KnitWell: Exploring creative, open-ended knitting as a form of journalling to record emotions, with consideration for mental wellbeing

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ABSTRACT

This practice-based, autoethnographic and participatory research investigates how aspects of hand knitting, such as stitch, colour, texture, scale and shape, can be used as a tangible, tactile tool kit to record and reflect upon an individual's emotional state. The research investigates the potential benefits, opportunities, limitations and affordances that this recording method offers and considers what impact the creation of a 'knitted journal' has on mental wellbeing.

Framed as 'KnitWell', the research focuses on the creative choices one can make within knitting as a means of capturing and expressing emotions. KnitWell involves the creation of a Daily Knit Journal (DKJ) that employs a 'free knitting' approach. In contrast with following a pattern, free knitting enables the knitter to freely discover the craft of knitting, by selecting yarn, colour, and stitch choice in an open-ended and creative way.

There are two strands to the research methodology: autoethnographic knitting practice and participatory research involving 11 knitters who took part in three iterative phases of activity. In each phase, the participants were invited to create a DKJ and complete a daily wellbeing scale for 28 days as well as a Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale at the beginning and end of the 28 days, followed by a material elicitation interview. The parallel autoethnographic practice allowed the researcher to investigate the technical elements of free knitting, experiment with the structure of a DKJ and embed themselves in the participant study as Participant 12.

Multiple levels of analysis were conducted to examine the visual DKJs, the corresponding interview and written diary data. Analysing the participant data began with an inductive data analysis approach. Visual and technical analysis of the DKJs was undertaken using specific parameters to provide consistent interpretation. A KnitWell website was developed to visually communicate each participant's creative knitting journey and acts as an analytical platform to share the research findings. A deductive

data analysis approach was used for the autoethnographic data which began with the themes identified from the participant data.

The analysis of the autoethnographic and participant data identified three core themes. The first, 'Process and Participation', addresses the knitters' approach to the concept of free knitting and daily knit journalling; overall, the experience of free knitting brought a new element to the knitters' practice. The second, 'Emotional Expression', relates to the knitters' articulation of emotions in their knitting, through their use of colour, stitch, and tension; analysis revealed that the tactility of knitting captured an essence of the day through its expressive nature. The third, 'Awareness and Approach to Meaning', unveiled the multiple layers of meaning within a DKJ; through decision making, reflection and memory-keeping, the DKJ can hold flexible meaning to the knitter.

In summary, this research provides detailed insights into the value and experience of keeping a knitted journal for mental wellbeing. Evidence indicates that the KnitWell proposition provides a meaningful way of capturing emotions on a daily basis, using the flexible creativity of knitting, and has the capacity to positively impact mental wellbeing.

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GLOSSARY OF KNIT STITCHES AND TECHNIQUES

The knitting stitches and terminology described below relate to hand knitting using two needles and are terms discussed throughout this thesis.

1 x 1 Rib

1 x 1 rib is a two-row repeat pattern and stitches are worked across multiples of two: it alternates knit and purl stitches. Knit the first stitch, purl the next stitch and repeat until the end of the row. Turn the work and continue alternating knit and purl stitches.

2 x 2 Rib

2 x 2 rib is a two-row repeat pattern and stitches are worked across multiples of four. Knit 2, purl 2 until the end of the row. Turn the work, continue to knit the knit stitches and purl the purl stitches as set in the previous row.

Bobbles

Bobbles add 3D texture to the knitting. Multiple increases are knitted into one stitch and then these are worked on independently to create a 3D bobble within the knitting.

Cast Off

Casting off is the last step when knitting; it is the process of taking stitches off a knitting needle to create a finished edge.

Cast On

Casting on is the first step when knitting and is the process of creating stitches on a knitting needle from which knitting can then proceed.

Colourwork

Colourwork is a term that describes knitting with multiple different colour yarns in a single row to create patterns and motifs.

GARTER RIB	*Garter rib is a two-row pattern repeat. Row one: knit all stitches, row two: knit 2, purl 2 to end. These two rows create the pattern repeat. Repeat pattern as set.*
GARTER STITCH	*Garter stitch is a simple knit stitch and is known as the easiest stitch to achieve in knitting; it is where every row uses the basic knit stitch.*
GSR - GERMAN SHORT ROWS	*GSRs are a technique used within hand knitting to create shape and direction within the knitting. They are a form of partial knitting, working over a segment of live knit stitches to add height or depth to a specific part of the knitting. GSRs are often used to create neck or hem shaping within traditional knitting projects.*
I-CORDS	*I-cords are knitted tubes that are knitted on two (or more) double pointed needles. Arguably an i-cord is most recognised as something that is created on a French Knitting doll or a cotton bobbin and 4 pins.*
KNIT	*Knit stitches are knitted into the back loop on the left-hand needle and create bumps on the back of the knitting.*
MARLING	*Marling is when the knitter holds two (or more) strands of different colour yarn together to create a unique colour whilst knitting.*
MOSS STITCH	*Moss stitch is another two-row repeat pattern where stitches are worked across multiples of two: it alternates knit and purl stitches. Row 1: knit 1, purl 1 until the end of the row. Row 2: knit*

the purl stitches from the previous row and purl the knit stitches from the previous row. Repeat row 2 throughout.

PURL	*Purl stitches are knitted into the front loop on the left-hand needle and create bumps on the front of the knitting. When knit and purl are combined many stitch patterns can be created, for example stocking stitch, moss stitch, and many different rib variations.*
SHORT ROWS	*A short row is a form of partial knitting where the knitter turns the work before they have finished knitting an entire row. Short rows are used to create 3-dimensional effects within knitting. For example, bust darts or heels on socks.*
SLIP STITCHES	*Slip stitches are a knitting technique that requires transference (or slipping) of the stitches from the left-hand needle to the right-hand needle (for right-handed knitters and the opposite for left-handed knitters) without working (knitting) them. When using two yarns, slip stitch patterns can give the effect of colourwork without having to knit with two colours in the same row.*
STACKED STITCHES	*Stacked stitches require multiple increases or multiple decreases in one stitch. Essentially, a double increase is knitted into one stitch and then two stitches are slipped, from the left-hand needle back to the right-hand needle, and the centre stitch is used to increase two again. This process is then continued, stacking increases until the required number of stitches have been knitted. Stacked stitches are an innovative way of adding shaping or creating 3D texture within knitting. When combined with stripes, stacked stitches create interesting colourwork patterns without long floats on the wrong side of the knitting.*

STOCKING STITCH _Stocking stitch is knitted by alternating full rows of knit and purl stitches._

WRAPPED STITCHES _Wrapping stitches are a good way to add texture and a decorative touch to knitting, as well as for bringing in extra colour. The number of stitches being wrapped is determined by the knitter. The process of wrapping stitches means that yarn lies across the stitches and is not knitted in, thus creating a wrap effect._

ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations are used throughout this thesis.

DKJ	*Daily Knit Journal*
DPNs	*Double Pointed Needles*
DRM	*Day Reconstruction Method*
DWKS	*Daily Wellness Knit Scale*
ESM	*Experience Sampling Method*
FTRC	*Fashion and Textiles Research Centre*
HSF	*Hybrid Short Form*
KJ	*Knitted Journal*
NHS	*National Health Service*
NTU	*Nottingham Trent University*
OED	*Oxford English Dictionary*
UKHKA	*UK Hand Knitting Association*
WEMWBS	*Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale*
WHO	*World Health Organisation*

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Daily knit journalling is integral to this research and as this thesis develops through each chapter, I have created a knitted journal to visualise that development. Images of the knitted journal are presented at the start of each chapter and illustrated below.
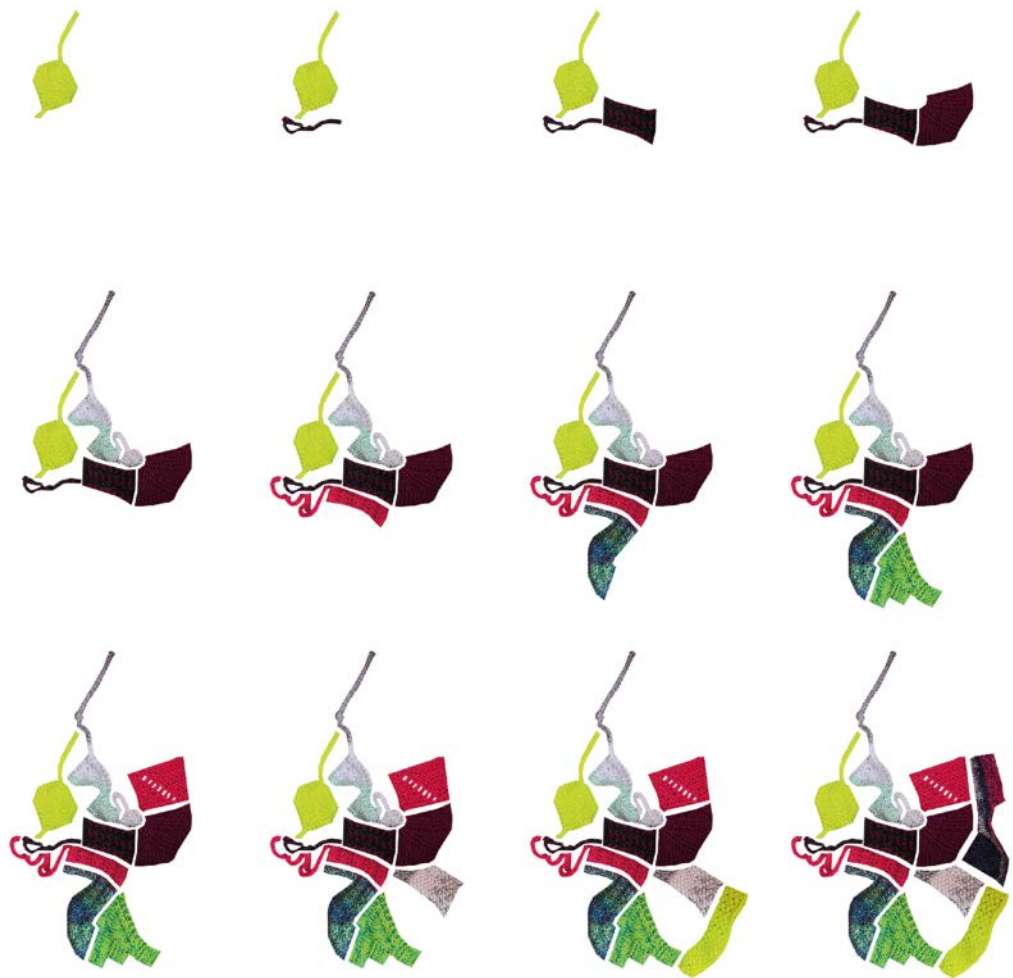
Figure 0.1 Developement of a knitted journal. There are 12 installments which match with each chapter presented in this thesis.
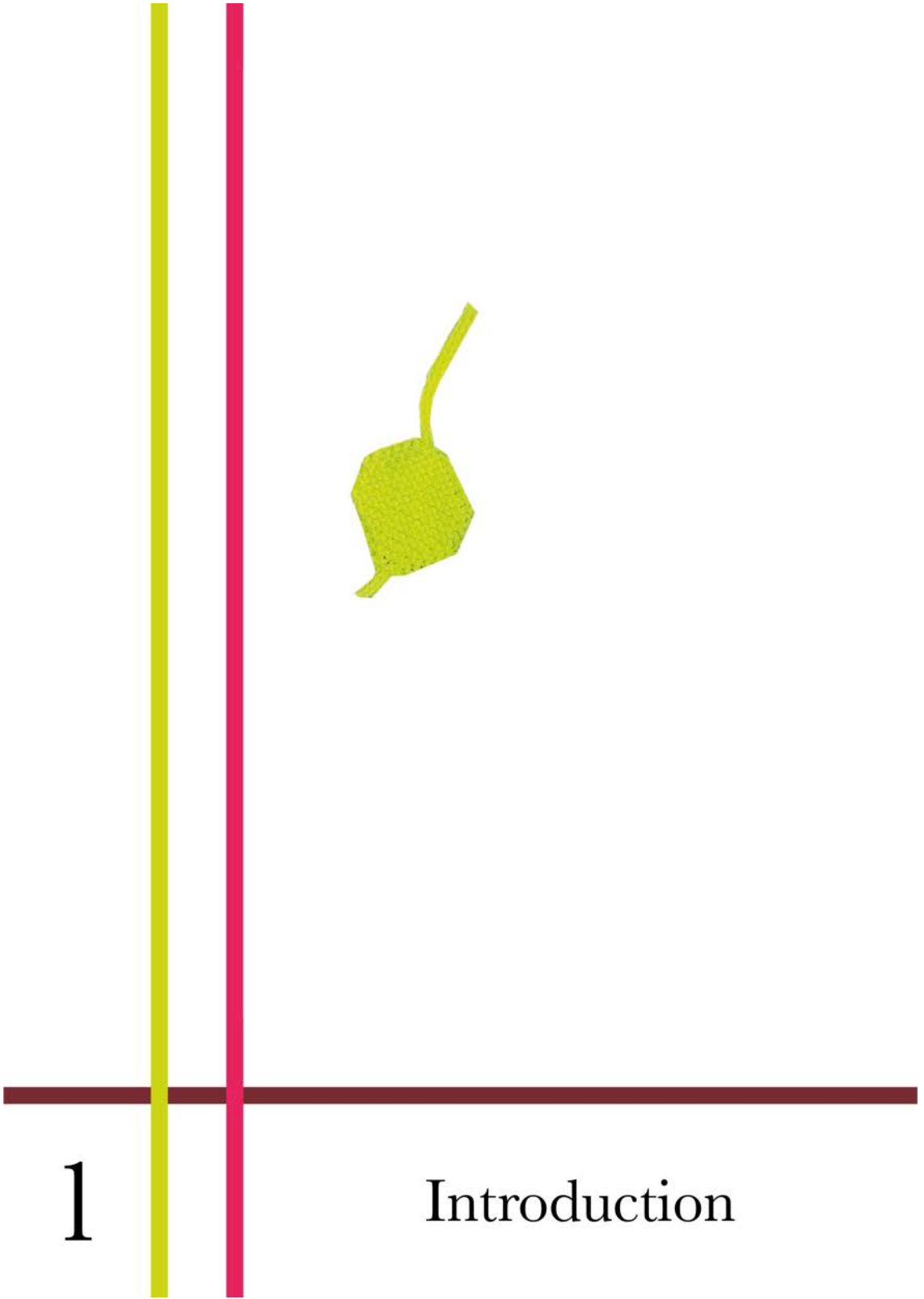
1 Introduction

Picture this, a summer evening in July 2010. Outside the sun is setting and the air is warm but inside there is a calm yet hurried click-clacking of knitting needles. I have just joined my first knitting group. Under my grandmother's calm instruction, I sit with her friends – fellow knitters – and begin to knit. My first experience of knitting fulfils the cultural stereotype: knitting is something that grannies do, it is cosy and homely, feminine, and domestic. However, there was so much more to gain from this experience: camaraderie, support, and knowledge exchange at the very least. This stereotypical image of knitting masks the depth of the aforementioned and many other encounters, experienced both by myself and other knitters around the world, whose engagement in the craft occurs for different reasons, varied purposes and in diverse contexts.

Over the last few years, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, knitting reached new heights of popularity (Klass, 2020; Wood, 2020), a trend that looks set to continue based on the number of knitting communities that can be found locally, globally and online. There is also growing acknowledgement of the benefit of knitting (Amoratis, 2022; Silver, 2021), crochet (Macey, 2021), and craft practice more broadly, for mindfulness and wellbeing (Burton, 2022; Dance, 2022; Scott, 2022; Turner, 2022). In 2023 a short animation film entitled *Visible Mending* shared the experiences of a selection of knitters and how they reconnect and heal themselves through their knitting practice (Moore, 2023);[1] *Visible Mending* highlighted the current impetus for research into this genre. Given knitting's growth in popularity, there are indications that this craft practice holds other benefits beyond homely domesticity. This research takes the opportunity to explore whether knitting can also be utilised as a tool for assisting mental wellbeing. KnitWell, the proposition I have developed, is a method of journalling that utilises an approach termed 'free knitting'. Freed from the constraints of a pattern, and equipped with the opportunities of choice – of yarn, of stitch, of colour – KnitWell enables the knitter to use this craft approach as a way of documenting and reflecting their thoughts and emotions on a daily basis. Therefore this research investigates the

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[1] *Visible Mending* was nominated for a BAFTA award. Media Active share the synopsis here: https://www.mediaactive.org/visible-mending.html

impacts that the creation of a 'knitted journal', utilising free knitting techniques, might have on mental wellbeing.

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

The Fashion and Textiles Research Centre (FTRC) at Nottingham Trent University (NTU) is renowned for its leading research through three interconnected groups: Advanced Textiles, Cultures and Heritage, and Sustainable Transitions. This practice-based study owes much to the latter group, notably, research into sustainable clothing and textiles using participatory methodologies. Of particular relevance is work undertaken by: Associate Professor Amy Twigger Holroyd, including the Stitching Together Network (Twigger Holroyd, 2017; Shercliff and Holroyd, 2020); Professor Katherine Townsend, such as Emotional Fit (Townsend and Sadkowska, 2020) and recent graduates, Dr Lisa Shawgi (2023) and Dr Sally Cooke (2024), who both employed participatory methodologies in their textile-based research. In common with these peers, I was also awarded a studentship as part of the Midlands 4 Cities funding initiative which enabled me to work with Professor Anne Boultwood, Reader in the Psychology of Fashion, Birmingham City University, whose insights into mindfulness and wellbeing (Boultwood, 2013) were invaluable.

Past Practice

In 2013, with the support of the Prince's Trust and a 'Win a Shop' competition run by Nailsea High Street, North Somerset, UK, my independent business Ewe Knit 20 was established. Ewe Knit 20 was a bricks and mortar premises which gave me the opportunity to build a thriving community of craft knitters in my local town. I was able to befriend, support and advise many knitting and crochet enthusiasts, and we bonded over a mutual appreciation of the craft. Services that I offered at Ewe Knit 20 (Figure 1.1) included facilitated workshops, 'knit and natter' sessions and learn to knit classes for both hand and domestic machine knitting. These encouraged families to learn to knit together, as well as supporting individuals with their own development and knitting practice. In 2014, I created a community knitted garden (

Figure 1.2), where I invited local knitters of all ages to knit and crochet flowers to add to the garden. Additionally, in 2015 I worked alongside the Chamber of Commerce to

organise charity events within the town, yarn bombing in the town centre for Valentine's Day, with all proceeds going to the British Heart Foundation, and knitting and crocheting poppies for the Poppy Appeal with all proceeds going to the British Legion (Figure 1.3). I enjoyed bringing people together, sharing knowledge, nurturing both creativity and friendship.

Figure 1.1 Business Card & Workshop Timetable for Ewe Knit 20, 2013

Figure 1.2 Ewe Knit 20, Community Knit Garden, 2014

Figure 1.3 Ewe Knit 20, Poppy Appeal community knit night, sponsored by Costa Coffee, 2015

Whilst engaging with this community of knitters, it was brought to my attention that for several people knitting was a way of relaxing and releasing tension. Through creating a safe environment within Ewe Knit 20, I was able to support individuals to accomplish apparently simple but meaningful life tasks, like leaving their home, going to a shop, interacting with others. For one person (a woman in her forties) this was the first time in many years that such an action had been possible. Another individual (a young woman in her twenties) learnt to knit to facilitate meaningful interactions with her grandmother, as knitting gave them the opportunity to share skills and knowledge. It was through the engagement and interaction within this community that I recognised the positive benefits knitting had on different individuals. Whether disclosed in conversations with groups of knitters or observed in changes in an individuals' behaviour, it became increasingly evident that partaking in everyday creativity, in this case knitting, could have a positive impact on other elements of people's lives; particularly in building relationships, confidence, and friendships (Richards, 2007; Richards, 2011; Silvia et al., 2014).

Ewe Knit 20 closed in 2016, and subsequently I spent time designing hand knit patterns, some of which have been published in knitting books and magazines internationally. Examples of my published designs: Lotte Socks published in *52 Weeks of Socks*, Laine Publishing, 2020; Dancing Skies Socks published in *Making Stories* magazine, Issue 6, 2021 (see Figure 1.4). I have also worked closely with two UK based yarn suppliers and designed patterns exclusively for their new yarn ranges. Examples of my designs for yarn

suppliers include: Cove Poncho, Diamond Steps Cowl, Diamond Steps Mitts, Minack Socks and Perran Hat form the Cove Collection in Cove 4Ply and Cove Super Chunky for Blacker Yarns, 2020 (see Figure 1.5); Wollaton Socks in Amble sock yarn for the Fibre Co., 2021; Copper Wood Cowl in Woodland 4Ply for Blacker Yarns, 2021.

Figure 1.4 (Left) Lotte Socks, photographed for 52 Weeks of Socks, Laine Publishing, February 2020. (Right) Dancing Skies socks, photographed for Making Stories Magazine, Issue 6, September 2021

Figure 1.5 (Left) Diamond Steps Cowl and Mitts; (Centre) Perran Hat; (Right) Minack Socks. These are a selection of my hand-knit designs for the Cove Collection for Blacker Yarns' launch of their new yarn Cove, September 2020.

My design process for knitting always starts with the yarn. The qualities of the fibre blend, the texture, and colour all contribute to potential designs. These design ideas culminate in a mass of sampling; the samples are not just for the pattern and stitch

choice but tension, placement, and colour options are also under consideration. My design work for commercial knitting companies evidences my ability to design, create and follow complex knitting patterns.

1.1.1 INITIAL RESEARCH: MA STUDY

With the knowledge and insight gained from Ewe Knit 20, I went on to complete a Masters' degree at Nottingham Trent University in Textile Design Innovation in 2018. I used this as an opportunity to investigate the role of knitting more formally as an act that can play a therapeutic role in the everyday lives of individuals.

Although I did not realise it at the time, my MA study, 'Knitting through your Emotions' (2018) acted as a pilot study for my PhD. 'Knitting through your Emotions' aimed to support wellbeing using a daily journal format. The research asked five participants to use seven shades of merino yarn to document their emotions in a 'knitted journal', every day for a period of three weeks during March 2018. The participants were knitters known to me from knitting groups established at Ewe Knit 20. I invited each participant to assign each shade of merino yarn to a specific emotion, as shown in **Figure 1.6**. When participants came to knit each day, I invited them to reflect on their emotions and choose the colour or colours that best represented their experiences on that day.

		Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4	Participant 5
●	=	Excited	Surprise	Happy	Warm	Excited
●	=	Happy	Happy	Energised	Tense	Happy
●	=	Positive	Frustration	Springlike	Happy	Disgust
●	=	Negative	Interest	Comfortable	Interest	Calm
●	=	Sad	Annoyed	OK	Calm	Anger
●	=	Relaxed	Anticipation	Content	Relaxed	Frustration
●	=	Tired	Thoughtful	Miserable	Distant	Boredom

Figure 1.6 Diagram of each participant and the emotions they assigned to each colour.

Each day during the knitting process, I also invited participants to send an email or text message with a photograph of their knitting and a short written description of why they knitted with the colour they chose and what informed that decision; Figure 1.7 provides a diagram of the daily participant activities. 'Knitting through your Emotions' acted as a new method of communication, specifically of the relationship between emotion and colour as a form of self-expression. Examples of the participants' knitting can be seen in Figure 1.8.
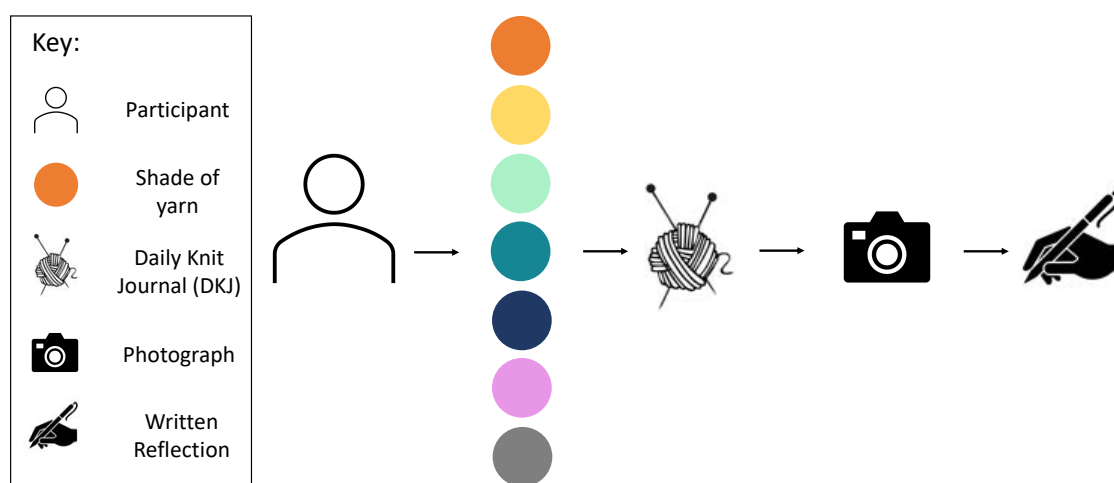
Figure 1.7 Diagram of the participant daily activities throughout the three-week knitting period.

Figure 1.8 Examples of MA case study knitting (Rickard, 2018)

In retrospect, 'Knitting through your Emotions' was the first iteration of the KnitWell proposition – the generation of a Daily Knit Journal (DKJ). My MA study established the

potential for knitting to work as a medium for the daily recording of an individual's emotional state, providing a mechanism for short and long-term reflection, and led directly to this research.

There were elements of 'Knitting through your Emotions' which participants found challenging; for example, the majority of participants struggled to associate specific emotions to an exact colour, as their connection to each colour changed throughout the knitting process, depending on personal circumstances such as illness or state of mind. On reflection, the parameters I had set regarding colour and yarn were too rigid to accurately portray participants' emotions 100% of the time. These learnings further informed the next iteration of KnitWell which this research investigated.

1.2   KNITTING: THE CONVENTIONAL FORMAT

Hand knitting is a creative practice whereby at least two needles are used to turn yarn into fabric through a series of pulling loops through each other to form stitches. Each active (also known as 'live') stitch is held on a needle until the next loop is passed through it, creating a new stitch. There are many different methods of creating stitches in relation to how the knitter holds the needles and yarn in their hands, but the resulting fabric is always recognisable as having been knitted. Machine knitting uses an entire bed of needles complete with hooks. The knitting machine has a carriage which carries yarn over the hooks on the needles, creating new stitches. Each time the carriage passes over the needles it generates a new row of knitting. Unlike hand knitting, machine knitting can be accomplished at speed and generates a uniform knitted fabric.

There are two definitions that a knitter might apply to themselves: product knitter or process knitter. The product knitter knits with a specific aim in mind and might even knit to a specific time frame. The process knitter takes their time, focusing on the process of knitting rather than on the finished outcome. Yes, there may be overlap as both will complete knitted items, but the focus is what the knitter finds the most joy in: the finished product or the process of making it.

The conventional approach to both hand and machine knitting is to plan the piece before starting. The knitter would usually select an pre-existing pattern, choose the colour, the yarn, the size (of item being knitted) and test the stitch gauge before casting on and following explicit instructions, row by row. To design a hand or machine knitted garment also requires planning, and features many of the details listed above; yet the designer is creating their own design to follow, row by row, in place of a pre-existing pattern. Whichever approach is taken – following a pre-existing pattern or designing a new one – once planned, this style of knitting does not necessarily allow for further creative input or personalisation other than choosing the colour and yarn to knit with.

There is an implicit requirement for the knitter to concentrate when following a pattern as there are a number of elements to keep track of; for example, how many rows to knit, when to change colour or stitch, and when to cast on or cast off stitches. Each of these elements could cause stress to the knitter, if they were to lose their place in the pattern, as it could create an error in the knitting. The conventional, pre-planned approach to knitting requires precision, because traditionally the outcome would be a garment or an accessory that would be worn, and therefore, any error in the knitting would devalue the outcome. Errors in this form of knitting are often rectifiable; if lucky, the knitter spots an error quickly and is able to correct it without much hassle. However, sometimes an error is spotted much later and more intense effort is required to correct it.

When a knitter chooses a pattern (or designs their own) the conventional format is generally to knit in one direction. The knitter will cast on a specific amount of stitches, knit the panel to the desired length, following the stitch pattern specified, and then cast off.[2] Typically, the conventional, linear format to knitting features three factors: it is planned in advance, it follows set instructions and it is knitted in one, linear direction.

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[2] A glossary of stitches and techniques provides detailed information on the terminology used, see page xvii.

1.3 CONTEMPORARY KNIT PRACTICES

A number of knit artists challenge the conventional approach to knitting in order to subvert the cultural stereotype of 'granny' knitters. Rachael Matthews[3], Celia Pym (Pym, n.d) and Freddie Robins (Robins, n.d), for example, each focus on contemporary knit practices that may involve fashion and clothing, but are arts-based, community-based and in some cases, performative.

Rachael Matthews aims to shift conventional perceptions of textiles; her current work, *Rag Manifesto* (2025), captures stories by repurposing what others might deem waste material within her ethical practice. Her book, *The Mindfulness in Knitting* (2023 [2017]), explores how the practice of knitting can connect the knitter to the environment around them and advocates mindful making, which chimes with the NHS definition of mindfulness discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.1.5. While Matthews emphasises mindfulness and ethical repurposing, my approach with KnitWell (see Section 1.6) goes further by focusing on the emotional self-awareness and expression of the knitter.

Celia Pym's work focuses on making art through prolonging the life of a material. Pym explores the concept of damage and repair within textiles, creating a contemporary practice from historical traditions centred around knitted clothing. In *On Mending* (2023), Pym engages the reader through stories of damaged garments and the process of repairing them, delving into the emotions entangled with the worn and no longer prestine items and the act of repair. Although I appreciate Pym's narrative of repair and emotional connection, my focus is on the active portrayal of the knitter's current emotions and self-awareness, rather than the historical and sentimental aspects of the materials themselves.

Meanwhile, Robins expresses ideas relating to identity and subjectivity through her knit practice, using knitting as a means to examine contemporary issues such as gender, death, loss, and religion (Robins, n.d). These provocative artworks engage the audience

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[3] Link to Matthews' Instagram profile: www.instagram.com/rachael_matthews_textiles/

with the concept that knitting is not passive or benign; it is a medium for artistic expressionism. Similar to Robins, I use knitting as a form of artistic expression. However, my unique contribution lies in the emphasis on the knitter's self-awareness and the emotional journey during the knitting process. Robins' work is discussed further in Section 1.4.

These contemporary knit artists have helped me to position KnitWell within current, conceptual knit practices. While these artists share a common goal of redefining knitting and telling stories through their practice, my approach with KnitWell (see Section 1.6) introduces a new dimension by focusing on the knitter's active portrayal of their emotions during the knitting process. Unlike Matthews' emphasis on mindfulness, Pym's narrative of repair, and Robins', exploration of identity, KnitWell centres on the emotional experience of the knitter, making the act of knitting a form of personal self-expression. This unique focus not only challenges conventional perceptions but also positions KnitWell within the broader context of contemporary knit practices as a distinct and innovative approach.

1.4   CREATIVE EXPLORATION THROUGH KNITTING

Various approaches to creative exploration in knitting stray from the conventional approach of following a pre-designed pattern and knitting in a linear format. In the 1960s Mary Walker Phillips was "the first to introduce knitting as a form of artistic expression" (Lindsay, 2015). Phillips' work focused on divorcing knitting from the human body, whereby knitting was not solely to be garment based and worn on the body, but it could also be an expressive art form (ibid., p. 3). Phillips' created a form of open-ended knitting, without rules, that is wholly reflective of an individual's thoughts and emotions (Figure 1.9). Fox states that:

> Where traditional knitters were classical artists, faithfully reproducing a score, Phillips knit jazz. In her hands, knitting became a free-form, improvisational art, with no rules, no patterns and no utilitarian end in sight (Fox, 2007).

Phillips' approach supports the theory that knitting as a creative outlet is "one of the purest ways for a person to express their authentic self" (Riley et al., 2013).

Figure 1.9 Example of Mary Walker Phillips' work, Knitted Wall Hanging, 1965 © Mary Walker Phillips Estate Photograph courtesy of Patricia Abrahamian

There are knitted textile artists who embrace Phillips' style of knitting within their work, not following patterns but creating elements as they go. These practice-based projects focus on colour and texture, as can be seen in Freddie Robins's 2004 work *How to make a piece of work when you are too tired to make decisions* (see Figure 1.10). This piece of work involved machine knitting and three dice; each die featured a different command, for example colour change, increase one stitch, knit. Thus the decision making was taken out of Robins' hands, with each knitted piece being created by following 10 commands from the dice. Robins' work illustrates a method based on chance, which is just one of her creative approaches to (machine) knitting.

Figure 1.10 Robins' work: How to make a piece of work when you are too tired to make decisions (Robins, 2004).

Channing Hansen's (2017) work is another example of creative exploration through

Figure 1.11 Example of Channing Hansen's Knitted DNA (Hansen, 2017)

knitting. Hansen uses his DNA (Figure 1.11) to generate an algorithm to knit to, with this indicating when a change in colour, fibre, or pattern is required, and whether to drop stitches to make intentional errors (Holmes, 2017). Hansen's use of intentional errors within his knitting challenges the conventional format of knitting. Traditionally, errors in knitting are not intentional, they are seen as a fault to be corrected.

Signe Riisom, a Danish artist, creates knitted portraits through individual sections of knitting and short rows[4] which creates a unique knitted form and ultimately challenges the traditional, linear format of knitting (see Section 1.2). Riisom shares the process and development of her work via Instagram,[5] where the viewer can see how these pieces are constructed (as in Figure 1.12). The piece grows section by section; Riisom picks up stitches with a new colour and works the next section. Instead of casting on and following a linear approach to knitting, Riisom has embraced the possibility of knitting in different directions in order to create her own innovative knitting practice.

Figure 1.12 From left to right, the development of one of Signe Riisom's knitted portraits.

As can be seen, knitting artists are using a range of unconventional approaches to enable creative exploration through knitting practice as opposed to the linear format of knitting discussed in Section 1.2. Phillips' work widened the scope for freeform, open-ended knitting practice, whilst Robins and Hansen set parameters for their work to follow but also left elements to chance, and Riisom's work shows exploration within the process of knitting by not following its predictable straight lines. Each specific aspect of the described artists' creative explorations within knitting reinforce the notion that there are many ways to embrace knitting, separate from a more traditional, linear format. Furthermore, each aspect of their creative exploration has aided the development of the KnitWell proposition (Section 1.6) and led me to the use of the term 'free knitting'. Free knitting describes an open-ended, freeform knitting approach that does not

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[4] See glossary of knit stitches and techniques on page xvi.
[5] Link to Riisom's Instagram profile: www.instagram.com/signeriisom?igsh=YTdzajFjaDVgYzAw

conform to conventional, linear knitting standards (see Section 1.2): it is not planned in advance, it does not follow set instructions and involves knitting in different directions.

1.5   EMOTIONAL INTERPRETATION WITHIN CREATIVE PRACTICE

Before sharing KnitWell as a proposition, I will discuss the notion of emotional interpretation within creative practice. In Chapter 2, Section 2.3, I discuss creativity for wellbeing and investigate the concept of expressing emotion as a therapeutic process. At this point I will take a broader view towards everyday interactions with creative practice. Creative practice – art, drama, dance, music, craft, to name a few – is likely to impact every individual throughout their lifetime. In my case this involved an early attempt to play an instrument as a child, learning a complex dance routine as a teenager, and moved on to designing abstract knitting patterns as an adult. Creative practice is encompassed within many different elements of our human lives. Emotions evoked through creative practice are "are not only central to the experiences of perceivers, but also commonly discussed by artists in relation to their works and creative processes" (Tinio et al., 2023, n.p). Essentially, emotions are essential in order to experience art (ibid).

By connecting with creative processes, individuals can experience and interpret their emotions through the senses, including the visual and tactile processes involved in knitting. Engaging with creative practice in this manner allows individuals to reflect on and regulate their emotions which may may lead to a deeper level of self-awareness. For example, a study into imaginative responses to medical care highlights how creative exercises helped individuals to interpret and "express emotions more effectively, especially those that are difficult to articulate or confront, or to express ideas that might otherwise be tacit" (McBain et al., 2015, p. 3).

When I knit, I predominantly knit for myself, however, on occasion I have knitted for others. As a knitter, I am aware of the emotional interpretations within the item I am knitting. Yet, as Tinio et al. (2023) suggest, my knitting may also evoke emotions in the receiver of the knitted item and how they interpret the finished piece. Free knitting (discussed below Section) is unlike conventional knitting practice (Section) - whereby

someone generally follows a knitting pattern or plan - as it sits within the realm of arts-based, contemporary knitting practice and as such presents stronger opportunities for emotional interpretation than everyday knitted artefacts.

1.6   KNITWELL AS A PROPOSITION

The KnitWell proposition can be simply defined as the process of generating a Daily Knit Journal (DKJ) through creative, free knitting practice to document the knitter-diarist's emotional state and reflections. As stated above, in this research free knitting refers to an open-ended and unplanned approach. Free knitting explores the creative choices one can make within knitting, such as yarn, colour, gauge, and stitch.

The KnitWell diary, the DKJ, is proposed as a method of self-expression. Participants are invited to knit for any period between 10-30 minutes daily, freed of the specific constraints associated with linear knitting practice (see Section 1.2). The DKJ is a creative knitted diary, which takes away the pressure, felt by many, of having to sit in front of a blank page with pen in hand and fill a page with emotions and experiences of the day. The main difference between the DKJ method, used in KnitWell, and typical written diaries (Faccio et al., 2019; Kenten, 2010; Meth, 2003; Milligan et al., 2005) is that when complete the DKJ will only be able to be read and decoded by the knitter-diarist. No matter what the knitter's skill level, the DKJ knitted diary will always be personal and private. Thus, it removes the fear of someone judging the knitter-diarist; it is a wholly personal, in the moment, safe space.

Some research into knitting for wellbeing focuses on the physical act and processes of knitting, whereby garter stitch is the key to achieving a meditative mind-state (Corkhill et al., 2015). Yet knitting should not only be celebrated as an activity to reduce anxiety and depression (Corkhill et al., 2015; Mayne, 2016; Myzelev, 2009), but also as an activity that can have a positive effect on wellbeing through making. Brooks et al.'s (2019) study demonstrates that knitting holds a prominent role within how individuals view their identities as, throughout the activity, it lends structure and purpose to the knitter's time; this discussion is continued in Chapter 2, Section 2.3.3.

Despite the knowledge generated about knitting for wellbeing, there has not been an exploration into the creative choices one can make in stitch and colour, as a means for self–expression, to record wellbeing. The lens of creativity offers an alternative approach to thinking about the potential benefits of knitting in terms of wellbeing.

Likewise, whilst there have been previous hobby knitting activities that have involved forms of knitted diaries, none have focused on wellbeing per se – see Chapter 2, Section 2.3.4. There have been knitted sky diaries and temperature diaries, where the knitter chose a colour that denoted the sky or temperature (depending on which diary they kept), and knitted two rows of garter stitch to represent the day. The sky and/or temperature diary projects invited the knitter to knit once a day for a year. Yet, these projects were not concerned with the knitter's day or how they felt. One exception is Weston's *Moody Blanket* (Weston, 2016) which asked knitters to pick a colour and knit a few rows each day, in garter stitch, to match their mood. The *Moody Blanket* (ibid.) was similar to my Masters project in some respects. It invited knitters to align specific colours with their emotions; however, the *Moody Blanket* (ibid.) was more restrictive, as there was a specific pattern to follow and only used garter stitch. As such, the *Moody Blanket* (ibid.) model is quite prescriptive and does not lend itself to allowing the knitter to express how they are feeling or offer the opportunity for such storytelling as they may want to convey. In contrast, KnitWell embraces knitting as a creative outlet for personal reflection; it invites the knitter to visually record their emotions through free knitting practice as a therapeutic outlet for individual wellbeing.

1.7 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

There is one overarching aim for this research: to develop and test a specific approach to knitting (the KnitWell proposition) and explore how it can be used to portray emotional experience, while considering the impact on mental wellbeing. In order to investigate this aim, I have identified a list of related objectives:

1. Investigate creative, open-ended, free knitting through autoethnographic practice in three areas: explore the capabilities of specific stitches and their ability to portray emotions (Stitchplorations); test the boundaries of knitted

journalling; act as Participant 12 by following the guidelines of the participant study.

2. Develop a participatory research study encompassing three phases of activity to highlight if there are any benefits towards wellbeing for creating a knitted journal and/or creating a knitted journal with written reflection.

3. Determine a quantitative approach to measuring wellbeing and how it can be utilised as a measure to 'read' the more qualitative, subjective knitting activity.

4. Use multiple avenues of data generation and collection to analyse the impact of daily knit journalling on the participating knitters' mental wellbeing.

1.8 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

With the aims and objectives in mind, this research sought to answer three questions:

RQ1: How can various aspects of a knitted structure (e.g. yarn, colour and texture, stitch, gauge and shape) be used to record and communicate information about an individual's emotional state?

RQ2: What opportunities and limitations can a knitted journal (in which free knitting is used to record an individual's daily emotional state) offer in terms of creative self-expression?

RQ3: Explore the manner in which a knitted journal may generate benefits in terms of mental wellbeing.

1.9 THESIS STRUCTURE

This thesis contains ten chapters as outlined below.

Chapter 1 – Introduction. This first chapter provides context for the research.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review. This chapter focuses on two areas of current literature. Firstly, I investigate concepts of wellbeing in order to establish the definitions

that this research utilises. The focus then shifts to creativity for wellbeing, directed explicitly at creative endeavours that have been documented to aid wellbeing.

Wellbeing is divided into six sub-sections. Hedonic Wellbeing and Emotions examines differing definitions of hedonic wellbeing and how emotions and hedonic wellbeing are interlinked. Eudaimonic wellbeing is anchored through the lens of flourishing, which helps to differentiate eudaimonic from hedonic wellbeing. After a definition of both hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing has been examined, I share how these might be interpreted through a knitting perspective. Hedonic and Eudaimonic Wellbeing explores how there might be some overlap between these two concepts. Alternative ways to look at the concept of combined hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing are through the lenses of flow and mental wellbeing. Finally, KnitWell and Wellbeing, shares what aspects of wellbeing influenced the KnitWell proposition and the research into it.

The second section of the literature review begins with a discussion of creativity. The KnitWell proposition is an everyday activity and as such, everyday creativity provided a working definition for this research. Having established the role of creativity in relation to this research, next I examine differing elements of creativity for wellbeing and this is divided into four sub-sections. Writing for Wellbeing explores the role of diary keeping and different writing practices, such as free writing, and their impact on wellbeing. The definition and concept of free writing directly impacted the development of free knitting practice within the KnitWell proposition. Next, I discuss craft for wellbeing which refers to all craft practices and the impact these artistic endeavours have on wellbeing, I draw on research by art therapists and studies which have utilised craft practices for wellbeing. Knitting for Wellbeing then discusses the two aspects of knitting for wellbeing most commonly researched within academia: the physical act of knitting and knitting as a purposeful leisure activity. Finally, I discuss data visualisation for wellbeing. Initially exploring the concept of visualising mental health, the section ends with an investigation into creative practices that are used as recording devices which develops scope for visual data generation - entirely separate from wellbeing.

Each element under discussion in this chapter influenced the development of the KnitWell proposition, and how it sits apart from existing projects that relate to knitting for wellbeing.

Chapter 3 – Methodology. I begin by discussing the theoretical framework of this study, followed by reiterating the research questions. Next, there is a focus on the methods put in place to investigate the impact of keeping a knitted journal (KJ), which include: practice-based, diary method, material elicitation interviews, and wellbeing scales. Each of the methods was utilised in both the participant and autoethnographic study.

Next, I progress to discussing the research methodology, which is separated into two research design models: the participant study and the autoethnographic study. Within the participant study model, I detail all aspects of the research design: the planning, participant recruitment, workshops, knitting month and interviews. My involvement as an autoethnographic researcher required organisational and participatory involvement that in some places differed from that of the participant study and this is discussed within the autoethnographic study model.

The next topic is ethics, where I discuss the ethical dimensions of the study and share how I have been able to build upon other research methodologies within FTRC. When discussing data collection and analysis there are multiple different methods of analysis including qualitative analysis, quantitative analysis of wellbeing data and creative data visualisation. This chapter ends with a discussion surrounding the difficulties I faced when generating both participant data and my autoethnographic data.

Chapter 4 – Free Knitting: An Autoethnographic Journey. The focus of this chapter is a consideration of the process of free knitting and daily knit journalling through my autoethnographic study. It examines how I tested the methodology and stretched its capabilities, helping me to shape the participant study. Additionally, each element of my autoethnographic practice was created to explore the research

questions. There are three avenues of exploration. Stitchplorations documents my investigation into stitches that might be deemed as enjoyable and straightforward to knit, thereby enhancing motivation and easily communicating emotional states. The purpose of Testing the Boundaries of Knit Journalling was to explore the concept of a knitted journal (KJ). This fundamentally helped me to form the shape and length of the participant study. Finally, as Participant 12, not only did I gain an insider perspective, but it also enabled me to empathise with my participants as I experienced each element of the research design first-hand.

Chapter 5 – Free Knitting: The Participants' Journey.

This chapter provides detailed focus on each individual element of the participant study: how it was undertaken, their responses and the outcomes of the participatory process. The purpose of chapters 4 and 5 is to act as a bridge between the methodology and the overall findings examined in chapters 6, 7 and 8.

In the first section of this chapter I share what it was like for participants to register their emotions on a daily basis using the Daily Wellness Knit Scale (DWKS). The data gathered from the DWKS was fundamental in the generation of the creative data visualisations. This chapter also explores participants' written journal entries, stitches and yarns, external influences and Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) results. The WEMWBS results are one aspect of the research which directly answer RQ3. The final section of this chapter focuses on one participant, Participant 5, and shares her progression from Phase 1 to Phase 3 in order to give a sense of the overall KnitWell proposition as experienced by an individual knitter-diarist.

Chapter 6 – Process and Participation.

Three core themes were identified through my analysis, and each is respectively explored in chapters 6, 7, and 8. Throughout these chapters I share images of my own knitting, participants' knitting and creative data visualisations. Knitting is a visual practice and therefore sharing visual imagery reinforces comments about the materiality of knitting.

Chapter 6 considers how the participants and I engaged in and navigated free knitting practice and daily knit journalling. It is divided into three primary sub-themes, with each then being further separated into secondary sub-themes. The Free Knitting Process discusses Participants' Engagement with Free Knitting, Exploring Stitch and Structure, and No Such Thing as a Mistake. Not Following a Pattern explores two secondary sub-themes: Process vs. Product Knitting, and A Liberating Opportunity for Creative Input. Generating a Daily Knit Journal considers three secondary sub-themes: Daily Knitting Practice, A Space for Reflection vs. A Chore, and Decision Making and the Approaches Taken to Daily Knit Journalling.

Within this chapter I connect my findings back to theories developed within the literature presented in chapter 1 and chapter 2. To give a few examples: I refer to the concept of everyday creativity, the theory on craft for wellbeing; the concept of 'flow', and creative exploration through knitting.

Chapter 7 – Emotional Expression. This chapter explores the second theme I identified and relates to the articulation of emotions in knitting. It explores how my participants and I reflected and communicated our emotional state through free knitting practice. To enable particular elements identified in the analysis to be considered, it is divided into six primary sub-themes: Knitting Instead of Words: A New Language, Direct and Metaphorical Expression, Planned and Consistent Connections, Planned yet Flexible Connections, Emotions Revealed and finally, Processing Emotion.

I have associated my findings within this chapter with relevant theories developed in the literature presented in chapter 2 including the theory on writing for wellbeing, with a specific focus on diary keeping and free writing practice; craft for wellbeing; and knitting for wellbeing.

Chapter 8 – Awareness and Approach to Meaning. The third theme I identified relates to the unveiling of multiple layers of meaning within a DKJ: through reflection and memory-keeping, the DKJ holds flexible meaning to the knitter. Chapter 8 considers

this theme, and is divided into five primary sub-themes: Access to Meaning; Conscious; Partial Awareness; Unconscious; and finally, Time Capsule.

It is evident that participants found value in recording life experiences in the moment, without the need to make the meaning known retrospectively. Again, I connect my findings back to theories presented in chapter 2. For example, I refer to the theory of writing for wellbeing, with a specific focus on diary writing and how it acts as a narration tool; and craft for wellbeing, specifically how homemade items are imbued with emotion.

Chapter 9 – Conclusion. Here I draw together the analysis strands and insights that emerged from the research and assess them against the research questions posed, linking back to topics discussed in chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8. I discuss the benefits that participants noted in relation to being part of the study, and following this I reflect on the limitations of the study. I then identify my contribution to knowledge and make suggestions for future work.

Chapter 10 – Outputs. There were three main areas of dissemination regarding this research and my practice outcomes, and this chapter shares each of them in turn: Exhibitions; Conferences; and the KnitWell website. Across all of these activities, knitted material samples produced within the study, in my autoethnographic practice, and by participants, were presented as evidence of this practice-based research alongside the evolving thesis.

1.10 COVID-19 STATEMENT

This research began in October 2019 which meant that it was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. National lockdowns in the UK were held between March-June 2020 and January-July 2021. There were additional restrictions in place within NTU which meant there was no physical access to university sites between March-September 2020 and December 2020 - March 2021. The government-imposed lockdowns resulted in the need to change the participatory aspect of the research methodology.

The participatory element was initially intended (pre-COVID-19) to be face-to-face with participants based in and around Nottingham. Between November 2019 and May 2020 I had organised a workshop plan and call for participants and prepared an ethics application ahead of implementing the participant study in May 2020. At that point I was still hopeful for COVID-19 restrictions to lift before commencing the study. However, COVID-19 restrictions were not lifted and I had to redesign the entire participatory element of my PhD in the following ways:

- **Change the call for participants** – initially aiming for knitters based in Nottingham, I changed this to include knitters in the UK as disseminated via the Knitting History Forum[6] and the UK Hand Knitting Association.[7]
- **Workshops** – these were intended to be face-to-face where I would show techniques, share thoughts about knitting and interact with my participants. When faced with taking these online, I had to restructure the workshops so participants could see my hands whilst knitting – requiring familiarisation with online platforms, such as Zoom and Microsoft Teams. I also had to ensure that participants were willing to use online video software.
- **Ethical documentation** – all ethical documentation, e.g. call for participants, participant information sheet, consent form, risk assessment, had to be changed to reflect the move to online workshops.
- **Yarn palette** – in place of in person workshops, where the yarn palette and workbooks would have been at hand, by moving online I had to plan and prepare individual packs to send each participant via postal services, incurring additional time delays and expenditure.
- **Postage delays** – as knitting materials and completed participant work was sent via second class mail, I had to rely on the participants' ability to get to the post office to send their knitting and workbooks back to me, and work around delays within the postal service incurred as a consequence of COVID-19 restrictions.

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[6] Link to the Knitting History Forum website: http://knittinghistory.co.uk
[7] Link to the UK Hand Knitting Association website: https://www.ukhandknitting.com/

In summary, owing to the extra time involved in redesigning the participant study and all the details listed above, I finished the participant study in June 2022. If COVID-19 had not been a factor, in theory I would have completed this aspect of the research in September 2021, 9 months earlier. COVID-19 had a significant impact on the timeframe of the research, particularly on the development and implementation of the participant study.

This research was conducted at a very specific point in time that happened to coincide with the COVID-19 pandemic. There is no doubt that COVID-19 and the government initiated lockdowns had an impact on each of the study participants' wellbeing and day-to-day experiences, including my own as Participant 12. As circumstances changed and lockdowns eased or were reinstated, we also faced individual or family situations related to COVID-19 and/or lockdown restrictions. Such restrictions affected our lives and emotions as recorded in the DKJs. Participants' experiences of COVID-19 and its emotional impact are therefore considered throughout the discussion of the participants' journeys (Chapter 5) and the themes (Chapters 6, 7 and 8).

2

Literature Review:
Wellbeing and Creativity

As stated in the introduction (Section 1.8), the aim of this research was to explore the impact of the KnitWell proposition – the generation of a DKJ.

The focus of Section 2.1 is on academic literature relating to wellbeing. Initially, I explore the two foundational pillars of wellbeing: eudaimonism and hedonism. Subsequently, I explore theories that have emerged from the investigation into elements of eudaimonic and hedonic wellbeing. Finally, I outline the definition of wellbeing that was adopted in the development of this research into KnitWell.

Sections 2.2 and 2.3 investigate creativity for wellbeing, beginning with a definition of creativity. The focus then shifts to wellbeing more specifically, and the creative endeavours that have been recorded to promote positive wellbeing, such as writing, craft, and knitting.

The final section (2.4) of this chapter explores creative outlets that are used as a tool for recording specific events: some explore data visualisation for wellbeing, whilst others are more focused on events happening at specific times, such as keeping a temperature diary, and as such are not a tool for recording wellbeing. The purpose of this section is to highlight how KnitWell as a proposition (Section 1.6) sits apart from existing projects in knitting for wellbeing as a proposition for supporting wellbeing.

2.1 WELLBEING

The OED defines wellbeing as "the state of being or doing well in life; happy, healthy, or prosperous condition; moral or physical welfare (of a person or community)" (OED, n.d.). Yet, the OED definition of wellbeing is not substantial enough as the basis of this research; more exploration is needed, especially as it is common in research for there to be a number of definitions for a specific concept.

The two terms that are most frequently adopted when discussing wellbeing, and that I specifically focus on in this thesis, are 'hedonic' and 'eudaimonic'; these are established from different assessments of human nature (Deci & Ryan, 2008). The contrast between the two states is clear: hedonic wellbeing focuses on maximising emotions (Disabato et

al., 2016), whereas eudaimonic wellbeing is focused on a sense of meaning, and self-realisation (Ryan et al., 2001).

2.1.1 HEDONIC WELLBEING AND EMOTIONS

Gregory (2015, p. 113) suggests that hedonic wellbeing is currently one of the most influential theories of wellbeing, and continues to state that:

> hedonism is the view that wellbeing wholly depends on how you feel… it says that all and only positive experiences are good for you, and that all and only negative experiences are bad for you.

Furthermore, hedonic wellbeing refers not only to emotional experiences but the frequency and intensity with which a person might feel them; these include joy, happiness, and worry, emotions that make an individual's life pleasant or unpleasant (Kahneman & Deaton, 2010). Therefore, for someone seeking to improve their wellbeing, it is important to focus on the presence of positive affect, minimising the presence of negative affect (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Positive and negative affects relate to the feelings surrounding pleasure and positive experience, and displeasure and negative experience, respectively (Miller, 2011).

Emotions and hedonic wellbeing are interlinked. Hedonic wellbeing is an 'in the moment reaction', complemented by the emotion one is feeling. To understand the relationship between emotions and wellbeing, one must also have a definition of emotions. Emotions not only mentally but physically affect us (Kratz et al., 2009). Distinct emotions, such as happy or scared, are a distinct type of positive or negative view on what they portray:

> It makes sense to think of fear as an evaluation of an object as dangerous, of amusement as an evaluation of an object as funny, and of shame as an evaluation of an object as degraded. This readily explains many aspects of the way we consider emotions in everyday life (Deonna et al., 2015, p. 195).

Emotions are an attitude that help a person to navigate the world, whether that is positively or negatively (Deonna et al., 2015). Overall, we have very little power or control over our emotions; they are an unconscious response to something that is happening around us (Averill, 2009).

By experiencing positive emotions, one can experience high levels of hedonic wellbeing and vice versa. The hedonism that focuses on the presence of positive affect and minimising the presence of negative affect (Deci & Ryan, 2008) is known as "broad hedonism" (Gregory, 2015, p. 115). In contrast, 'classic' hedonism focuses more on in the moment pleasure and pain scenarios. From the classic perspective, all and only pleasure is good, and all and only pain is bad (ibid.). One of the pitfalls of classic hedonism, that leads many to adopt broad hedonism in its place, is that an experience can be unpleasant but not cause pain, and this unpleasant experience can detract from one's wellbeing (ibid.).

Research into wellbeing in recent decades has predominantly been conducted from the hedonic approach and is often referred to as subjective wellbeing (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Subjective wellbeing has been defined as "a person's cognitive and affective evaluations of his or her life" (Diener et al., 2009, p. 63). In essence, subjective wellbeing means experiencing a "high level of positive affect, a low level of negative affect, and a high degree of satisfaction with one's life" (Deci & Ryan, 2008, p. 1). Therefore, if one is seen to endorse these three factors, then it is implicit that this individual has high subjective wellbeing (ibid.). It is argued that the hedonic approach is "commonly operationalised as subjective wellbeing" (Nelson-Coffey & Schmitt, 2022, p. 3).

2.1.2 EUDAIMONIC WELLBEING AND FLOURISHING

Eudaimonic wellbeing is defined in terms of the "degree to which a person is fully functioning" (Ryan et al., 2001): how one lives life in a full and satisfying way (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Besser-Jones (2015, p. 187) suggests that "eudaimonism holds that the best life is the life well lived, where a life well lived makes optimal use of one's capacities".

'Flourishing' has become a term used to capture the core of eudaimonic wellbeing (Besser-Jones, 2015; Keyes, 2002; Stone & Mackie, 2013). Besser-Jones (2015) argues that eudaimonic wellbeing is anchored through the lens of flourishing, which helps to differentiate eudaimonia from hedonic wellbeing. Flourishing relates to the ability to live a good life. Michalec et al. (2009) argue that a person who is flourishing is filled with emotional understanding and is able to function highly in all aspects of their lives. Human flourishing may present differently from person to person. Therefore, it is the flourishing of each individual person, as well as the individuality of flourishing, that is important to register (Rasmussen, 1999). To paraphrase Norton (1976, p. 13), if there is a person one is in awe of, be it their work, home life, or experiences, and one wants to achieve a life like this for oneself, to achieve this is not to copy and re-live that person's life, act for act, but rather to utilise the principles of what got them there. Those principles will be demonstrated by that person and will aid the overall enhancement of one's individual life (ibid.).

There are elements of eudaimonism that wholly distinguish it from hedonic wellbeing. Besser-Jones (2015, p. 187) maintains that these elements include:

> its effort to characterise an active state of wellbeing that, while experiential, requires agency and ongoing activity; and, second, its characterisation of wellbeing as objective, dependent upon features of one's life rather than one's attitudes towards one's life.

The standout factor of eudaimonism is that it describes wellbeing as an active process. It is not a passive state, but an active means of living well. Besser-Jones' (2015) metaphor of a child learning to read is valuable for understanding eudaimonic wellbeing. Before the ability to read, a child is read to. This is an enjoyable experience, holding both meaning and value to the child. Yet, it is a wholly different experience to that of the child engaging with learning to read for themselves. This is an active process which allows the child to experience the book in a different way. Reading a book has now become an activity for the child; it is no longer delivered to them. This theory of eudaimonic

wellbeing suggests that eudaimonism is achieved by this type of dynamic exercise of agency (ibid.).

2.1.3 HEDONIC AND EUDAIMONIC WELLBEING – A KNITTING PERSPECTIVE

Having defined hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing, we are able to consider how they can be applied to knitting. A hedonic perspective on knitting would be about the emotional experience at the time the knitting is being undertaken. For example, a knitter may feel joy and accomplishment at finishing a row of a complicated pattern repeat or finishing a knitting project. However, a dropped stitch is often seen as frustrating, sometimes stressful, and if the knitter is unable to pick the stitch up and re-work it, they may be faced with unravelling hours' worth of knitting in order to rectify it. Although causing immense frustration to the knitter, it does not cause pain. Therefore, in line with classic hedonism, it is not bad; however, the experience itself is bad for the knitter. Therefore, this delineation challenges classic hedonism, in support of the 'experiences' of broad hedonism (Gregory, 2015).

Utilising Besser-Jones' (2015) reading metaphor, we can explore the idea of eudaimonia in relation to knitting through the eyes of a knitter, before and after they learn to knit. Initially, before learning to hand knit, a person experienced hand knitting by a loved one knitting a garment for them. This can be seen as an enjoyable experience for the person receiving the knitting. They may have been involved in the process of helping to pick colours and be patiently waiting to receive the item; this has the potential to imbue the item with love, value and meaning for that person. However, this is a wholly different experience to the non-knitter now learning to knit. This person is now actively engaging in learning how to knit for themselves. By learning and taking part in the activity of knitting, this person experiences knitting in a different way. They now experience the feel of yarn running through their fingers, the weight of knitting moving from one needle to the other, the slow process of creation. Through this, knitting becomes an activity (or multiple activities). The knitted item is no longer given to that person, instead this person now takes ownership of the whole experience – showing active exercise of agency.

2.1.4 HEDONIC AND EUDAIMONIC WELLBEING

It might appear that hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing are two conflicting elements to wellbeing but, in reality, they complement each other. Eudaimonia offers a way of living that can work alongside other ideas of wellbeing, such as hedonism (Besser-Jones, 2015). When discussing hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing and drawing distinctions between them, something fundamental stands out:

> they play major complementary roles in life. Clarifying these roles can help us to explain why the hedonic–eudaimonic distinction so often appears centre stage and to appreciate the importance of having a balance of both pursuits (Huta, 2015, p. 164).

The differences and relationship between hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing are regularly under investigation. A 2020 study by Thorsteinsen and Vittersø (2020) supports observations that hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing are recognised as different concepts of wellbeing but share considerable overlap. Furthermore, Waterman (1993; 2008) states that an individual who experiences eudaimonic living will automatically also experience hedonic enjoyment. However, not all elements of hedonic enjoyment result from eudaimonic living (Deci & Ryan, 2008:3). This implies that hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing are interlinked and, therefore, will have considerable overlap in certain research (ibid.).

Alternative ways to look at the concept of combined hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing are through the lenses of flow and mental wellbeing. Flow is a state of mind where a person becomes fully immersed in a task, such as knitting. This immersion causes a person to be entirely present in the activity and allows for engagement and enjoyment through this focus. In the 1970s, Csikszentmihalyi first published work on his theory of optimal experience, 'flow'. Since then, flow has remained a key conceptual framework for people who work to understand the subjective experience of human beings and their daily life (Freire, 2011) and is often found in academic research regarding wellbeing. Each activity that Csikszentmihalyi deemed to have flow all featured the same factors. They provided a:

sense of discovery, a creative feeling of transporting the person into a new reality. It pushed the person to higher levels of performance and led to previously undreamed-of states of consciousness. In short, it transformed the self by making it more complex. In this growth of the self lies the key to flow activities (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008).

From this description of flow, it is evident that it shares many traits with hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing. To achieve flow, one is in an active state. There is agency and dynamic thinking within what is being achieved. It is not a passive, solitary state. Yet, once flow activities are achieved, there is the opportunity for hedonic pleasure; one may feel accomplished, or simply experience hedonic enjoyment. Similar to flow, mental wellbeing also combines elements of hedonic, in the moment pleasure/pain scenarios, with a eudaimonic active state of pursuing positive mental health. This is discussed in more depth in section 2.1.5.

2.1.5 MENTAL WELLBEING AND MINDFULNESS

Waterman (1993) suggests that when people report that they feel positively affected by an experience, or satisfied, it does not necessarily ring true that they are psychologically well (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Waterman, 1993). When discussing wellbeing, the subject of mental health often arises. There is a growing acknowledgement that there is more to mental health than the absence of mental disorder. The term 'mental wellbeing' better describes this understanding and focuses on combining both optimum functioning and feeling (Ryan et al., 2001). Therefore, it is fair to suggest that mental wellbeing - also known as positive mental health or flourishing - brings aspects of hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing together (Ryan et al., 2001; Warwick Medical School, n.d.). Increasingly, promoting mental wellbeing is considered to be an important factor to embrace within our lives.

There are a lot of avenues and activities that promote positive mental wellbeing, and the first thing a person in pursuit of this will encounter is mindfulness and mindfulness techniques. In the UK, the NHS now promotes mindfulness on their website with a

subheading, "how mindfulness helps mental wellbeing" (NHS, 2022). This guidance advocates paying attention to everything that is happening inside and outside of our bodies, from moment to moment. Furthermore, the NHS website states that it is easy to get caught up in our heads and stop noticing what is happening in the world around us. It is easy to "lose touch with the way our bodies are feeling… caught up in our thoughts without stopping to notice how those thoughts are driving our emotions and behaviour" (NHS, 2022).

Mindfulness advocates re-joining the body with the sensations they experience. To do this, a person needs to pay attention to their surroundings, the sights, smells, sounds and tastes of the present moment. A contextually appropriate example of this would be a knitter making a conscious effort to feel the yarn running through their fingertips when knitting. When an individual is more aware of their surroundings and living in the present moment, it can help them to understand the world and themselves better; this level of awareness allows them to experience things afresh, things that may have been taken for granted previously. In recent years there has been a lot of hype around mindful crafting, mindful knitting, or in general, having a mindful hobby within the news across the UK (Burton, 2022; Dance, 2022; Macey, 2021; Scott, 2022; Turner, 2022). This is discussed in more depth in the section on Creativity for Wellbeing (2.3).

2.1.6   KNITWELL AND MENTAL WELLBEING

The aim of this research (Section 1.8) is to investigate the KnitWell proposition. Specifically, it aims to test the potential benefits, opportunities, limitations and affordances that a DKJ offers and consider what impact the creation of a 'knitted journal' has on mental wellbeing. The KnitWell proposition (Section 1.3), including the integral DKJ, is intended to promote positive mental wellbeing and flourishing through the activity of daily knitting as an active, eudaimonic pursuit.

2.2   CREATIVITY

KnitWell is a creative practice. Figure 2.1 highlights the overlap between wellbeing and creativity that this chapter, and more widely this research, explores.
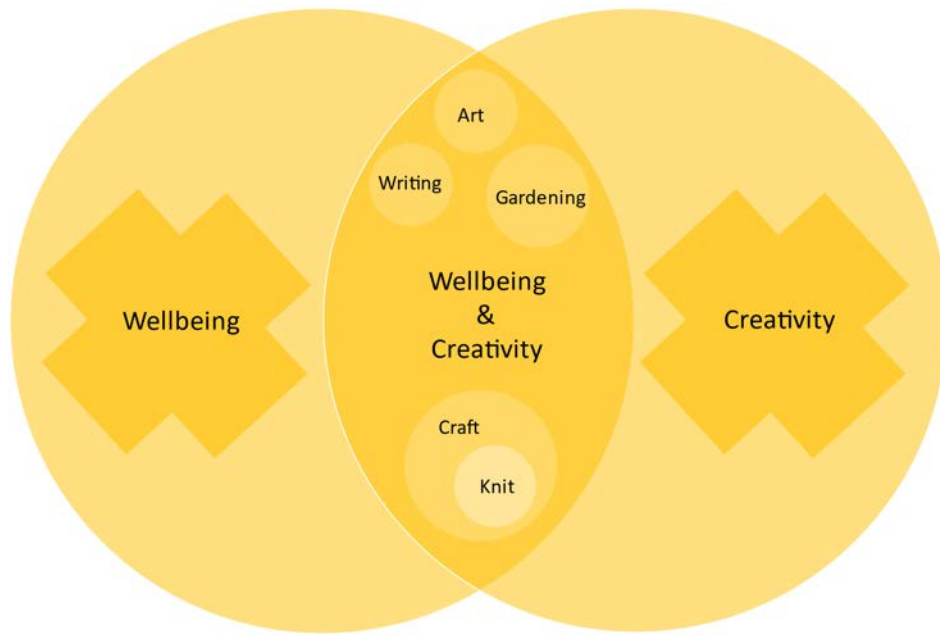
Figure 2.1 The intersection of wellbeing and creativity. These are creative practices under investigation for their impact on wellbeing within this section.

Runco and Jaeger (2012, p. 62) explain that there is a standard definition of creativity which necessitates both originality and effectiveness: effectiveness in this instance "may take the form of value". However, this definition of creativity only suggests the core principles of what it means to be creative. There are different theories on the meaning of originality within creativity, one in particular is known as Big C and Little C creativity and was originally developed by Csikszentmihalyi (2013). Big C creativity denotes major productions of significance, whereas Little C creativity refers to what can be found in "the everyday production of novel solutions" (Gilhooly & Gilhooly, 2021, p. 217). Creativity has been used to refer to items which show novelty; this refers to something new being created, regardless of whether it holds originality or effectiveness (Cropley, 2011, p. 359). In essence, the novelty described lends itself to Little C creativity. To exemplify this, imagine a knitter who has just made their first item. Before casting on, it was just a ball of yarn. They have since created something unique and novel to them. Then think of a designer whose work could be seen as changing perspectives on knitting, or who does something that has not been seen previously – an example would be Xandy Peters, who is unique in how they play with direction in their patterns (Peters, n.d.). Essentially, the knitter's activity involves 'ordinary' or Little C creativity, whereas the designer's activity involves elements of 'sublime' or Big C creativity (Cropley, 2011).

The KnitWell proposition that I have developed is evidence of my Big C creativity. However, the focus of this research is on the knitter and the benefits of daily knit journalling and therefore Little C creativity. Kaufman and Beghetto (2009) argue that recent research into Little C creativity has focused on increasing the knowledge and acceptance of everyday ideas of creativity. Everyday creativity refers to "the creative outcome (products, ideas, or behaviours) that involve day-to-day activities" (Richards, 2011, p. 468). These day-to-day activities may be undertaken at work or in personal leisure time (ibid.). The striking difference between the standard definition of creativity and everyday creativity is that everyday creativity involves meaningfulness to others (ibid.). Meaningfulness in this sense refers to the idea that what is being created has a purpose - it is not random (ibid.). Richards (2011, p. 468) states that "everyday creativity is not only universally available, but is essential to our very survival as humans, to our flexible accommodations to changing life conditions".

When faced with only three qualifying factors, originality, meaningfulness, and effectiveness, it is important to examine what everyday creativity can be applied to: following a knitting pattern, knitting a pair of socks from memory, organising the home/office/desk, planning holidays or a weekend away visiting family, to name a few. Those qualities of originality and meaningfulness, which encompass the nature of everyday creativity, connect with personal experience. More people may be familiar with this kind of everyday creativity through gardening, which is a pastime I also enjoy. Helping something grow and flourish has given me appreciation of the moment, of nature, and elements have left me feeling accomplished in the same way that Richards (2011, p. 468) states that the process of everyday creativity "offers a way of meeting life that can enrich the moment, bringing us greater awareness, openness, and vivid appreciation of the world and ourselves."

Silvia et al.'s (2014) study of everyday creativity in daily life supports Richards' (2007) theory that it is important for human potential. Richards (2007) believes that because commonplace creative activities are widespread, it opens an important discussion about human nature. Silvia et al.'s (2014, p. 187) study concludes that "the creative products

might seem frivolous, amateurish, or weird, but the creative process that yielded them appears important to positive psychological development."

2.3 CREATIVITY FOR WELLBEING

Having established the role of creativity in relation to this research, I will now examine differing elements of creativity for wellbeing. Sarah Desmarais (2016, p. 20) states that "any discussion of the social impacts of the arts raises questions concerning the nature of wellbeing and the determinants of human health and happiness." Consequently, any discussion encompassing the therapeutic benefits of creativity and crafts must include a mutual understanding of creativity and wellbeing (ibid.). The following four sub-sections discuss creative endeavours recorded to aid wellbeing: Writing (Section 2.3.1), Craft (Section 2.3.2), Knitting (Section 2.3.3), and Data Visualisation (Section 2.3.4).

2.3.1 WRITING FOR WELLBEING

The role of writing in maintaining wellbeing is well documented in literature; keeping a diary and the writing process are an established element of psychotherapeutic intervention and other support processes documented in studies of wellbeing, sports and health (Faccio et al., 2019; Milner, 2011; Pennebaker, 1997; Schaefer, 2008). Indeed, as Pennebaker (1997) notes, the writing process can allow individuals to engage with personal challenges, with the potential to produce extraordinary short- and long-term health benefits. Diary writing is often a daily exercise and therefore acts as a narration tool (Schaefer, 2008). Faccio et al.'s (2019) study focuses on the use of a diary as a narration tool in the psychotherapeutic process and its role in improving the patient's awareness of their emotions. It is evident within Faccios et al.'s (2019) study that the use of a diary allowed the diarist to share their thoughts more easily. Through the act of writing, it helped the diarist to clarify and develop an understanding of what they were feeling before verbalising it. Diaries give the diarist a sense of control. Through writing, the writer is able to relive past events and therefore better understand the emotional responses experienced (ibid.). Within Faccio et al.'s (2019) study there is evidence of Pennebaker's theory; their participant expressed a feeling of improved wellbeing, 'like a weight being lifted' after writing their experiences within a diary. This suggests the potential for creative diary keeping.

Marion Milner is a renowned British psychoanalyst who published a book entitled *A Life of One's Own* in 1934. This book encapsulated a seven-year study of what made her happy, focusing on free writing diary entries (Milner, 2011 [1934]). Free writing is a technique of continuous writing (Elbow, 1973); similar to mind mapping, but written in sentence form. It is usually undertaken for a predefined amount of time. If stuck on what to write during a free writing exercise, then it is important to keep writing: repeating the last sentence written until the next thought comes is a technique for keeping uninterrupted momentum (ibid.). It is the continuous movement that aids the collection and manifestation of the writer's thoughts. Milner (2011 [1934]) states that through keeping a diary, and giving herself the time to explore her thoughts, she was able to see what 'powers' were distorting and limiting her ability to perceive feelings. Milner describes the need to acknowledge and record how she feels so that she can create change.

Writing is a solitary act; it implies that there is a dialogue between self and the internal listener (Faccio et al., 2019). Expressive writing is similar to free writing, with the main contrast being that expressive writing relies upon personal reflection, often focusing on past trauma. It promotes "uninhibited articulation of thoughts and feelings" (Schaefer, 2008, p.88) and there is no emphasis on a finished, polished outcome. Rather, the physical movement of putting pen to paper releases pent up energy. Writing expressively changes an emotional experience into something tangible, something to feel and connect to (ibid. 2008). It is also believed to help emotions, through focusing on positive actions and experiences rather than the negative. There is evidence to suggest that, through the practice of writing, people may be able to change how they interact socially (Pennebaker, 1997). For example, after writing, the writer may be more willing to talk to others – be that friends, family or even strangers – than they were before the practice of writing (ibid.). Thus, expressive writing facilitates the development of social connections.

There are links between Milner's experience (2011 [1934]) and Pennebaker's (1997) theory, as she states that:

what helped me most was the growing conviction that silence might be the privilege of the strong, but it was certainly a danger to the weak. For the things I was prompted to keep silent about were nearly always the things I was ashamed of, which would have been far better aired and exposed to the cleansing winds of confession (Milner, 2011 [1934], p. 11).

Through diary writing, Milner (2011 [1934]) draws our attention to the difference between intellectual knowing and embodied knowing; stating that, by learning from our senses, it is possible to become aware of unexpected details of the self. Through keeping a diary and giving the diarist the time to explore thoughts, it is possible to see what 'powers' are distorting and limiting their own abilities to perceive feelings (Faccio et al., 2019; Milner, 2011 [1934]; Pennebaker, 1997). Diarists ought to be aware that they will uncover aspects of themselves that are unexpected.

It is important to note here that Milner's (2011 [1934]) diary entries were not the objectively analysed diaries of participants, but rather her own interpretations and as such are necessarily subjective. One specific limitation to Milner's approach, in terms of research, is the unavoidable subjectivity of autoethnographic research; this is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3, Section 3.3.5.

The qualities discussed above, which can be synoptically considered as 'embodied experience', are illustrated further in the work of Michael Pedersen, an award-winning Scottish poet. Pedersen (2022a) published his first book of narrative prose, *Boy Friends*, written during an artist residency only 6 weeks after the loss of someone dear to him. In the midst of his grief, Pedersen began to write, to reminisce on the good times he had with this person, on the stories that only he shared with them. After sharing this at a poetry reading in August 2022, Pedersen went on to say that writing these stories, putting pen to paper and letting his grief fill a blank page, was like "cauterising a deep, open wound" (Pedersen, 2022b); it helped him to process and respond to his grief in a positive way.

There are multiple evidence-based arguments and theories that support the benefits of journalling and free writing for wellbeing. Specifically, it appears to be the process of engaging with written language, as opposed to verbal articulation, that helps the writer to process emotional information (Pennebaker, 1997). It is evident that writing for wellbeing not only affects those with pre-existing trauma or ill health, but also supports and maintains individual wellbeing, as evidenced by Milner (2011 [1934]). The literature which examines writing for wellbeing offers examples of daily journalling exercises which I have utilised as a framework to consider a knitted equivalent in order to create the KnitWell proposition.

2.3.2 CRAFT FOR WELLBEING

This section discusses creative arts practice for wellbeing with a focus on craft. When discussing craft I refer to all craft practices, including woodwork, felting, silversmithing, fashion and textile practices. In recent years, there has been an increased focus on creative practice, as evidenced through Arts Council studies such as *Taking Part Focus On: Arts* (Arts Council England, 2016), and exhibitions such as *Unravel: The Power and Politics of Textiles in Art* (2024) and *Power of Making* (2012), the press and broadcasting (Crafts Council, 2020; Macey, 2021; BBC, 2023). There are also multiple in-depth studies exploring the definition of the term 'arts for health' and documenting the many benefits of creative practices across all stages of life (Clift & Camic, 2015; Daykin, 2019; Daykin et al., 2018; Fancourt, 2017; Staricoff & Clift, 2011; Staricoff, 2004). Creative practices can be recognised as an aid for positive mental health and wellbeing. The government also recognises this, for example the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Arts, Health and Wellbeing acknowledged that "the arts and health movement has grown to the point at which it is ready to take on the establishment, just when the establishment may be ready to listen and respond" (Howarth, 2018).

A need to embrace the therapeutic value of creative outlets has been expressed for many years. Natalie Rogers, a person-centred expressive arts therapist, suggests that we hold the ability to express our inner thoughts and feelings through creative outlets. 'Expressive art' is a term used to refer to what an individual produces when they use emotional and intuitive aspects of the self through multi-media art forms (Rogers, 1993).

For example, we can see evidence of how crafting mediums were engaged within treatments for physical as well as psychological traumas during World War One (Desmarais, 2016, p. 50). Crafts, as part of creative practice, hold:

> special therapeutic value as they afford occupation which combines the elements of play and recreation with work and accomplishment. They give a concrete return and provide a stimulus to mental activity and muscular exercise at the same time and afford an opportunity for creation and self-expression (Johnson. S., 1920, p. 69).

This highlights the benefits that crafts can provide an individual, supporting Rogers' statement that the process of creating is healing. The item being created is expressive and portrays important messages of the psyche to each individual maker, therefore it is the creative process as a whole that is unique and profoundly transformative (Rogers, 2013). Estrella (1997) states that our need as humans, as a community and as a general population, for any kind of engagement within a creative process is hugely undervalued within society. We need as many avenues and tools to express authenticity as we can find (ibid.). This need could be addressed through more holistic approaches to design, including co-design. Emotional Fit, which brought together an ageing population of women with designers, highlighted how both the physical and the emotional needs of these women and what they would like from their clothing could be resolved through co-design (Townsend and Sadkowska, 2020).

Knowledge generated in the area relating to creative practices to aid mental health and wellbeing suggests that craft has a positive impact on self-belief, self-worth, and wellbeing (Kearney et al., 2019). This supports Pöllänen's (2015) study which suggests that for those people who have experienced difficult times throughout their lives, their experience of craft making helped to contribute to a creative and sustaining "self-image that protected the ego or provided ego-uniting experiences." Self-expression through craft and creating can be embraced as a holistic process where the aim is to aid individuals' understanding of themselves (Pöllänen, 2011). Pöllänen (2015) goes further by stating that crafting can help organise thoughts and feelings, as the crafting process

allows the maker personal space, promotes self-expression, and aids the expansion of physical and cognitive skills. In her study, Pöllänen shares findings that self-reflection brought on by craft-related activities helped the maker understand themselves better as well as understand others and life (ibid.). Pöllänen's perception of craft and self-reflection supports and enhances Rogers' description of how the different factors of creativity are key to exploring self-expression.

> … colour, line and form speak to us. Art is a direct visceral experience. It does not need to go through the word mill. Colour, line, and form can reveal our energy levels, our feeling states, and our self-concepts (Rogers, 1993:35).

The development of the KnitWell proposition (defined in section 1.3) was focused on giving strength and a voice, particularly to those who perhaps feel unable to express themselves using standardised everyday vocabulary. My hope was that the ingenuity of knitting would provide them with a creative outlet for a more nuanced and sensitive expression. Kaufman (2018) supports this theory and states that "if creativity can continue to evolve into a mechanism or tool that can give voice and strength to others, then at least there is one positive direction that the world will be moving toward" (Kaufman, 2018, p. 130).

2.3.3   KNITTING FOR WELLBEING

In recent years, knitting particularly has been reported upon as an activity to alleviate anxiety and depression (Amoratis, 2022; Ritschel, 2018; Silver, 2021). One publication even suggests that knitting should be prescribed on the NHS (Knapton, 2018). There is evidence of knitters who take yarn and knitting needles to hospital wards to knit with patients to help with stroke rehabilitation and the stress of diagnoses, and to connect patients with their families outside the hospital (NHS Foundation Trust, 2020; NHS Trust, n.d., 2022)*. The process of knitting can induce a calm meditative state of mind, owing to knitting's effects on many different aspects of the brain, and it can be seen as something uncomplicated to learn (Corkhill et al., 2014).

Betsan Corkhill, an ex-physiotherapist, is the founder of Stitchlinks[8], and researcher into knitting for wellbeing. Since 2006, Corkhill has used therapeutic knitting techniques in the NHS, and, as a result, has gathered a wealth of knowledge on how knitting can be applied to complement medical treatments. As an organisation, Stitchlinks is collecting valuable information, and the work is teaching:

> valuable lessons in terms of the importance of creativity, rhythmic movement, social contact, rewarding occupation, and how simple things like texture and colour can raise mood (Stitchlinks, n.d.).

Corkhill et al. (2015, p. 39) states that "Knitting creates strong, resilient, flexible fabric. Therapeutic knitting seeks to create strong, resilient, flexible minds in the process." Corkhill's therapeutic knitting involves the simplest of knit stitches, garter stitch[9], and promotes the need to be aware of everything whilst knitting: the yarn, the colour, the texture, the movements and the space around you, to be in the moment. This chimes with the NHS (2022) definition of mindfulness (Section 2.1.5). The experience of therapeutic knitting has been recorded, if someone knits three or more times within a week, to increase their awareness of feeling relaxed and calm after knitting (Corkhill et al., 2015). Indeed, people who partake in craft practices have often been able to verify the long-term benefits of playing with threads or yarns (Vercillo in Kenning, 2015). This suggests that these craft practices have been beneficial to their practitioners throughout times of stress, anxiety and ill health (ibid.).

A research network entitled *Stitching Together* focuses on participatory textile making – including knitting practice – and examines the "quality of experience afforded by textile making" as individual practice but also community-based initiatives (Shercliff and Holroyd, 2020). There is a growing focus on community within textile making and in recent years there has been more research to support the benefits of leisure knitting in community groups and for the community (Cour, 2020; Mandell, 2021).

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[8] Stitchlinks is a Community Interest Company (CIC) which is a non-profit organisation (Stitchlinks, n.d.)
[9] See definition in the glossary, page xvii.

Social connectivity can, of course, happen online as well as in person. There are several forums online, for example, Ravelry[10], Instagram and Facebook, where it is possible to join knitting groups virtually. With this idea of sharing knitting online, the process and emotions involved offer an alternative to face-to-face communication; working and sharing online gives a freedom unlike other circumstances in daily life. This is evidenced in the way that knitting communities, formed online using social media, often share thoughts in a way that one might not be able to do in a face-to-face situation. Alison Mayne's doctoral research focused on the experience of joining and sharing knitting within online groups, and the impact it has on subjective wellbeing. Mayne (2016) suggests that interacting with these social groups elevates the maker through offering the opportunity to exercise agency in ways that would have not been possible as a lone maker. Similarly, Renehan et al. (in Kenning, 2015, p. 55) state:

> research shows that participation in economic, cultural, and spiritual activities, civic affairs, or, indeed, social activities related to craft making, such as meetings of craft groups, informal get-togethers, networks, community projects, and in some cases exhibitions, keeps individuals engaged, stimulated, and active and promotes a sense of social connectedness.

This supports Mayne's (2016, p. 11) theory that "sharing tangible making in knit and crochet groups online can support an improvised sense of agency and self-esteem." As confirmed by Corkhill et al. (2015), Mayne (2016) and Myzelev (2009), embracing knitting as a positive tool can support wellbeing as it has the ability to create friendships, foster new skills and to regain one's balance in life as, "if people feel good about themselves and are encouraged to be active, interested and social, they heal" (Corkhill et al., 2015).

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[10] Ravelry is a knitting website that sells knitting patterns and creates a feeling of community through their chat rooms and forums.

The KnitWell proposition sits between the two established modes of knitting within practice and research: an approach that is more creative and complex than the repetitive forming of identical basic stitches, such as Corkhill et al.'s (2015) therapeutic knitting, and wholly separate to the social benefits of sharing individual projects within community groups or online forums (Mayne, 2016). The KnitWell proposition – generating a DKJ through creative, free knitting practice – allows the knitter to document their emotional state with a tangible, tactile medium. The lens of creativity offers an alternative approach to investigating the potential benefits of knitting for wellbeing (see Chapter 1, Section 1.6).

2.3.4   DATA VISUALISATION FOR WELLBEING

In 2016, knitwear designer Jem Weston embraced the benefits of knitting and created a project entitled the *Moody Blanket*, (Figure 2.2). This involved knitting squares, corner-to-corner, and changing the colour each day to match the knitter's mood, thereby creating a patchwork blanket that visualised her mental health throughout the year. Weston's project aligns with Corkhill et al.'s (2015; 2013) therapeutic knitting techniques, embracing garter stitch to reach a meditative mind-state.

Figure 2.2 Example of the Moody Blanket (Weston, 2016)

Figure 2.3 Example of Visualising Mental Health: Bruises - The data we don't see (Lupi, 2018)

Weston's (2016) *Moody Blanket* is an example of investigating mental health through data visualisation. Similarly, *Bruises – The data we don't see*, by Giorgia Lupi (2018) is a study based on visualising a child's illness and the impact it has on their family over a four-month period, culminating in a musical score and illustrative data visualisation, shown in Figure 2.3. During this time a diary was kept, detailing any new and persistent ailments alongside how the mother was coping with the knowledge of her child's illness. Using a creative outlet in this manner gave the mother an opportunity to take back some semblance of control over the situation (Lupi, 2018). Diarising provided the mother with a chance to reflect on the clinical test results and her feelings on this. It also acted as a mechanism for taking stock and calming herself down: to stop letting her stress and fear over her daughter get in the way of being a good parent (ibid.). Lupi believes that data is never simple. Data holds meaning on multiple levels; it is never just about the numbers, but what is behind the numbers (ibid.). Hidden behind the first glance is data that is sometimes overlooked, data that requires new ways of representation to be fully captured and understood (ibid.).

The use of diarising and illustration within *Bruises – The data we don't see* (Lupi, 2018) shows the benefit of a creative outlet for documenting individual participants' lived, emotional reality: through personal engagement, the data generated is faithfully

representative of our human nature, as it includes empathy, imperfection, and human qualities.
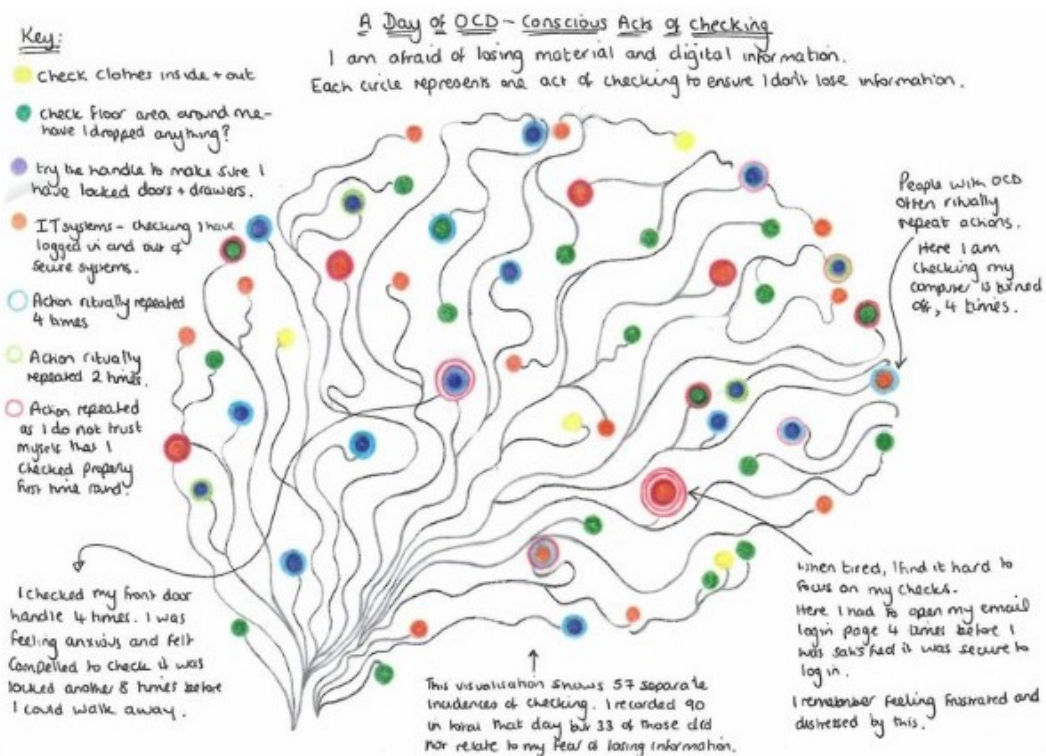
Figure 2.4 Example of Visualising Mental Health (Simpson, 2017)

Jill Simpson, inspired by another of Lupi's projects, *Dear Data* (Lupi & Posavec, 2016), took to pencil and paper to visualise her mental illness, as shown in Figure 2.4. In doing so, she was able to take a step back from her behaviour to see it as a symptom of her mental health disorder, rather than something that defines her (Simpson, 2017). Through this work Simpson poses this question: "Is it possible to visualise personal experiences of mental health problems in a way that is intelligible and meaningful to those who have never experienced them?"(Ibid). When an individual gives personal data such as this a tangible, visual image, it offers the audience an opportunity to connect and empathise with it on another level to text.

What is evident through Lupi's (2018) and Simpson's (2017) projects is that there is a time lapse between collecting the data and then visualising it. Further examples of visualising data through creative outlets are the long traditions of 'story cloths' of the Hmong people of Thailand (Peterson, 1988), the 'memory cloths' of South Africa (Van

Der Merwe, 2014; van der Merwe, 2017) and arpilleras of Latin America (Nickell, 2016). These cloths act as vessels for communication and understanding. For example, the story cloths of the Hmong people were created in refugee camps; they form a narrative of the artists' lives. Peterson (1988, p. 6) states that "story cloths are 'key texts' that enact concepts of historicity, cultural identification, intercultural communication and collective action." Furthermore, Van Der Merwe's (2014, p. 791) work discusses the importance of highlighting lost narratives; "the nature of the written word makes it difficult for groups without a written culture to challenge records, causing their memories to be disregarded." Memory and story cloths are visual representations of an individual, family, or cultural group; they involve "active participation of a community in documenting and making accessible the history of their particular group" (van der Merwe, 2017, p. 239). These cloths form a narrative visualisation of personal data, to be shared with and passed on to others, substantially beyond the time of the experience they document.

Aligning data and visualisation into one process develops scope for visual data generation, whereby the data itself is in fact visual. An example of this would be the German 'train delay' scarf, created to express the length of delays whilst commuting (Schultheis, 2019); the knitter knitted two rows a day, changing colour depending on the time delay. Grey signified a wait of less than five minutes, pink a wait between five and 30 minutes and red was any time over 30 minutes. Taking inspiration from the 'train delay' scarf, Canadian councillor, Sue Montgomery, knitted throughout council meetings, highlighting when men and women spoke (Ryder, 2019). Both knitters assigned attributes of the knitting in advance, thus both projects are generating data and visualising it in one sitting. Similarly, Lea Redmond has created projects to track an individual's year. For example, Sky Scarf, first published on Ravelry in 2011 and later featured in *Knitting Magazine* Issue 197 in 2019, calls for the knitter to knit two rows every day of what the sky looks like. It encourages the knitter to take a bit of time out from their day, and just look up; it asks the knitter to follow the seasons through their knitting and yarn choices, once again, generating data within a visualisation. This holds interesting potential to visually record data contemporaneously in knitting, whilst also taking a moment to experience the natural environment.

The focus of each of the data visualisations under discussion is the visual portrayal of data and how it can be processed by others; some are about portraying illness or mental health and others are more focused on sharing their experiences through cloth. Likewise, this research and assessment of KnitWell explores the potential for an individual to visually record their mental wellbeing, in the moment, through the practice of knitting. There are comparisons between the visual data generation knits described above and Weston's (2016) *Moody Blanket*, whereby they both utilise quite a prescriptive model of simple garter stitch. This method does not lend itself to permitting the knitter to express their emotions or offer the chance for such storytelling as they may want to share. This is where the KnitWell proposition differs; the fundamental elements of free knitting (see Chapter 1, Section 1.6) can be utilised by the knitter in order to visually express and record their emotions within their knitting.

2.4 CONCLUSION

To develop and strengthen the concept of KnitWell (defined in Section 1.6), a substantive understanding of the current literature was imperative. The review of the different concepts of wellbeing and creativity helped to develop a structured understanding of the definition of each that this research would adopt. The KnitWell proposition (Section 1.3), which includes the pursuit of daily knitting, can be described as an active, eudaimonic pursuit to improve wellbeing. Everyday creativity is argued to be important for human potential and the act of daily creativity is key for positive psychological growth (Richards, 2007; Silvia et al., 2014); this theory was fundamental to the working theory of creativity that I used within this research.

Each element discussed in this chapter – including the current literature on creative pursuits for wellbeing such as writing, craft, knitting and visualisation – influenced the development of the KnitWell proposition. Collectively they also highlighted a gap in knowledge, emphasising the potential to examine a new facet of knitting for wellbeing: free knitting (Section 1.6). Wholly different to the approaches typically associated with knitting for wellbeing within academia (see Section 2.3.3), free knitting – influenced by the literature on free writing – does not conform to the linear format of conventional

knitting (see Section 1.2). Free knitting is an open-ended, freeform, unplanned approach and reflects the creative choices the knitter can make within knitting, for example yarn, colour, gauge and stitch.

3   Methodology

This chapter explains the methods I put in place to explore and analyse the KnitWell proposition and its impacts. It is organised into six sections: Theoretical Framework (Section 3.1), Research Questions (Section 3.2), Research Methods (Section 3.3), Research Design (Section 3.4), Ethics (Section 3.5), Data Collection and Analysis (Section 3.6). To begin, I outline the paradigm of inquiry that this research adheres to; in short, a constructionist epistemological framework with a phenomenological ontology. I then reiterate my research questions and discuss each of the methods I utilised and their place within the research. The methods include practice-based research, diary method, wellbeing scales, material elicitation interviews, and autoethnographic practice.

The research design is separated into two parts; the first discusses the participant study. The participant research design discusses all the elements that encompassed participant engagement, for example, planning, participant recruitment, workshops, and the daily knit journalling process. The second part of the research design focuses on my autoethnographic practice.

The development of my methodology builds on a legacy of work by researchers in FTRC at NTU who have created innovative participatory research methodologies with diverse groups of users, with the crafting of textiles as the catalyst, (Cooke, 2024; Shawgi, 2023; Shercliff and Holroyd, 2020; Townsend and Sadkowska, 2020).

3.1 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: CONSTRUCTIONISM

This study follows Willig's (1999, p. 37) definition of constructionism, which is established on the understanding that "research practice creates rather than reveals evidence." Braun and Clarke (2021) state that constructionism is not about discovering but creating 'something' with tools and techniques, like an artist or musician. However, that 'something' – be that output or product – has to be "bounded and has to 'make sense' within existing systems of meaning" (ibid., 2021, p. 179). Braun and Clarke (2021, p.180) also state that sometimes constructionism is described as "bringing realities into being".

This qualitative, practice-based, participatory research follows a constructionist epistemological framework, adopting a phenomenological ontology and a bricolage of methods (Kara, 2017, p. 48; Saldaña, 2015, p. 73). A phenomenological ontology focuses on the lived experiences of the participants of the study (Byrne, 2001). When focusing on data generation, not only does using a bricolage of methods complement the complexity and depth of the research, but it also adds rigour, breadth and creativity (Kara, 2017). Furthermore, it allows for the limitations of one method to be counteracted by another (Bartlett & Milligan, 2015; Bijoux & Myers, 2006; Hyers, 2018), providing a level of triangulation in the analysis. Within this methodology, I have utilised the diary method, material elicitation interviews and wellbeing scales; each have their own specific advantages, strengthened when working in combination and providing a unique avenue for data generation.

3.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The questions that this research investigates are as follows:

RQ1: How can various aspects of a knitted structure (e.g. yarn, colour and texture, stitch, gauge and shape) be used to record and communicate information about an individual's emotional state?

RQ2: What opportunities and limitations can a knitted journal (in which free knitting is used to record an individual's daily emotional state) offer in terms of creative self-expression?

RQ3: Explore the manner in which a knitted journal may generate benefits in terms of mental wellbeing.

3.3 RESEARCH METHODS

In the following sections, I will explain the methods that have been essential to the research into the KnitWell proposition, encompassing practice-based research, the diary method, the Daily Wellness Knit Scale (DWKS), material elicitation interviews and autoethnography. Here, I discuss the methods I developed to study KnitWell in use.

There are two strands to these methods; the first is my own knitting practice, and the second involved 11 participants who took part in three iterative phases of activity, illustrated in **Figure 3.1**. Each of these phases required participants to create a daily knitted journal (DKJ) for a period of one month (28 days); Figure 3.2 provides an example of a DKJ knitted in Phase 1. In Phase 2 there was an added element of a written diary and in Phase 3, participants had the option of keeping a written diary alongside their DKJ.
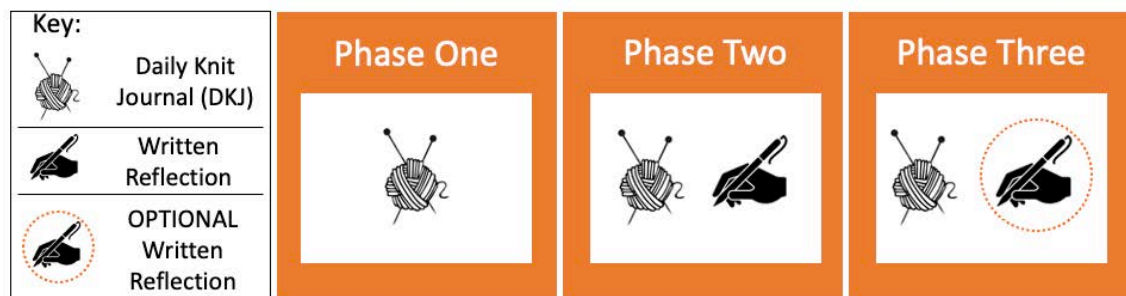
Figure 3.1 Diagram of the three phases of the participant study and the activities undertaken.

Figure 3.2 Progression of a DKJ: Phase 1, Participant 2, from left to right, 7-days, 14-days, 28-days, the DKJ as a whole.

All methods utilised within this research into the KnitWell proposition are illustrated in **Figure 3.3**.
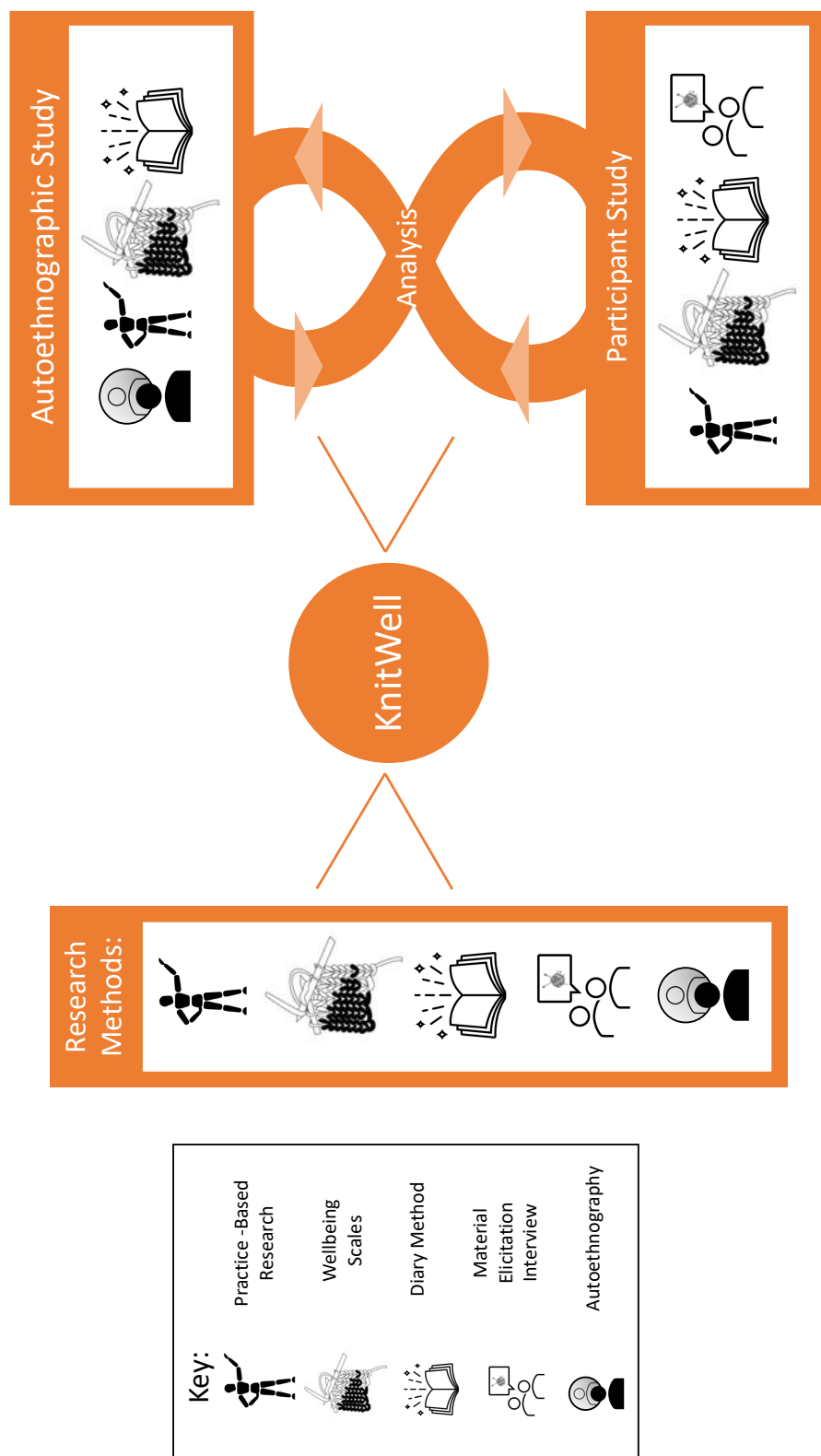
Figure 3.3 This diagram shows the research methods that encompass the research into KnitWell and how they were utilised within the Autoethnographic and Participant Study.

3.3.1 PRACTICE-BASED RESEARCH

Practice-based research is defined as a:

> principled approach to research by means of practice in which the research and the practice operate as interdependent and complementary processes leading to new and original forms of knowledge (Candy et al., 2021, p. 27).

I utilise my own and my participants' creative knitting practice as research. Creative practice is increasingly recognised as a form of research in itself; one that enables enquiry and allows the researcher to experience things like "play, intuition, serendipity, imagination and the unexpected as resources for making sense" (Kara, 2020, p.29). Recent research into creative practice suggests that artists are able to conduct research whilst in the process of creating art. It supports the concept of the resulting piece of art being a valid research outcome, through embodying and communicating knowledge produced through and of its creation (ibid.).

Kara (2020, p. 30) states that "everyone has the right to artistic activity, which is usefully experimental, and promotes creative thought". This supports the observation that art-based methods "have been used by a wide variety of researchers and professionals to assist people in expressing feelings and thoughts that … are difficult to articulate in words" (Blodgett et al., 2013, p. 313).

3.3.2 DIARY METHOD

I have established the proposition of KnitWell as a process of keeping a knitted diary (Section 1.6), and that I am investigating the use of this style of diary as a creative wellbeing process (Section 1.8). I have also discussed the use of the diary method in studies of wellbeing, sports, and health (Section 2.3.1).

The diary method is a qualitative research method which describes how, when and under what circumstances to use a diary, within a research context. Diaries allow insight into a person's lived experiences, as they occur without fear of recall bias – when participants do not recall previous experiences accurately or omit important details –

and allow for an extended period of data generation (Bartlett & Milligan, 2015; Bolger et al., 2003). There are downfalls to the diary method for participants. The principal issue is that ultimately it is a lot to ask participants to dedicate a specific amount of their time to a task as part of the study, a task which also requires a readiness to share personal details and to do so following specific guidelines (Kenten, 2010). These issues can be mitigated by participants appreciating the scope and purpose of the study, and the benefits the participants of that study may receive through taking part.

Solicited Diaries

A solicited diary involves the researcher requesting participants to record a diary within a specific subject area (Bartlett & Milligan, 2015). Solicited diaries are for external consumption; they are created for a purpose, and deemed co-constructed, as the researcher is asking the participant to reflect on certain aspects of their lives that they may not have thought about in that way before (Bartlett & Milligan, 2015). When using the diary method within a research setting, researchers can draw on the rich data from the participant's life and experience, based on what the participant discloses (ibid.). A solicited diary can provide a valuable tool for gathering detailed, chronological information focused on the behaviours, emotions and many more aspects of participants' lives over a defined period of time (Alaszewski, 2006; Bartlett & Milligan, 2015). As such, I can clearly state that I utilised a solicited diary method within this research and the defined period of time was 28 days.

The ability to develop diverse diary forms (in the case of KnitWell, a knitted diary) evidences the flexibility of this method for collecting numerous sources of data (Bartlett & Milligan, 2015). Solicited diaries can be used as a stand-alone, qualitative method, although they are most regularly used alongside other methods within a multi-method methodology (ibid.). A drawback to solicited diaries is that participants are creating the diary because they have been asked to; it is not completely self-initiated. They are aware that they are required to participate daily for a set period, and this could become restrictive.

Structured / Semi-structured / Unstructured Diaries

A structured diary is generally focused on quantitative data collection (Bartlett & Milligan, 2015). In comparison, a semi- or unstructured diary is designed to let the diarist take control. Semi- or unstructured diaries may be loosely structured around a set of themes developed by the researcher; however, the narrative is predominantly the diarist's (ibid.). This style of diary lends itself to gaining a more profound understanding of the diarist's experiences, thoughts, and emotions on specific events throughout the designated period (ibid.). Ultimately, this style of diary is more personal, and creates space for the diarist to record what they want and what is important to them. In some cases this allows for visual data to support written accounts (ibid.).

The DKJ and my autoethnogprahic KJs are unstructured diaries in a non-written form. A semi-structured written diary was added in Phase 2; participants were asked to complete this alongside their knitting to see how it affected the process, and consider if it made a difference to how emotions were recorded within the DKJ. The phases of the participant study are illustrated in Figure 3.1.

Diary Diary-Interview Method

Diaries are commonly applied in conjunction with interviews (Bartlett & Milligan, 2015), as participants are given the chance to discuss their diary entries and the researcher is then able to probe further about specific entries (ibid.). In support of this, Kenten (2010) states that the diary interview should be seen as a fundamental aspect of using a solicited diary as a research method. Whilst diary keeping, the diarist may fail to grasp what they are trying to articulate, they may struggle with a thought process and trail off, and therefore, there is an allusion to the presence or absence of content within the diary; by utilising a diary interview, this absence of content may be rectified (ibid.).

The use of diaries as a memory aid (Bartlett & Milligan, 2015) is another example of how a creative diary can be used, especially when triangulated with material elicitation interviews, as in this research methodology. The Diary Diary-Interview method was introduced by Zimmerman & Wieder in 1977, suggesting that the diary was used as an

observational log. Its purpose was to aid a more intensive interview approach (Zimmerman & Lawrence, 1977). Corti (1993, p. 1) supports this, stating that:

> the diary diary-interview method where the diary keeping period is followed by an interview asking detailed questions about the diary entries is considered to be one of the most reliable methods of obtaining information.

This research into KnitWell uses the diary method within a mixed methodology. Through utilising diary-interview and material elicitation methods alongside the diary method, it reflects Corti's (1993) statement above. The main difference between this research's use of diary method and typical written diary studies (Faccio et al., 2019; Kenten, 2010; Meth, 2003; Milligan et al., 2005) is that, because knitting is the medium of recording, the diary, when complete, can only be read and decoded by the knitter-diarist; the inclusion of a diary-interview is therefore imperative. Within this research, the diary-interview was a material elicitation interview, discussed further in Section 3.3.3.

3.3.3 MATERIAL ELICITATION INTERVIEWS

At the end of each monthly phase of knitting, illustrated in Figure 3.1, I conducted a material elicitation interview, based on the model of the photo elicitation interview. Padgett et al. (2013) state that the photo elicitation interview offers an opportunity to capture lived experiences and perceptions visually as opposed to verbal-only research methods. Collier and Collier (1986) are recognised as early advocates of the photo elicitation method (Brett, 2021). Photo elicitation interviews are described as a method where photographs, generated by the participant, are present at an interview and discussed by the participant and the interviewer (Collier and Collier, 1986; Padgett et al., 2013; Brett, 2021). This process allows the participant to express the reasons why specific photographs are present and acts as a springboard to explore further discussion on issues that arise from discussing the photographs (Brett, 2021).

Richard & Lahman (2015) argue that the interview methods surrounding photo elicitation create an:

inherent dimension of empowerment through choice and justification; that is, participants made their own photo choices and naturally explained their thought processes or reasoning behind their choices, resulting in clarification of their thoughts and ideas.

The debate surrounding photo elicitation interviews indicates that through discussing chosen imagery, the invisible becomes visible; the visual representation may evoke emotions and memories that the interview setting is able to glean from the participant via verbalisation of specific choices and reasoning (Padgett et al., 2013).

Figure 3.4 DKJ image used in the material elicitation interview for Participant 3, Phase 2.

The rationale behind the photo elicitation interview highlighted the need to develop a material elicitation interview method within this project, as it was imperative for participants to have the opportunity to voice their personal choices about their DKJs. A material elicitation interview was incorporated into each phase of knitting activity. These one-to-one interviews took place via online video conferencing software and each participant was shown an image of their DKJ (Figure 3.4 provides an example). Each material elicitation interview took place in the month following completion of the DKJ; this allowed for a little time to pass between knitting on the DKJ and reflecting on it. Each DKJ is personal to the knitter. The material elicitation interviews allowed insight into elements the participants were willing to disclose, including on choices that were conscious or memorable and on elements or specific days of their DKJ.

The material elicitation interview also allowed me the chance to gather and record the opportunities and limitations between a DKJ (Phase 1) and a DKJ with written reflection (Phase 2), (illustrated in Figure 3.1). The material elicitation interview is a key element of the research methodology and underpins the themes discussed in Chapters 6, 7 and 8.

3.3.4 WELLBEING SCALES

One of the methods I used to shed light on the impact of the KnitWell proposition was wellbeing scales. Several scales are used to measure wellbeing, and the method of measurement selected is dependent on the area of research under investigation. For example, people who investigate hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing will each use their own methods of measurement. In this section I begin by considering the process of selecting a scale to measure the overall impact that taking part in this research has on mental wellbeing. The discussion then moves on to the development of the Daily Wellness Knit Scale (DWKS), a wellbeing scale I created to measure individual emotions at the time of knitting. To best address the different qualitative and quantitative aspects of wellbeing encompassed within this research approach, I have chosen to draw on three scales: the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (Warwick Medical School, 2021), the Experience Sampling Method (Larson & Csikszentmihalyi, 1992), and the Day Reconstruction Method (Christodoulou et al., 2014).

The majority of wellbeing scales are presented in the form of a Likert scale (Diener et al., 1985). A Likert scale measures how participants feel about certain items of discussion, ranging from 'strongly dislike' to 'strongly like' (ibid.). As with many methods of measuring data, there are concerns surrounding the Likert scale's interpretation of language, predominantly within the regular- and reverse-keyed items which measure a statement (Kam, 2020). For example, if the statement for the day is, 'today I have felt happy', the options on a Likert scale range from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. An issue arises when a participant feels neither happy or unhappy, and there might be confusion as to how to fill out the scale, which may lead to flawed responses. Nevertheless, the Likert scale is frequently used because it is universal and unintrusive to participants (LaMarca, 2011).

The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS)
The WEMWBS is an example of a Likert scale which utilises positively worded items; it focuses on emotions, and was developed to enable monitoring of an individual's mental wellbeing. As discussed in Chapter 2 (Section 2.1.5), mental wellbeing focuses on combining both optimum functioning and feeling (Ryan et al., 2001).

The development of WEMWBS was aimed at aiding the "evaluation of projects, programmes and policies which aim to improve mental wellbeing" (Warwick Medical School, 2021). WEMWBS has two iterations; the original 14-item scale (see Figure 3.5), and a short, seven-item scale. The original 14-item WEMWBS provides a "fuller picture of mental wellbeing with a better balance of feeling and functioning items than the 7-item scale WEMWBS" (ibid.). The 14-item WEMWBS is often preferred in situations where it is valuable for participants to receive a clear report of their mental wellbeing (ibid.). However, both WEMWBS scales are "considered to be robust and valid when applied in population, community, educational, occupational and clinical settings" (ibid.). Which version of the WEMWBS is used is dependent on the aims of the study.

Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS)

Below are some statements about feelings and thoughts.

Please select the answer that best describes your experience of each over the last 2 weeks.

	None of the Time	Rarely	Some of the Time	Often	All of the Time
I've been feeling optimistic about the future	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling useful	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling relaxed	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling interested in other people	1	2	3	4	5
I've had energy to spare	1	2	3	4	5
I've been dealing with problems well	1	2	3	4	5
I've been thinking clearly	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling good about myself	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling close to other people	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling confident	1	2	3	4	5
I've been able to make up my own mind about things	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling loved	1	2	3	4	5
I've been interested in new things	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling cheerful	1	2	3	4	5

Figure 3.5 The 14-item WEMWBS. Highlighted in orange are the statements used within the 7-part WEMWBS.

Since the launch in 2007, WEMWBS has been widely used within a range of areas including public health, workplaces, and clinical settings (Warwick Medical School, 2021). It is argued that one of the reasons for its success is because WEMWBS covers key areas relating to psychological functioning. For example, "optimism, autonomy, agency, curiosity, clarity of thought and positive relationships; and positive affect (feelings): confidence, feeling relaxed, cheerful, having the energy to spare" (ibid.). Another strength of WEMWBS is its "ability to capture both the eudaimonic (people's

functioning, social relationships, sense of purpose) and the hedonic perspectives on wellbeing (e.g. feelings of happiness)" (Fat et al., 2017), as discussed further in Chapter 2, Section 2.1. WEMWBS is designed to be used on a repeated basis at least four weeks apart. I utilised the 14-item scale to measure participants' wellbeing at the start and end of each knitting month (see Section 3.4), making it possible to indicate if there was a change in their overall mental wellbeing during the period of the DKJ.

Experience Sampling Method (ESM) and Day Reconstruction Method (DRM)

As part of the research into the KnitWell proposition, I wanted to identify a way of measuring wellbeing that could sit alongside the DKJ, enabling insights into the emotions of the knitter at the time of knitting. In order to develop my own, context appropriate, method for measuring wellbeing, I investigated two methods: firstly, ESM and secondly, DRM.

ESM investigates a participant's wellbeing through a daily diary keeping method, obtaining self-reports for a "representative sample of moments in people's lives" (Larson & Csikszentmihalyi, 1992, p. 22). ESM's self-reports are based on random scheduling through electronic prompts which requires the individual to stop what they are doing and fulfil a "self-report questionnaire about [an individual's] experience at that moment in time" (ibid., p. 23). In this way, ESM provides a snapshot based on an objective situation and subjective state (ibid.). The objective situation is a record, gathered through open-ended questions, of the facts of that moment: who the subject is, what they were doing and where they were at the time of the reminder. Conversely, there is then probing to understand the individual's thoughts and emotions at that moment in time - their subjective state – and this is generally presented through a Likert scale (ibid.). For example, an individual may receive a reminder and record that they are outside in the sunshine – their objective situation – and then grade their emotions of that experience at that specific time – their subjective state.

There are drawbacks to this method, which include being demanding of a participant's time and reliance on participants to fulfil the questionnaire at the time of the random electronic reminder. However, there are rich data generation opportunities, with

mental state, quality of life and social networks within the snapshot of time being recorded. With the development of technology, apps have been released to help track ESM results; one example is PsyMate (Maastricht University et al., n.d.). PsyMate invites consumers to log on every day and report on a series of questions, which will determine how they are feeling at a specific time. The app will buzz at different times throughout the day in order to request fresh sets of data from the consumer.

In contrast to the random scheduling of ESM, DRM is less intrusive on a participant's life and time, as it only requires a one-off reflection in a day rather than multiple interruptions like ESM. DRM relies on instructions to recover lived experiences, recollections, from the previous day, therefore providing comprehensive coverage (Christodoulou et al., 2014, p. 907). Once details are recovered, DRM participants are asked to describe each item listed and the emotions experienced at the time (ibid.). This form of elicitation, whilst discussing the previous day, may aid participants to recall specific memories and reduce errors in recollection (ibid.).

It is rare to see comparisons of ESM or DRM alongside the use of a Likert-based WEMWBS scale. However, Christodoulou et al. (2014) compared DRM with a Hybrid Short Form (HSF) questionnaire in order to provide validation for a shorter (Likert-based) assessment. The HSF questionnaire in that instance was completed orally over the telephone and participants were asked to make a note of their responses. Both ESM and DRM are time consuming and, therefore, Christodoulou et al. (2014) compared DRM against an HSF questionnaire to measure the relationship between use of time and validity of results. Their findings state that there was considerable overlap between an HSF questionnaire and DRM in terms of usability and effectiveness (ibid.).

ESM and DRM actively focus on mental wellbeing. They make participants think and capture their thoughts and emotions. In order to develop this research, I created the Daily Wellness Knit Scale (DWKS), which is discussed in the next section. In order to create the DWKS I adopted some of the principles of ESM as a measure for wellbeing and utilised some aspects of its system. However, I did not implement the random testing. Instead, I asked participants to reflect on their day as in the DRM approach.

Daily Wellness Knit Scale (DWKS)

I created a new wellbeing scale for use in this research: the DWKS, based on a Likert scale, whereby each statement has five points ranging between 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. I invited participants to contemplate their emotions from the day and to complete the DWKS alongside their knitting each day.

This research into KnitWell measures elements of both eudaimonic and hedonic wellbeing (Section 2.1). The daily knitting of the DKJ is an active eudaimonic pursuit. Yet, through the DWKS, I am also measuring hedonic wellbeing and emotions at the time of knitting. Similar to ESM, the DWKS creates a consistent, daily record. Additionally, the DWKS allows for a quantitative, standard measure which complements the highly subjective knitting activity.

Figure 3.6 DWKS, encompassing elements of ESM and WEMWBS. Also shown is how it can be completed.

The DWKS employs elements of WEMWBS, ESM and DRM to gather an in-depth understanding of the participant's emotional state. The DWKS (see Figure 3.6) is similar to ESM, as participants were asked where they were and what time they were knitting each day. I used one-word statements, written above the scale 'Today I have felt…', for participants to correlate with one of seven statements: happy, lonely, relaxed, anxious, useful, insecure, and optimistic. The adjectives were derived from both ESM and WEMWBS and are words that participants could easily understand and relate to.

The similarities between the DWKS and DRM are most present in Phase 2 (see Figure 3.1), when participants were asked to reflect on how they felt each day through written reflection. The knitting activity itself can be compared to a measure of ESM because it is subjective and variable, with specific meanings not being known before starting the activity but emerging through the process of doing.

A difference between the design of WEMWBS and DWKS is how visual the latter scale is. My approach draws on projects encompassing more creative, visual methods for measuring wellbeing, such as the *Internet of Soft Things*, where Kettley (2016) created a starfish wellbeing scale (see Figure 3.7). The DWKS is more visual than the starfish: through shading in each knit stitch, the participant is creating a visual log where they can see the changes to their wellbeing more clearly, day to day, while creating a visual pattern through knit stitches.
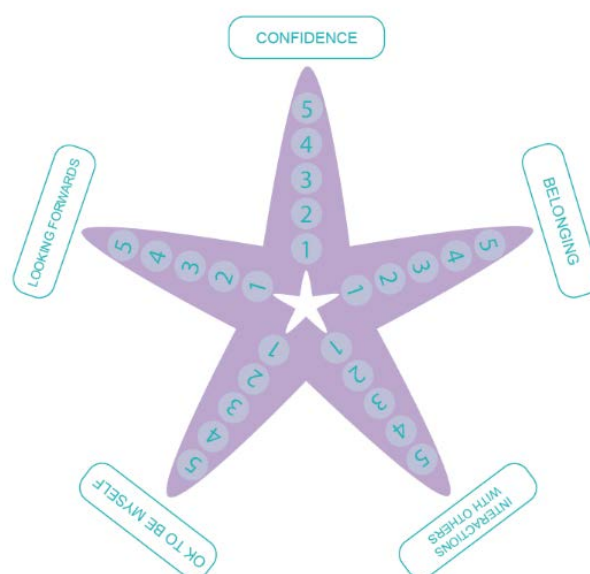
Figure 3.7 An Internet of Soft Things, Starfish Wellbeing Scale (IOST, 2015).

According to Le (2014), the use of visualisations within wellness assessment gives people a better understanding of their health. Le's (2014) study demonstrates how older adults found value in visualising their wellness, to generate conversations with their healthcare provider, and as a way of tracking their long-term health. Rather than facts and figures,

visualisations work as an aid to understand the data (ibid.) (see Section 2.3.4), thus using the DWKS in this manner could act as a strategy for measuring wellbeing.

In summary, the DWKS documents emotional state in a quick, quantitative, and easy way. There are many benefits to this, including the creation of a consistent record of participants' daily emotional state. The DWKS is consistent in its appearance and also in what it asks, compared to knitting which can be inconsistent and change daily. Two participants may fill the scale in in the same way, yet their knitting may be completely different. The DWKS also acted as a prompt for me as interviewer and/or the participant within the material elicitation interview, and it provided a standard against which to compare the participants' responses.

3.3.5   AUTOETHNOGRAPHY

Each of the methods discussed so far are utilised in both the participant and autoethnographic study. This section discusses autoethnographic practice, a method utilised only in my personal practice.

Carolyn Ellis (2015) was the first ethnographic researcher to take the hyphen out of autoethnography, recognising it as its own entity. Since the 1990s, Ellis has moved from defending autoethnography as a research method to watching it develop and witness its uses within a number of research disciplines:

> autoethnography is not simply a way of knowing about the world; it has become a way of being in the world, one that requires living consciously, emotionally, and reflexively. It asks that we not only examine our lives but also consider how and why we think, act, and feel as we do (Ellis, 2015, p. 10).

Autoethnography holds huge creative potential (Kara, 2015, 2020), not just for creative writing but also more broadly within the arts. The concept of exploring lived experiences through creative exploration lends itself to my autoethnographic practice within this research. I am a skilled knitwear practitioner and utilised these skills to explore the focus of the research, spending time and effort and applying my skillset to accomplish this in

different ways. The physical knitting is my autoethnographic enquiry; the written reflections act as a narrative tool. The different elements of my autoethnographic practice are discussed further in Section 3.4.2.

A difference between this research and the research typically undertaken by autoethnographers is that the latter tend to focus on particular and powerful experiences, such as major life events (for example, bereavement, mental health, and terminal illness) and then link these events with their cultural location and identity (Kara, 2020). This research focused on day-to-day experiences; if something 'major' happened during that time then it was included, but it was not the focus. The emphasis is therefore more on a personal perspective of lived, inside moments (Adams et al., 2014), embracing the vulnerability of self in everyday life.

There are a number of challenges to autoethnography, predominantly centred around the pivotal role of the researcher, rather than the research itself; some articles suggest that autoethnographic approaches are self-indulgent (Coffey, 1999; Hickey & Smith, 2020; Winkler, 2018). Whilst this approach may indeed have limitations, the highly subjective approach allows for the lived experiences of the researcher to be fully captured. In terms of this research into KnitWell, the benefits offered by this approach outweigh its methodological disadvantages; for example, I was able to test the capabilities of free knitting and daily knit journalling to aid development of the participant study. I experienced first-hand the emotional toll of the introspection that the DWKS and daily knit journalling involved. The approach of this study sought to combine autoethnographic insights together with those of research participants, thus mitigating the narrow and subjective focus of an autoethnographic method. The participant study model (see Figure 3.8), therefore also applied to me as I embedded myself in the research as Participant 12 and followed the same study outline.

3.4 THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The beginning of this chapter focused on the specific research methods within the methodology; this section focuses on the application of the methodology, in relation to the participant and autoethnographic studies.

3.4.1 RESEARCH DESIGN – THE PARTICIPANT STUDY MODEL

The participant study was combined of three phases detailed below; Figure 3.8 provides a diagram of the participant study and Figure 3.9 illustrates its timeline.

- **Phase 1**: Participants kept a DKJ (28 days) to become familiar with the process of daily journalling through the medium of knitting and completed a DWKS. An example of the development of a DKJ from 7 days to 28 days is illustrated in Figure 3.2.

- **Phase 2**: Participants kept a DKJ (28 days), and a written diary was added; they continued to complete the DWKS each day. This enabled the research to investigate how participants express themselves in each format.

- **Phase 3**: Participants were asked to choose between the formats of Phase 1 or Phase 2. This allowed participants to choose the style of DKJ that had been most effective for them.

In order to measure the benefit of the activity on their mental wellbeing, participants were asked to complete the full 14-point WEMWBS (Warwick Medical School, 2021), before and after each 28-day period of knitted journalling. This was to determine if there was any change to the participants' mental wellbeing over each phase of knitting.

For the daily knit journalling in Phase 1, participants were provided with a yarn palette of 12 yarns of varied texture, colour, and thickness. This enabled participants to express their emotions and reflect different moods through yarn selection. At the end of Phase 1, participants were offered the option to alter their yarn palette, thereby allowing them to create a selection of yarn qualities that 'spoke' to them creatively and emotionally and for expressing a range of emotional circumstances.

Planning

Prior to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, I had planned to recruit participants based in Nottingham to enable meeting in person. However, this had to change dramatically when COVID-19 legislation was implemented in the UK in March

2020. From that point, I began to develop a programme for this research that could be implemented through online platforms (e.g. Zoom).

The study was scheduled over a 9-month period, between March 2021 and December 2021, and comprised three main phases of activity (see Figure 3.8). However, owing to a family bereavement, I had to postpone Phase 3 by four months which meant overall the study lasted 13 months and was completed in April 2022. Alongside the 28 days of knitting and the weekly check-in (an ethical consideration, explained in Section 3.5), activities utilised within the participant study model (see Figure 3.8) encompass the preparations and support for participants and the research methods discussed in Section 3.3. The structure of each phase followed the same outline:

Month 1:
- Two 2-hour workshops, to facilitate the participants' knitting practice.

Month 2:
- Wellbeing Scales:
    - Completion of a 14-part WEMWBS scale, to be completed the evening before the 28 days of daily knit journalling commenced.
    - 28 days of DWKS
    - Completion of a 14-part WEMWBS scale, to be completed the day after the 28 days of daily knit journalling ended.
- Diary method recording:
    - The DKJ – Daily capture of thoughts and emotions through a knitted journal. At the end of every day, each participant was asked to use an appropriate yarn, colour and stitch to reflect upon and document how they felt (at the time of knitting) regarding their emotions from the day. and complete a DWKS.
    - 28 days of photographs of the knitting.
    - 28 days of written journalling (Phase 2 and optional in Phase 3)
- Ethical Considerations (see Section 3.5):

       o Scheduled weekly check-in via email or text (participant's preference), to provide any guidance or help if needed.

Month 3:

- One-to-one material elicitation interviews – 1 hour.
- Phase 3 had a final recorded group discussion, which reflected on the whole process – 1 hour.
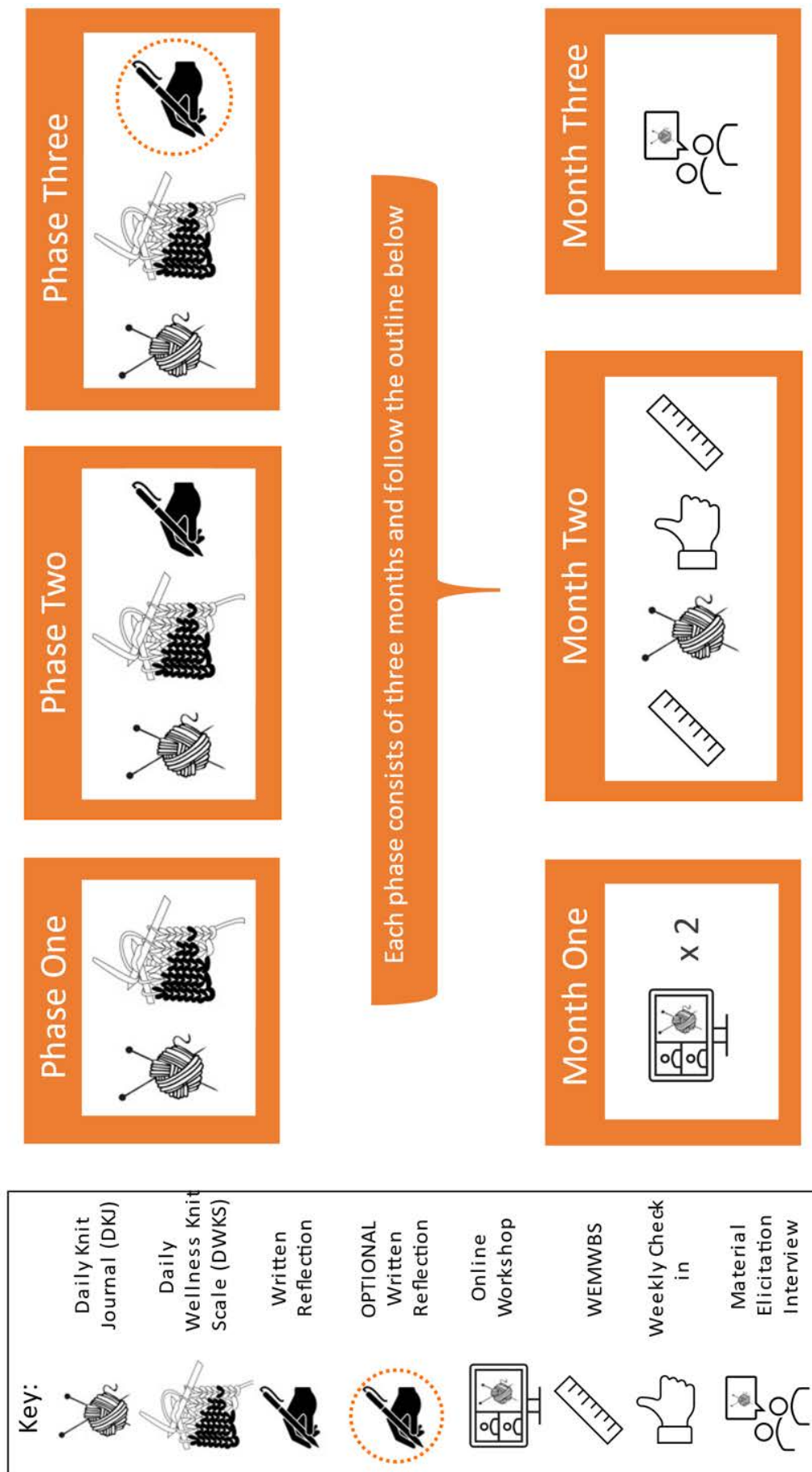
Figure 3.8 Diagram of participant design, detailing three iterative phases of activity and the outline for each phase.
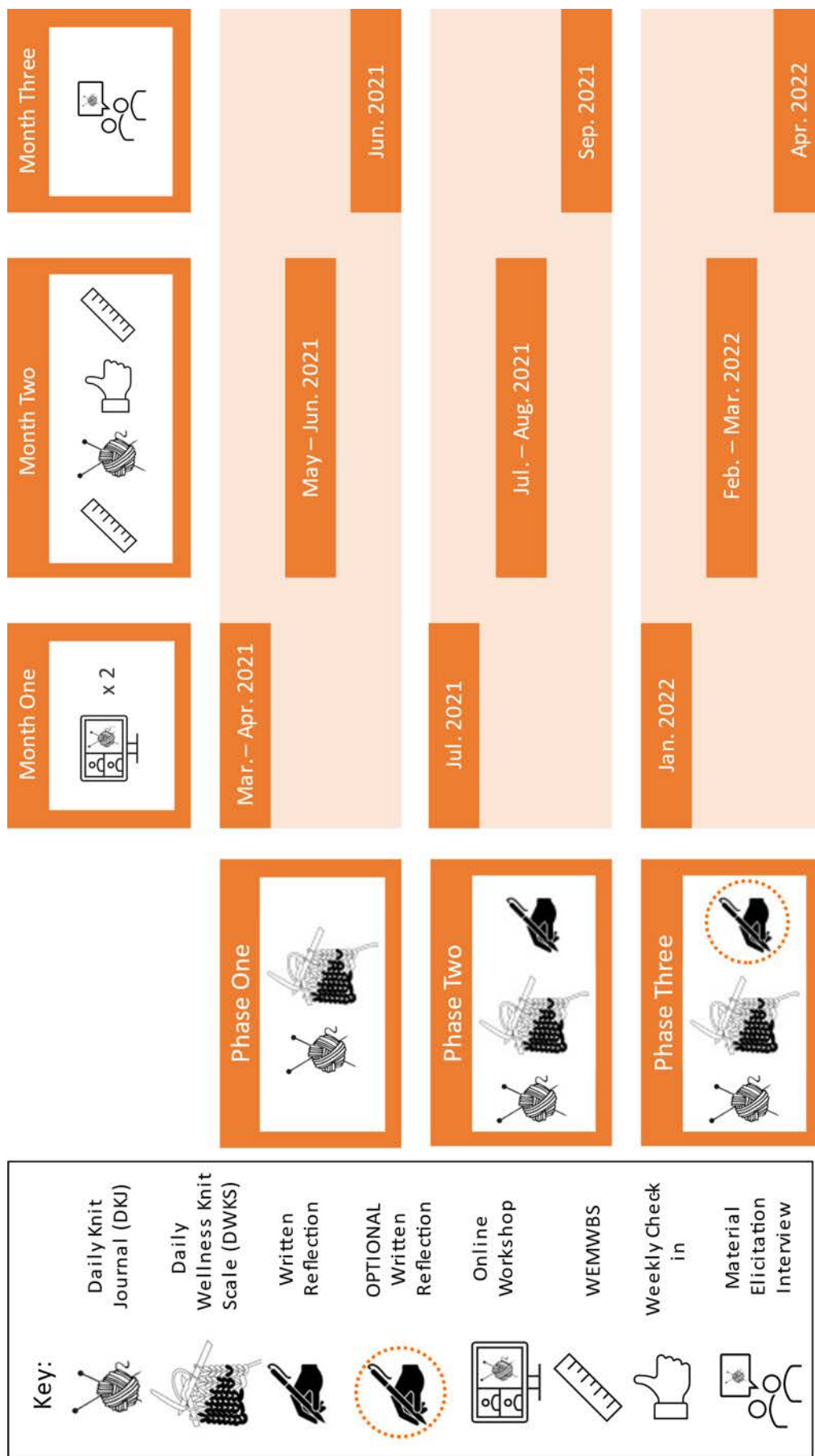
Figure 3.9 Timeline for the participant design between March '21 – April '22

Participant Recruitment

In November 2020, I was invited to give a paper at the Knitting History Forum's annual conference. I used the end of the presentation as a call for participants. The UK Hand Knitting Association (UKHKA) also shared my call for participants through their mailing list and online platforms. If I was unable to fulfil participant places from these calls, I intended to use snowball sampling (Naderifar et al., 2017; Noy, 2008), from my existing network of knitters to complete recruitment.

One prerequisite of the study was that all potential participants were required to have a basic knowledge of knitting techniques, such as casting on, casting off, knit and purl. From these calls, I received 23 expressions of interest and all potential participants attended the preparatory workshop. Following this all attendees were given the participant information sheet (Appendix B.2) which resulted in 11 subsequent confirmations to take part in the KnitWell study. Seven of the final participants came via the Knitting History Forum, two from the UKHKA and two were knitting acquaintances from Nottingham.

Once each participant confirmed they wanted to take part in the project, they were asked to re-read the information sheet and sign a written consent to be a part of the study (Appendix B). Owing to the personal nature of the diary-keeping elements of the study, all participants remain anonymous throughout, and are numbered from Participant 1 to 11.

Unfortunately, owing to a bereavement in their family, Participant 7 was unable to complete Phase 3 of the study. The data compiled from their attendance in Phase 1 and Phase 2 has been used within the analysis. The ten remaining participants continued to be engaged throughout the project.

Although gender was not specified within the call all the participants were women, and their age was not requested. However, a broad understanding of their ages, believed to be 20s to 60s, arose through conversations, the workshops and material elicitation interviews; this was never explicitly confirmed as it was not essential to the study. As all

workshops were held online, this opened up the potential for participants to be based all over Europe; consequently, participants came from England, Scotland and France. It also meant that in the event of relocating participants could remain in the study; this was the case for Participant 5.

Workshops

The facilitated workshops, prior to each knitting month, sought to share knitting techniques, and thus build each individual knitter's stitch repertoire. I planned a structure for each workshop, which always incorporated teaching two stitch techniques, dedicated knitting time and optional show and tell. These workshops also allowed participants to interact with each other and ask any questions in the lead up to the DKJ month.

The preparatory workshop took place via Zoom in March 2021, and was treated as the first workshop in Phase 1. The main purpose of this first workshop was to introduce participants to the playful opportunities of free knitting through demonstrating various knit techniques (see Section 4.1). The secondary purpose was to discuss the outline of the study and the time commitments required of each participant.

There were two 2-hour scheduled workshops per phase (see Figure 3.8) and they followed the same outline:

- Workshop One: Briefing and taught workshop (Phase 2 and Phase 3 included a recorded, group discussion about the previous Phase) – 2 hours.
- Workshop Two: Q&A about the knitted journal task and taught workshop – 2 hours.
- The taught workshops were based on building up the participants' repertoire of skills and to provide inspiration as to how they might use free knitting to express themselves.

The Knitting Month

The first stage of data generation was the Phase 1 knitting month which took place from mid-May to mid-June 2021. During the 28 days, I asked participants to photograph their knitting every day; this meant I was able to keep a detailed record of which day each section of knitting related to in terms of both date and diary entry. This was essential for relating back to the DWKS, for planning of questions within the material elicitation interview and for visual analysis. With the yarn palette supplied to participants, I encouraged participants to choose what yarn they wanted to use on each day, without any predetermined criteria. This is a direct contrast to the pilot study discussed in Section 1.1.1 where colours were defined prior to knitting.

Interviews

At the end of each phase of knitting, I conducted a material elicitation interview, based on the photo elicitation interview model (Richard & Lahman, 2015), as discussed in Section 3.3.3. Prior to the first round of interviews, I prepared a list of 14 questions linked to aspects of each research question (see Appendix F.1). I asked each participant these general questions as well as two specific questions relating to their DKJ: one related to the DWKS and their knitting, and the other based around something interesting that stood out to me as a researcher. For example, if a yarn was used only once, why was that? Or, if there was a specific stitch that altered the dimensions of the knitting, such as multiple decreases which could produce a 3D bulging effect in the knitting, why had they chosen to do this and, indeed, could they remember why? Although there was a pre-planned structure and time to the interviews, I found that they ended up being more like an open-ended informal conversation, where sometimes answers were given before a question was asked.

Upon completion of the knitting month, participants were asked to post their DKJs to me; I was then able to photograph them in preparation for the interview process. To facilitate the material elicitation interviews, the knitting was shown on the screen throughout, and I asked participants to discuss elements that caught their attention when viewing the DKJ again, or anything they wished to disclose. Therefore, the participants had the opportunity to highlight parts of the knitting that they were drawn

to, rather than me pointing sections out to them. It was imperative for participants to have the opportunity to voice their reasoning and choices about their DKJ, in line with photo elicitation stipulations (Richard & Lahman, 2015).

When it came to Phase 2, I adapted the questions to consider the additional written element. Again, the questions were reviewed and revised ahead of Phase 3 when the written element was optional. Through the analysis of each phase, I was able to reflect on and record the opportunities and limitations offered by a knitted journal, and a knitted journal with written reflection (see Chapter 7).

3.4.2 RESEARCH DESIGN – THE AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY MODEL

In my autoethnographic knitting practice there were three avenues of exploration. I completed a technical exploration of knit stitches named Stitchplorations; these explored the complexity and versatility of specific stitches including gauge, texture, shape, form and colour in line with RQ1 (see Section 3.2). To address RQ2 I tested the boundaries of what a knitted journal (KJ) could be, be that a one-day, one-week, or a one-colour journal; each of these had pre-defined restrictions on what was being generated. As Participant 12 (see Section 3.3.5), I was able to gain an insider perspective. This also allowed space for me to experience daily knit journalling, without the previous restrictions I had imposed on myself as researcher when I was testing the boundaries of the KnitWell proposition.

My involvement as an autoethnographic researcher required organisational and participatory involvement that differed from that of the participant study. There are elements of my autoethnographic study that were completed prior to the participant study commencing, such as Stitchplorations and testing what a KJ could be; these activities helped to inform the methodology ahead of the participatory involvement in the research. Once the participant study began, I followed the participatory model as Participant 12 in parallel with the participants. A more in-depth discussion of my autoethnographic process can be found in Chapter 4.

Data from my autoethnographic practice includes Stitchploration, KJ and DKJ artefacts, completed WEMWBS and DWKS, photographs of all artefacts and written journal reflection, documenting my thoughts about the opportunities for self-expression that each KJ project offers. An example of a DKJ I produced during Phase 3 is illustrated in Figure 3.10.

Figure 3.10 Example of my autoethnographic practice DKJ from Phase 3 (Feb. – Mar. 2022)

3.5 ETHICS

Schubotz (2020) states that any research project that involves human participants or the data they have generated has to be submitted for ethical review within the researcher's affiliated institute. As discussed (Section 1.1) this research builds on other research methodologies based within FTRC at NTU and as such, I have been able to harness their knowledge not only in developing this methodology but also in determining the ethical dimensions of the study (Townsend et al., 2017; Shercliff and Twigger Holroyd, 2020). The ethical review documents I created for this research were pivotal for the participatory aspect of the study, and provided a space to consider all ethical issues that might arise within the research and how to address them. In order for participants to

understand the expectations of the study, I created a call for participants; participant information sheet; and consent forms (see Appendix B). The study was asking a lot of participants' time over a 12-month period, and this was outlined within these documents, including the participants' right to withdraw.

Within participatory research, it is good practice to create a plan to ensure the research undertaken is safe for both the participants and the researcher, and to consider how potential ethical issues can be addressed if they arise (Schubotz, 2020). As this research investigated emotions and mental wellbeing it was necessary to ask participants to record their emotional state. This presented a risk of participants becoming distressed, or disclosing information that may have had an impact on me as the researcher. I therefore completed a risk assessment that highlighted four potential risks to my own and my participants' mental wellbeing.

Firstly, a participant may have become distressed during the knitting process. The mitigation for this was for me, the researcher, to make weekly check-ins via text or email to make sure each participant was happy and willing to continue throughout the knitting month.

The second potential risk was that a participant may have become distressed during the material elicitation interview process. The control for this was to postpone the interview and make sure the participant was safe, check in with them at a later date, and signpost the participant towards the right support if needed.

Thirdly, a participant may have become mentally or physically unwell. The control in place for this was to offer the participant the opportunity to pause involvement with the study, and that they could resume when they felt better.

Finally, the fourth potential risk related to my wellbeing as the researcher, and the potential to take on the mental distress from a participant. The control for this potential risk was to safeguard my wellbeing through creating boundaries between the

participants and myself and organising debriefing sessions with a supervisor if necessary.

In Chapter 8, Section 8.1, I discuss the process of the material elicitation interview and how I invited participants to take the lead in discussing and disclosing what they felt comfortable with. However, the second and fourth potential risks did occur in the form of sensitive topics arising within the material elicitation interviews, which had an impact both on me and on the participants in question (discussed further in Section 3.6.3).

3.5.1   BIAS

Within Chapter 4 (Section 4.3) I address the concept of being an insider within the participant study. Joining the study as a participant meant that I already had the experience of previous explorations with free knitting. Unlike the participants, this technique was not new to me. My perspective was therefore influenced by my prior knowledge and the research I conducted for the literature review and research design. The notion of bias should also be discussed here, in terms of both researcher and participant bias. As both a participant and researcher, I knew the aim of the research, making my contribution as Participant 12 value-laden. Carpenter (2018, p. 37) discusses participant bias, stating that it is "not difficult to conceive of a situation in which a participant, consciously or unconsciously, wishes to please a researcher by providing the data they seek rather than being a neutral, passive, source of data". I share one potential impact of participant bias in Chapter 6 (Section 6.1.3). Instead of re-knitting a section that Participant 9 would typically consider a mistake in conventional knitting, she fought with herself to leave it. She was trying to embrace the concept of free knitting and the idea of 'no such thing as a mistake'. This example of Participant 9's experience shares a direct link to Carpenter's statement, that is, she left a perceived mistake in her knitting perhaps as a wish to please me, the researcher.

As I began to highlight potential areas of bias – discussed above – I was reminded of Galdas' (2017) statement that the concept of bias is not compatible with the philosophical foundations of qualitative investigations. Rather, qualitative researchers "generally agree that considering concepts such as rigor and trustworthiness are more

pertinent to the reflexive, subjective nature of qualitative research" (Galdas, 2017, p. 1). As such, I believe the methodology for both the autoethnographic and participant study provides rigour; I have created a research design that generates multiple forms of data from both qualitative and quantitative sources which I believe adds validity to the findings. Additionally, it is suggested that qualitative research validity is "dependent on close, enduring relationships" with participants (ibid); the nature of this research enabled exactly that, a close relationship where each participant was valued as a collaborator rather than a source of data (ibid).

3.6 DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

In this section, I will discuss the data compiled throughout the study and how I approached the analysis. The outcomes can be found in Chapters 6, 7 and 8. The different avenues of data collection from participants are illustrated in Figure 3.11. Over 3,000 elements of individual data were analysed, including around 30 hours of transcribed (material elicitation) interview data from all phases and 490 written diary entries from Phases 2 and 3. Coding software NVivo was used to transcribe the interview data, as well as the written diary entries (from Phase 2 and Phase 3), which enabled me to identify core themes.

I began analysing participant data with an inductive data analysis approach (Azungah, 2018) and open coding (Williams & Moser, 2019). This was the first level of coding of the material elicitation transcriptions and the written diary entries from Phases 2 and 3, and allowed me to identify initial concepts for potential themes (ibid.). I continued to open code until I had gone through every transcript and diary entry. During this coding process, I coded each response to one or more codes, which highlighted what the data was about. Once completed, this gave me a set of initial codes (see Appendix H.1).

Phase One

Phase Two

Phase Three

DKJs

Individual knitting days, x28 per phase, per participant = 896

The DKJ (as a whole) from each phase, x3 per participant = 32

Recordings of the Material Elicitation Interviews

x1 per phase, per participant = 30

DATA

Photographs of the DKJs

Photograph of each individual knitting day, x28 per phase, per participant = 896

Completed WEMBWS

The WEMWBS, x 2 per phase, per participant = 64

Completed DWKS

The DWKS, x28 per phase, per participant = 896

Written Journals from Phase Two and optional from Phase Three

x28 per participant for phase two = 308

Phase three:
Participant 1 x 11, Participant 2 x 20, Participant 3 x 28, Participant 4 x 14, Participant 5 x 0, Participant 6 x 9, Participant 7 x 0, Participant 8 x 28, Participant 9 x 28, Participant 10 x 22, Participant 11 x 22 = 182

= 490 total

Figure 3.11 Diagram of data collected from participants relating to the DKJ.

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Once the first stage of analysis was complete, I employed the constant comparative method (Williams & Moser, 2019) to organise and refine the data further. The constant comparative method is used to continually compare the data, the codes and the emergent themes; "the critical focus is on organizing themes into coherent and comprehensive categories" (Williams & Moser, 2019, p. 51). At this stage, I reviewed each code and the data within them, reviewing and condensing codes, making sure each element of data within the code fitted. If there were codes that were similar to each other, I either combined them or refined each code and the data within them.

The third level of coding involved selective coding (Williams & Moser, 2019). Selective coding "elaborates the development and integration of the coding" (Flick, 2022, p. 421). This is where I refined the data further and identified core thematic categories (Williams & Moser, 2019); in an organised manner, I aligned the identified core themes with sub themes that were selectively coded (ibid.).

I analysed the autoethnographic data differently to the participant data. I used a deductive data analysis approach (Azungah, 2018), using the themes identified through analysis of the participant data. I utilised this approach firstly as a way of navigating the amount of data I had and, secondly, in response to the unexpected impact of analysing my personal data (discussed in Section 3.6.3).

In order to generate the three themes: Process and Participation (Chapter 6), Emotional Expression (Chapter 7), and Awareness and Approach to Meaning (Chapter 8), I undertook a developmental stage of analysis. After I identified an intital set of codes, I assessed how they worked together (the constant comparative method, discussed above). This was a new process for me, as it was the first time I have coded data in this manner, so, I experimented in different ways. For example, when I had my initial code book, I made mind-maps using the codes and focussed on different elements of the RQs. I initially identified potential themes such as 'creative play', 'visual awareness', patterns of exploration, levels of consciousness, curated reflections and feeling through embodied practice. Figure 3.12 shares an example of three potential themes and the codes associated with them. At this stage, I realised that some areas of these initial

themes addressed the RQs in an interesting way but there were other areas that did not respond to the RQs as pertinently and in some cases, it was hard to differentiate between two themes. For example, Figure 3.13 shares how I visualised an idea that came through the data – to do with three dimensional knitting – and placed it with the code, a potenitial theme and then an image of the DKJ. Figure 3.13 also evidences how within one code it was possible for multiple ideas to be expressed. Here, Participant 5 discusses two elements; one, how writing is a two dimensional practice; and two, how knitting can be utilised within many dimensions.

Patterns of Exploration	Levels of Consciousness	Feeling Through Embodied Practice
Free knitting experience	Reflection	Knit articulates feelings
Time	Decision making	Knit choices are connected to/reflect feelings
External influences	Memory	Colour/yarn choices are connected to/reflect feelings
Structure of knitting	Connection to feelings	Acknowledging pleasure and displeasure
External knitting practice	External Influences	Intentions and follow through
		Physical act of knitting

Figure 3.12 Example of three potential theme ideas and the codes aligned with them.

Patterns of Exploration

Structure of knitting

"I think I definitely, sometimes, if I wasn't being playful during the actual process I would become playful at the end. Yeah. Um, so that'd be sometimes where I'd like mess around. So I think that's (the crochet) probably is like an another example of that".

Participant 5, Phase Two, Interview.

"But in theory that would have like, you know, I think I was enjoying, because, you know, if you're writing, you're writing on a 2D thing, right? Like, you can't suddenly start writing in a different direction. Whereas like with knitting you can, you can, you know, you can use all the dimensions".

Participant 5, Phase Two, Interview.

Figure 3.13 Example of participant quotes linked to the code, Structure of Knitting.

This meant further refining, which gave me an opportunity to focus on intriguing ideas that arose from different participants' experiences that provided interesting insights to

the RQs and enabled me to identify the three core themes for this research: Process and Participation, Emotional Expression and Awareness and Approach to Meaning.

3.6.1   WEMWBS ANALYSIS

WEMWBS scores can be divided into low, moderate and high mental wellbeing. This is determined through calculating "means and standard deviations" (Warwick Medical School, 2023) and comparing the results with standard UK population norms.[11] The statistical approach suggested by WEMWBS puts "approximately 15% of the participants into high wellbeing and 15% into low wellbeing categories" (ibid.). Therefore, the bottom 15% of scores range from 14-42 and equate to low wellbeing, any score between 43-59 equates to moderate wellbeing and the top 15% of scores range from 60-70 and equate to high wellbeing (ibid.). The researchers behind WEMWBS have produced various tools to aid in the analysis of the WEMWBS data. I utilised the excel templates available which gave me core statistics to analyse. There are two methods of analysis that I have used:

- Proportions of wellbeing – this highlights the percentage of participants that had low, moderate, or high wellbeing before and after each phase of knitting.
- A mean score – this is the total sum of each participant's WEMWBS scores divided by the number of participants which gives a mean/average value.

The results of this analysis are discussed in Chapter 5, Section 5.5.

3.6.2   DWKS ANALYSIS AND CREATIVE DATA VISUALISATION

The DWKS scores for each participant were inputted into a bar-chart for analysis (see Chapter 5, Section 5.6.1, Figures **Figure 5.15** to **Figure 5.17**). Each bar-chart was then used to pin-point specific days in each participant's DKJ; this aided a method of analysis that linked the DKJ with the DWKS data and the material elicitation interview data.

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[11] A more in-depth discussion on the parameters for the statistical analysis of WEMWBS data can be found on their website (Warwick Medical School, 2023).

Visual and technical analysis were key in analysing the DKJs and clear parameters were developed to provide consistent interpretation. This was done via a structured process which involved comparing the individual DKJs with the DWKS results, to determine whether certain stitches were repetitively used for certain emotions, whether emotions determined colour use, and how the structure of knitting was related to the participant's emotional state. This responded directly to RQ1 (see Chapter 1, Section 1.8).

The analysis of the 32 DKJs, which comprised 896 individual elements of visual data, required a systematic approach to manage the vast amount of information. By focussing on each participant's DKJ and cutting out each daily entry from printed images, I was able to isolate and examine the entries more effectively. This method allowed me to identify the specific stitches and colours used when participants felt certain emotions, which would have been difficult to discern if the DKJs were viewed as a whole. This approach was beneficial because it allowed for a detailed and manageable analysis of a large dataset, allowing me to systematically interpret the data and uncover patterns.

Creating hard copies of these entries enabled a detailed comparison of similarities and differences between participants' daily entries. This initial step was crucial as it provided a clear view of each piece of knitting as a standalone entity. Subsequently, I developed digital visualisations, including colour and use wheels, which consolidated diary entries from each participant's DKJ. This digital approach allowed for a focused analysis of aspects like stitch choice, colour choice, and the emotions associated with them.

Working in this manner was beneficial because it broke down the complex pieces of knitting into manageable elements, facilitating a deeper understanding of the data. It revealed insights into the frequency and variety of options available to knitters when expressing emotions, leading to the concept of a "knitter's vocabulary". This vocabulary encompasses different aspects of knitting, such as colour, stitch, and texture, which can be used individually or in combination to communicate emotions. This level of detail would have been difficult to discern if the DKJs were viewed and analysed as a whole.

This process not only made the data more manageable but also provided new perspectives on the emotional dimensions of knitting and triggered thoughts about the complexity and richness of non-verbal communication. It highlighted the potential of knitting as a medium for emotional expression and suggested new avenues for research into how crafts can be used to process and convey emotions. These insights are further discussed in Chapter 7, Section 7.1.

Additionally, I have developed a website[12] for visually communicating each participant's creative knitting practice which doubles as an analytical platform. The purpose of the website is twofold: an aid to analysis and a method of dissemination. To break down the data, I looked through three specific lenses: Participants, Stitches and Emotions.

The participant lens presents each participant's knitting, highlighting interesting aspects of the material elicitation interviews and referring back to the DWKS. This lens offers four views of each individual participant's knitting, including: a composite of knitting from Phase 1, 2 and 3; a composite of knitting from Phase 1, 2 and 3, showcasing specific knit days; the DKJs from each phase, with image hotspots that highlight the participants' reflections via the material elicitation interviews or their written reflection; and a matrix of emotions, taken from the DWKS and presenting each participant's emotions on each day of daily knit journalling.

The stitches lens spans all participants' DKJs and looks at specific elements of knitting, whether that is stitch, colour or yarn choice, highlighting interesting aspects from the material elicitation interviews. This lens offers two views of each stitch under investigation. Firstly, I created a use wheel, which enables review of how a specific stitch or colour was used. Secondly a matrix of stitches evidences how frequently each participant used a specific stitch and on what day it was used.

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[12] www.KnitWell.org.uk

Figure 3.14 (Left) Example of an image hotspot taken from KnitWell.org.uk. This is a 'use wheel', showing the knitting produced on all the days throughout Phase 1 where participants 'strongly agreed' with feeling anxious.

Figure 3.15 (Right) The image hotspot shows greyed out images of the DKJs and highlights specific days where participants strongly agreed with feeling anxious and knitted stocking stitch, and where the relevant section sat within each participant's knitting.

The emotions lens also spans all participants DKJs; it uses each emotion from the DWKS to see colour, stitch, yarn choice and how regularly a yarn is used to show this. This lens offers three views of each emotion under investigation. A colour wheel enables identification of what colours were used for a specific emotion. Secondly, a use wheel reveals the stitches that were used when participants felt a specific emotion from the DWKS, illustrated in Figure 3.14 and Figure 3.15. Thirdly I developed a matrix of emotions to consider any correlation between where participants strongly agreed with the emotion under investigation and how regularly they felt it throughout the 28 days of daily knit journalling.

The three lenses allowed me, as a researcher, to navigate the data to elicit new findings, and they also act as a tool to allow the viewer to access the data. Through the website, both elements are integrated together. The insights from the creative visual analysis are worked into the analysis chapters 6, 7 and 8.

3.6.3 Difficulties with Data Generation and Analysis

Within the timeline of this project, I encountered some challenges in data generation and analysis. Issues that participants discussed with me or detailed in their written reflections included: four bereavements, one anniversary of a death, one affair, two long-term health issues, one job and home relocation. Five suffered long-term anxiety and depression. There was also COVID-19 and the associated government restrictions, and finally, the Russian-Ukraine invasion and subsequent war. The impact of disclosing this information to me adds another level of involvement and understanding from myself, as researcher, that I had not anticipated.

During every knitting month, I had daily contact with each of my participants through WhatsApp or email, as part of the process was to send a photograph of their knitting each day. What I had not anticipated was the added level of text correspondence, telling me about their day, how they were finding the free knitting experience, what happened that day. As much as I enjoyed this correspondence, and it felt like I was building a relationship with my participants, it added substantially to my mental load. Consequently, by the final phase, I discussed with my participants that I may not be able to respond to their messages every day, but I did check in at least once a week for a catch-up. This made a big difference not only to my daily workload but also my mental load and carrying the weight of people's experiences.

As discussed previously (see Section 3.4.2), during the autoethnographic process of becoming Participant 12, I undertook the same tasks as my participants. When it came to analysis, I then had to look back at what I had written. In common with the participants, my involvement was affected by unforeseen personal and socio-political events. In order to complete the research tasks, my response to these events were all recorded within the written reflections alongside the DKJs. It did not occur to me that I would find re-reading these reflections painful, troubling or triggering at the time of developing the research methodology.

I coded the participants' material elicitation interview and written diary data through NVivo. However, a stark contrast between what I asked my participants to reflect on

during the material elicitation interviews and what I, as researcher, had to reflect on with my data became apparent during the coding process. This resulted in data being incomparable. Participants were not expected to discuss their in-depth written responses in the material elicitation interview but instead were asked to discuss points that they felt comfortable with. I did not have the same possibility with my data; I was unable to separate myself from it in order to code it like the participant data. Therefore, I needed to develop a different approach to analysing my data, in order to allow the value of my data to come through, without causing personal struggle and jeopardising my mental wellbeing. This involved analysing my data with the themes from the participant study in place. I examined all aspects of my autoethnographic study with each theme and sub-theme in mind and created a mind map of each important aspect of my knitting with written reflections. I looked for specific instances that connected to the themes I had identified; this allowed me to analyse my data without the difficulty of reliving specific events during the time period of daily knit journalling. The difficulty I faced in analysing my data has been an unanticipated impact of this methodology.

3.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter has discussed the methods and methodological approach used in this research. The DKJs generated in the knitting months – by participants and myself, as Participant 12 – acted as solicited, unstructured diaries. The written diary method offers the opportunity for regular reflection in parallel with the DKJ. With its principles of regularity and reflection, the diary method is innately complementary to the DKJ. The methods utilised within this research methodology delivered a unique avenue for data generation, bringing further advantages when triangulated alongside each other.

Ultimately, this research investigated emotions and wellbeing which presented potential risks to the wellbeing of both me – as researcher – and my participants. Some potential risks did become reality; sensitive topics arose within the material elicitation interviews, which had an impact both on me and on the participants in question (see Section 3.6.3). However, the trust that my participants bestowed on me by sharing their emotional state via material elicitation interviews and written diary entries (Phase 2) was an incredibly humbling experience. Furthermore, there were unforeseen challenges

in analysing my autoethnographic data which highlighted potential safeguarding opportunities for future participatory and autoethnographic research methodologies.

4

Free Knitting: An Autoethnographic Journey

The following two chapters (4 and 5) describe the experiences of participation in KnitWell and this research, and consequently are a bridge between the methodology and the overall themes and findings in chapters 6, 7 and 8.

This chapter describes my autoethnographic journey through free knitting and daily knit journalling. I share what it has been like for me to be part of the study, to test out the methodology and stretch its capabilities. It is divided into three sections: Stitchplorations considers the testing of specific stitches in one sample (Section 4.1); the intention of Testing the Boundaries of Knit Journalling (Section 4.2) was to experiment with the concept of a knitted journal; and Daily Knit Journalling and Participant 12 discusses the DKJs I created and my role in the participant study (Section 4.3).

4.1   STITCHPLORATIONS

Stitchploration is a word I have adopted to highlight a focus on the technical exploration of stitches and techniques to explore my technical abilities, through which I created exemplars for the participants to use as starting points in the free knitting process.

The techniques featured within my Stitchplorations include GSRs, slip stitches, stacked stitches and i-cords.[13] These techniques were selected:

- To test the potential of a stitch for expressing emotion.
- To create and explore different stitch samples, that I could then easily show participants to assist them in developing their own repertoire.
- To explore the technical qualities of specific stitches, through which I could set restrictions on myself such as only using one stitch.

I set restrictions on myself and on the Stitchplorations. I found that the process of setting restrictions allowed continued scope for exploration of the creative and expressive possibilities of free knitting. When I knitted GSRs, for example, the restriction imposed was changing direction in the knitting without casting off. This allowed me to

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[13] A glossary of knit stitches can be found at the start of the thesis, page xiv.

explore how the change in direction facilitated by GSRs could link to emotions; for example, they could act as a pivot in the day, to mark when a change happened.
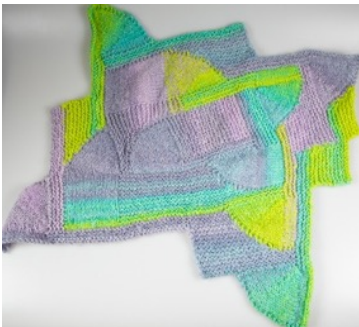
In terms of the criteria used to choose the stitches for a Stitchploration, several factors were considered. Initially, I wanted to enhance my skills and develop my own stitch knowledge and practice beyond how they might be used in garment construction. Within garment construction there are always pre-destined measurements to ensure a good fit (see Section 1.2); by sampling within a Stitchploration I was able to explore stitches without having to adapt to specific measurements and criteria. The knowledge and skill gained through this sampling improved my confidence when sharing these stitches with the participants. Secondly, I was drawn to experiment with stitches that were likely to be enjoyable and accessible to knit, thus enhancing motivation and aiding the expression of emotion. I-cords are a great example of this. I-cords are knitted on double pointed knitting needles (DPNs) and utilise the basic knit stitch (and is therefore accessible); yet it is possible to create 3D shapes by simply picking up stitches and using a simple increase or decrease to create more or fewer stitches, again altering the shape and leading to enhanced enjoyment through this novelty. An example of an i-cord Stitchploration is in Table 4-5.

I initially experimented with many different stitches[14] in my Stitchplorations and DKJs, to experiment with their suitability for expressing my emotions on a regular basis. This experimentation stage helped me to shape the participant study and decide which stitches to share. The stitches I chose to share were bobbles, GSRs, i-cords, slip stitches, stacked stitches and wrapped stitches. They were selected owing to their striking appearance and effectiveness when expressing my emotions. It was also important to ensure that the stitches taken forward were suitable for each participant's knitting abilities and confidence. Therefore, I chose stitches that, whilst appearing slightly more complicated than basic knit stitches, were, in reality, relatively simple to knit.

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[14] All the stitches I experimented with are shared in the glossary at the start of the thesis, page xiv.

Some stitches that I chose to share with the participants were not regularly used in my own knit journalling as I did not enjoy the process of knitting them. These included bobbles and wrap stitches, which I decided to share with participants as, due to their textural qualities, I recognised that they may be useful for participants in expressing emotions. Other factors considered in the assessment of which stitches were offered to participants included the possibility to change direction, knit to a point, introduce multiple colours, add texture, and connect different elements of knitting together.

Table 4-1 provides an overview of each Stitchploration completed and where to find them within the thesis. I knitted numerous samples and the Stitchplorations I share within this section highlight the use of GSRs, i-cords, slip stitches and stacked stitches. In some cases, there are multiple Stitchplorations using similar stitches and these can be found in Appendix A.1.

Image:	Name:	Purpose:	Table Number:
	GSR Stitchploration	To test the GSR technique.	Table 4-2
	Handspun GSRs	Continuing exploration into GSRs and how they can change direction in knitting, to create interesting shapes.	Appendix A.1
	Handspun Slip Stitch Stitchploration	To test the slip stitch technique.	Table 4-3

	Combined Bobbles and Slip Stitchploration	To test how these stitches work together. Completed as a show and tell for Participant workshops in Phase 2.	Appendix A.1
	Slip Stitchploration	To test different slip stitch patterns and how they work in single and multiple colours.	Appendix A.1
	Stacked Stitch Stitchploration	To test the stacked stitch technique.	Table 4-4
	Stacked Stitch for Workshop	To create an example that shows the stitches shared within participant workshops.	Appendix A.1
	I-cord Stitchploration	To explore the technicalities of knitting i-cords and how expressive they can be.	Table 4-5
	Linking I-cords Stitchploration	To experiment and play with i-cords and how they can interlink with previous knitting.	Appendix A.1
	Combined I-cord and Slip Stitch Stitchploration	To explore combining attributes of two different stitches on a small scale.	Appendix A.1

	Combined I-cord and Garter Stitchploration	To combine stitches to explore how they work together. The focus is on introducing i-cords within the knitting.	Appendix A.1

Table 4-1 Overview table of all the Stitchplorations completed.

I completed a pro-forma to review each Stitchploration. A selection of these are documented in tables Table 4-2 to Table 4-5, and detail which stitches and techniques were used within the Stitchploration. Each table includes the purpose of the Stitchploration, whether the stitches and techniques were used within the participant workshops, and the attributes of the stitch. Each table also records my key reflections on the Stitchploration measured against two criteria: the capacity they hold to express emotion, and accessibility in terms of ease of knitting.

Name:	GSR Stitchploration
Date:	March 2021
Stitch / Technique:	• GSRs
Purpose:	To test the GSR technique
Used in Workshops:	Yes / ~~No~~ • Phase 1, workshop 2 - GSRs
Used in my KJs:	Frequently / ~~Sometimes~~ / ~~Never~~
Attributes of Stitch:	• They create shaping and change direction in the knitting.
Reflections regarding expressing emotion:	• GSRs are a relatively easy technique to learn, which would suit any level knitter from beginner to experienced. • The ability to change direction in the knitting reminds me of how in a day, if something happens, an event, an interaction with another person or something quite unexpected that warrants a new direction, GSRs can portray that change.
Reflections regarding ease of knitting:	• GSRs are a much simpler equivalent to other short row techniques.

Table 4-2 Pro Forma for GSR Stitchploration

Name:	Handspun Slip Stitch Stitchploration
Date:	June 2021
Stitch / Technique:	• Slip stitches
Purpose:	To test the slip stitch technique
Used in Workshops:	Yes / ~~No~~ • Phase 2, workshop 2 – Slip stitches
Attributes of Stitch:	• When using two yarns, slip stitch patterns can give the effect of colourwork without having to knit with two colours in the same row
Reflections regarding expressing emotion:	• Slip stitches can provide a colour change in knitting that can be used to express different emotions happening at the same time. • Slip stitches break the linear flow of knitting, which can be used to show specific emotions coming to the fore such as anger or joy.
Reflections regarding ease of knitting:	• Simple colourwork effect that is easy to learn, good for workshops. • Slip stitches are a good alternative to more complicated knitting techniques.

Table 4-3 Pro Forma for Handspun Slip Stitch Stitchploration

Name:	Stacked Stitch Stitchploration
Date:	November 2021
Stitch / Technique:	• Stacked increases and stacked decreases
Purpose:	To test the stacked stitch technique
Used in Workshops:	Yes / No • Phase 3, Workshop 1 – Stacked increases • Phase 3, Workshop 2 – Stacked decreases
Attributes of Stitch:	• Creates organic, 3D forms within the knitting.
Reflections regarding expressing emotion:	• I have focused on stacked stitches as a way of creating organic shapes, to let go of control within the knitting. I think this is an interesting stitch in regard to emotional expression as it is somewhat unpredictable. • This could be used to express a time when the knitter is unsure of their emotions, or if they feel strong emotions and want to lose control in the knitting to show that sense of being all encompassed.
Reflections regarding ease of knitting:	• The stacked stitches do not necessarily work how I imagined they would, creating shapes and 3D elements within. • Unlike the intentionality of GSRs and the active choice to change the direction of the knitting, it is not until after the stacked increases or decreases have been completed that it is possible to see the direction in which the knitting has taken. Unique forms are created with each stack.

Table 4-4 Pro Forma for Stacked Stitch Stitchploration

Name:	I-cord Stitchploration
Date:	March 2021
Stitch / Technique:	• I-cords
Purpose:	To explore the technicalities of knitting i-cords and how expressive they can be.
Used in Workshops:	Yes / ~~No~~ • Phase 1, workshop 1 – I-cords
Attributes of Stitch:	• It is possible to create an i-cord and not be able to see its beginning or end, creating a moebius shape.
Reflections regarding expressing emotion:	• I feel like it is emotive, unlike a flat piece of knitting. This 3D i-cord with shapes interconnecting and pulling away is visually engaging.
Reflections regarding ease of knitting:	• It is an easy stitch to remember and very effective for little effort.

Table 4-5 Pro Forma for i-cord Stitchploration

4.2 TESTING THE BOUNDARIES OF KNIT JOURNALLING

Having contextualised the Stitchplorations, I will now discuss the knitted journals (KJs) I created to explore the concept of a KJ with set restrictions. The purpose of each KJ was experimentation; created ahead of the participant engagement, they facilitated exploration of different aspects of a specific concept.

- **Time** – was one element under investigation and these KJs were about experimenting with time scales. For example, for the one-day KJ, I knitted for five to ten minutes every hour for an eight-hour period.
- **Knitted Form** – this explores the different forms of a KJ. For example, stress knit – where I only knitted when feeling stressed - or one colour – where I knitted with only a single colour throughout the KJ.
- **Fibre Craft** – throughout the process of creating and experimenting with KJs the urge to explore other fibre crafts arose. I spent some time working on a domestic knitting machine and on a tapestry loom, and also hand spun my own yarns.

Some KJs created share an overlap between two of these criteria. Additionally, each KJ had a specific type: it either explored free knitting or it focused on recording emotion. The type and form of each KJ are explicitly noted in the pro forma tables for each KJ. All of the KJs, including details of overlap where applicable, are illustrated in Table 4-6.

It is important to understand here that I was artist, researcher, and facilitator; that there were elements where these roles, or lenses, combined to enhance the participant study and there were elements where only one applied. Testing the boundaries of knit journalling allowed me to explore the concept of knit journalling through these different lenses and the perspectives they offered. As knit practitioner, there were always restrictions on these experiments - they always had a purpose - so I was never able to be truly free with my choices.

Time

The purpose of the KJs focused on time was experimentation with three aspects: the duration over which the KJ was developed, the frequency of updating the KJ and the

opportunities for self-expression within differing time scales. Within each of these it was then possible to consider how emotions may have changed over time. For example, a one-day KJ elucidated what my emotions were every hour throughout the day. A one-day KJ particularly has limitations of time – regular, frequent, intensive updates were required within that day. I found that the self-expression obtained from the one-day KJ centred on my emotions in the moment in comparison to those KJs which were undertaken over longer durations. Instead, these KJs facilitated a reflection on the whole day and let me take time to register the impact of the day overall. This suggested that the opportunity to reflect on a whole day enables greater scope for self-expression.

Form

The KJs focused on form had a dual purpose: to explore the boundaries of free knitting and to set restrictions on myself, over and above those guidelines set for the participant study. This enabled me to explore the impact of adding more restrictions to the process; for example, requiring that knitting was undertaken only with one colour, or knitting with a set number of stitches. With these restrictions in place, I was experimenting with whether I was still able to express myself within this medium, essential to realising mental wellbeing benefits. In some cases, such as the one-colour KJ, self-expression was overly constrained; I found it incredibly stifling and in turn the KJ did not accurately communicate my emotions. However, with KJs based on stitch restriction I felt much more able to effectively communicate my emotional state. I feel colour is an important aspect of my self-expression and therefore minimised stitch count did not affect this expression.

Fibre Craft

The fibre craft KJs each encompassed at least two fibre crafts: for example, tapestry weaving, machine knitting, and/or hand spinning fibre alongside hand knitting. The purpose of these KJs was to discover whether I was able to connect and communicate my emotions with these samples, in the same manner and extent as with hand knitting. Again, this was not a request I made to participants. Rather, it was an element that I could explore myself, to consider the impact of different fibre craft techniques. The KJs which encompassed hand spun fibres were a joy to knit. I felt connected to the whole

process, from spinning and plying to knitting with the yarn. Conversely, the KJs knitted on a domestic knitting machine did not at all compare to the experience of hand knitting. Machine knitting is loud, it is not a portable practice; there is a disconnect between the mind and body relationship when a machine is brought into the equation. As I was specifically trying to recreate hand knit stitches, once again, I felt like the opportunity for self-expression was stifled. I was focused on the replication of hand knitting rather than pushing the capabilities of machine knitting, which I think would have led to more opportunity for self-expression.
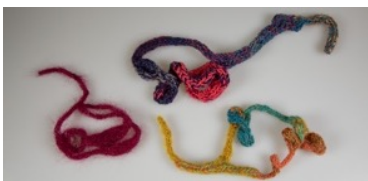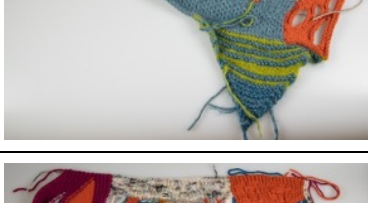
As researcher, these KJs helped me to shape the participant study. Through adjusting time scales, for example trialling the one-day, one-week, and two-week DKJs, I gained insights which led to the development of the 28-day DKJ. 28 days is a four-week period, a month – a recognised amount of time, which felt substantial enough to gain insight into the effect of daily knit journalling and also to ask participants to partake in. The experience of generating these KJs also helped me to suggest a daily time to knit for participants – between 10 – 30 minutes. Whilst knitting I became aware of how much I was able to knit in a specific time frame: as a fairly adept knitter, anything less than 10 minutes felt like there was no evidence of what I had knitted. I did not feel that a row or two of knitting could accurately express my emotions. Therefore, a knitting time of 10-30 minutes was recommended as a guide to participants, particularly as I was aware of asking participants to give up their precious time each day to participate in this research. Yet on occasion several participants did indeed knit for longer than 30 minutes; this was their choice and not instigated by a timespan that I recommended. Essentially, the process of generating KJs allowed me to explore what a DKJ could be and what would work best for participants.

As with the Stitchplorations, to aid review of each KJ I completed pro-forma tables. Within these I detailed a number of objective elements, including frequency, duration and knitting time. Frequency refers to how often that I knitted on the KJ, for example daily, whilst duration refers to the total period for which that KJ was sustained, i.e. one week. Where an element was not recorded at the point of creation then this is noted as 'not tracked' within the pro-forma. The majority of KJs are defined as 'recording

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emotion' and do track frequency, duration and knitting time; this is because I wanted to track how I engaged and reflected on my emotions within the timespan. However, the KJs that focused on exploring free knitting do not track frequency, duration and knitting time; in these cases the investigation was centred on the physical knitting and the impact on my emotional state overall rather than the recording of emotion at the time of creation.

Table 4-6 provides an overview of the KJs I generated. As with the Stitchplorations, some pro-forma tables have been included in the appendices as there are multiple KJs with a similar focus. Those featured in this chapter had a direct impact on the participant study.

Image:	Name:	Purpose:	Focus of KJ:	Table Number:
	One-day	To experiment with time scales.	Time	Table 4-7
	Two-week DKJ	The emphasis is on time, testing daily knit journalling over two weeks.	Time	Appendix A.2
	Stress Knit	To knit when I felt a specific way, rather than recording my emotions daily, therefore exploring daily knitting through one specific lens.	Form	Table 4-8
	One Colour	To explore whether only using one colour and one yarn can express emotions.	Form	Table 4-9

	15 Stitch KJ	Intentional restriction of 15 stitches at all times with one cast-on and one cast-off edge.	Form	Appendix A.2
	I-cord KJ	To explore the technicalities of knitting i-cords but also with how expressive they could be.	Form	Appendix A.2
	IFFTI note-taking I-cords	To test knitting as a form of notetaking or memory keeping.	Form	Appendix A.2
	21 stitch KJ	To experiment with small number of stitches and new techniques, continuing experimentation with one cast-on and one cast-off edge.	Form	Appendix A.2
	Caterpillar KJ	Open test of knit journalling.	Form	Appendix A.2
	Straight edge KJ	To experiment with the form of a KJ.	Form	Appendix A.2
	Begin with Pi KJ	Initial test of what a KJ can be and picking up stitches from a curved edge.	Form	Appendix A.2

	Trial KJ	To test the practicalities of a KJ.	Form	Appendix A.2
	The 'form' of a KJ	To show free knitting with boundaries. At some point within each of these examples an overall pattern was followed.	Form	Table 4-10
	One cast-on, one cast-off edge	Using GSRs to change direction and keeping it one continuous piece, no cast off edges.	Form and Fibre Craft	Appendix A.2
	Infinity KJ	To explore how negative space can be used within free knitting and pushing the boundaries of GSRs.	Form and Fibre Craft	Table 4-11
	I-cord exploration in hand-spun yarn	To test connection between knitting with hand-spun yarn and shop bought yarn.	Form and Fibre Craft	Appendix A.2
	Machine Knit	To replicate hand knit stitches on a machine with the intention of discovering whether I was able to connect with the knitting in the same way as hand knitting.	Fibre Craft	Appendix A.2
	Tapestry Journal	To try journalling with a different fibre craft.	Fibre Craft	Appendix A.2

	Conference Workshop Free Knitting Experiments	To have knitting available for workshop participants to add to, rather than starting from scratch.	Fibre Craft	Appendix A.2

Table 4-6 Overview table of all the KJs completed.

Name:	One-day
Date:	March 2021
Focus of KJ:	Time
Type of KJ:	~~Exploring free knitting~~ / Recording emotion
Frequency:	Every hour
Duration:	One day
Knitting Time:	Minimum 5 minutes
KJ Restriction:	Knit every hour on the hour.
Stitches commonly used:	- Garter stitch - Lace holes
Purpose:	Experiment with time scales.
Key Reflections:	- I got frustrated with this as it felt like I was knitting all day without actually knitting all day. - There is only so much I can knit in a five-to-ten minute period which felt stifling and then I was constantly watching the clock to make sure I knitted at the same time the following hour. - This did not feel like free knitting, there was an element of stress surrounding it.

Table 4-7 Pro Forma for one-day KJ

Name:	Stress Knit
Date:	March 2021
Focus of KJ:	Form
Type of KJ:	~~Exploring free knitting~~ / Recording emotion
Frequency:	Knit when feeling stressed
Duration:	Three days
Knitting Time:	Knitted until felt less stressed, no time limit.
KJ Restriction:	Only knit when stressed.
Stitches commonly used:	- I-cords - Moss stitch
Purpose:	To knit when I felt a specific way, rather than recording my emotions daily, therefore exploring daily knitting through one specific lens.
Key Reflections:	- This knit looks stressed, the colours are jarring and don't work well together and the stitch choices are simple but create quite sharp, harsh angles. - There was a level of discomfort to the process as I knew I was knitting for a specific reason and so I was uncomfortable during the knitting process and also when looking and reflecting on it.

Table 4-8 Pro Forma for stress KJ

Name:	One colour
Date:	February 2021
Focus of KJ:	Form
Type of KJ:	~~Exploring free knitting~~ / Recording emotion
Frequency:	Not tracked
Duration:	Not tracked
Knitting Time:	Not tracked
KJ Restriction:	Only use one colour.
Stitches commonly used:	• Garter stitch • Garter rib • I-cord
Purpose:	To explore whether only using one colour and one yarn can express emotions.
Key Reflections:	• I found this DKJ incredibly restrictive. I am drawn to colour, I like to change colour or at least have the option to change colour and taking those options away made me very frustrated. Frustration on the whole is not the outcome I want from a KJ. • The stitches I used were very simple, potentially in rebellion to not changing colour, I actively chose to keep the knitting bland. • This experiment helped me in preparation for the participant study as it aided my thought process on what I was asking participants to do, it armed me with the knowledge to not impose colour or yarn restrictions.

Table 4-9 Pro Forma for one colour KJ

Name:	The 'form' of a KJ
Date:	February 2020
Focus of KJ:	Form
Type of KJ:	Exploring free knitting / ~~Recording emotion~~
Frequency:	Not tracked
Duration:	Not tracked
Knitting Time:	Not tracked
KJ Restriction:	Following a set pattern to create a shape.
Stitches commonly used:	- Wrap stitches - Lace holes - Stocking stitch - Garter stitch
Purpose:	To show free knitting with boundaries. At some point within each of these examples an overall pattern was followed.
Key Reflections:	- Through setting boundaries, I found it took away my freedom. The knowledge of having the pattern sitting at the back of my mind, that at some point I would have to follow a certain instruction did not create a free knitting state of mind. - This experimentation cemented the purpose of free knitting and daily knit journalling, that following a pattern was not the outcome or purpose.

Table 4-10 Pro Forma for the 'form' of a KJ

Name:	Infinity KJ
Date:	May 2021
Focus of KJ:	Form
Type of KJ:	Exploring free knitting / ~~Recording emotion~~
Frequency:	Not tracked
Duration:	Not tracked
Knitting Time:	Not tracked
KJ Restriction:	Knit with only 9 stitches, unless looping back to create negative space.
Stitches commonly used:	• GSRs • Garter stitch • Moss stitch
Purpose:	To explore how negative space can be used within free knitting and pushing the boundaries of GSRs.
Key Reflections:	• I enjoyed creating continual loops within the knitting with no visible end. • GSRs were used to create the curve shaping and this was really satisfying and made more evident with only a small number of stitches. • Huge satisfaction in knitting with hand-spun yarn.

Table 4-11 Pro Forma for handspun, infinity KJ

4.3 PARTICIPANT 12

When the participant study began, I embedded myself as Participant 12. However, I also created DKJs outside of the participant study. I created five DKJs in total: one before the participant study, three associated with the phases of the participant study and then one following Phase 3.

The DKJ I created before the participant study was the initial DKJ that I knitted throughout the 31 days of December 2020; this was a time when I was experimenting with the different possible durations of a DKJ and helped to determine the 28-day DKJ. I created the last DKJ after the participant study with the purpose of completing a DKJ outside of the parameters I had set, to test if I felt obligated to knit daily.

It was not until participating in the three phases, alongside the participants, that I allowed myself creative freedom. The knitting I completed until this point had allowed me to practise the idea of keeping a DKJ, but with some form of imposed restriction for the purpose of designing the parameters of the research for others to participate in. Yet, as Participant 12 I now had the freedom to really play with stitch ideas and colours throughout the knitting phases. By contributing as Participant 12, I gained an insider perspective and was able to empathise with my participants, as I knew first-hand what they had to do. I ought to acknowledge here, that as Participant 12, it was not exactly the same for me as it was for my participants. For example, I did not send pictures of my knitting each day to a researcher and I did not complete a material elicitation interview. Additionally, I had all of the insider knowledge, not only about the process, but also what participants were knitting via their daily photographs – all of which could have influenced me and was, indeed, separate from the participants' experience.

Within each month's DKJ I tended to use the stitches I shared in the workshops that led up to each phase. This was not necessarily the case for the participants as they were not obliged, or even expected, to use the stitches I shared within the workshops. The stitches I shared were given more as examples so participants could expand their stitch

repertoire if they wished, providing them with more options to deploy when knitting. The stitches I shared in the participant workshops were:[15]

- **Phase 1** – I-cords and GSRs
- **Phase 2** – Slip stitches, bobbles and wrap stitches
- **Phase 3** – Stacked increases and stacked decreases.

I played with different structural elements of knitting within each of my DKJs. Although I used a lot of garter stitch, how I used it was different from day to day. My DKJs from Phase 1 and Phase 3 show a lot of 3D surface knitting and forming shapes whereas Phase 2 is much flatter. Table 4-12 shares an overview of each DKJ I completed including those I created as Participant 12. My Participant 12 DKJs are then presented in Table 4-13 to Table 4-15, with the other two DKJs in the appendices. The reflections from my DKJs are found in chapters 6, 7 and 8, as opposed to within the pro-forma tables.

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[15] In Chapter 5, Section 5.3, Table 5-3 highlights which participants used the stitches from the workshops in their DKJs.

Image:	Name:	Purpose:	Table Number:
	First full month DKJ	To test daily knit journalling for one full month.	Appendix A.3
	Phase 1 DKJ	To gain an insider perspective of the participant study.	Table 4-13
	Phase 2 DKJ	To gain an insider perspective of the participant study.	Table 4-14
	Phase 3 DKJ	To gain an insider perspective of the participant study.	Table 4-15
	Additional DKJ	To continue daily knit journalling after fulfilling the participant study.	Appendix A.3

Table 4-12 Overview table of all the DKJs completed.

Name:	Phase 1 DKJ
Date:	May 2021
Frequency:	Daily
Duration:	28 days
Purpose:	To gain an insider perspective of the participant study.

Stitches from workshops:	Yes / ~~No~~
	   • I-cords
	   • GSRs

Stitches commonly used:	• I-cords
	   • GSRs
	   • Moss stitch

Substitute yarns:	~~Yes~~ / No
Written reflection:	~~Yes~~ / No

Table 4-13 Pro Forma for Phase 1 DKJ

Name:	Phase 2 DKJ
Date:	August 2021
Frequency:	Daily
Duration:	28 days
Purpose:	To gain an insider perspective of the participant study.
Stitches from workshops:	Yes / ~~No~~ • Bobbles • I-cords • GSRs • Slip stitch
Stitches commonly used:	• GSRs • Garter stitch • Slip stitch
Substitute yarns:	~~Yes~~ / No
Written reflection:	Yes / ~~No~~

Table 4-14 Pro Forma for Phase 2 DKJ

Name:	Phase 3 DKJ
Date:	March 2022
Frequency:	Daily
Duration:	28 days
Purpose:	To gain an insider perspective of the participant study.
Stitches from workshops:	Yes / ~~No~~ • I-cords • GSRs • Stacked increases • Stacked decreases
Stitches commonly used:	• I-cords • Stacked stitches • Garter stitch
Substitute yarns:	Yes / ~~No~~
Written reflection:	Yes / ~~No~~

Table 4-15 Pro Forma for Phase 3 DKJ

4.4 CONCLUSION

The aim of this chapter was to share my autoethnographic practice and how I approached the practice of free knitting. Each element of my autoethnographic practice was influenced by and responded to the RQs (see Section 1.8) as well as impacting the progression of the participant study.

Stitchplorations (Section 4.1) enabled an investigation into stitches that might be deemed as enjoyable and easily achievable to knit in order to enhance motivation and communicate emotional states – in line with RQ1. I found that stitches that changed the shape and direction of the knitting, such as GSRs, were effective in communicating changing emotions, as evidenced in Table 4-2. Stitchplorations aided development of the participant study as they helped me to decide which stitches to share during the participant workshops. I ensured that the stitches I shared were suitable for each participant's knitting abilities and confidence. Ultimately, I chose stitches which were simple to create but had a look of being more complex, such as i-cords, GSRs and slip stitches.

The aim of Testing the Boundaries of Knit Journalling (Section 4.2) was to explore the concept of a KJ; this was fundamental to forming the participant study. Through testing differing time scales I gained an understanding of the opportunities and limitations that a KJ offered in terms of self-expression (RQ2); this was particularly evident in KJs focused on time and knitted form. The limitation of using only one colour KJ, Table 4-9, meant I was unable to express myself fully within the KJ and highlighted the necessity not to impose colour or yarn constraints on the participants. Furthermore, by adjusting timescales on my own KJs, it aided development of the 28-day DKJ. These experimental KJs also helped me to suggest a daily time to knit for participants such as 10-30 minutes per day.

Entering the participant study as Participant 12 (Section 4.3) was an enriching experience which has significantly enhanced this research. I became a contributor, gaining an insider perspective, able to empathise with the other eleven participants. Like them, I experienced each element of the research design first-hand (Section 3.4). I

experienced the liberation of creating and exploring stitches and colour to communicate my emotional state (RQ1).

5

Free Knitting:
The Participants' Journey

In this chapter I share the process of free knitting and daily knit journalling from the participants' perspective: how it was undertaken, their responses and the outcomes of the participatory process. In order to do this, I consider the participant study as a whole and then concentrate on one participant's journey to give a first-hand insight (Section 5.6). The purpose of this chapter is to lay the foundation for the upcoming themes chapters, and to deepen an understanding of free knitting and how it was implemented within the research.

The participant study took place between March 2021 – April 2022, with 11 participants recruited, as detailed in Section 3.4.1. As Table 5-1 shows, eight participants fully completed all phases of the study. Owing to a bereavement, Participant 7 did not take part in Phase 3. Participants 4 and 10 did not do the final interview in Phase 3 owing to illness and holidays. Therefore, I have complete data from eight participants.

Phases Completed:	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
Participant 1	✓	✓	✓
Participant 2	✓	✓	✓
Participant 3	✓	✓	✓
Participant 4	✓	✓	x
Participant 5	✓	✓	✓
Participant 6	✓	✓	✓
Participant 7	✓	✓	∇
Participant 8	✓	✓	✓
Participant 9	✓	✓	✓
Participant 10	✓	✓	x
Participant 11	✓	✓	✓

Table 5-1 Details which participants completed all phases of activity. ∇= did not fulfil, ✓ = completed, x = no interview

As might be expected at the commencement of a project, Phase 1 brought something new to participants; free knitting was something for them to try and the process of daily knit journalling was fresh to them. Over time, as the phases moved, for some

participants the activities became more of a burden, a task that needed to be fulfilled: "there were times when I just was doing it to tick it off the list of things that needed to be done" (Participant 8, Phase 2, Interview). Yet, to combat the potential burden, the participants took ownership of their participation – making how they participated their own and making it work for them, so that their participation was sustained: "switched to knitting in the morning so it feels like less of a chore before going to bed" (Participant 1, Phase 2, Diary Entry). In some cases, participants changed the location of where they knitted, which changed their feelings towards the DKJ. Participant 2 took to her garden to knit and reported that this affected what she knitted and how she registered her emotions at the time of knitting.

5.1 PARTICIPANTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE DWKS

I included the DWKS[16] as part of the activity as a way of providing data to evaluate KnitWell, to measure participants' daily emotions at the time of knitting on their DKJ. It was not intended to affect the participants' knitting. Yet, to some extent, this method did affect the KnitWell process itself, especially as several participants noted that completing the DWKS provided them with time to register their emotions and reflect on how these influenced what knitting they chose to do. The DWKS also made some participants aware that they were living with mixed emotions. Participant 10 shared that:

> I found the scale quite interesting … I realised that you can actually quite, quite happily live with quite mixed emotions. In the sense of, like, you can feel sort of, what I was conscious of is because of this kind of semi lockdown mode, like, the whole time was quite a lonely time for me. So, so that was quite a strong feature. But within that, it had, like, days when I was like perfectly happy and relaxed and lonely. And other days when I was quite anxious or unhappy and lonely, you know? And, I do think those sorts of things did influence, like, what I was compelled to try and do (Phase 1, Interview).

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[16] Discussed in Chapter 3, Section 3.3.4, illustrated in Figure 3.6.

However, for Participant 6, the DWKS appeared more negative than her perception of her emotions:

> I was really surprised, like, how negative the scale seemed to come out. And I was, like, I don't think I'm feeling this bad. And that was interesting for me, definitely. Because I think if it had been more like writing my feelings straight into the knitting, I probably would have put more of like a positive spin on it (Phase 1, Interview).

Participant 10 posited that the DWKS allowed specific time to "settle into understanding how you're feeling" (Phase 1, Interview), and in some cases, the DWKS aided participants' self-reflection as the process of generating a record allowed participants to reflect on their emotions over a period of time.

5.2 WRITTEN JOURNAL ENTRIES

Written journals were a mandatory component of Phase 2, alongside participants' DWKS and DKJs, and an optional activity in Phase 3 (see Chapter 3, Section 3.4.1). Table 5-2 shows which participants kept a written journal throughout the phases of activity. Three participants chose to maintain a written diary, as well as their DWKS and DKJ, in every day of Phase 3, and a further six participants made occasional written diary entries. All of these written diary entries were analysed and are discussed in chapters 6, 7 and 8.

Through the written reflection of Phase 2 it became evident that it is possible to knit anywhere: on the bus, in the staff room on a lunch break, outside in the garden with friends. Yet, in contrast, writing generally requires more focus and quiet time. Participant 4 has chronic fatigue and often suffered from brain fog; she explained that she found that "knitting [gave] me energy" (Phase 2, Interview) and that it didn't require her focused attention. However, she found writing draining and "if there's people around I just, I'm very distracted. And like I need complete, complete, quiet to do it. Not the knitting, I can do the knitting anywhere. But the recording's got to be done in a quiet place" (ibid.).

Written Diary:	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
Participant 1	✘	✔	☐
Participant 2	✘	✔	☐
Participant 3	✘	✔	✔
Participant 4	✘	✔	☐
Participant 5	✘	✔	✘
Participant 6	✘	✔	☐
Participant 7	✘	✔	▽
Participant 8	✘	✔	✔
Participant 9	✘	✔	✔
Participant 10	✘	✔	☐
Participant 11	✘	✔	☐

Table 5-2 Indicates when participants kept a written journal alongside their DKJ. ✘ = no written journal, ✔ = written journal every day, ☐ = sporadic written journal, not completed every day, ▽ = did not take part in this phase.

In some cases, the added element of written reflection made Phase 2 more challenging. For Participants 8 and 6 this was because they had to carve more time out from their days to complete it. Participant 5 found Phase 2 more emotionally demanding because it was more personal and "having to write about it, like, having, like, fielding that context made me kind of maybe explore the day, maybe more so than last time" (Phase 2, Interview), which made the whole experience "more intense" (ibid.). Furthermore, Participant 6 felt that the written reflection should have come more naturally and struggled with that, "I always thought, like, journalling would be, like, something that would come more easily to me" (Phase 2, Interview).

5.3 STITCHES AND YARNS

The techniques shared within the workshops were often seen in the corresponding phase's knitting month; Table 5-3 indicates which participants chose to incorporate stitches from the workshops into their DKJs. In the Phase 2 workshops, one of the techniques shared was slip stitches, and many participants enjoyed this newly learnt technique: "I really enjoyed the slip stitches. They were really easy, and they were easy

to just kind of, if I wanted to do something different, you know" (Participant 3, Phase 2, Interview). In addition, Participant 8 noted, "what I quite liked is the slip stitches … the different effects of something - have I put this yarn with that one. Oh, no. Well, let's just see what happens if I put these two together" (Phase 2, Interview).

Stitches from Workshops:	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
Participant 1	✔	✔	✔
Participant 2	✔	✔	✔
Participant 3	✖	✔	✖
Participant 4	✔	✔	✖
Participant 5	✔	✔	✖
Participant 6	✔	✔	✖
Participant 7	✔	✔	▽
Participant 8	✖	✔	✔
Participant 9	✔	✔	✖
Participant 10	✔	✔	✔
Participant 11	✔	✔	✖

Table 5-3 Indicates if participants used the stitches I demonstrated, during the workshops, within their DKJ. ✖ = did not use stitches from the workshops, ✔ = did use stitches from the workshops, ▽ = did not take part in this phase.

There was an option for participants to substitute up to six yarns in each phase from the yarn palette provided and several participants chose to do this, shown in Table 5-4. Participant 2 substituted yarns in each phase and always swapped to a yarn that held meaning to her, had memories of what she had knitted before or where the yarn had come from. Additionally, Participant 5 substituted specific colours into the palette as they brought her joy.

Substitute Yarns:	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
Participant 1	✖	✖	✖
Participant 2	✔	✔	✔
Participant 3	✖	✖	✖
Participant 4	✖	✖	✔

Participant 5	✓	✓	✓
Participant 6	✗	✗	✗
Participant 7	✗	✗	▽
Participant 8	✗	✓	✓
Participant 9	✗	✗	✗
Participant 10	✗	✗	✗
Participant 11	✓	✓	✓

Table 5-4 Indicates whether participants substituted their own yarns throughout each phase of activity. ✗= did not substitute yarns, ✓= did substitute yarns, ▽= did not take part in this phase.

5.4 EXTERNAL INFLUENCES

Some of the life circumstances of participants, at the time of each phase, did affect their knitting process; these include education and work deadlines, family circumstances and health conditions. Both Participant 1 and Participant 5 had education and work deadlines during Phase 2 and Phase 3. For Participant 1 this meant she had less time to focus on the DKJ, whereas Participant 5 aimed for "some element of structure within free knitting" (Phase 3, Interview); this resulted in marling[17] and carrying on techniques used from the previous day.

A number of participants struggled with COVID-19 restrictions and lockdowns, as well as family illness, which impacted their day-to-day ability to focus on daily knit journalling; in some cases, the DWKS responses held a direct correlation to these circumstances. Participant 8 shared how the DWKS helped to register what events had impacted her and chart her emotions, "in terms of where I was emotionally from day to day, this was a big deal" (Phase 3, interview).

Prior to the project, some participants disclosed they had pre-existing health conditions such as chronic fatigue, fibromyalgia, anxiety and depression; these conditions all affected how they undertook daily tasks and held a negative impact on their day-to-day wellbeing. In some cases, this did impact their DKJs. One participant recorded that they were tracking their pain through the DKJ rather than their emotions. However, for another participant, daily knit journalling and taking time out to register her emotions

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[17] Marling is defined in the glossary page xiv.

with the DWKS meant that she was able to get a diagnosis of anxiety and depression from her medical doctor; this is discussed further in Chapter 7 (Section 7.5).

5.5 PARTICIPANT RESULTS: WARWICK-EDINBURGH MENTAL WELLBEING SCALE (WEMWBS)

As previously discussed (Chapter 3, Section 3.3.4), I invited participants to complete the 14-item WEMWBS at the beginning and end of each knitting month.[18] The 14-item WEMWBS was an important aspect of the process as it indicated if there was a change in the participants' overall mental wellbeing throughout the period of daily knit journalling.

It is evident from the WEMWBS analysis that participants' general wellbeing did improve from phase to phase. Figure 5.1 shows the proportions of low, moderate and high wellbeing[19] before and after the Phase 1 knitting month; a 25% rise in 'moderate' wellbeing, from 33% to 58%, was evident. A 25% increase in 'moderate' wellbeing was also evident in Phase 2 (see Figure 5.2). Interestingly, the raised level of 'moderate' wellbeing at the end of Phase 1 matched the level of 'moderate' wellbeing at the commencement of Phase 2; both being at 58%. There are two speculative scenarios for this. It may be that the activity of daily knit journalling in Phase 1 made participants more aware of their emotions, and so aided both a better understanding of these and their ability to control them, which in turn led to a consistent level of wellbeing. Alternatively, external influences on participants' lives between Phase 1 and Phase 2 could have led to a sustained level of wellbeing. For example, there was a lifting of government initiated lockdowns in the UK, pubs and social hubs re-opened, on 17th May 2021 and legal limits for social gatherings were removed, on 19th July 2021. Phase 2 began in July 2021, it cannot be ignored that the impact of the COVID-19 related changes could have impacted participants' wellbeing. Arguably, elements of both these factors could have had an impact on the WEMWBS results.

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[18] An example of a completed WEMWBS is illustrated in Figure 5.12 and Figure 5.13.
[19] The criteria for low, moderate and high wellbeing are detailed in Chapter 3, Section 3.6.1.
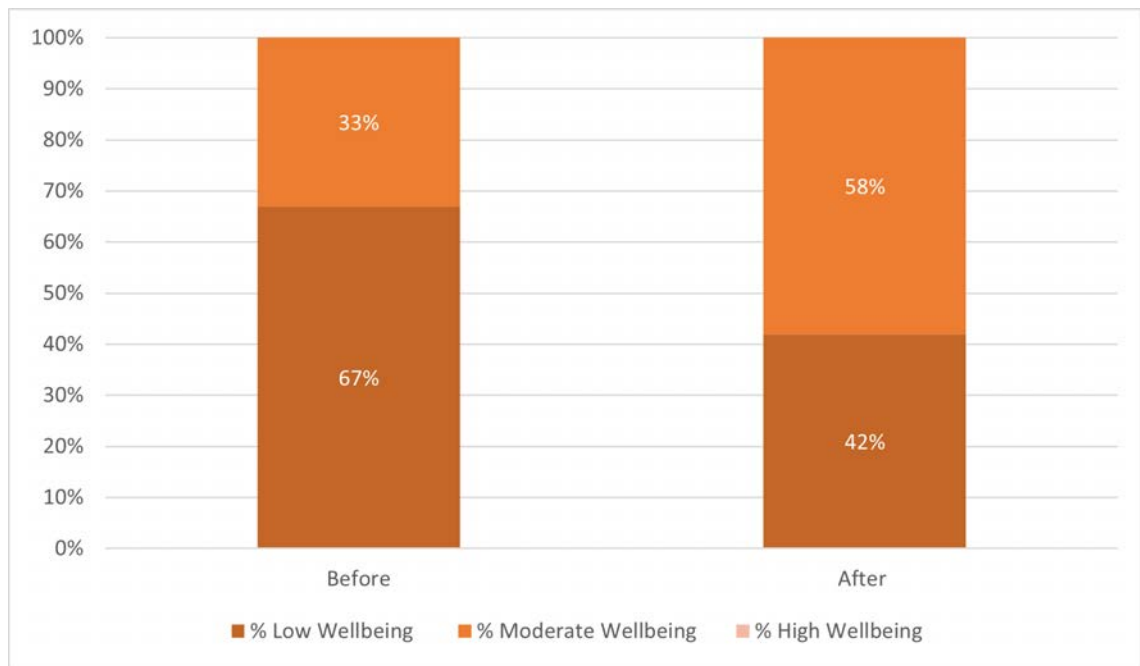
Figure 5.1 Phase 1 WEMWBS results. Proportions of wellbeing before and after intervention. 'Before' taken at the start of the Phase 1 knitting month, 'After' taken at the end of the Phase 1 knitting month.
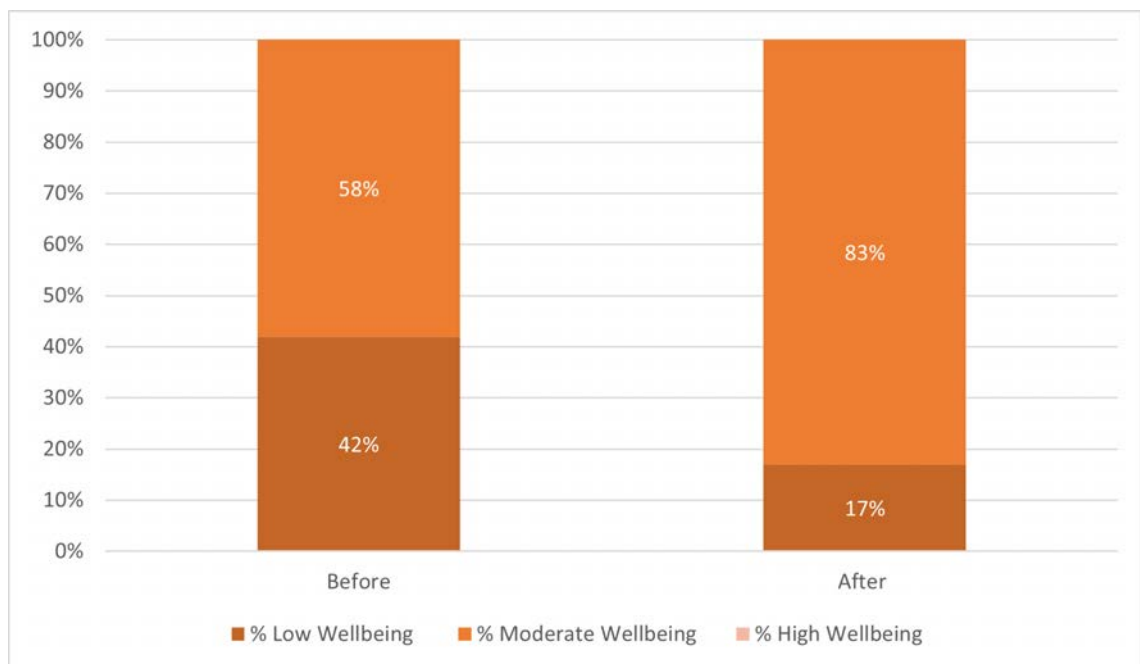
Figure 5.2 Phase 2 WEMWBS results. Proportions of wellbeing before and after intervention. 'Before' taken at the start of the Phase 2 knitting month, 'After' taken at the end of the Phase 2 knitting month.

The largest difference in general wellbeing is noted during the Phase 3 knitting month, illustrated in Figure 5.3, which indicated a rise in 'moderate' wellbeing from 50% to 80%, an overall increase of 30%.
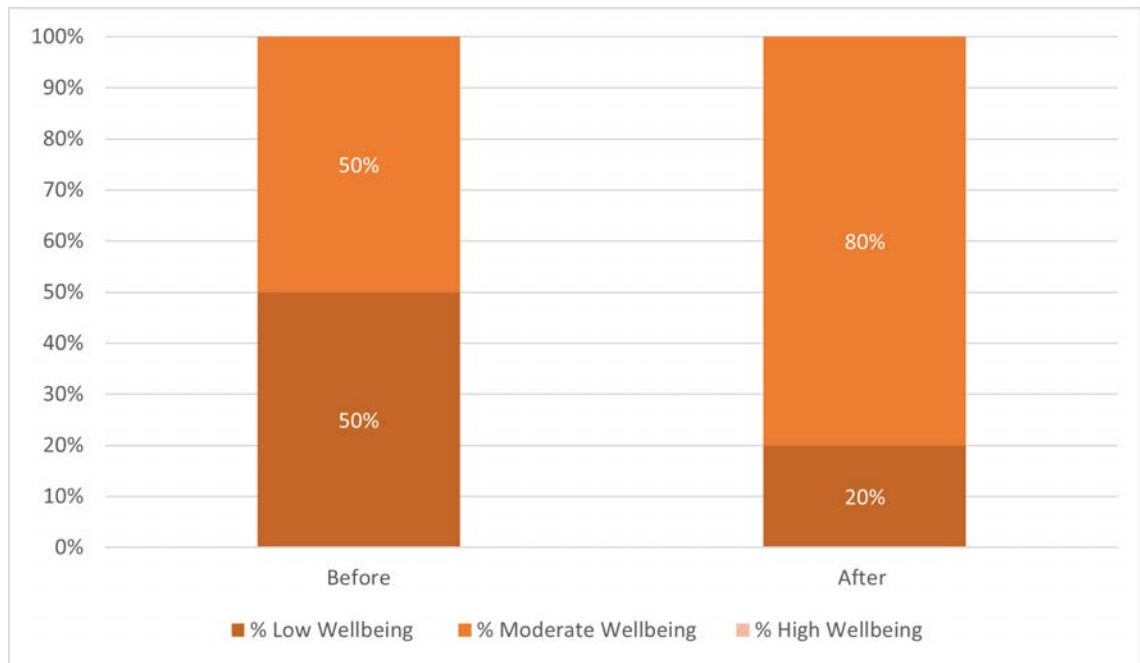
Figure 5.3 Phase 3 WEMWBS results. Proportions of wellbeing before and after intervention. 'Before' taken at the start of the Phase 3 knitting month, 'After' taken at the end of the Phase 3 knitting month.
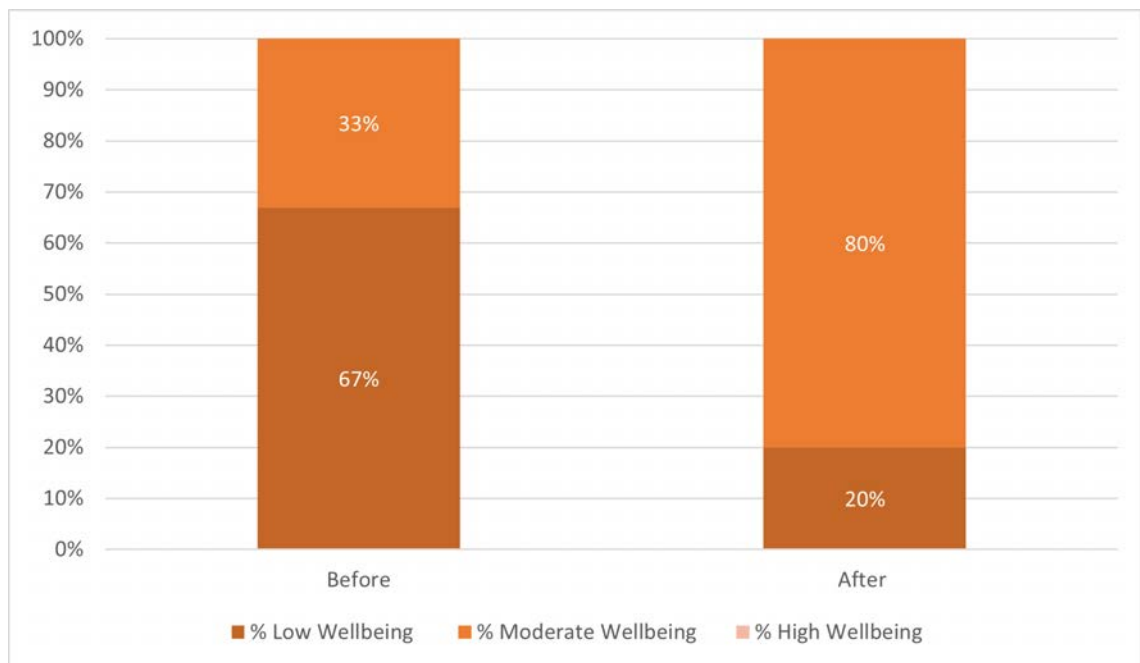
Figure 5.4 WEMWBS results, culmination of the three phases of activity. Proportions of wellbeing before and after intervention. 'Before' taken at the start of the Phase 1 knitting month, 'After' taken at the end of the Phase 3 knitting month.

Illustrated in Figure 5.4 are the overall changes in the participants' wellbeing from the start of Phase 1 to the end of Phase 3; it highlights that before Phase 1 knitting

commenced, an average of 67% of participants had 'low' wellbeing and 33% of participants had 'moderate' wellbeing, according to the WEMWBS analysis. Yet at the end of the Phase 3 knitting month, an average of 20% of participants had 'low' wellbeing and 80% of participants had 'moderate' wellbeing. This highlights that 'moderate' wellbeing increased by 47% throughout the span of the project. Therefore, participants had an increase in their general wellbeing overall.
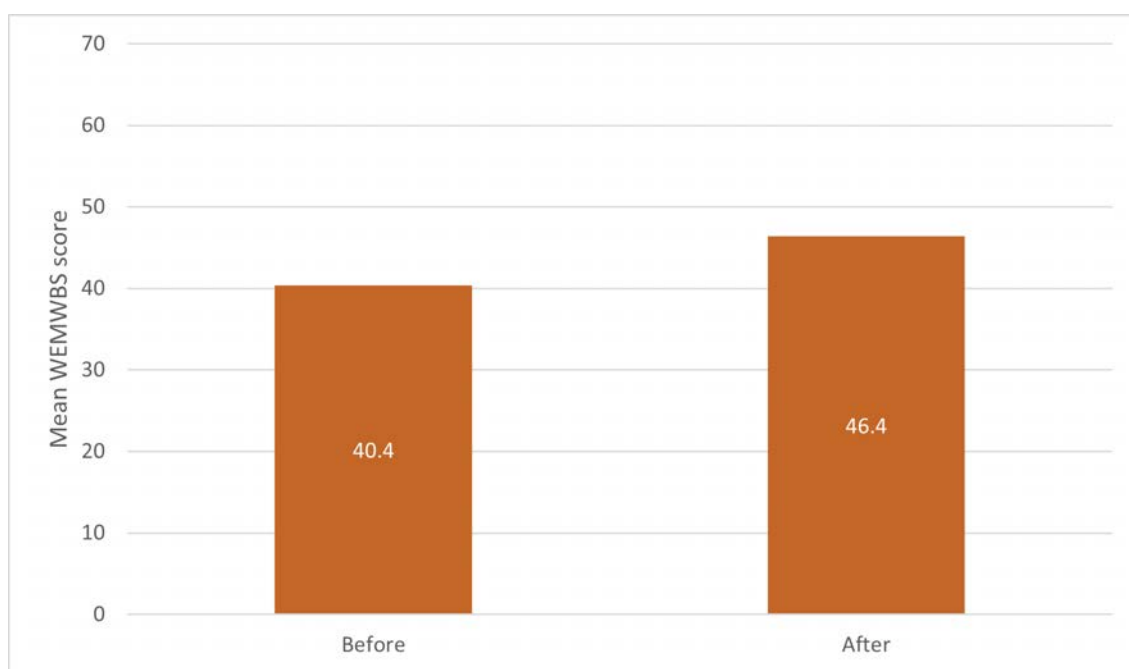
Figure 5.5 Mean WEMWBS score, 'Before' taken at the start of the Phase 1 knitting month, 'After' taken at the end of the Phase 3 knitting month.

In support of this, Figure 5.5 indicates the mean WEMWBS score[20] from the start of Phase 1 to the end of Phase 3. The WEMWBS scoring system is out of 70 and the mean score at the start of Phase 1 was 40.4; this changed to 46.4 at the end of Phase 3, highlighting that the overall mean score increased by 6 points throughout the process.

I am aware that the change in participants' overall wellbeing over a 13-month period may not wholly be down to daily knit journalling as external life factors will have impacted this to some greater or lesser extent; the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the imposed government-initiated lockdowns being likely substantial influences upon participants' wellbeing. However, there is a noticeable change to participants'

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[20] See Section 3.6.1 for calculations required for the mean analysis.

general wellbeing in the knitting month of each phase, suggesting the activity had a positive impact on participants' general wellbeing. There are a couple of specific exceptions: Figure 5.14 highlights a noticeable drop in Participant 5's WEMWBS score from 41 to 28 after the initial Phase 1 knitting month, and Participant 1's WEMWBS in Phase 2 stayed the same throughout. These highlight that there were individual fluctuations between each phase of knitting, but the overall findings, as stated above, show an increase to general wellbeing.

5.6   PARTICIPANT 5 – FREE KNITTING EXPERIENCE

Having discussed the participants' journey broadly, I will now concentrate on one participant, Participant 5. Sharing her progression from Phase 1 to Phase 3 provides a sense of an individual participant's experience of the project and gives an understanding of all the elements I invited participants to undertake.

5.6.1   LOOKING AT PARTICIPANT 5'S EXPERIENCE

This section considers a number of activities (shown in Table 5-5 and illustrated in Figure 5.6) undertaken by the participants throughout the knitting month.[21] These activities are illustrated with the following examples.

- Examples of Participant 5's completed DWKS from Phase 1, illustrated in Figure 5.7.
- Participant 5's Phase 1 daily photographs are illustrated in Figure 5.8.
- I have shared the progress of her Phase 1 DKJ, illustrated in Figure 5.9 and Figure 5.10.
- Pro forma tables for each DKJ created by Participant 5, illustrated in Table 5-6 to Table 5-8.
- A sample of her written diary entries, illustrated in Figure 5.11.
- A completed WEMWBS from the start of Phase 1, illustrated in Figure 5.12.
- A completed WEMWBS from the end of Phase 3, illustrated in Figure 5.13.

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[21] A diagram of each phase of the participant study was illustrated in Chapter 3, Figure 3.8.

- Figure 5.14 shares the overall WEMWBS results for Participant 5 from each phase of activity and highlights any change to her wellbeing.
- Figure 5.15, Figure 5.16 and Figure 5.17 provide a by phase analysis of Participant 5's emotions throughout each phase.

Participant activities during the knitting month:	Daily	Monthly
WEMWBS (start of knitting month)		✓
DWKS	✓	
DKJ Entry	✓	
Photograph of daily knitting	✓	
Written Journal Entry (Phase 2)	✓	
WEMWBS (end of knitting month)		✓

Table 5-5 Details the participant activities throughout the knitting month.
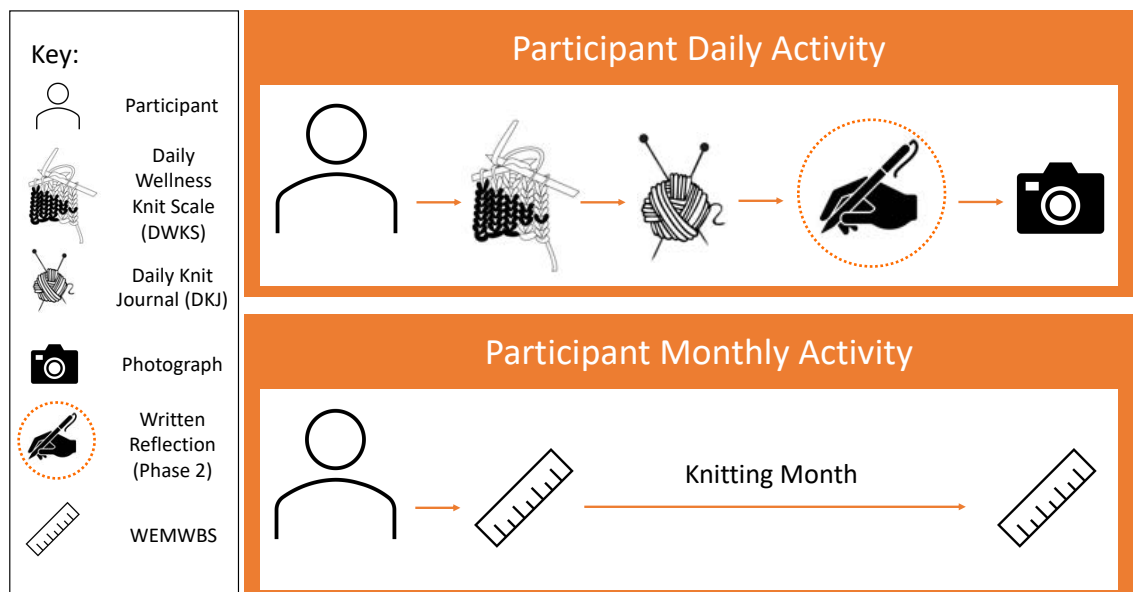
Figure 5.6 Diagram of participant activities throughout the knitting month

KnitWell Workbook: Phase One

Date: 15/05

Happy
Lonely
Relaxed
Anxious
Useful
Insecure
Optimistic

Strongly Disagree — Strongly Agree

Where are you? : BEDROOM
What time is it? : 13:50

Date: 16/05

Happy
Lonely
Relaxed
Anxious
Useful
Insecure
Optimistic

Strongly Disagree — Strongly Agree
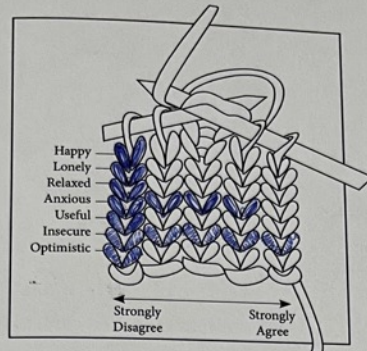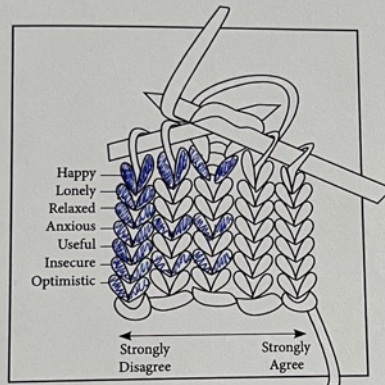
Where are you? : BEDROOM
What time is it? : 14:00

Date: 17/05

Happy
Lonely
Relaxed
Anxious
Useful
Insecure
Optimistic

Strongly Disagree — Strongly Agree
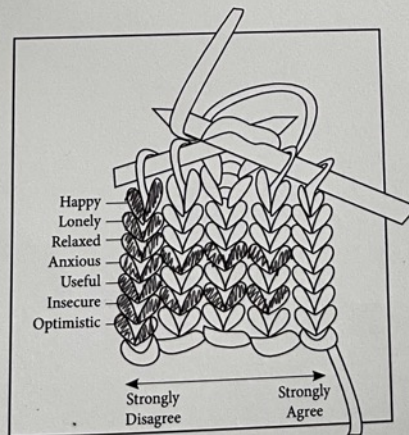
Where are you? : BEDROOM
What time is it? : 19:42

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Version:1.1

Figure 5.7 Participant 5, Phase 1, example of completed DWKS

Figure 5.8 Phase 1, Participant Five, from left-right, photographs of daily knitting, days 1-28

Figure 5.9 Progression of a DKJ: Phase 1, Participant 5, from left to right, 7-days, 14-days.

Figure 5.10 Progression of a DKJ: Phase 1, Participant 5, 28-days, the DKJ as a whole.

Name:	Phase 1, Participant 5
Date:	May 2021
Frequency:	Daily
Duration:	28 days
Stitches from workshops:	Yes / ~~No~~
Stitches commonly used:	• I-cords • Garter stitch • Stocking stitch
Substitute yarns:	Yes / ~~No~~
Written reflection:	~~Yes~~ / No
Key reflections:	• "It just makes me feel really awkward. And I think it's very, like, personal looking… Like, for me looking at any of my normal previous projects, they don't feel awkward to show somebody" (Interview).

Table 5-6 Pro Forma for Phase 1, Participant 5, DKJ, 28 days

Name:	Phase 2, Participant 5
Date:	July-August 2021
Frequency:	Daily
Duration:	28 days
Stitches from workshops:	Yes / ~~No~~
Stitches commonly used:	• Slip stitch • Garter stitch • Stocking stitch
Substitute yarns:	Yes / ~~No~~
Written reflection:	Yes / ~~No~~
Key reflections:	• "I remember when I finished this, I actually struggled to look at it, I found it so painful to look at, whereas I can actually now look at it and not be in pain. So that's good" (Interview). • "I think I definitely, sometimes, if I wasn't being playful during the actual process I would become playful at the end. Um, so that'd be sometimes where I'd like mess around. So, I think the crochet probably is like another example of that" (Interview).

Table 5-7 Pro Forma for Phase 2, Participant 5, DKJ, 28 days

Name:	Phase 3, Participant 5
Date:	February – March 2022
Frequency:	Daily
Duration:	28 days
Stitches from workshops:	~~Yes~~ / No
Stitches commonly used:	• Garter stitch, Stocking stitch and 2x2 rib
Substitute yarns:	Yes / ~~No~~
Written reflection:	~~Yes~~ / No
Key reflections:	• "Over time I became interested in, like, abstract shapes, so less about how to use stitches to form interesting shapes, but more about how to, like, how to put pieces of knitting together to make interesting shapes. So, obviously, like, I've got this weird, 3D flower in the middle, which was originally, like, I think, one long rectangle and I think I definitely got more interested in, kind of, like, like, 3D shape and like, yeah, you can see lots of holes. I became really interested in, kind of, like, lack of space and how things could, like, all interact and feed into each other and, kind of, it was, I think it became interesting how, like, I think at first I was really obsessed with thinking about stitches or being focused on the stitches and I have then progressively got more interested in the piece as a whole, and how things could interact. Like, I did a lot of things that are, like, in the middle of things this time. And yeah, I kept wanting to put things in a hole or remove a hole, or..." (Interview).

Table 5-8 Pro Forma for Phase 3, Participant 5, DKJ, 28 days

KnitWell Workbook: Phase Two

Date: 16/13

Happy —
Lonely —
Relaxed —
Anxious —
Useful —
Insecure —
Optimistic —

Extremely
Disagree

Extremely
Agree
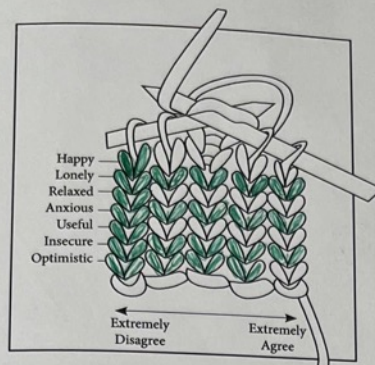
Where are you? : _NOTTS FLAT_

What time is it? : _19:50_

Notes:

ABOUT THE DAY:
○ STRESSFUL DAY @ WORK
○ PERIOD PAIN
○ LISTENING TO CHRISTMAS MUSIC

ABOUT THE KNITTING:
○ CHRISTMAS COLOURS → HOPE FOR LIFE/LIGHT/JOY
○ TWO YARNS → THICKNESS → COMFORT
○ RIBBING → COMFORT + SUPPORT

Figure 5.11 Participant 5, Phase 2, a page from the workbook showing an example of a completed DWKS and written diary entry

Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS)

Below are some statements about feelings and thoughts.
Please select the answer that best describes your experience of each over the last 2 weeks.

	None of the Time	Rarely	Some of the Time	Often	All of the Time
I've been feeling optimistic about the future	1	2	(3)	4	5
I've been feeling useful	1	2	(3)	4	5
I've been feeling relaxed	1	2	(3)	4	5
I've been feeling interested in other people	1	2	(3)	4	5
I've had energy to spare	1	(2)	3	4	5
I've been dealing with problems well	1	2	(3)	4	5
I've been thinking clearly	1	2	3	(4)	5
I've been feeling good about myself	1	2	(3)	4	5
I've been feeling close to other people	1	2	(3)	4	5
I've been feeling confident	1	2	(3)	4	5
I've been able to make up my own mind about things	1	(2)	3	4	5
I've been feeling loved	1	2	(3)	4	5
I've been interested in new things	1	2	(3)	4	5
I've been feeling cheerful	1	2	(3)	4	5

Figure 5.12 Participant 5, completed WEMWBS at the start of Phase 1

Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS)

Below are some statements about feelings and thoughts.
Please select the answer that best describes your experience of each over the last 2 weeks.

	None of the Time	Rarely	Some of the Time	Often	All of the Time
I've been feeling optimistic about the future	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling useful	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling relaxed	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling interested in other people	1	2	3	4	5
I've had energy to spare	1	2	3	4	5
I've been dealing with problems well	1	2	3	4	5
I've been thinking clearly	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling good about myself	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling close to other people	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling confident	1	2	3	4	5
I've been able to make up my own mind about things	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling loved	1	2	3	4	5
I've been interested in new things	1	2	3	4	5
I've been feeling cheerful	1	2	3	4	5

Figure 5.13 Participant 5, completed WEMWBS at the end of Phase 3
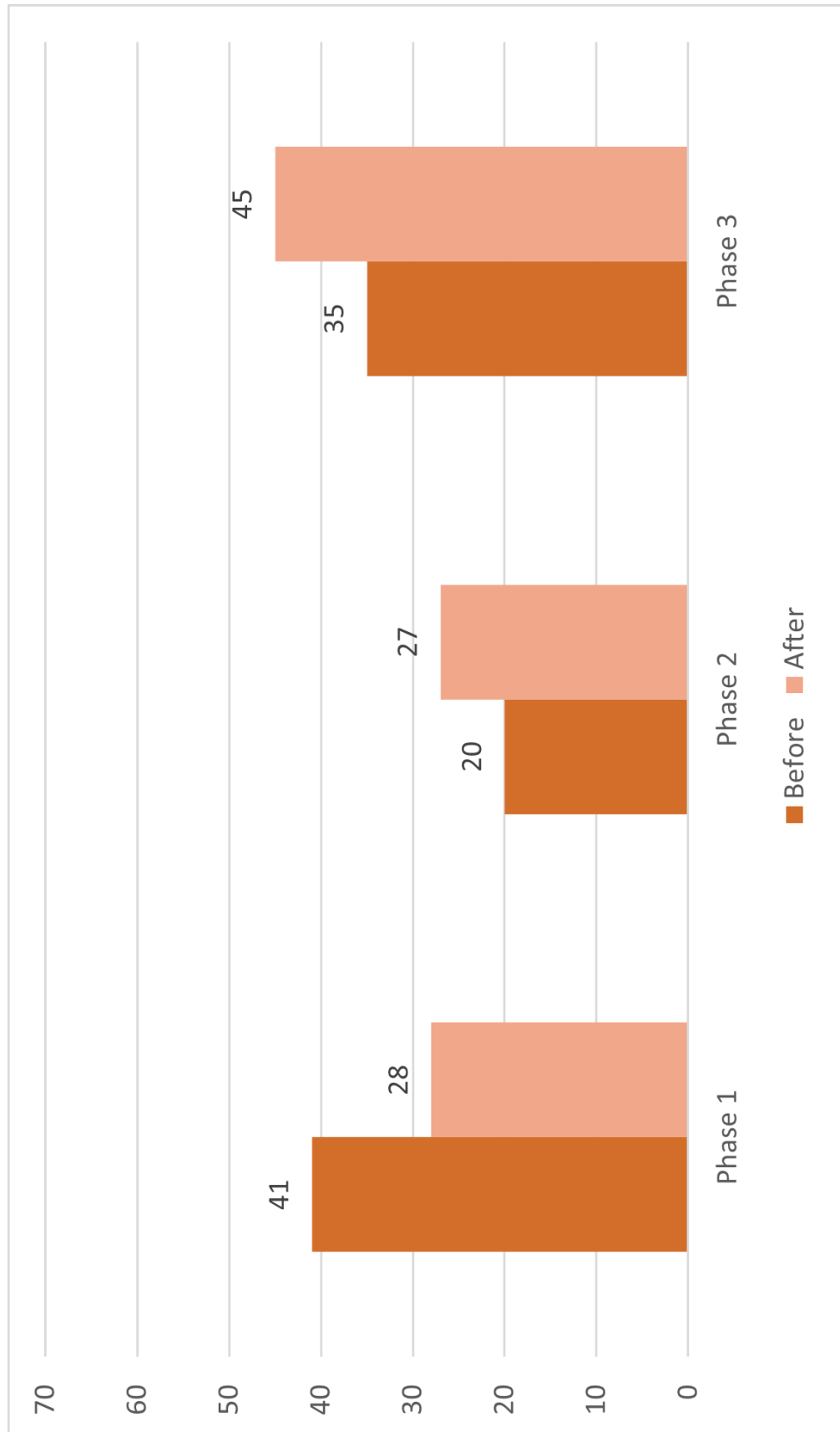
Figure 5.14 Participant 5, WEMWBS scores from each phase. 'Before' taken at the start of the knitting month, 'After' taken at the end of the knitting month.

Figure 5.15 DWKS results, Phase 1, Participant 5
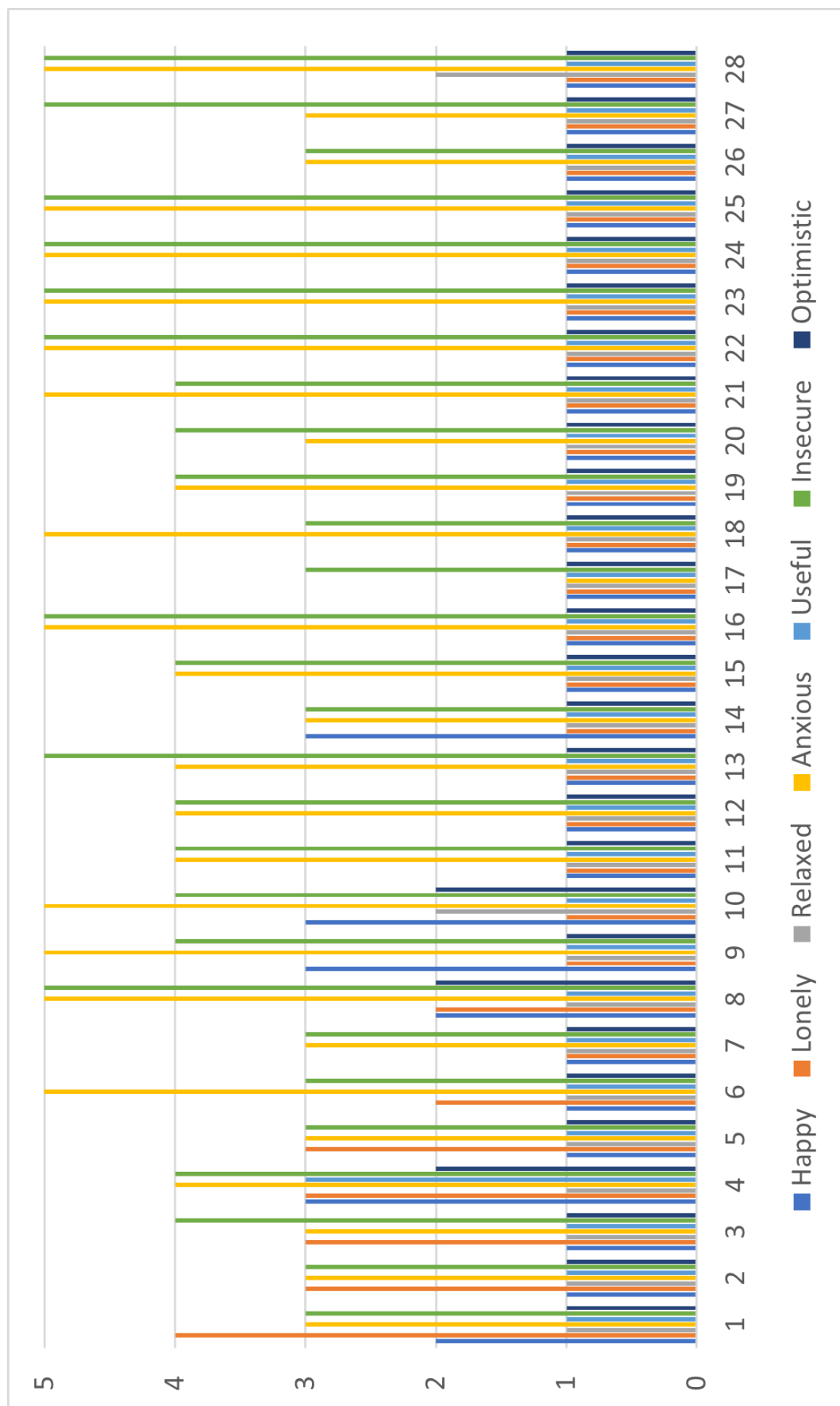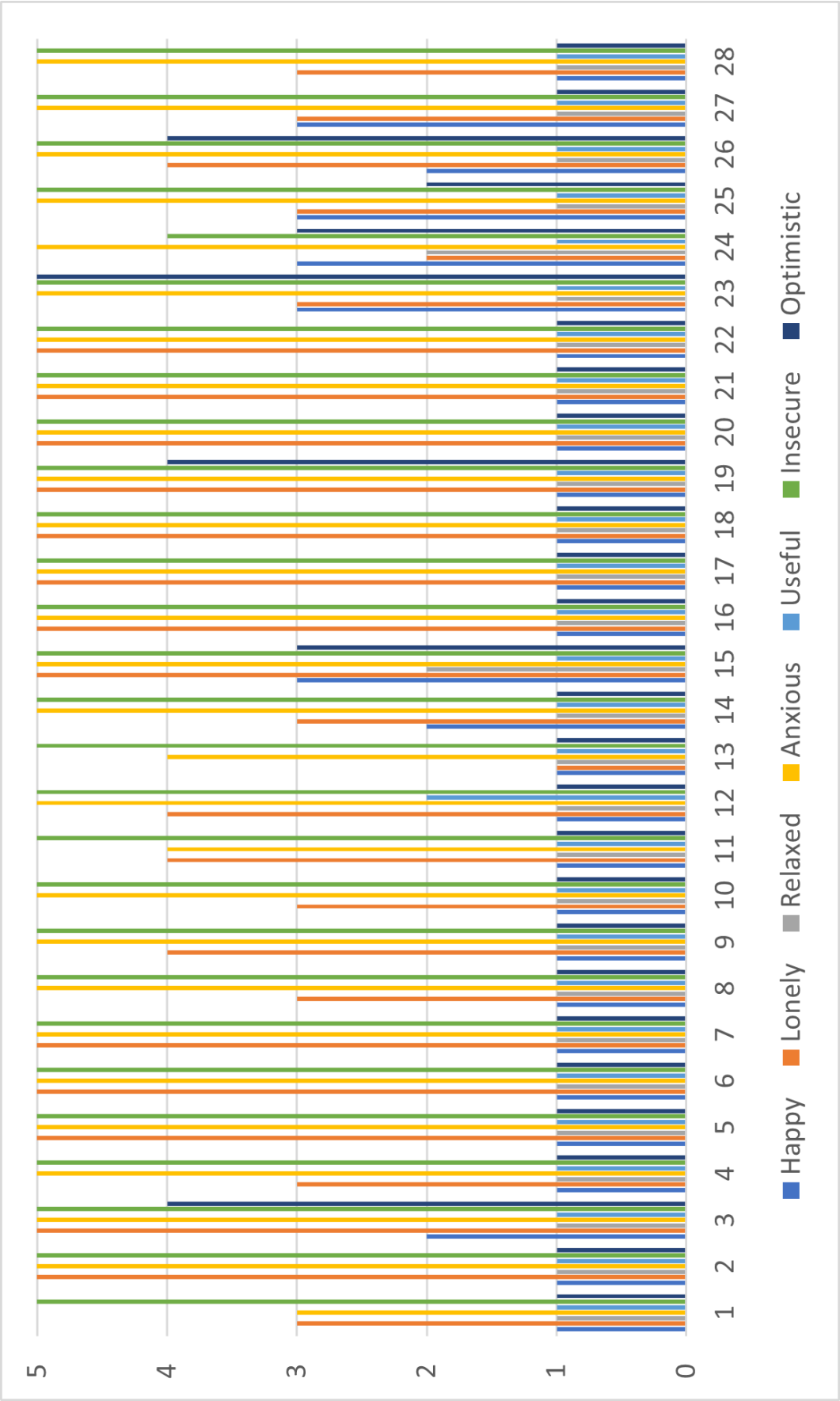
Figure 5.16 DWKS results, Phase 2, Participant 5
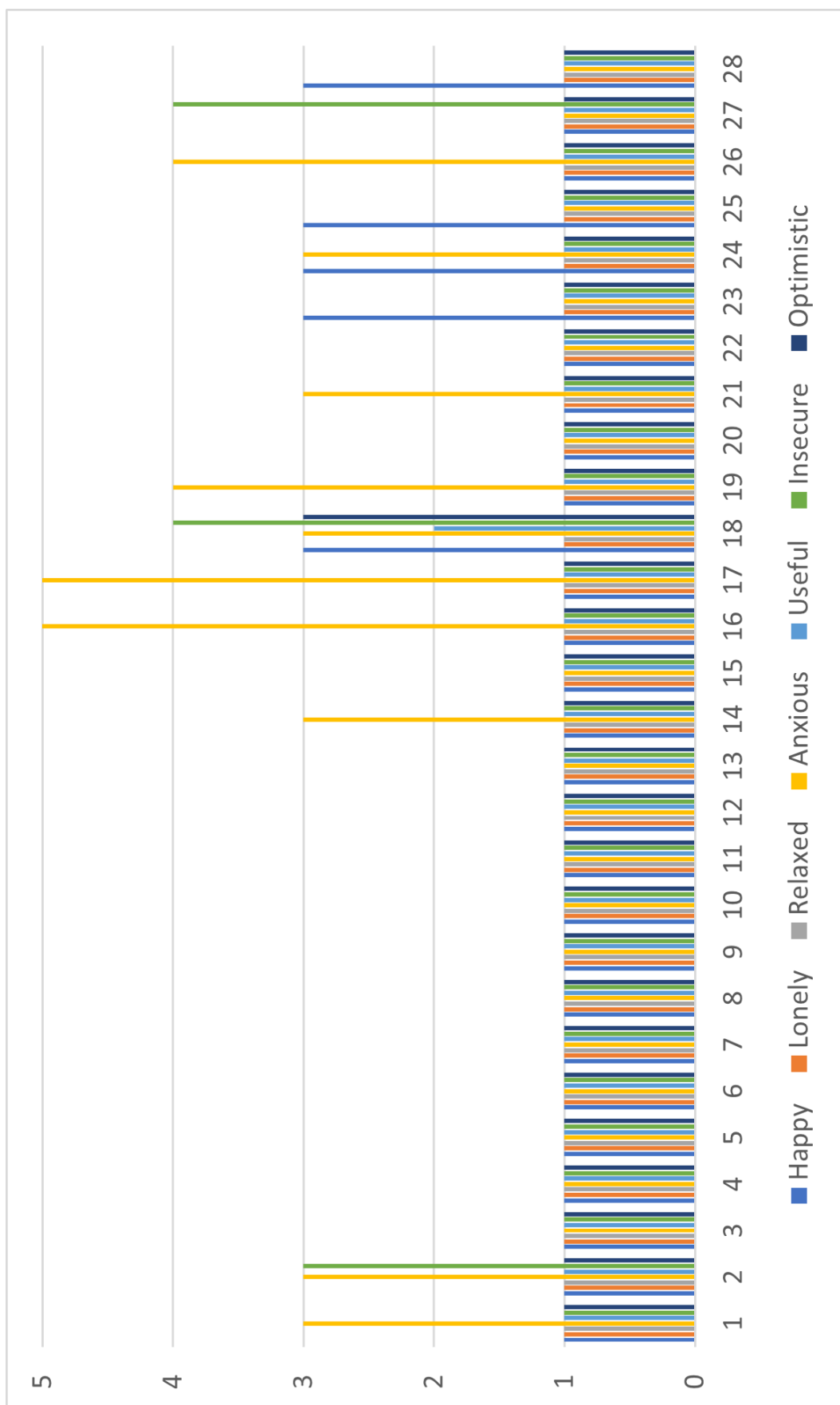
Figure 5.17 DWKS results, Phase 3, Participant 5

5.6.2 Learnings from Participant 5's Experience

From the start of Phase 1 to the end of Phase 3, Participant 5's general wellbeing increased by 4 points on the WEMWBS. However, in Phase 1 a decrease in her wellbeing is visible from before and after the knitting month, in comparison to her increased WEMWBS scores for Phase 2 and Phase 3.

Participant 5 did disclose to me that between Phase 1 and Phase 2 there was a period of upheaval for her: she was relocating, changing jobs and re-entering education and felt the general angst that surrounded this. This goes someway to explaining the number of days she 'strongly agreed' with feeling anxious, insecure and lonely at this time; it was her external life circumstances that were determining the outcome of the WEMWBS and DWKS.

Overall, Participant 5 felt that tracking her wellbeing through the WEMWBS and DWKS gave her a way to deal with her wellbeing. By taking time to register her feelings, she was given the opportunity to reflect and manage her emotions. This process made her more mindful of how she was feeling on a day-to-day basis.

5.7 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to share the process of free knitting through the participants' journeys within this research, illustrating the participants' engagement with each aspect of the participant study.

Whilst the DWKS was intended to be solely a data-gathering tool, it is evident that it did affect the KnitWell process to some extent. Specifically, some participants expressed that the action as well as the reflection required to complete the DWKS allowed them a conscious registering of their emotions and in some cases that then further influenced their knitting. Furthermore, the DWKS assisted participants' self-reflection, as the process of producing a visual record allowed participants to reflect on their emotions over a specific time period.

The WEMWBS analysis was particularly informative as it gave quantitative results to the more subjective knitting activity. Compared to the DWKS, which was completed daily, WEMWBS was completed once at the beginning of the knit month and once at the end of the knit month (Figure 5.6). It is evident from the WEMWBS analysis that overall, participants' general wellbeing did improve from phase to phase. The mean score[22] at the end of Phase 1 was 40.4 and at the end of Phase 3 it was 46.4 which highlights a 6-point increase throughout the process. There could have been external influences which affected the scores, some of which were discussed in Section 5.4, yet the overall results suggest that the activity of daily knit journalling had a positive impact on participants' general wellbeing, directly responding to RQ3 (see Chapter 1, Section 1.8).

The specific consideration of Participant 5's experience of the study and her progression from Phase 1 to Phase 3 evidences each stage of the participant study model (Chapter 3, Figure 3.8) and conveys a sense of each element of the process as experienced by an individual. It is evident that even though Participant 5 was experiencing some upheaval within her life, the process of taking part in daily knit journalling, and completing the DWKS and WEMWBS, show that her mental wellbeing did improve overall during this time frame. She also shared that the process of tracking her emotions led to becoming more mindful of her wellbeing on a day-to-day basis.

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[22] The method for WEMWBS analysis is discussed in Chapter 3, Section 3.6.1.

6   Process and Participation

The themes presented across the following three chapters (6, 7 and 8) represent the findings and analysis from the participant study and my autoethnographic data – derived from the transcribed material elicitation interviews, themselves informed by the DWKS and the WEMWBS analysis, and the written journal entries. Each theme responds to the research questions posed (see Chapter 1, Section 1.8).

Through the coding and analysis process that I undertook (described in Chapter 3, Section 3.6) there was significant development as themes became apparent, coalesced and refined, culminating in the three themes I identified: Process and Participation (Chapter 6); Emotional Expression (Chapter 7); and Awareness and Approach to Meaning (Chapter 8).

With the core themes identified I was able to further scrutinise each one, leading to the identification of primary and secondary sub-themes. Process and Participation, a core theme, for example, contains three primary sub-themes: The Free Knitting Process, Not Following a Pattern, and Generating a Daily Knit Journal. In turn, each of these primary sub-themes were refined into secondary sub-themes, illustrated in Figure 6.1.
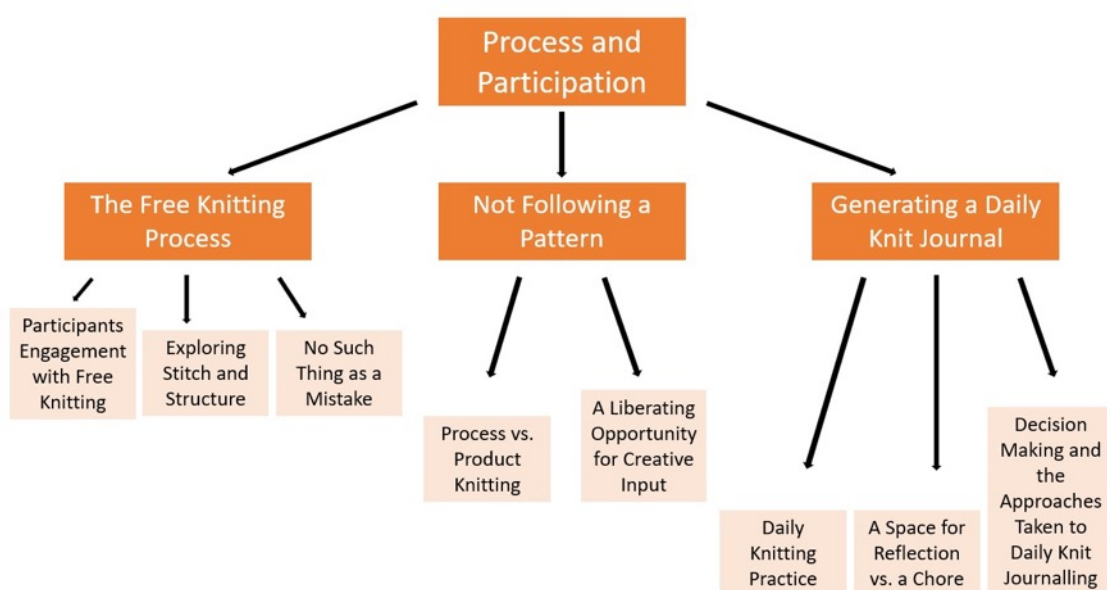
Figure 6.1 Diagram of theme one Process and Participation and its primary and secondary sub-themes

I will now discuss the theme of Process and Participation in detail. Throughout this chapter I draw on theory and literature presented in chapters 1 and 2 where relevant. Process and Participation responds directly to RQ2 as it reflects participant engagement, the impact of daily practice and creative expression through knitted structure.

6.1 THE FREE KNITTING PROCESS

During my analysis, I recognised a commonality in how engagement with free knitting was fostered on a day-to-day basis, throughout the daily knit journalling process. The key aspects of the free knitting process under discussion are the participants' engagement with free knitting; how participants explored the use of stitch and structure; and finally, how participants embraced the concept of no mistakes within their knitting.

6.1.1 PARTICIPANTS' ENGAGEMENT WITH FREE KNITTING

Throughout the process of free knitting the knitter can create their own approach to the practice: "for once I was just looking at like, okay, where do I want to go just for the sake of like, oh I just fancy going in this direction, or I fancy going a bit bigger, or a bit smaller" (Participant 5, Phase 1, Interview). Through making her own rules for free knitting, Participant 10 enjoyed seeing "the fabric work. So, that, yeah, I think that definitely would attract me to doing a lot more things and seeing how they might evolve" (Phase 1, Interview); she also enjoyed the freedom that free knitting gave her to experiment and explore her understanding of knitting. Richards (2011, p.468) suggests that everyday creativity can "enrich the moment" and provide the person creating with a greater awareness of their activity and their surroundings (see Chapter 2, section 2.2). In this instance, for Participant 10, the daily pursuit of free knitting was adding a new element of originality and enriching her knitting practice in comparison to a more conventional, linear knitting activity (see Section 1.2).

For some participants, having no boundaries and limitless possibilities freed up the knitting experience. Participant 5 shared insight from a beginner's perspective: "it's actually kind of nice not to be stressing too much about how well you're doing something" (Phase 1, Interview). Participant 1's experience supported this, stating in her

Phase 1 interview that "the idea that I couldn't get it wrong, as it were, was quite freeing as I was doing it". However, while finding it freeing, Participants 1 and 5 also found that making their own rules within free knitting left them feeling anxious. Participant 1 especially noted that she had anxiety initially because she feared she "wasn't doing it right" (Phase 1, Interview). Participant 5 pointed out that, as a scientist by profession, she is used to following rules and the anxiety focused on what to knit without instruction; she found it "really scary at first, just, like, looking down and being, like, ahhhh what do I do?... So, I think that was just, like, the immediate fear" (Phase 1, Interview). Overall, the elements that these participants found liberating included the absence of judgement and appreciation of the inability to go wrong. In contrast, the elements that produced anxiety arose from the non-existence of formal day-to-day instruction and rules, which, in turn, appeared to affect some participants' confidence in what they were producing. This poses the notion of anxiety as a limitation, which was initially experienced by these participants, a challenge which was overcome as they engaged more freely in the process of knitting every day. Free knitting became an opportunity to engage with aspects they found challenging to improve and to develop their abilities and confidence.

My own experiences surrounding the anxiety of free knitting were quite different; I found that I was consistently knitting the same thing and worried about the lack of interesting, stand-out features in my samples. Within my reflective notes I often state, "garter stitch… again!" or "boring, garter stitch" (Phase 1 & Phase 2, reflective notes). Such a small reference does not make obvious the deep anxiety I felt about showing participants examples of my free knitting, particularly in Phase 1 and 2, that did not feature much alternative to basic knit stitches. Indeed, where Participant 1's anxiety about "doing it right" (Phase 1, Interview) could be interpreted as not wanting to let me or the research down, my anxiety mirrored hers in terms of not wanting to let my participants down with simple stitch choices. However, one positive outcome to emerge from this perceived limitation was that the participants felt at ease, and it reduced the pressure on them to try complicated stitch techniques if they did not want to.

There are conventional expectations of knitting (see Chapter 1, Section 1.2), especially visually, and some participants struggled with aligning this with free knitting. Participant 6 shared how she "didn't enjoy the actual way it came together … I don't think I can separate something being visually pleasing from feeling kind of comforted" (Phase 3, Interview).

Additionally, some participants struggled to let go of the idea of what knitting 'should' be, so that they were able to explore free knitting. For example, Participant 2 felt she was "controlling my own freedom" (Phase 1, Interview). However, from day to day and from phase to phase many participants, including Participant 2, became increasingly adventurous. Participant 2 states that, "as I got further into it, I got a little bit more adventurous maybe, because I did other things" (Phase 1, Interview). The specified time frames for each phase (see Chapter 3, Figure 3.9) allowed Participant 2 to practise and explore free knitting, ultimately leading to a more creative and bold approach. Participant 2 acknowledged this progression in the final Phase 3 interview:

> I kept thinking... it was this feeling of what do I knit next? Instead of thinking I'll just knit. I was trying to get my thought process into just knitting rather than thinking, right today I'll go do this... And I think, even by looking at the samples you can see how much better I got about just throwing caution to the wind

Figure 6.2 Left – Right, Participant 2, Phase 1, Phase 2, and Phase 3 DKJ

As Figure 6.2 illustrates, Participant 2's free knitting technique from Phase 1 to Phase 3 clearly evolved into a more organic, less calculated process. Participant 2's Phase 1 DKJ is very considered: each day is clearly defined and separate from the next. There is only one instance where she uses two yarns within one day's knitting. In comparison, the DKJ from Phase 2 reveals Participant 2's loosening inhibitions when it comes to experimenting with free knitting. Like Phase 1, there is still a clear delineation between each day's knitting. However, there are multiple days where more than one yarn is used, which adds texture and suggests playfulness. The Phase 3 DKJ shows the greatest change in Participant 2's knitting style: there are 3D elements and there are days where she has worked on top of previous days' knitting. There is no clear definition of where one day starts and another begins; this, in turn, has created a much more organic, less considered DKJ.

The process of becoming more adventurous also meant that participants reported feeling braver and more confident in free knitting. Likewise, they also took more pride in their work; Participant 3 shared in the final interview that "on the third one, I know that, I, you know, I kind of knit in the ends as I was going along, I tidied it up a bit more. Maybe there was a bit more pride in the work I don't know I, you know, or confidence" (Phase 3, Interview). Through developing pride in their work, it is possible to suggest that participants became more aware of themselves and their emotions, supporting Pöllänen's (2015) theory that self-reflection brought on by craft enables a deeper understanding of the self and their surroundings (see Chapter 2, Section 2.3.2).

In addition, the majority of participants appeared to enjoy the process more as each phase evolved. "I found it a lot better. I found it a lot more interesting, and I felt happier" (Participant 2, Phase 2, Interview). Participant 11 felt like she got increasingly more "comfortable with the process... after you've done it for a while" (Phase 3, Interview).

6.1.2 EXPLORING STITCH AND STRUCTURE

The adventurous spirit adopted through free knitting led participants to become more experimental with stitches. This is partly associated with the stitches that I shared within

the group workshops and partly because participants' confidence had grown from phase to phase, as is evidenced by Participant 7's reflections:

> I found myself experimenting more with colours and shapes, whereas before I would do, like, just blocks of colour and patterns. I tried to do a lot of different ones with texture in as well this time, like, different stitches. Um, so yeah, I think I was a bit more, a bit more experimental with it this time (Phase 2, Interview).

The process and practice of free knitting also led to participants investigating their individual stitch repertoires more closely. Stitches that participants would usually avoid in patterns, such as bobbles, were embraced when free knitting. For one participant, garter stitch was their least favourite to knit, and through the process of free knitting, that changed: "now I really love [garter stitch]. And I think this was the beginning of that" (Participant 11, Phase Two, Interview).

By engaging and participating with a 'new' knitting practice, the DKJ became a space where the knitter could reflect upon learning new techniques and to practise them. Participant 11 was interested in learning how to knit backwards and the DKJ allowed her the space to play and practise which for her "was very exciting" (Phase 3, Interview). Participant 3 also enjoyed learning new skills through the DKJ, "In the mood to make a corner today… will need to learn how. Yay!! Learning a new skill/method" (Phase 2, Diary Entry).

In my autoethnographic experience, I also used free knitting as an opportunity to teach myself new techniques. I found that the absence of pressure in free knitting allowed me to try something new without panicking. The necessary concentration and frustration that sometimes comes when learning a new stitch pattern did not arise here because the whole experience was trial and error. This is especially evident in my Phase 3 DKJ (illustrated in Figure 6.3) where I began using stacked stitches, a stitch technique new to me. I found that depending on where stacked stitches were used, and whether stacked increases and stacked decreases were used together, they would manipulate the form of what came before and after without my direct intention. Therefore, not only

was I learning a new stitch technique mechanically, but I was also learning to embrace serendipitous outcomes within my knitting.

Figure 6.3 Autoethnographic, Phase 3, DKJ with close-ups of four specific days where I knitted stacked stitches in different ways throughout the knitting month.

As well as the structure and physicality of the knitting itself, it is also evident that some participants also enjoyed embellishing their DKJ entries. Several techniques were utilised to add texture. As discussed in Chapter 3, Section 3.6.2, I developed a creative way to visual analyse the DKJs. In this instance I was able to generate a use wheel which highlights how participants used specific techniques to embellishment their DKJs and the amount of times each technique was used, as illustrated in Figure 6.4. Participant 9 used beads to create a diamond shape, and Participant 5 used Swiss darning and other embroidery techniques on a number of days throughout each phase. This visual analysis highlights how participants embraced the playful nature of free knitting.

Figure 6.4 Visual analysis of embellishment techniques used throughout the phases of activity. Clockwise from top: beading, swiss darning, embroidery, wrap stitches and threading i-cords – all of which add texture to the DKJ entry.

It is apparent that through free knitting, participants have been able to explore what excites, intrigues or in some cases frustrates them about the specific mechanics of a stitch. Participant 10 shared that when free knitting:

> It's almost sort of liberating to an extent of where…before I could knit quite complex structures, but because you're following a pattern, you're sort of just parroting what's written down. Whereas with this, actually, there was a scope to sort of explore how things join, and how things join three dimensionally, and that I found really interesting, actually being able to take it and sort of explore the geometry of it (Phase 1, Interview).

Figure 6.5 DKJ, Participant 10, Phase 1, DKJ - the close-up indicates the manipulation of a cable stitch pattern into a point.

An example of this experimentation with stitches is evidenced by Participant 10 when she knitted a cable (see Figure 6.5.) and "just wanted to see if it was possible to make the cable shrink. You know, kind of knitting it to a point … I wanted to see if I could manipulate the cable" (Phase 1, Interview). Similarly, Participant 1 also used free knitting to experiment with stitches to see whether something was possible and test "how it would work mechanically…" (Phase 2, Interview). These accounts highlight how some participants found free knitting allowed them to test and push the boundaries of the structure of a specific stitch and of their understanding of knitting. In my own

experience, I utilised Stitchplorations as a method to test the mechanics of a stitch; this knowledge then flowed into my free knitting practice which allowed further experimentation (see Chapter 4, Section 4.1).

Where some participants were interested in the mechanics of specific stitches, other participants were more interested in making their knitting 3D. Participant 2 was more focused on the idea of surface knitting, of moving between 2D and 3D: "instead of just going around the edges. I've started in the middle as well and gone outwards, and that's what I found was different. And I enjoyed it more actually" (Phase 3, Interview). Participant 10 also enjoyed exploring 3D elements to her knitting and the possibilities of how to "manipulate the thing more three dimensionally" (Phase 1, Interview).

There is also evidence of participants playing with the structural extremes of knit stitches, for example one day they might have enjoyed the openness of creating lace holes and a soft floaty fabric compared with another day where they embraced the rigidity of a 2x2 rib stitch. Participant 5 shared that:

> one day I was doing, something that was very, like, flexible, and maybe using garter stitch, and then I'd be, like, I must use some, like, heavy ribbing to, like, try and add some structure here. Kind of switching between the two extremes (Phase 2, Interview).

Channing Hansen's (2017) knitting practice similarly utilises the structure of specific knit stitches to manipulate and shape the fabric (see Chapter 1, Section 1.4). Yet, rather than allowing his emotions to dictate the knitting, he follows a predestined algorithm.[23] Some KnitWell participants' knitting centred around an exploration of manipulating stitches, and playing with positive and negative space, creating newness through filling in gaps and creating 3D elements to the knitting. Participant 5 particularly enjoyed the evolution of her free knitting:

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[23] An example of Hansen's knitting was illustrated in Figure 1.11

that was at one point a hole as far as I'm aware…it didn't look like that. And then it changed, but, like, not in one day. That was, like, over two days, I think. So, like, one day it looked like one thing and then the second day it looked like another thing, and I remember just liking that transition of, like, how something can look so different from one day to another, based on kind of, like, how things change, what things happen (Phase 2, Interview).

Free knitting allowed the knitters to experiment with yarn, stitch, and colour choice. For Participant 6, the focus of her experimentation was more on texture and how different yarns created a contrast in the structure even when knitting the same stitch, and she found that "really pleasing" (Phase 1, Interview).

6.1.3 NO SUCH THING AS A MISTAKE

Throughout the phases of activity, participants soon became aware that they could knit without the fear of making mistakes. Participant 8 shared how "there was no business of going back to fix mistakes. Yeah, that was never part of the whole process. Because there was no such thing as a mistake" (Phase 1, Interview). However, even within the freedom encouraged by the free knitting approach, if a participant did something that they perceived to be an error or 'wrong' it was still a challenge not to try to 'fix' it. Arguably, this could be owing to the conventional, linear format of knitting (see Section 1.2) which is ingrained within each knitter. For example, Participant 9 struggled with leaving mistakes in her DKJ and noted that:

there was one I did back to front because I accidentally casted it on [to] the wrong side. Not cast it on, picked it up on the wrong side. I thought, well, it doesn't matter. It really doesn't matter … it slightly threw me doing that, and that was a little bit of a challenge…Living with it, not changing it, and just going it doesn't matter, it doesn't matter (Phase 1, Interview).

Participant 9 exposes an interesting element of the participant-researcher dynamic within this scenario. She could have discreetly rectified the perceived error without disclosing this in the interview. However, Participant 9 maintained the integrity of the

aims of the project and her understanding of free knitting by tolerating the perceived error and the ensuing discomfort. When I initially suggested this approach in the first workshop, I was unaware that tolerating so-called mistakes could cause unease for some participants.

However, unlike Participant 9, other participants were able to embrace mistakes in the knitting. For example, Participant 5 is no longer "stressed about small mistakes... this has definitely taught me that, like, sometimes maybe mistakes are meant to be there, or how to make some good of something, like, I think I'd be more chill when knitting things go a bit wrong now" (Phase 3, Interview). The ability to alter and adapt mistakes within free knitting has meant that those skills are now transferable to other knitting projects. The process of free knitting encourages playfulness compared to conventional, linear knitting practice (see Section 1.2), which has enabled the knitter's mindset to evolve and to strengthen. Richards (2011) posits that everyday creativity is vital to our day-to-day development as it aids flexibility in our approach to life (see Chapter 2, Section 2.2). I propose that the everyday creativity evoked through free knitting has indeed aided flexibility in how participants cope with mistakes in their knitting which could in turn aid personal development in day-to-day life.

So-called mistakes did not dissuade participants from experimenting with free knitting; their ongoing participation shows evidence of progression and the opportunity for participants to facilitate their own creative, experimental practise. In addition, the knitters began to see their free knitting as a dedicated space to practice specific knitting techniques. Participant 5 enjoyed the benefit of practicing picking up stitches, "because I didn't pick up that often, which, maybe you can tell, it's been like useful being able to, kind of, play around, I suppose" (Phase 1, Interview). Furthermore, this idea of a space to practice featured both skills enhancement and an element of trial and error: exploring knitting with a specific yarn and trying new needles, each individual element of knitting can be attempted within free knitting. Participant 5 stated that, "I kind of wish this was something that when I first learned knitting, I could have done to utilise that. Because you can just kind of do whatever you want. And it's not the end of the world. And if you make a mistake, like it's supposed to be there" (Phase 1, Interview). This idea of practice

and utilising free knitting to further their knitting knowledge links to the participants' growing confidence, and how to apply free knitting to best suit their needs; Participant 9 shared that free knitting "definitely [led to] an improvement in my confidence in my knitting" (Phase 3, Interview). Craft has been shown to improve self-development (Brown, 2017; Nasseri and Wilson, 2017) (see Chapter 2, Section 2.3.2), and as Participants 5 and 9 acknowledged they developed a greater understanding of knitting, their own abilities and their self-development throughout the process.

6.2   NOT FOLLOWING A PATTERN

My data analysis revealed a common sub-theme regarding how participants interacted with the concept of not following a pattern. This included the shift from product to process knitting and what that entails in terms of minimising the pressure of following formal instruction, and the resultant liberation and how that brought about an opportunity to have creative input.

6.2.1   PROCESS VS. PRODUCT KNITTING

My own experience with conventional knitting patterns is long suffering – I shared details of my knitting background in Chapter 1, Section 1.1. To this day, I have a pile of unfinished projects that span over a decade, all with their own pattern and all differing in their level of 'completeness'. Personally, I find that these projects do not languish in such a pile due to the complexity of the pattern, but more due to my eagerness to start something new and my lack of enjoyment in the final 'sewing up' stages of a project. In comparison, free knitting is something I came to with joy: for its lack of formal instruction fuelled by process over product knitting (see Chapter 1, Section 1.2). The shift in focus, and freedom to knit whatever I wanted, produced a pleasure in the knitting process that I had not felt before. There was no guilt for the unfinished project that came beforehand. I became more aware of how this style of knitting is a form of artistic expression, similar to Mary Walker Phillips' approach to knitting (Lindsay, 2015) (see Chapter 1, Section 1.4). Walker Phillips' work focused on divorcing knitting from the human body; in turn, she produced pieces of expressive knitting without rules or patterns, which aligns with my experience of free knitting and renewed vigour for the practice.

Several participants commented on the benefits of process as opposed to product knitting: "what was very nice about it is, sort of, just being able to do what you felt like doing. And that was a really, really positive thing" (Participant 10, Phase 1, Interview). The removal of the requirement to concentrate on following a pattern enabled Participant 6 to feel "immediately engaged" with the knitting (Phase 1, Interview). Participants appreciated this shift, to process from product, ultimately because it was adding a different element to their knitting practice.

Instead of reading and following a pattern, free knitting allows knitters to read the knitting that has come before and use that as a guide for future knitting: "you're reading the thing in front of you. Particularly when you're, sort of, picking up along, you know, you're picking up along the side... to sort of, connect things" (Participant 8, Phase 1, Interview). Reading the knitting also takes away the stress that following a formal pattern can induce. When following a pattern, there can be a certain level of expectation a knitter puts on themselves to create a usable end product. Participant 6 described how she has knitted from patterns previously but gets caught up in counting rows, and stitches and that, "it would take me as long to keep track and re-find where I was in the pattern as it would to do the actual knitting" (Phase 1, Interview). Free knitting took the pressure away for Participant 6; it allowed her to apply various knitting techniques and to change her DKJ into something else if she was not happy with it:

> It made it kind of lower pressure in a way and, also, like, I knew that it maybe wasn't gonna look like something that I would deliberately make and that was kind of nice. Like, to not have this image of what it was supposed to look like at the end. And just to focus on that, that, one day's knitting. And even though I was obviously like making decisions about how it was in relationship to the other sections around it, I think that made it feel more free (Phase 1, Interview).

Another aspect of the free knitting process extends beyond accepting to embracing the freedom of not following a pattern. Traditional, hobby knitters often follow knitting patterns faithfully, commonly because they lack confidence in their ability to deviate

from written instruction (Twigger Holroyd, 2017). Arguably, it is the complexity of tone and specific knitting vocabulary used within conventional knitting patterns that contributes to this (ibid.). Nevertheless, in Amy Twigger Holroyd's (2013, p. 106) thesis, *Folk Fashion: Amateur Re-Knitting as a Strategy for Sustainability*, she shares evidence that knitters often feel frustrated with traditional knitting patterns and show "desire for more freedom and creative input." In this respect, Twigger Holroyd is discussing the concept of hobby knitters adapting, designing, and reknitting their own knitwear. Yet, it does show that knitters are enthusiastic for their practice to evolve and a desire to personalise it.

Not following a predestined pattern suggests that free knitting is without purpose. This type of knitting is out of the knitter's control in terms of not having any rules to follow: as Participant 11 states, "it wasn't a present for somebody... It was just knitting that was completely out of my hands almost, and there's something very liberating about that" (Phase 3, Interview). Several participants enjoyed the freedom of not following a pattern. Participant 8 shared that "it feels liberating not to be following a pattern. Partly because you're not stopping to check and measure and that sort of thing. You're just doing it" (Phase 1, Interview). There are elements within Participant 8's description that are reminiscent of the concept of 'flow' developed by Csikszentmihalyi (see Chapter 2, Section 2.1.4). 'Flow' is experienced when a person is fully immersed within a task which causes them to be wholly present in the activity and experience enjoyment through this focus.

This discussion underscores how knitting, when self-directed, can offer greater potential for self-expression compared to conventional knitting practice. Free knitting takes the pressure away from an end product, which in some cases is why participants found knitting without a pattern rewarding. In comparison, Participant 2 shared that not following a pattern meant that she was able to go into her own world through knitting, "and I found that really rewarding" (Phase 2, Interview).

6.2.2 A LIBERATING OPPORTUNITY FOR CREATIVE INPUT

During the practice of knitting to a pattern, part of the knitter's brain is always aware of what is happening next, of how many rows until the next instruction, but free knitting allows the knitter just to knit. This is something that Participant 11 highlights from her free knitting experience, "I often spend my knitting time thinking about what I'm going to do next. And, so, this was just, like, it was really great that the only place I had to look for that was just, you know, in my head, really nice" (Phase 1, Interview). Participant 11's comment connects with the discussion of mindfulness (see, Chapter 2, Section 2.1.5), as she is relating the experience of free knitting to being in the moment, rather than being distracted by what is happening next.

Interestingly, Twigger Holroyd (2013, p. 106) states that hobby knitters often "lack the confidence to make creative design decisions independently, without support." However, with free knitting, the impetus is on the process and my participants have noticed a shift in their confidence when it comes to adapting patterns. In some cases, this included designing their own stitch patterns and knitwear within their own time and space. Free knitting unleashed a willingness and confidence to alter patterns in order to have "creative input" in the knitting process (Participant 5, Phase 3, Interview). Participant 3 stated that "it's helped me certainly open up to thinking that I don't need to knit with a pattern if I don't want to and that I can get creative and try different things" (Phase 3, Interview). Free knitting through KnitWell also helped participants to be more adventurous, to think outside the box: Participant 1 stated that "I don't necessarily have to stick to things that I know I can do" (Phase 3, interview). A willingness for exploration has been revealed.

6.3 GENERATING A DAILY KNIT JOURNAL

A third sub-theme within Process and Participation was how participants interacted with creating their DKJs. The key aspects being firstly, participants' attitude towards daily knitting practice and the positive and negative aspects of daily knit journalling; secondly, the level of decision making and approaches that participants took to daily knit journalling; and finally, participants' attitude towards daily knitting practice.

6.3.1 DAILY KNITTING PRACTICE

With regard to daily knitting practice, several participants felt that as time went on free knitting felt less prescriptive. At the beginning, Participant 5 felt the need for each day of knitting to be actively different from the previous one. However with the commencement of Phase 2 and 3 she began to feel that "if something looks a bit similar [in the knitting], that could be reflecting on the fact that I feel similar to yesterday" (Phase 3, Interview) and she did not force herself to make her knitting different each day. Furthermore, her approach to Phase 3 had developed into seeing the DKJ as a whole piece, "I think that was probably the biggest change... treating it as one big piece rather than many different ones. I think that felt nicer, it was kind of nice feeling like I was creating one big thing, that all interconnected" (ibid.).

Several participants found that they looked forward to knitting on their DKJ; for Participant 9 it became something she could "look forward to" each day (Phase 2, Interview). She found herself wanting to knit earlier and earlier in the day simply because she "wanted to" (ibid.). Indeed, often when enjoying the knitting, participants lost themselves in it and lost track of time. Before the initial knitting phase commenced, I recommended that participants knitted between 10-30 minutes daily. Through sheer enjoyment, Participant 9 allowed herself to knit for longer but then would admonish herself when too much time had passed, stating, "oh, come on, you've been going on forty minutes now, you really ought to finish" (Phase 3, Interview). Yet, for other participants, the actual time spent knitting depended on how experimental they felt: "definitely, I think, on the days where I ended up doing something slightly more experimental, I definitely spent longer than, like, 15 minutes... Sometimes it was more like an hour" (Participant 6, Phase 1, Interview). These participants allowed time for themselves to experiment, whereas others stuck rigidly to the time scale I stipulated within the workbooks and then felt frustrated that they were unable to see progress within the knitting.

> If I wasn't creating something that was really noticeable, then I felt like I wasn't doing what I needed to do ... I had to tell myself, it's okay, that's all you have time for, but at least it's something (Participant 3, Phase 1, Interview).

Routine became a large part of the daily knit journalling experience. Participant 4 is a person who "thrives best on routine" (Phase 2, Interview) and owing to COVID-19 her daily routine had diminished. Yet the process of creating a DKJ helped Participant 4 get "into the habit of knitting every day and doing some writing every day" (ibid.). Similarly, for Participant 8, part of the enjoyment was through forming a knitting routine; again, this links to the periods of COVID-19 government-initiated lockdowns being in place within the UK. At a time when one's established daily routine was no longer achievable, such as leaving the house for work, forming new routines was a necessity for Participant 8 and, for her, daily knit journalling held some "grounding to it" (Phase 2, Interview). This highlights the unexpected benefit of routine and ironically it surrounds how routine allowed participants freedom of expression; the routine implied discipline, to 'sit and do' which led to participants' creative freedom.

6.3.2   A SPACE FOR REFLECTION VS. A CHORE

Participants demonstrated a twofold response to the process of generating a DKJ. Firstly, participants reported that the DKJ became a space to reflect, learn, and practise their skills. Secondly, however, participants also noted a mental barrier in completing the DKJ as sometimes external influences and personal motivation could make the process feel like a chore.

Participant 6 shared an insight which compares what it was like knitting on the DKJ with a more general knitting hobby, stating that:

> I suppose that was interesting, because it was like engaging with it in, like, less than optimal conditions, I guess. Usually, if you're doing something that's kind of a hobby or for fun you do it when you're in the mood, and you do it when you feel like you can...Rather than just doing it every single day. So, I think that was interesting. And I don't know if it would show in the knitting from those days or not. Because I think usually, once I started, I sort of got past that a bit. It was just the initial, like, umm this isn't what my brain thinks I should be doing right now (Phase 1, Interview).

There could be a barrier that the knitter must push through to give their attention to the DKJ, as noted by Participant 6 above. Similarly, Participant 9 enjoyed the process of generating a DKJ; however, there were days when she struggled. It may have been hard for her to find motivation but when she started knitting, once she had pushed through the mental barrier that was preventing her from picking up the needles, she felt that "it was also really good to have something to focus on at the end of the day" (Phase 1, Interview). Even so, Participant 9 registered that "there were some days where I enjoyed it more than others" (ibid.).

Furthermore, some participants registered that daily knit journalling began to feel like a burden. For example, Participant 3 shared that on days where she was busy, "it, kind of, felt more like a chore, you know, like a task that I had to do" (Phase 3, Interview). Likewise, Participant 5 shared that if she had a hard day at work "it was definitely harder to persuade myself to knit" (Phase 1, Interview). Participant 8 was relieved when the knitting month was coming to an end as she was "on the edge of treating it as a task rather than a pleasure" (Phase 1, Interview). Through KnitWell and the process of generating a DKJ, participants were developing discipline within their practice by focusing on continuous progress even when not under optimum conditions. Freddie Robins' work (see Chapter 1, Section 1.4, Figure 1.10) is a prime example of pushing through mental barriers, developing discipline and taking control to create continual progress. Whilst the regular nature of this research into KnitWell, and the separate phases of generating a DKJ, encouraged developing discipline, participants did take days off intuitively. On rare occasions participants did not complete a day on their DKJ or used a different fibre craft to fulfil their diary entry owing to ill health. The participants in this instance were making choices based on intuitive responses and adapting their DKJ to better suit their needs. Whilst pushing through barriers did have the effect of developing discipline for some participants, which they found beneficial, for others this did not constitute a therapeutic aspect of the process. Additionally, if participants choose to follow the KnitWell method outside of the research setting, it would be easier to opt out on days that it felt like a chore as there would be no external obligation.

Throughout the process of creating a DKJ, participants acknowledged having positive and negative responses to the aesthetic and meaning behind their various entries. Some participants found pleasure in their knitting, especially when specific pieces worked as they had envisaged:

> I really like the red patch of flowers, just to the right of the big flower. It just, kind of, reminds me of, like, a rose patch or something … I really, I really like those. I don't know why, maybe it's like the colour choice there. Or maybe it's... yeah I'm not sure I, I just, I find it really calming to look at (Participant 5, Phase 3, Interview).

The practice of daily knit journalling challenges the notion that knitting should be aesthetically pleasing, especially when it is utilised as a vehicle for expressing emotion. Yet, this is a steep hurdle to overcome. Personally, I struggled with how colours clashed within each of my DKJs. I appreciated each individual day of knitting, but the DKJ as a whole was quite jarring; if I were knitting a jumper, for example, I would not have chosen the same colours together. Personally, the aesthetics of knitting are always at the forefront of my mind, and so to dismiss that at the start of a new practice is difficult. However, some participants were able to overcome this, particularly because they enjoyed how adaptable the DKJ was; if there was a piece of knitting they did not like, there was always the opportunity to change it the next day. Participant 10 shared:

> you kind of put this blob on and you don't really like it. But because you go back and you're constantly accreting you can sort of start pulling or manipulating things you've done before. And then that, that was well... almost, like, you know, every day you could sort of choose somewhere else to start and finish (Phase 1, Interview).

The organic, adaptable nature of the KnitWell proposition enabled a level of satisfaction not only with day-to-day explorations but with the overall development of each knitter's free knitting practice.

6.3.3 Decision Making and the Approaches Taken to Daily Knit Journalling

There were multiple choices and decisions that participants made surrounding the general shape of their DKJ on a daily basis. Participant 11 explained:

> I did the square first and then I did the triangle, without really thinking about it, and then I wanted it to not be that shape. So, I spent the rest of the time trying to get it to not be that shape. I really enjoyed that, like, so, all those lines around it, that was all me trying to turn the thing back into a square again (Phase 1, Interview).

Participant 11 described how she knitted a piece that looked similar to a simplistic drawing of a house, and how she then chose to consistently change the shape to remove that connotation. In this instance, Participant 11's interaction with her DKJ was reminiscent of doodling; that being a spontaneous, written, phenomenon often linked with unconscious thought (Maclagan, 2013) and in this instance, Participant 11 certainly showed a spontaneous reaction to her DKJ.

Figure 6.6 Participant 11, Phase 3, daily knit photographs sent by the participant. Left: the day before; Right: the day of knitting origami, mentioned below.

The actual shape of the DKJ was something that Participant 11 was conscious of throughout each phase. In a Phase 3 written diary entry she noted that "the shape of the knitting has been bugging me, so I did some origami." The developing shape of her DKJ can be seen in Figure 6.6 and Figure 6.7. In a similar manner, Participant 5 made

active decisions regarding negative space and her DKJ: "I was really enjoying, like, creating holes, but there was a hole that I actually then ended up sewing up, so, like, there was a hole and then I removed the hole. I enjoyed that kind of process of like creating something and then removing it" (Phase 2, Interview). These examples share one main similarity: that specific, conscious, decisions were made to alter the shape of their knitting which stayed with the participants even after finishing their DKJ.

Figure 6.7 Participant 11, Phase 3, finished DKJ

Figure 6.8 Participant 2's, Phase 1, DKJ; a close up shows elements of the DKJ that she enjoyed knitting.

The participant data also provided insight into how they viewed their DKJ and their creative decisions, once time had passed. In some cases, participants recalled the pieces they liked knitting: "you can look at it and remember the little bits you enjoyed doing. I enjoyed doing the little bits around the edges, the little hoops, and bridges" (Participant 2, Phase 1, Interview), and these elements can be seen in Figure 6.8.

Participant 5 also created something within the knitting that she could refer back to:

> I imagine this as a garden, and then every day is a new patch of the garden, 'what does my day in the garden look like?' Which I don't know if you can see or not, but that was kind of, what it was. I think, like, once I'd done that, I found it a lot easier because my brain had something to, like, focus on … So, I found that helped to, like, silence everything and just, you know, focus on one thing… looking back, I really like, if you go across the river, and down the, like, beachy sand, you hit a little, like, hedgerow is kind of what I thought of it as' there's a set of, like, bushes and stuff. I really like those (Phase 3, Interview).

Participant 5 invoked the visual idea of a garden to structure her knitting experience, but to also enable her reflection in a more detached way, not wholly connected to specific events or emotions.

6.4 CONCLUSION

By drawing together this theme of Process and Participation, I have examined how participants engaged with and navigated the free knitting and daily knit journalling process of KnitWell. The experience of free knitting brought a new dimension to the participants' knitting practice. There were positive and negative aspects to this experience. A type of 'knitting without rules' left some participants struggling and second guessing themselves and their knit knowledge; this was a limitation that, owing to their daily practice, participants overcame with time.

RQ2 (see Chapter 1, Section 1.8) asks what opportunities and limitations a knitted journal can offer in terms of self-expression; I have been able to show that these

opportunities are varied yet substantial. In this chapter, I have shown that the participants, and I as Participant 12, utilised many different facets of knitting to facilitate self-expression. Free knitting of the DKJ within the KnitWell proposition provided the freedom to manipulate stitches, develop stitch formations, and play with the structural extremes of knitting. It promoted play and in turn enhanced knitting skills and confidence. Personally I, as Participant 12, saw the playfulness as a route to embracing serendipitous outcomes within different aspects of my knitting and a growing opportunity for self-expression.

From the evidence presented in this chapter, it appears that the actual process of knitting, rather than knitting a specific product meant that a participant's DKJ, 'written' through free knitting, was a positive opportunity for self-expression and offers a contrast between the conventional, linear format of knitting (see Section 1.2) and free knitting. Self-expression was possible as suddenly knitting was no longer about following set guidelines; each day of journalling provided the opportunity to explore the fundamentals of knitting and created potential for the knitter to enter a 'flow' state (see Chapter 2, Section 2.1.4). This also connected with knit artists who have demonstrated creative exploration in their knitting, as discussed in Chapter 1 (Section 1.4). The practice of daily knit journalling, and free knitting, aided participants' creative exploration, in terms of their skillset and for self-expression.

The DKJ was a space for self-reflection and became a vessel for contained experimentation and learning through doing. Through the contained space of a DKJ the potential to change and combine previous days' knitting into something new was possible – again offering different, daily, opportunities for self-expression. Time played a big factor in the overall KnitWell experience, from day to day and from phase to phase. As time went on, the participants' attitude towards their daily journal and free knitting changed: they became more adventurous and experimental with their choices. In some cases, this aided a developed understanding of the structure of knitting. Not only has the construction of the DKJ enhanced the participants' confidence in their knitting ability, but it has changed the way they think about knitting as a means for self-expression moving forward.

7

Emotional Expression

This chapter discusses the second of the three core themes that I identified from both the participant and my autoethnographic data: Emotional Expression. Drawing on theory from the literature presented in chapters 1 and 2 where relevant, Emotional Expression is separated into six sub-themes, illustrated in **Figure 7.1**. Firstly, Knitting Instead of Words: A New Language (Section 7.1) broaches the topic that a knitter has two vocabularies, one based in language and the other based in knitting. Direct and Metaphorical Expression (Section 7.2), Planned and Consistent Connections (Section 7.3), and Planned yet Flexible Connections (Section 7.4) examine the ways in which participants chose to use knitting specifically to express their emotions. Emotions Revealed (Section 7.5) explores how, in some circumstances, the knitter was only made aware of their emotions once they reflected on their completed knitting. Finally, Processing Emotion (Section 7.6) discusses how daily knit journalling and the written equivalent enabled participants to process and manage their emotions. Through examining the concept of a knitter's vocabulary and exploring the opportunities for processing and communicating emotion within creative practice, Emotional Expression responds to RQ1 and RQ2.
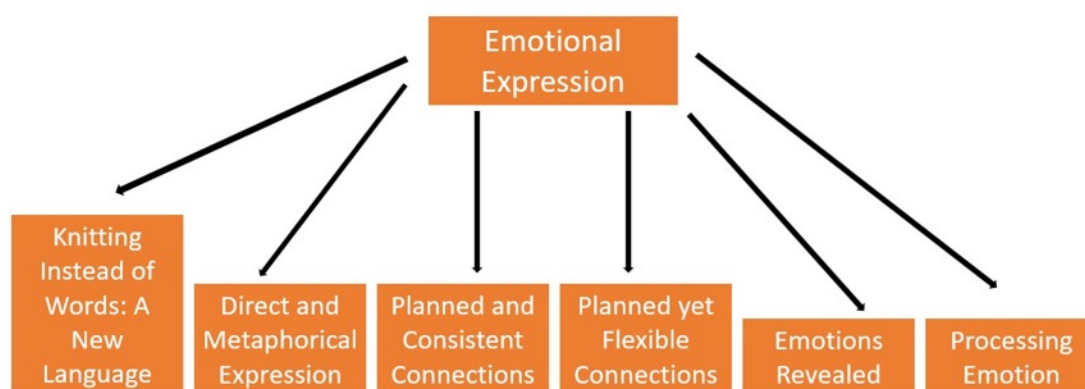
Figure 7.1 Diagram of Theme Two, Emotional Expression and its sub-themes

7.1 KNITTING INSTEAD OF WORDS: A NEW LANGUAGE

Here, I consider the evidence that any knitter utilising the KnitWell method has two vocabularies; one that is written or spoken and one that is knitted. Before beginning the discussion surrounding the knitter's language, it is pertinent to recap the requirements for each phase of knitting throughout the project (see Figure 3.8): in Phase 1 participants were invited to create a DKJ; in Phase 2, they wrote a diary alongside their DKJ; and in

Phase 3, participants had the choice to write or not write a diary alongside their DKJ. Thus, according to the phase, the quotes from participants relate to an experience of knitting only or knitting and writing combined.

When it came to participants articulating their emotions, a clear distinction arose between a knitter's vocabulary and that of written language. Throughout my interactions with participants, as well as my own experience, it was evident that the non-verbal nature of knitting allowed knitters to engage with their emotions, freeing them from the confines of written language. This notion is comparable to Polanyi's statement on tacit knowledge, "we know more than we can tell" (Polanyi in Ehmer and Brône, 2021, p.3). Polanyi is positing that the skills and experience-based knowledge we hold is hard to portray; likewise, emotions are often information that we find difficult to verbally express and convey to others. Further, there is evidence from this investigation into the KnitWell proposition that a knitter's skills and experience-based vocabulary can be used to aid the written language, in order to articulate and express emotion. Moreover, there is a possibility for more expression within a knitter's vocabulary as "there are certain feelings which, actually, are, kind of, almost easier to knit up than to write out... it feels more expressive" (Participant 10 Phase 2, Interview).

Through adopting an autoethnographic approach to this research into KnitWell, I have had to be willing to explore myself; through reflective note taking and then through the sharing of those reflections, elements of which can be seen throughout this thesis. Initially this was intimidating because while confident in my knitting ability, writing about the emotions experienced whilst knitting was new territory; I felt much more able to express myself and my reasoning through stitch than with words.

Many participants shared how knitting was instinctive, that it was about "picking things because it felt right" (Participant 1, Phase 2, Interview) whereas they did not have the same innate response with written language. Participant 1 shared that "when I tried to put it into words, that was more difficult" (ibid.). Each individual element of knitting can be a guide to the emotions the knitter felt at the time of knitting, and for some knitters there are many more options available within their knitting vocabulary than their verbal equivalent. Participant 8 shared that she thought the benefits of the KnitWell

proposition of daily knit journalling stem from the decisions that have been made within the knitting and reflecting on those choices, and that the language needed to discuss emotions "might not be immediately accessible" (Phase 3, Interview). She further stated, "I could see how this sort of thing might help to process an experience where the language isn't quite enough" (ibid.). When pausing to find accurate vocabulary, it is possible to lose the thought or emotion that was trying to be captured:

> Doing things which aren't verbal, are more likely to mean you can capture it in the moment, you can capture it there and then because you're not having to go through that level of processing, it's a more direct relationship, things that don't involve language (Participant 8, Phase 1, Interview).

Similarly, Participant 4 suggested that it is the means of expelling emotions from the body that is important, and a visual connection is sometimes easier to process:

> I think the knitting is so much more intuitive. I mean, I can put what I was feeling into words, but, a visual thing is less tiring because you haven't explained yourself. You know what I mean? Once it's out there, it's out there. And you don't have to keep going over the feelings. So, that's why I think the free knitting is such a good technique. Because once, once I'd done it, it's there, but not inside me anymore (Phase 2, Interview).

It is evident that for some participants free knitting felt both more expressive and more connected to their emotions, whereas words did not share the same connection. Free knitting allowed Participant 6 to "bypass the verbalisation" (Phase 1, Interview) of her emotions; the knitting "was more, just, like, it was directly impacted by how I was feeling" (ibid.). Participant 11 agreed, stating that "the knitting was more intuitive" (Phase 2, Interview) and that disseminating her emotions into words turned it into something black and white, whereas "the knitting was more about feeling and that's not always so much with words" (ibid.). Similarly, Participant 5 shared how:

Capturing, like, the feel or the essence of the day, I think unless you're particularly good with language that can be really difficult to put in words. So, perhaps in that way, maybe the knitting was better, and maybe almost like summarising it in a concise way because you can look at something and you instantly, like captured it, right? The connection is quicker perhaps with knitting (Phase 2, Interview).

This brings to mind Rogers' (1993) discussion surrounding expressive art, and how different elements of arts practice can portray our energy and emotions (see Chapter 2, Section 2.3.2); yet instead of arts practice, I refer to free knitting and how it has led to a direct, visceral, experience without the need to blanket it with words. A written language has many confines and connotations, the use of a positive word will portray a positive emotion and vice versa for negative words. However, this is wholly different within knitting: there are no predefined connotations for stitches. Arguably knitting can be seen as more nuanced than traditional language as it is possible to "read it in different ways" (Participant 6, Phase 2, Interview). Participant 6 struggled with finding suitable language to express her emotions in her written diary:

It was almost like the writing felt more restricted by how I was feeling than the knitting, if that makes sense. I had to sort of confront it more than with the knitting where you can just express it without having to put, put words to it, having to name how you're feeling. Which, I think, is good for the way my brain works. So, the knitting is really good, because it's a way of expressing yourself without being really precise (Phase 2, Interview).

Participants also shared how free knitting has helped them to process their emotions and aided self-expression. It is evident that the choices surrounding yarn, colour and stitch, as well as the time spent knitting, aided a better understanding of themselves and how to communicate those emotions with language. Pöllänen's (2015) study stipulates that crafting can aid the maker in organising their emotions within a space that promotes self-expression and self-reflection (see Chapter 2, Section 2.3.2); the KnitWell participants have also registered an appreciation for how knitting has aided

their emotional regulation. Participant 8, for example, found that knitting allowed her to process her thoughts in order to "put a concept of language around it and pin it down" (Phase 3, Interview).

For some participants, free knitting helped them to process thoughts into language; for others free knitting and daily knit journalling were a visual exploration that guided their learning about themselves. Participant 5 suggested that free knitting is a good exercise for people that "want to, like, see their life and their emotions in a, in a really visual way. And yeah, I think you'll definitely be, like, I think, you can definitely learn things about yourself, and how you see the world" (Phase 3, Interview). This correlates with Nasseri and Wilson's study (2017, p. 203) on craft as a practice for self-development, where they share that:

> Meanings that emerge from craft dialogue are distinguished from a verbal dialogue as they embody the consciously exchanged information as well as unconsciously obtained knowledge of the relationship. This is tacit and embodied knowledge, wisdom and intuition that are formed over time. Craftsmanship is a whole-person dialogue involving senses, thoughts, feelings and intuitions of the practitioner. Beyond a process and activity, it embodies an engaged mode of being and knowing the world.

Essentially, the dialogue formed between knitter and knitting is whole-body and the knowledge learned about the self as a knitter is transferable to other aspects of their life. The act of knitting facilitates a deeper connection to the knitter's emotions; for example, in some cases, the act of knitting enabled participants to later engage with written language to explain and further process their emotions. This is particularly evident in Phase 2 when the written diary element was added to the process. In Phase 2, the majority of participants knitted first and then wrote their diary using the knitting as a vessel to discuss their emotions. However, some participants wrote about their day first, then knitted the DKJ, and then made written reflections on how their knitting connected to their day and their emotions, effectively writing twice. Both approaches

share similarities in how participants reflected upon their knitting after completing the activity.

Several participants felt that written reflection added an extra element to the DKJ experience, especially Participant 8 who shared that, "I think there's a clarity to be achieved by having to put language around it. And the language reflected the choices in terms of the knitting … Then that all flows together" (Phase 3, Interview). Combining the written word with a tactile, non-verbal, craft like knitting allows for multiple layers of meaning to arise, each visible through yarn choice, colour choice, stitch choice and written language. The first three form part of a knitter's vocabulary, and between them, they inform each individual knitter's lexical repertoire that defines their knitting. The written language, in this context, gives a voice to something that would otherwise be unknown.

7.2   DIRECT AND METAPHORICAL EXPRESSION

In terms of how participants expressed emotion through knitting, two main styles emerged: direct expression and metaphorical expression. Direct expression can be seen as a clear connection between the knitter's emotions and stitch or colour choice. On the other hand, metaphorical expression appeared to involve a more figurative representation of the knitter's emotions.

Figure 7.2 Participant 1, Phase 2, DKJ – the close-up indicates a neon section that was knitted on day six when Participant 1 was suffering from high pain levels.

An example of direct expression is how Participant 1 made clear connections between her knitting choices and her emotions, "pain levels v. high today so chose brightly coloured yarn as I find it very jarring, much like the pain. As I feel like I only half function when in pain, I only knitted on half my stitches" (Phase 2, Diary Entry), illustrated in Figure 7.2.

A further example of direct expression came from Participant 5's DKJ (see Figure 7.3) and Phase 2 diary entry.

> About the day:
>
> End of surgery week – exhausted, relieved, drained. Want to curl up in a ball.
>
> Dreading work tomorrow
>
> About the knitting:
>
> Stocking + garter stitch = comfort
>
> Garter border = structure I'm seeking
>
> Holes = loss + grief
>
> High contrast colours (dark + light) = intensity of feeling
>
> Mistakes + mixed tension = not feeling myself
>
> SSK cast off = quick + easy, smooth rhythm

Figure 7.3 Participant 5, Phase 2, DKJ – the close-up indicates a marled section that was knitted on day one when Participant 5 used contrast yarns to highlight the intensity of her feelings.

Here, Participant 5 has made very direct connections between emotion and the structure and colour choices of her knitting. Furthermore, this direct approach is prevalent in her written diary, evidenced above, in terms of the writing structure and style choices which are concise and methodical.

Figure 7.4 Participant 4, Phase 2, DKJ – the close-up indicates, a daily entry knitted in grey boucle yarn that reminded Participant 4 of a sheep, discussed below.

In contrast, some participants were more metaphorical with their expression. This can be seen in Participant 4's DKJ (see Figure 7.4) and associated Phase 2, Diary Entry.

> I have chosen the grey curly wool. It reminds me of a sheep with a woolly coat. I feel I need guidance – for example a sheepdog to point me in the right direction. I am knitting a square in garter stitch which I feel is the most sturdy and flexible. A square is like a cornerstone of a new structure – my new beginning.

Another example came from Participant 11, who described choosing a blue yarn that she dyed herself and how "the colour kind of swallowed me whole. It's the love thing, it gets everywhere, the colour looks how floating in water looking at the sky feels + love feels that way too" (Phase 2, Diary Entry), illustrated in Figure 7.5.

Figure 7.5 Above: Participant 11, Phase 2, finished DKJ. Below: the close-up indicates when Participant 11 metaphorically described her knitting like floating in water, discussed above.

In terms of my own experience, the way in which I conveyed emotion was less metaphorical and more direct, as in this diary entry from the Additional DKJ (illustrated in Figure 7.6):

Wakefield for Sheila Hicks: Off Grid exhibition

YSP – beautiful

Really lovely day

Knit:

I – MADE – IT = in words through K + P

Figure 7.6 Above: My additional DKJ (following the participant study). Below: the close-up indicates when I knitted the phrase 'I made it' repeatedly across the row in knit and purl .

This is not the only time I have combined written language within my knitting, like an encoded message for that specific day and time, and this example shows a clear connection. However, whether I was focused on making clear connections to my emotions or whether the knitting was more intuitive, depended on how I felt each day:

my Phase 2 Diary Entry "– garter stitch – feeling frustrated and need something calming" illustrates how I intuitively turned to garter stitch when searching for comfort.

7.3 PLANNED AND CONSISTENT CONNECTIONS

Through analysing the data, I identified a common sub-theme that some participants consistently planned for their DKJ; i.e. planning what or how to knit beforehand or consistently using a colour to represent a specific emotion. Free knitting opens a dialogue with the self and puts the knitter in control: "you're thinking about what do I feel like doing and why do I feel like doing it? You're, kind of, having that dialogue with yourself because you're conscious you're going to put it down..." (Participant 10, Phase 2, Interview). In Faccio et al.'s (2019) study (see Chapter 2, Section 2.3.1), it is proposed that through the activity of diary writing, the diarist can clarify and develop their emotional awareness. Participant 10 made a similar connection with her knitting choices above; she consistently opened a dialogue to communicate her emotions.

It is evident that some participants certainly planned what to knit, and how it connected to their emotions, before picking up their needles. For some, this was because specific stitch, colour and yarn choices were made to reflect specific emotions and emotional states. Participant 1 shared that certain stitch choices, for example, were planned before knitting commenced as she felt that a specific stitch was more reflective of her emotions than another:

> So, there's the bit where I did the stacked decrease … sort of everything felt like it was getting on top of me and so everything felt like it was coming in together. And, and that seemed to fit, that, that pattern seemed to fit that very, very well … it does represent what I wanted it to represent (Phase 3, Interview).

Participant 1 was particularly aware of how her knitting reflected her emotions, and the reasons behind her choices; extracts from her Phase 2 diary exemplify this:

> added yarn on by picking up stitches as the good day came out of nowhere and so placing it at random seemed appropriate.

did some short rows and rib stitches as I think I feel like a lot of stuff is an uphill battle right now.

How participants engaged with their knitting often reveals a clear connection to how they engaged with their emotions and planned what stitch was best to express them. For Participant 4, for example, "I like that slipstitch because it meant it was like, it could represent different feelings on that day, that I was having different emotions" (Phase 2, Interview).   In this instance Participant 4 used slip stitches[24] as a technique to mix colours within the knitting (see Figure 7.7).

Figure 7.7 Participant 4, Phase 2, DKJ – the close-ups indicate daily entries knitted using the slip stitch technique.

The DWKS offered participants an opportunity to consider their emotions each day, and this fostered consistent reflection. Visual analysis of the knitting created when participants strongly agreed with feeling anxious (see Figure 7.8), highlights the different stitch options that participants turned to when experiencing anxiousness. Evidently, there is no firm resonance that when feeling anxious all participants consistently knitted garter stitch. Yet, the visual analysis does expose that on the majority of days when feeling anxious, participants chose simple stitches - i-cords, garter stitch, moss stitch and stocking stitch – and that only a small handful of anxious days showcase more elaborate

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[24] The definition for the slip stitch technique is in the glossary on page xv.

knitting. This suggests that participants chose to knit something simple to ease their anxiety rather than something complex that could fuel it even more.

Figure 7.8 Visual analysis, Anxious Use Wheel, highlights each day a participant strongly agreed with feeling anxious throughout the phases and is organised in order of stitch choice. Clockwise from top: beading, i-cords, garter stitch, moss stitch, stocking stitch, and embroidery

In my own experience, whether I planned what to knit depended on the extent I was willing to engage with my emotions. For example, on one day in Phase 2, I felt angry and frustrated, and I was wholly engaged with feeling that anger, and therefore even made

the knitting experience more frustrating by actively choosing to increase my stitches. Participant 10 explored her emotions in a similar way:

> I think there were one or two times where actually I chose to knit with things I really didn't actually like at all because it was, like, a way of, kind of, satisfying a degree of frustration. It's almost like, like, having a tantrum. Like, crappy wool and crappy colour and really crappy day, yeah. That's how bad it is, I have to do some horrible knitting (Phase 2, Interview).

However, on a different day, Participant 10 and I may both have been willing to engage with that anger and frustration in a different way. For example, I was also known to knit garter stitch in an effort to calm myself and simplify my thought process, thereby attempting to combat more negative emotions. How I interacted with my emotions changed day to day, depending on the intensity I felt them and my willingness to engage with them.

Planned connections were also made between yarn choice and emotions. For example, Participant 11 chose one yarn she loved and another yarn in a colour that she liked but "jangles me a bit" (Phase 3, Diary Entry) and knitted a checkerboard to show the "back and forth of feelings … comfort in surprising places" (Ibid.). This shows how colour, yarn and stitch choice all played an equal role in Participant 11's representation of that day. Yarn choice was also important for Participant 6 who used yarns she liked to encourage change, "I really like sparkly things. There weren't many sparkly things happening, so, putting it in the knitting was like a way of trying to bring it about" (Phase 3, Interview).

Some participants used yarn consistently throughout each phase. Participant 1 used the neon yellow acrylic yarn on high pain days throughout all three phases and the thick white wool yarn for when she was suffering with brain fog. Similarly, if Participant 9 had a good day she would regularly use the "fluffy yarns … and it felt like that was a slightly joyful thing to do" (Phase 1, Interview).

7.4   PLANNED YET FLEXIBLE CONNECTIONS

Through exploring planned and consistent connections, I identified a sub-theme: where participants had made connections, but applied these flexibly in order to express their emotions. Participant 5 shared how "with the knitting, actually, it could be the same choice of stitch, or same choice of shape, or same choice of colour, but, actually, day to day, that really could represent a different thing. It's kind of more open to interpretation" (Phase 2, Interview). My own experience is similar to this: there were days where I knitted garter stitch as I felt content and relaxed, and on other occasions I knitted garter stitch because I had a bad day and wanted to feel comforted. These choices came naturally to me, without grappling with trying to find appropriate language to process them.

The day-to-day fluctuations in the willingness to engage with emotions is something that Participant 5 also addressed, sharing that it was:

> maybe less how I felt, but how willing I was to, like, deal with how I felt and maybe that's what you can see with the knitting, because sometimes like day to day it's the same feelings I felt. But the extent to which I knitted or the kind of knitting I did was different, and that's based off, like, how I, that day, responded to those emotions (Phase 3, Interview).

Free knitting provided the opportunity for knitters to address their emotions and respond to them in a manner that facilitated self-expression. This links directly to Rogers' (1993) theory surrounding expressive art - where she suggests that different factors of creativity are key to exploring self-expression (see Chapter 2, Section 2.3.2). Yet, in comparison to Rogers' use of line and form within art, KnitWell uses yarn, colour, and stitch within knitting whereby each link to the knitters' energy levels and emotional state. The DKJ is an organic culmination of emotional expression which Participant 6 reflected on, stating that "seeing the mixture of, like, the tiny, shiny bits, and the fluorescent bits, and the fluffy bits, and, like, it feels quite, like, apt, how it's never just one feeling" (Phase 2, Interview). Participant 6's Phase 2 DKJ is illustrated in Figure 7.9.

Figure 7.9 Participant 6, Phase 2, finished DKJ.

Interestingly, for some participants, they stopped knitting when they did not want to dwell on external factors. Participant 1 shared how it was about "knowing that, actually, today I'm not going to put this down into any stitch or any writing. I would rather wake up tomorrow and not dwell on it" (Phase 3, Interview). This is an example of a different way that participants engaged with their emotions in a flexible manner, that knowing when to stop and disengage was important.

Several participants found colour significant to their mood. For example, Participant 5 was particularly affected by two colours, orange and green, both of which were not included within the yarn palette I provided; they are colours that she substituted (see Figure 7.10). The visual analysis of yarns substituted by participants, illustrated in Figure 7.11 and Figure 7.12, also highlights colours and yarns that participants were drawn to throughout each phase. Interestingly, sometimes a yarn was chosen or substituted for a specific reason by a participant; other times they made a substitution because it was to hand. Participant 5 found that the orange and green she favoured were in constant use, yet she used them in a flexible manner, "I can't tell if sometimes that was due to the fact either I was in a good mood, or I was in a bad mood and wanted to be in a better mood" (Phase 3, Interview). Throughout the process of daily knit journalling, Participant 5 realised "how much, like, colour can influence your moods and be very therapeutic" (ibid.).

Figure 7.10 Participant 5, Phase 3, DKJ – highlighted are her substitute yarn entries and greyed out are the entries where she utilised the provided yarn palette. Below in Figures Figure 7.11 and Figure 7.12 I share all the yarns that participants substituted throughout the phases.

Figure 7.11 Visual Analysis, Substitute Yarns Colour Wheel. This highlights each time a participant knitted with substitute yarn. Clockwise from top, dark greys, greys, yellows, oranges, and reds

Figure 7.12 Visual Analysis, Substitute Yarns Colour Wheel. This highlights each time a participant knitted with substitute yarn. Clockwise from top, beiges, greens, and blues

Many participants supported the supposition that colour influenced their moods, stating that colour was more important than the texture of yarn because it is a "visual art as well as a textural, tactile one" (Participant 4, Phase 1, Interview). The importance of colour rather than texture counteracts the findings from Corkhill et al.'s (2015) study, where 24% of their survey respondents shared that colour "usually or definitely affected their mood"; yet, 46% felt that texture affected their mood more. My own experience differs slightly from this, as although I am naturally always drawn to colour first, Phase 2 was during a very hot summer in the UK. Therefore, on particularly hot days I chose the soft, sleek, coolness of a cerise pink cotton yarn – irrelevant of the fact I was not drawn to the colour – purely for the comfort and ease of knitting in hot weather. This shows a flexibility in yarn and colour choice which is wholly affected by external factors, separate from my emotions.

For some participants colour was never used consistently to align with their emotions. Participant 6 noted that "I'll pick a colour based on the mood and, like, how I'm feeling that day, but it won't necessarily be the same colour I would have chosen if I was in the same kind of emotional state the day before" (Phase 3, Interview). Evidently colour played an important role in how participants chose to engage with and express their emotions. In some cases, Participant 4 used colour to counteract the day and lift her spirits, "I was attracted by the orange wool as I felt it was uplifting to my current mood" (Phase 2, Diary Entry). Both examples show a flexibility in colour choice, and the inconsistency of its use.

It is evident that in some cases colour selection and yarn choice related more to a participant's emotional state than a stitch choice, as these had stronger emotional connections. Examples include, "the dark colour of the wool was soothing" (Participant 4, Phase 2, Diary Entry), "'gold' = hope. Deep pink = richness of life" (Participant 5, Phase 2, Diary Entry), and "weld blue, I love … I wanted it to just look like how today felt – calm and full of love" (Participant 11, Phase 2, Diary Entry). Some participants, including myself, concurred with Participant 4's statement that "colour's the most meaningful thing" (Phase 2, Interview) when it comes to expressing emotions. Yet Participant 4 also used stitch choice in a flexible manner: "the slip stitch I really liked. I felt it captured,

like, different feelings, you know, because there's a contrast in there" (Phase 2, Interview). The flexibility of the slip stitch technique allowed her to express mixed emotions.

Figure 7.13 Visual analysis, Happy Colour Wheel. This highlights each day a participant strongly agreed with feeling happy throughout the phases and is organised by colour. Clockwise from top, greys, burgundy, pinks, reds, orange, neon, greens, blues and ecru.

Figure 7.14 Visual analysis, Insecure Colour Wheel. This highlights each day a participant strongly agreed with feeling insecure throughout the phases and is organised by colour. Clockwise from mustard, oranges, ecru, greys, maroon, pinks, white and neon.

Flexibility in colour usage is also evident in the visual analysis of participants' DKJs, aligned with the measurements of specific emotions recorded in their DWKS. Through creative visual analysis, I have created a colour wheel, illustrated in Figure 7.13, which highlights the colour used in a DKJ each time a participant strongly agreed with feeling happy in the DWKS, throughout the phases. The equivalent colour wheel for feeling insecure is illustrated in Figure 7.14. These colour wheels show a flexibility in colour choice for two quite distinct emotions, including a surprising overlap with some colours; for example the dark greys and burgundy feature in both colour wheels. However, these visual analyses also reveal how participants gravitated towards specific colours when feeling a certain way. Lighter, brighter colours are used more frequently when participants strongly agreed with feeling happy; in comparison, the tone of the insecure colour wheel is considerably darker, where there is significantly more marling which alters the shade and impact of specific colours. Of course, as many participants chose to do, colour can be used flexibly, day to day; there are no set rules dictating when a specific colour should be used. The empowerment of personal choice creates an original mode of self- and emotional expression which is at the core of the KnitWell proposition.

7.5   EMOTIONS REVEALED

The majority of the discussion surrounding the theme of Emotional Expression has focused on the conscious articulation of emotion by participants. However, there is one specific example where a participant was only made aware of her emotions once the phase of daily knit journalling had ended. For Participant 7, it is apparent that the whole experience of keeping a DKJ unlocked elements of the psyche which were not conscious or available to her at the time of knitting. There is a comparison to free writing here; as stated by Elbow (1973), the continuous movement of free writing aids the manifestation of the writer's thoughts. Similarly, it could be the continuous movement of free knitting that unlocked elements of Participant 7's inner consciousness:

> It was quite interesting to actually sit down and analyse how I was feeling every day. It's really weird, because since then, I know I've been diagnosed with having depression and anxiety, but only since I finished the knitting … I didn't realise, I

don't think, how stressed I was sometimes feeling, until you can get it out (Phase 1, Interview).

The DKJ as a material object revealed unconscious associations to Participant 7. This highlights how the KnitWell proposition and the time spent knitting were a process of revealing hidden depths, that only on reflection was the knitter able to access. It was demonstrated in Faccio et al.'s (2019) study that keeping a written diary helped to improve their participant's emotional awareness and generated a developed understanding of how they were feeling (see Chapter 2, Section 2.3.1). Arguably, the same can be said for free knitting, as is evidenced by Participant 7's experience. There are also comparisons to be made with expressive writing, whereby the focus is on the process, and that emotional experiences become something tangible through expressing them in written format (Schaefer, 2008). It could be argued that, for Participant 7, it was not only the time spent knitting, and the analysing of her thoughts, but it could also be the visual, tangible aspects of the DKJ that made her aware of her stress and anxiety. There is another possibility here, which is that the process of being part of this research has allowed Participant 7 free reign to access her emotions, something that she may have otherwise not engaged with. Potentially, through engaging with knitting in this new manner, Participant 7 recognises the value in selecting specific yarns and stitches to cater to her emotions; this reflects the statement by Niedderer and Townsend (2014, p.7), that the value of craft appears to "rest in the intimacy of handling and its multisensory appeal including visual appearance, sound, touch, smell and taste."

Several participants have expressed how the KnitWell proposition, of creating a DKJ, has impacted their awareness of their emotions, both consciously and unconsciously. Participant 9 informed me that she suffered with anxiety and depression; however, since participating in this project her general mental health has improved:

I've not had any mad, you know, the bad days … I haven't really, really had a bad day since I finished it … That might have made a difference because my mental health can be quite up and down, it's been pretty reasonable, recently. And in

fact, I'm reducing my antidepressant medication in consultation with my GP this week. So yeah, yeah, actually, I think in terms of from the first one, when I know I found it quite a challenge … I think I could probably describe myself as more settled (Phase 3, Interview)

The daily activity of creating a DKJ helped some participants to register emotional triggers and helped them to understand what was happening within their surroundings: "I thought it helped to clarify how you felt and also helped to make you realise why you felt like it, the things that happened to trigger things, which is .... that's brilliant really, because you can try and rectify it" (Participant 2, Phase 3, Interview).

Similarly, for some participants the daily activity helped them to process and order their thoughts and emotions. Participant 11 highlights how the structure of the DKJ aided her emotional regulation:

I think it helped me kind of order my thoughts better. Even though it may not have seemed like it … and it gave me kind of a structure for thinking about things, and that was really helpful … there were periods where I just felt kind of overwhelmed and a little bit crazy and having to, kind of, you know, having these periods where I sort of have to order that more was really helpful (Participant 11, Phase 3, Interview).

This examination has surfaced that a knitter's emotions are not always known prior to, or during, the knitting process; rather that, upon reflection, the emotions are revealed to the knitter. This brings a different perspective on emotional expression, and a potential additional benefit to a DKJ.

7.6 PROCESSING EMOTION

In addition to helping emotions to be revealed, the analysis has surfaced a sub-theme regarding how daily knit journalling, and the written equivalent, enabled participants to process or manage their emotions. This includes awareness of pleasure and displeasure,

and comfort and discomfort within knitting, the choices that were made and what they portray.

Some participants found daily knit journalling mentally challenging during difficult times, whether that was emotional or physical. The experience of free knitting created a liminal space for participants to process their emotions at times when they were unsure. For example, Participant 6 shared the following:

> I think the days where I did more knitting, I didn't necessarily know how I was feeling when I started, but the fact that I did a bit more than on the days where I definitely wasn't feeling so good, I was feeling quite overwhelmed … it helped me notice rather than explore, those days … it helped me make space and kind of take stock of things (Phase 3, Interview).

Rather than not knitting, Participant 6 used the DKJ as a vehicle for processing her emotions, to centre herself. There is also a suggestion here that she knitted more on more difficult days. Participant 8 also had a strategy for how she dealt with more challenging days, "when there's more anxiety, it might be more comforting to do things that are neater, that are more containing and more predictable" (Phase 1, Interview). Through the act of making, insights are provided "into the techniques of experience that can shape our dealings with others" as well as insights into the practitioner's own emotions and how to deal with them (Sennett, 2008, p.289). I have an example from my own experience where I turned to dependable, comforting stitches when under pressure. During Phase 3, there was one day where I felt completely out of my comfort zone in a workshop I was attending; it made me uneasy and anxious. Instead of waiting until the end of the day, I knitted during the workshop. I knitted a great mass of garter stitch and at the time, it felt calming to centre all the negative energy I felt into something that was comforting and contained. These examples suggest there is comfort in predictability and control when feeling anxious. During the process of daily knit journalling there is no need to be boldly expressive every day if that is not how the knitter feels at the time.

I have discussed how free knitting creates a liminal space for processing and containing emotions, but it also has the capacity to energise. Participant 4 shared how "knitting never makes me tired. I find it gives me energy because I relax, and it's like a rest for me to knit, it is like a resting agent" (Phase 2, Interview). As well as being energising, for some participants knitting has become a positive diversion from more negative distractions. Participant 6 shared how:

> It's made my feelings about knitting more positive in general … it made me realise that I do like having something to do with my hands and something to be working on. And that that is good … it's, like, a positive in the way it diverts me from like more negative distractions. (Phase 3, Interview).

Participant 6 explained that negative distractions, in this instance, included watching endless television and scrolling through social media.

The parallel between written journals – as places to process emotions and note reflections – and DKJs meant that some participants felt protective of their DKJ. This is most evident with Participant 11, who stopped knitting in front of others after receiving comments like, "just put that down, it's hideous" (Phase 2, Interview). She shared that it did not happen so much after that "because I hid it more. But I just didn't care. You know, like, I was like, no, this is mine. I like it" (ibid.). Participant 11 is alluding to how she knitted privately so as the aesthetics of her DKJ were not scrutinised by others, it was for her eyes only – at the time of creation.

Written journals hold connotations of not only a place to vent but also a safe space with no judgement. This is something that some participants have noted about daily knit journalling, "I think the knitting is definitely so safe. Probably the safest thing, safer even then journalling" (Participant 4, Phase 2, Interview). Personally, I agree with Participant 4: I have felt a level of safety within daily knit journalling that I have not achieved with written journalling. This is partly because of the encoded nature of free knitting. Moments, emotions, interactions, and more have been released from me and captured within my DKJ. I was able to shed the emotional weight without fear of retribution: no

one else could, even if they happened upon my DKJ, read it, and share my secrets with the world. Or maybe my DKJ felt like a safe space because, as mentioned before, I knew how I wanted to represent my day, and my emotions through stitch and colour much easier than with written language; there was no grappling in my mind to find the right word and losing it again before my pen hit paper.

The physical act of knitting played a large part in how participants centred and communicated their emotions to aid their wellbeing. Knitting "helped me just get all my thoughts together. I could look back and think well, yeah, I see why I got upset … or I can see why I was really happy and know what to do for the future" (Participant 2, Phase 3, Interview). This process gave participants the opportunity to 'check in' with themselves emotionally and register positive and negative emotions when they appeared, rather than letting time pass: "by the time I'd finished knitting, I realised that actually I was not in a great mood, not because of the knitting, but just like, it made me more aware of it" (Participant 6, Phase 2, Interview). Similarly, Participant 10 found that knitting gave her the facility to consolidate her mind, "what was significant about the day and what was significant about the choices I've made" in knitting (Phase 2, Interview); free knitting made her more conscious of her emotions and gave her the "space where you can, kind of, sort it out" (ibid.). However, it is evident that one participant particularly found daily knit journalling facilitated a direct confrontation with her emotions, stating that "knitting is a comfort and a distraction, and this knitting is also a head-on confrontation with my feelings which is good but hard" (Participant 11, Phase 3, Diary Entry).

Additionally, free knitting and daily knit journalling aided resilience in dealing with emotions; it gave one knitter the opportunity of:

Bouncing back from things and, like, growing that resilience and maybe stopping things in its tracks … stress or worry or insecurity can sometimes creep up on you, and if you don't clock it straight away, it can then become much more difficult to handle, before you know it, you've been really, really stressed and insecure and worried about stuff for like a couple of days … So, I think it was definitely really

helpful, to be able to, like, clock things early and be like, 'Hey, I'm feeling this way', and be really, really mindful of the ups and downs and send it into the ether. I've knitted it into a garden. Can't see it anymore. (Participant 5, Phase 3, Interview).

The process of knitting allowed Participant 5 the strength to combat her emotions head on; as a physical activity it not only allowed her the time to approach how she felt but also the tactile format to deal with that. There are many elements to knitting that the knitter can choose to represent their emotions, such as yarn, colour, and stitch choice, all of which aid a tactile response. However, some participants shared how the physical act of knitting also made them more aware of their bodies and the tension they carry around with them. For example, Participant 6 shared how "the knitting for me, even if I wasn't directly addressing how I was feeling, it made me more aware of, like, physical feelings, like, tension" (Phase 2, Interview). Similarly, Participant 10 shared how the process of knitting communicates more from the body, "it feels like you get more out, more is communicated out of you … the self-expression is greater" in this type of knitting (Phase 2, Interview).

In contrast, Participant 11 recalled a previous job focused on another fibre craft, and the effect that craft had on enabling space to think:

When you're weaving you have a lot of time setting the loom up, there's a huge amount of time where you're literally just sitting, sort of, doing this mechanical task. And there's a lot of time to think and I've never really thought about any kind of correlation between knitting and weaving. So, I just, would have all this time sitting on a chair inside the loom just thinking. Now that I'm thinking about it, I think it's kind of made me feel different about knitting. Knitting was just something I've done from a very small child and it's, kind of, driven by the end result. And this has sort of made me think of it more as a process, you know, more, like, a spectrum (Phase 3, Interview).

Participant 11 is suggesting a paradigm shift within her knitting practice; she has understood that knitting does not have to be solely focused on the final product, but

that the activity of knitting can be diverse. Weaving had allowed her the space to think. The KnitWell proposition and creation of a DKJ has changed her experience of knitting and Participant 11 now acknowledges knitting as a spectrum activity; she connects with it in a similar way to how she engaged with weaving, enjoying the process and the breathing space.

The physical act of knitting and daily knit journalling has evidently provided participants with a space to process their emotions, in addition to generating other noticeable benefits for their mental wellbeing, evidenced in Chapter 5, Section 5.5.

7.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter has considered the second theme I identified within the analysis, Emotional Expression. I discussed how participants reflected and communicated their emotional state through free knitting and daily knit journalling, highlighting the differences between a knitter's vocabulary and written language; for the KnitWell participants, knitting has proven to be more instinctive and expressive overall.

In considering the RQs (see Chapter 1, Section 1.8), RQ1 is interested in how different affordances of a knitted structure can be used to record and communicate the knitter's emotional state. In this chapter, I have demonstrated that the participants and I utilised many different indicators within knitting to denote how we engaged with and communicated our emotional states at the time of knitting. Colour was particularly important for some knitters: as a mode of communicating emotional state and for altering emotional states, acting pre- and post- knitting as a mood enhancer. Further evidence of colour being an important indicator, for both communicating emotional state and enabling self-expression, was shown by the substitute yarns that participants chose. As evidenced in Chapter 5 (Section 5.3, Table 5-4), half of the participants substituted yarns throughout the KnitWell study; a lot of the time this was owing to an emotional connection to the colour or yarn. This indicates that colour and yarn carry emotional weight when considering how, and what to knit with, to communicate emotional state.

I had anticipated that the gauge of knitting might be important, but this was not a concept that knitters discussed. Some participants disclosed that they knitted with the same needle size no matter what yarn they knitted with. In hindsight, I did not explicitly discuss needle size with participants. As I did not prompt them to consider changing needle size this might be the reason why gauge was not changed or discussed. In comparison, my analysis disclosed that the shape of knitting was evidently highly communicative and expressive. In their use of knitted structure, some participants were consistent in their choices as to what a specific colour or the texture of a specific yarn meant to them. In comparison, others, like myself, were more flexible with their choices; every day was malleable, and so the choices made yesterday may be different today, and different again tomorrow, and so on. This underscores the flexibility that the knitted structure affords for the communication of emotional states on a day-to-day basis.

Overall, there was a varied response between participants, regarding knitting as the means for expressing their emotions; some did struggle to express their emotions using knitting as the sole vessel for communication. In these instances, it was the time spent knitting that enabled the knitter to engage with their emotions; they were not necessarily reflecting their emotions within the knitting, but the knitting allowed them time and space to process, to find the accurate language to express themselves and to register their emotions. This was then reflected in the measurements recorded in the DWKS. The DWKS also made some participants aware that day to day they might feel the same, but the knitting would be different. Therefore the DWKS aided reflection on how they were engaging with their emotions, and this was an unforeseen benefit of this innovative research method (see Chapter 3, Section 3.4).

From the evidence presented in this chapter, it is clear that the language of knitting offers different possibilities to communicate emotional state and self-expression. RQ2 queries what opportunities and limitations a knitted journal can offer in terms of self-expression. KnitWell participants are clear that there is an overriding difference between a knitter's vocabulary and that of written language; for them it has the ability to be more expressive. Daily knit journalling has proven to be more instinctive, releasing participants from the need to verbalise thoughts and emotion, offering them a positive

opportunity for self-expression. Nevertheless, there were differences in how participants expressed themselves; some made very direct correlations between their emotions and their knitting, others were more metaphorical with their choices. This evidenced the myriad opportunities for self-expression within a DKJ. Whether direct or metaphorical, the fluidity of knitting acted as a form of visual processing and self-expression. Overall, the physical act of knitting gave the knitter a space to process their emotions; it allowed them to express their emotions – particularly via stitch and colour – and led to a mode of self-expression that felt authentic to the knitters.

8   Awareness and Approach to Meaning

This chapter examines the third and final core theme that arose from both the participant data and my autoethnographic data: Awareness and Approach to Meaning (see Figure 8.1). The data revealed how participants interacted with what was happening around them and the meanings associated with the choices that were made when connecting their knitting to events, memories, and emotions. Meaning is the defining factor of this theme, within which there are five sub-themes. Access to Meaning (Section 8.1) explores the concept of meaning being ephemeral and considers that the meaning of each DKJ entry had the potential to change upon the knitter's further reflection. Conscious (Section 8.2), Partial Awareness (Section 8.3) and Unconscious (Section 8.4) discuss differing states of participants' awareness when recording events, acts and their meanings. Finally, Time Capsule (Section 8.5) posits that it is not solely the stitch choice but the experience of knitting that is formulating memory, and therefore, the whole practice of knitting is significant in acting as a time capsule capturing that specific moment. In examining the concept and significance of meaning within participants' knitting, this theme goes some way to answering RQ2 and RQ3 (see Chapter 1, Section 1.8).
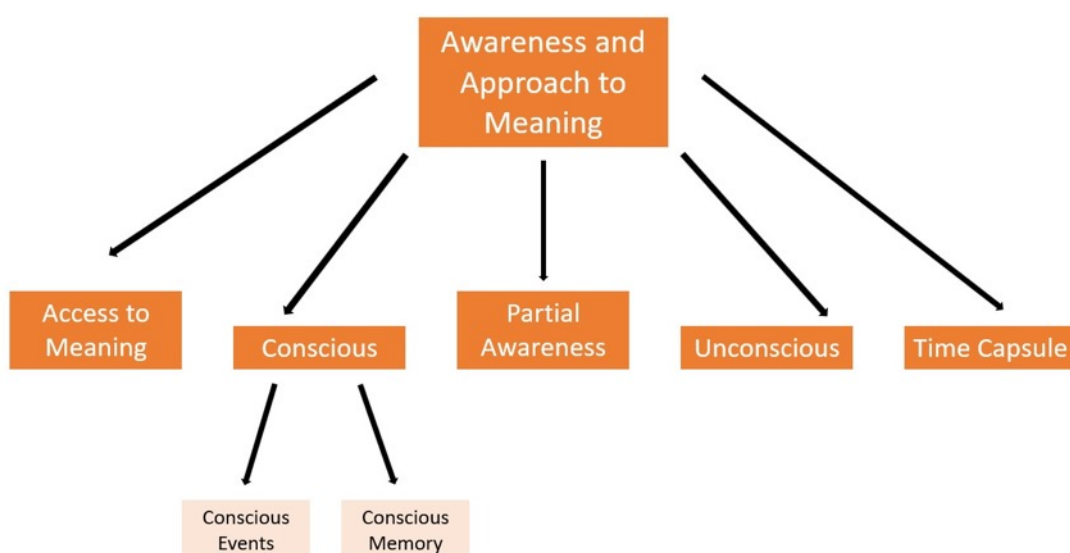
Figure 8.1 Diagram of Theme Three, Awareness and Approach to Meaning and its sub-themes

As with the other themes, this detailed discussion of Awareness and Approach to Meaning draws on the theory and/or literature presented in chapters 1 and 2 where relevant.

8.1 ACCESS TO MEANING

When I analysed the data, it became increasingly evident that for several participants the meaning of each knitted diary entry changed as time passed, from the time of knitting to when they reflected back on their DKJ. There are two contributory elements to this. Firstly, the DKJ is understood only by the knitter (see Chapter 7). Secondly, there is the passage of time, and that the knitter's understanding of their DKJ changes as they move away from its moment of creation.

As is the case with most written journals, the DKJ is personal and "it does have that, like, weird cringe factor that only journals have" (Participant 5, Phase 1, Interview). The act of sharing their DKJ with me, not only looking at it, but discussing it, made Participant 5 "feel really awkward" (ibid.), unlike a normal knitting project where she would be happy to discuss it with someone. She felt similar about her Phase 2 DKJ, "when I finished this, I actually struggled to look at it, I found it so painful to look at" (Phase 2, Interview). There are two issues that arise from these reflections. The first is the aspect of time: present versus future. Present refers to the time the knitting took place, it was an in the moment activity. Future refers to when the knitter sees their knitting again, looking back on it after some time has passed. It was almost as if reflecting on the DKJ was placing Participant 5 back in the emotional state she was in at the time it was created. This draws to the surface an additional issue, surrounding the ethical dimension of how I, as researcher, dealt with my participants' feelings of discomfort or sensitivity when undertaking the material elicitation interview.[25] When discussing the DKJ within these interviews, I always asked participants to pick elements that stood out to them, that they felt comfortable to discuss: in essence, letting them lead the material elicitation interview process. I endeavoured to make participants feel at ease and at points invited them to guide the discussion in order not to lead them into a particular area of discussion, nor (deliberately or unintentionally) provoke feelings of discomfort.

Participant 5 was not alone in feeling discomfort when reflecting on the DKJ; several other participants also felt this way. Participant 1 indicated that the DKJ "feels more personal" (Phase 1, Interview) and that she is "less happy to look at it" (ibid.) than other

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[25] See Chapter 3, Section 3.5 for the ethical considerations in place for this research.

things she has previously knitted. The daily knit journalling process created a safe space in the present for the knitter, yet it was not necessarily accessible or comfortable for them in the future. Ultimately, it was the knitter's choice whether to divulge meaning, if they could remember it or 'read' it in their DKJ.

The crux of this sub-theme, Access to Meaning, is whether the meaning attributed at the time of knitting can be retrieved, acknowledged and/or divulged at a later date. Participant 5 reflected on her use of the colour orange, that she used it when she felt happy and also when she wanted comfort. Now time has passed "I can't now look at it and know which of the orange bits … I just know that both of those things [comfort and happiness] can push me to use it, which is really interesting" (Phase 2, Interview). Participant 5 is acknowledging that she cannot recall the exact determining factor behind each specific use of orange yarn. There is integrity to the standalone experience of each knitted diary entry: it provides the knitter with the freedom to express themselves at a specific point in time. This leads to a comparison to be made between a written diary (discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.3.1), and the knitted equivalent: when diary writing acts as a narration tool (Schaefer, 2008), arguably, meaning is always known to the writer even as time passes, yet with a tactile, knitted equivalent, meaning is not retained on a permanent basis.

Some participants were unable to connect back to the emotions they felt at the time of creation, and in some cases, they drew incorrect conclusions about their knitting; for example, Participant 2 stated that, "I don't know what I wrote about on that day, but to me, that looks like something that I was quite ... it looks quite angry to me" (Phase 2, Interview). I referred to her written diary and informed Participant 2 that in fact it was a good day, spent in the garden with lots of light, and she responded, "oh, right, so, that wasn't a bad one then" (ibid.). Participant 2 has not misremembered; she had misinterpreted her use of colour at that time. Free knitting allowed the knitter to articulate their emotions in the moment, which lead to a vivid representation. However this research shows that this can mean that, as time passed, the knitter may not remember, or be able to access their memories of, the specific choices they had made. In one case, Participant 11 was aware at the time of knitting that she may not be able to

recognise why she knitted specific things at a later date, "I wondered a lot of the time, how, like, if I could look at the knitting later and think 'oh, yeah, that's how that day was', but I don't think I can, although at the time, it was, you know, I mean, they had something to do with each other" (Phase 3, Interview).

Arguably, one of the remarkable qualities of craft is how practitioners of "craft objects imbue them with personal emotions, memories and meanings" (Niedderer and Townsend, 2014, p.4). The process as well as the artefact can hold emotion, but is it possible to have infinite access to those emotions, memories, and meanings? The KnitWell DKJ provides a potentially spontaneous method of recording emotions; each daily knit entry is ephemeral, fixed only by yarn. Unless connected to a specific event or memory, it cannot always be decoded. Indeed, participants' reflections suggest that the need to understand at a later date is irrelevant in some respects; it is the unique choices and decisions made in the moment that are important as a mode of self-expression.

8.2   CONSCIOUS

When analysing the data, I identified a common sub-theme regarding how consciously, or not, participants were recording events – things that were taking place, had happened or were acts of doing – within their knitting, as opposed to how they recorded and expressed emotional responses, as discussed in Chapter 7. The following sub-themes, Conscious – Conscious Events and Conscious Memory (Section 8.2), Partial Awareness (Section 8.3), and Unconscious (Section 8.4), discuss how participants recorded specific events within their DKJs. The Conscious sub-theme centres on the explicit choices participants have made within their daily knit journalling process, and, as Participant 12, choices that I deem to be active and considered in mine. Partial awareness suggests an overlap between the conscious and unconscious. Finally, unconscious describes where choices were unknown to the knitter at the time of knitting, but I found to be implicit within the data.

Conscious Events

There is evidence of three different types of conscious events within the data: those that are emotionally charged, those that are emotionally neutral and those that link to

participants' knitting history. Emotionally charged conscious events were both historic and current; for example, one participant was recording an anniversary whereas another was making a record of an event in the present, whilst both denoted grief.

Participant 10 shared the loss of a loved one and how the anniversary of their death took place during Phase 1.

> There's like a few days that really stood out in my mind when I was doing it … like that maroon-coloured wool and then I started putting things in the middle of it and that was the day before the anniversary of his death, which sort of... and then there's the day that was the actual anniversary, I did that white piece that sort of long white piece. It was a fuzzy white stuff ... So, just, that white piece there, which, like, that's exactly what it was. That was just like a whiteout day (Phase 1, Interview).

Participant 10 was conscious of what she was knitting. She wanted to mark a significant event by knitting a specific feature. It is a conscious commemoration. Within Faccio et al.'s (2019) study, it is noted that through generating a record of events, it gives the diarist a sense of control, they can experience past events within the diary which helps them to justify their emotions (see Chapter 2, Section 2.3.1). There is a direct correlation between Faccio et al.'s (2019) written diary study and the knitted equivalent here, as Participant 10 took control of her knitting to observe her loss. Similarly, Participant 9 shared an experience which related to a moment of grief in the present. "The little black square, the day my friend died, which was just awful ... But it was quite good to have something that I could do that was just 'right, well, I'm just going to put that to bed' as it were" (Phase 1, Interview). Interestingly, Participant 9 consciously chose to knit using a black yarn which is, of course, a colour synonymous with grief in western cultures; in comparison Participant 10 knitted with a white yarn, a colour that was more in tune with her subjective representation of grief.

Another participant used a particular technique to directly record an anxiety-inducing experience. "Went out to a comedy gig and there was no mask wearing or social

distancing, still highly anxious this morning. The wraps and yarn being carried on the front are because I feel like I'm tying myself in knots trying to work out how to start going out safely" (Participant 1, Phase 2, Diary Entry). Participant 1 was addressing the impact that COVID-19, and its safety measures, had on her behaviours as well as her mental health. It is believed that free writing can aid mental health, through focusing on positive actions and experiences rather than the negative (Pennebaker, 1997) (see Chapter 2, Section 2.3.1). I argue that Participant 1 is creating a positive experience - a way forward - through the creation of her DKJ.

Also present in the DKJs are references to more everyday events, those that participants simply wanted to record had taken place, such as medical procedures, holidays and sporting events. Participant 9 visited family in Northumberland and chose to knit "a representation in slipstitch of the Angel of the North because I had just driven past it" (Phase 2, Interview); she consciously recorded this visit by imitating a landmark within her knitting which she was able to refer back to. Participant 9 regularly made explicit references to events which she wished to acknowledge within stitch choice. A further example was when she missed a cricket match, "I could have gone to watch the Hundred cricket match today. So knitted a 10x10 square – 100 for the Hundred. Gray because tho' I'm happy enough today, I'm also mightily annoyed" (Phase 2, Diary Entry).

My own experience shows how I have recorded specific events in a more transient way where the focus is on tactile connections, as in this Phase 2 diary entry:

Kings Lynn – antique shop – Sandringham craft fair – exploring Norfolk

- Blue tongue from Slushy
- Buying things for our new house together – exciting!
- HOT weather!!

Knitting:

- Neon for excitement
- Mohair – blue – blue slush puppy tongue. HAHA!
- Bobbles as trying new things together

For me, as Participant 12, I made a conscious recording in my DKJ of a specific event, yet the memory was captured more within the colour and yarn choice. To complicate matters, I used the same yarn choices on different days when I had not recorded specific events. Owing to the ephemeral, yet conscious, nature of those yarn choices the memories were not fixed.

Conscious Memory

The final type of conscious recording under discussion is where participants have actively chosen to commemorate projects they have knitted previously, "I did star stitch there … I'd knitted a dish cloth with that, with just, you know, white cotton. And it just occurred to me, you could try it with two contrast colours" (Participant 10, Phase 1, Interview). Here, Participant 10 was sharing a memory of something she has knitted and how she wanted to then recreate that stitch within the DKJ.

The KnitWell DKJs created a space to process and reminisce on events that had happened in the distant past; participants reminisced on school life, the clothes a loved one wore, and past jobs. Through daily knit journalling, participants created a space to sit and recall events and circumstances from their past, to be in that time, or with a specific person again. Participant 4 recollected what school was like as she knitted her school colours over a few days:

> it is the same colour as my school colours which were burgundy, gold and black. Although it wasn't a private school, we had a very distinctive school uniform. So, the neon yellow bobbles I knitted were similar to the gold colour on my school uniform. I think reading a lot has subconsciously reminded me of school. School was quite a pleasant experience for me (Phase 2, Diary Entry).

Through choosing to knit with her school colours, Participant 4 was able to ruminate on her experience of life at school. This is something she mentioned again within the material elicitation interview, this time referring to specific events, "the blazers were very distinctive … people would phone the school and report us for being in the town, but we would be doing something, like, official. So, you know, that took me back a lot,

just using these colours" (Phase 2, Interview). The use of colour, in this context, brought back those memories.

Some participants created space to be with their loved ones; their knitting choices fostered a connection to those that had died and gave the knitter space to reminisce. Participant 5 noted that, "Ribbing – comfort, structure, grandad's cardigans" (Phase 2, Diary Entry). Participant 9 shared another example, "I'm missing my mum. Hence the yarn choice – my favourite variegated because the colour was my mum's favourite. Hence a little framed heart" (Phase 2, Diary Entry). Participant 2 had a dream where her father was wearing a specific jumper and how "that influenced my 2-tone knitting today. Mohair as my dad was always soft and fluffy" (Phase 2, Diary Entry). The three examples shown exemplify how participants' knitting allowed them to dedicate space to remembering their loved ones all within the context of knitting. My own experience of reminiscing within the DKJ refers more to times gone by, rather than specific people, "the speckly yarn, is one I dyed myself … it takes me back to a time that feels incredibly far away now" (Experimental KJ, Diary Entry); it took me back to when I was dyeing yarn for my business, and facilitating community knitting groups, the joyful experience of meeting new knitters on a weekly basis. This reflection happened during the process of knitting, as it was a dedicated time that aided my personal reflection.

In comparison, Participant 5 focused more on honouring how she began knitting:

> I used to knit bunting. And I would use, like, an embroidery stitch to make words on it. So, I don't know if it's clear from this, but it's me going back on top of the stocking stitch. Um, so I kind of wanted to, like, play to my roots, like, that was how I got into knitting (Phase 1, Interview).

Participant 5 engaged with memories of her knitting history and how she replicated it in her DKJ as an act of remembrance. She made links to memories of knitting gifts for loved ones, including a pair of sequin mittens she knitted for her aunt, one of the most complicated items she had ever made, and therefore wanted to commemorate that project within her DKJ.

Both the participants and I made conscious recordings of events and memories within the DKJ. This is significant in several ways, particularly the striking difference between knitting and writing about the day. The knitting not only created a visual record but also a tactile one. In some cases, it was the tactility of yarn and stitch that helped to bring memories to the fore. It is evident that the KnitWell approach of developing a record through yarn and stitch created a 3D, embodied response that was not achievable with a written equivalent. As a result of this, several participants reported that the process of participating with the KnitWell research functioned to improve their emotional self-awareness.

8.3   PARTIAL AWARENESS

Through analysing the data, I became aware that some participants were, at times, only partially aware of elements of the knitting process. I have identified that whilst some knitting choices might have been consciously made by participants, as discussed in Section 8.2 above, others are less so.[26] Indeed, yarn selection might be an active, conscious choice but the time spent knitting or choosing stitches may not be. One reason for this could be that stitch choice has the potential to change as each stitch is formed whereas it takes more effort to change yarn.

Participants, on occasion, described partial awareness surrounding their DKJ entries. For example, Participant 1 discussed how she knitted the physicality of her pain levels,

> I think I'm knitting my pain experience more than my emotions and the yarn choice
> was more what I was feeling but then what I knitted was more to do with my pain
> levels, but at the same time they're interlinked anyway, so it's difficult to separate
> it out. And having said that, some of the days when I picked the vivid yellow yarn
> were days when I was in a lot of pain and that was all I could think about and that
> vivid colour kind of almost that linked in with my pain levels somehow (Phase 1,
> Interview).

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[26] See Chapter 7, Section 7.4 for a discussion of flexible choices regarding emotional expression.

Participant 1 refers to how pain feels – it hurts tremendously – rather than how pain affects her emotions: anger. She was not considering the pain as an emotion; that is a distinct and separate thing. In this instance Participant 1 created a record of her pain, which is a day-to-day event in her life that dominates other thoughts and feelings.

In contrast to using a yarn to represent pain, Participant 11 chose to use a yarn to bring comfort, linking a specific yarn to a memory of a dear friend and something that she knitted for her.

> I was knitting her scarf out of this yarn. It was some kind of acrylic, and it had like, sort of bits on it, it was really, really thin … she still wears it ... I think the sequins, like the sequins were the closest to what that yarn was like. And I think they just sort of, it's just some really weird juxtaposition of like, something that makes you feel something that's just a constant in your life that makes you feel really calm and settled. But that's also like, been a bit turned up on its head. And, so, it's like something that you kind of rely on to calm me down… at one point I had an idea, I was just going to use the sequins every single day with everything. And then things kind of calmed down again (Phase 2, Interview).

Both Participant 1 and Participant 11 share specific choices they made about colour or yarn, and why they chose to knit with these. However, there was no conscious choice about the knitting itself, that was more a consequence of the day facilitated by their embodied knitting skills. Participant 11 also gave an example of an intention to use the sequin yarn every day but then subsequently recognised that she did not do so. Partial Awareness in this instance shows that, on reflection, both knitters were able to see the choices that were made, but they had only partial or limited consciousness of this at the time of knitting.

8.4 Unconscious

The process of identifying and examining the conscious events and memories present in participants' DKJs raised the possibility that further events and acts were unconsciously

being documented. My analysis revealed that there were moments where participants were unaware of choices that were being made during the act of knitting. For example, during Phase 3, Participant 11 shared how the DKJ "seemed to, kind of, have a momentum of its own, and I wasn't really sure what I was doing most of the time. I just kind of did it" (Phase 3, Interview). However, whilst participants were not aware of what they were knitting at the time, on reflection they were able to make connections as to what or why something may have been knitted when reviewing the DKJ at a later point.

Participant 7 shared that:

> It was really funny because I was sitting here one day, and I'd never knit holes like that before, and then I was just sitting, and we'd had a power cut and the guys were outside ... they were there for two days digging a hole to reconnect the electricity. So, there was this ginormous hole … it must have been 20-30 foot in length, this hole, this big trench that they dug, and I just sat there this one day and I was watching them and totally unconsciously knit a piece with holes in it. It was only afterwards I think I wrote in my journal on that day that actually I don't know why I did holes, but I was just watching these men dig holes outside my window. So, it was, like, really, really strange. (Phase 1, Interview)

This indicates how Participant 7 was unconsciously affected by her surroundings whilst she was knitting and, without awareness, recorded a specific event. This is analogous to the experience of free writing made by Marion Milner in *A Life of One's Own* (2011 [1934]); both were unconscious of their actions at the time of creation but were able to make connections on reflection. Another example of unconscious expression of meaning came from Participant 11 who noticed that her knitting resembled medication taken by a friend.

> One of my best friends is bipolar. And she takes, these pink tablets that are shaped like a house. That's her.... That's her bipolar medication … She's been on lots of different ones over the years, and that's the one that really seems to work. When I look at it now, I didn't, like I'd never thought of it while I was doing it like the

house thing, but I think I kept kind of turning it in different directions. So I wasn't, I was trying not to really see it as a particular thing. But now that I'm looking at it, and how it's sat there, I'm like, 'Oh, it's just different colours, but it's my friend's tablets' (Phase 1, Interview).

Participant 11 was, in this reflection, connecting her DKJ to a close friendship, reflecting on a bond that has been forged. There are two debatable possibilities that arise from this: firstly, that Participant 11 was unconscious of the role of this connection whilst knitting, or secondly, that she recognises the physical similarity to the tablets now that she is reflecting on the DKJ. Whichever of these two it may be, her past experience is affecting how she now views the DKJ and has led her to place meaning onto it.

Similar connections were made by other participants. Participant 8 had recently volunteered on an electoral campaign, and it is evident that this experience unconsciously influenced how she looked back on the DKJ. Within the material elicitation interview, she shared, "I'm looking at this, and this is a map, and each section is a ward boundary" (Phase 3, Interview). Participant 5 was a childhood fan of Harry Potter, and this, once again, unconsciously influenced how she viewed a specific piece of the DKJ, "that, like, that whole section looks kind of, like, a sweater with a letter on it, kind of, like, very Harry Potter-esque" (Phase 1, Interview). Similarly, Participant 4 had a strong link to Northumbria and a pilgrimage she once took. On reflecting on the piece, she assigned elements of her DKJ to this, "it almost looks like this island off the coast of Northumbria, which is Holy Island" (Phase 2, Interview). These examples demonstrate two possible scenarios: participants were unconscious of what they were knitting at the time but were able to reflect and make connections in the present once the DKJ was completed; or that these participants were imposing meaning in retrospect.

8.5 Time Capsule

As well as recording memories or events in isolation, as discussed above, for some participants the experience of creating the DKJ ran parallel with significant life experiences. Therefore, it is not simply stitch choice but the experience of knitting that is formulating memory, and as such, the significance of the DKJ increases as it acts as a time capsule for that specific period.

Participant 11 shared how a personal relationship changed and adapted into something new during Phase 1:

> It was really reflective of, just, this whole emotional, this, kind of, turmoil that was really, really great, but just very kind of unexpected … I'll just tell you what happened … we've been really close for years, and then, just, suddenly something, something changed, and it was actually the day that I started this … We just sat on the sofa together all day, knitting ... That was very, like, I don't know, it just seemed really significant, somehow. I mean, you could just feel something was happening then, and then things just, kind of, got bigger and bigger as this kept getting bigger and bigger, and more surprising. So, I think in a way, that's probably part of why I feel so protective of it, it just seems, like, 'oh, that was like that first month when that was all happening'. (Phase 1, Interview)

In this reflection, Participant 11 was acknowledging the significance of the DKJ; that it is capturing the emotions of this particularly charged time in her life, leading to enhanced meaning for her and a protectiveness over the DKJ itself.

It is evident that other participants saw the potential for a DKJ to act as a record for a moment in time or memento for a specific event. For example, Participant 5 shared the following:

> I think it'd be a really fun thing if you had, kind of, like, a really nice period coming up, like, obviously, I'm by no means getting married anytime soon, but it would be the kind of thing where, like, if you had a really nice celebration coming up, or like a big birthday, yeah, it'd be really nice to, like, almost like celebrate the whole month … just imagine, like, having a recognition of how you felt, and those emotions ... I feel like that would be a really, really nice way to document a month (Phase 3, Interview).

In comparison to Participant 11, whose experience happened at the time of knitting, Participant 5 makes the proposal to proactively plan to track a significant life event with a DKJ so as to capture their emotions. Both examples convey how the KnitWell DKJ holds meaning and value to the knitter as an act of commemoration.

8.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter examined the third theme identified through my analysis, Awareness and Approach to Meaning, particularly exploring how meaning is understood, and made known by and to the participants.

It is evident that within this discussion, there are significant opportunities that RQ2 seeks to identify. There is substantial evidence that both daily knit journalling, and the free knitting used, provided the opportunity for a spontaneous form of creative, self-expression. The encoded meaning of a DKJ entry could be fleeting and momentary which highlights the spontaneous nature of the DKJ regarding in the moment, self expression. The ability to remember specific elements of the DKJ did not determine whether it held value in terms of self-expression. Rather, however momentary the encoded meaning was, some participants could identify or recollect that specific days were more considered and steeped in personal history. The importance for self-expression within the DKJ for day-to-day reflection, and not necessarily long-term, month-to-month reflection, is notable.

Additionally, this theme presents evidence that supports a positive answer to RQ3; that creating a knitting journal does generate benefits in terms of mental wellbeing. It is possible to see, perhaps surprisingly, that retrospectively identifying meaning within the DKJ and prolonged awareness was not necessary for improved mental wellbeing. Participants did not hold value in being able to access specific days, word for word like a written diary. Value was actually held in the KnitWell process – a method for creative, self-expression – as a way of recording of participants' experience of life, in the moment; it was this that provided benefits to their mental wellbeing.

There is evidence that conscious awareness of meaning, on the day, as knitting, does benefit mental wellbeing for some participants; it has enabled them to process an emotion, event or memory when registering it within the DKJ. Where participants made conscious decisions to capture specific events in their work these were easily identifiable, however it was not always possible to retrospectively identify certain encoded meanings in the DKJ as these were often subjective and malleable. The fleeting nature of meaning within the DKJ did not affect the perceived benefits of daily knit journalling for mental wellbeing. Furthermore, one could argue that utilising the DKJ as a time capsule may, mainly on reflection, benefit mental wellbeing, as one participant's account indicated that it helped them better understand their emotions.

9

Conclusion

This concluding chapter is a discussion of the findings in relation to the research questions (Section 1.8), drawing together evidence generated by all of the research methods and their application and analysis. I highlight the significant outcomes regarding the contributions to knowledge, and by considering these and the limitations of the study, I identify areas for further research.

9.1 Research Questions and Key Insights

RQ1: How can various aspects of a knitted structure (e.g. yarn, colour and texture, stitch, gauge and shape) be used to record and communicate information about an individual's emotional state?

Through the analysis presented within this thesis I have shown that different aspects of the knitting were used to express and communicate emotional states. The concept of a knitter's vocabulary, presented in Chapter 7 (Section 7.1), confirms the ability to communicate emotions through the choices a knitter can make within knitting. In some cases, specific knit choices felt, to the participants, like an instinctive representation of their emotions; written language did not offer them the same tangible connections (see Section 7.1). The ability to track emotions in a tactile, non-verbal, way led to an in-the-moment representation of the knitter's emotional state as it did not require the same level of mental processing as written language. Whilst some participants did not necessarily consider that they used the knitting as a vessel for communication, they did use it as a place of contemplation to register their emotions. Either way, it appears that creative, open-ended, free knitting practice generated a unique space for communication and contemplation.

Additionally, my analysis of the DWKS was essential in responding to this question. The results of the DWKS were utilised in the generation of my creative data visualisations (Section 3.6.2), which highlight the use of specific knit stitches and colour choices when participants felt specific emotions (see Figure 7.13 and Figure 7.14). Therefore, the DWKS and creative data visualisations allowed me direct insights into how various aspects of a knitted structure can be used to communicate emotional state.

Aspects of my autoethnographic practice further substantiate the evidence that answers RQ1. Stitchplorations (see Section 4.1) allowed experimentation with different stitches, specifically to examine their effectiveness in communicating various emotional states. Stitchplorations identified four stitches that were simple to knit yet were visually effective: GSRs, i-cords, slip stitches and stacked stitches [27] – each had a way of manipulating the knitted fabric which resonated and communicated my emotional state.

Overall, it appears that knitting acted as a form of visual and material processing. I identified yarn colour and texture, stitch and shape as various ways in which the knitter engaged and communicated their emotions at the time of knitting. In the case of some knitters, the shape of their knitting was indicative of their emotional state at the time, for example, knitting to a point (creating a misshaped triangle) expressed stress for one participant, and knitting a heart showed love for another (see Section 7.3). I had thought that the gauge of knitting might be an indicator for communicating emotional states, however this was not an aspect registered by the participants. Yet, the majority of participants did confirm, either in their written journals or in their material elicitation interviews, that they made active choices about yarn colour or yarn texture not only to record and/or communicate their emotional state, but also to alter emotional states pre- and post- knitting as a mood enhancer (see Section 7.4). Indeed, certain colours could be used to mean vastly different things, even by a single knitter. Participants were more inclined to use specific colours when experiencing a specific emotion: lighter, brighter colours were used more frequently when participants strongly agreed with feeling happy. Furthermore, from their written journals or in their material elicitation interviews, it can be inferred that yarn choices, particularly the colour or texture of yarn, held emotional weight for participants (see Figure 7.5). Some participants made active choices to substitute yarns, selecting those that held emotional connections and that aided memory recall within their knitting (see Section 8.2).

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[27] See the glossary of knit stitches and techniques at the start of the thesis, page xvi.

Overall, analysis of the research materials evidenced that a knitted structure can record and communicate an individual's emotional state. There are a number of ways knitting can be employed to do this: it provides participants with choices, specifically the selection of particular yarn colours, the texture of yarn and the shapes of knitting act as an alternative for 'words'; these affordances of knitting offer the knitter an opportunity to non-verbally communicate their emotional state, particularly the use of simple stitches which made emotional articulation easier or more accessible for some.

RQ2: What opportunities and limitations can a knitted journal (in which free knitting is used to record an individual's daily emotional state) offer in terms of self-expression?

In the process of daily knit journalling the knitter is no longer required to follow set guidelines; this ultimately led to an opportunity for the knitters who participated in KnitWell to explore the fundamentals of knitting, through 'free knitting' (Section 1.6), on a daily basis and to use elements like stitch choice to aid self-expression (Section 6.1).

This research confirms that there are, indeed, many different facets of free knitting that offer the opportunity for this to be an original mode of self-expression (see Chapter 6) in ways that are distinct from conventional, linear knitting practice (Section 1.2). Firstly, there was no longer an impetus to follow set instructions; followed by a shift from product to process knitting, which gave the knitter a positive opportunity for self-expression; and finally, free knitting aided participants' creative exploration which in turn facilitated a more imaginative mode of self-expression. The fluid nature of the DKJ offered the potential to change and combine the knitting from previous days into something new – with this prospect of perpetual change came further different, daily, opportunities for self-expression.

When the written diary element was added in Phase 2 (see Figure 3.8), the participants were very clear that there was a notable contrast between a knitter's vocabulary and that of written language; for them a knitter's vocabulary has the ability to be more expressive (Section 7.1). The practice of daily knit journalling released participants from

the need to verbalise their thoughts and emotions, offering them an alternative opportunity for self-expression – with some of those opportunities being very direct and others more metaphorical. The act of knitting functioned as a form of processing and self-expression; it also provided participants with openings for a more mindful practice (Section 2.1.5) and/or a 'flow' state (Section 2.1.4).

Evidently, the DKJ encouraged a spontaneous form of creative, self-expression – a rationale for the value of this form of creative knitted journal. As discussed in Chapter 8, it was the daily opportunities for self-expression and reflection, afforded by the DKJ, that participants noted. They emphasised that the value of participating in the project was not necessarily in retrospectively identifying meaning within the DKJ, but rather the experience of the whole process as a type of recording of their experience of life in the moment.

I became aware, throughout the three phases of participant activity, as well as during the analysis, that some participants struggled to express their emotions using knitting as the sole mode of communication – which highlights a limitation for the knit-only approach in Phase 1 (Section 3.4.1). There are three potential reasons for this: firstly, the limitation could be within the participant's knitting capabilities, if these are not sufficient for them to be able to express their emotions; secondly, it could be a limitation of the yarns available in the provided yarn palette; and thirdly, and most discussed by participants, it could be that knitting itself is not a process perceived by all as a mode for self-expression. The introduction of the written diary element in Phase 2 (Section 3.4.1), was intended to compare how participants expressed themselves in each format: knitted diary and written diary. To some extent, the inclusion of a written diary did highlight a difference between knitted and written vocabulary (Section 7.1 and 7.2). However, the written journal did aid some participants' interaction with their knitting; for these, it was the time spent knitting that enabled the knitter to process their emotions, and whilst their emotions might not have been reflected in the knitting itself, the physical act of knitting allowed them to process and access the accurate language to express themselves. Ultimately, the dual process of knitting and writing was beneficial

for these participants and the benefit of written reflection warrants consideration to be a feature of future iterations of the KnitWell proposition.

The Daily Wellness Knit Scale (DWKS) – a wellbeing scale I created to measure the knitter's emotions at the time of their daily knitting practice – was included in the participant study (Section 3.3.4). The DWKS was a method put in place with the intent of going some way to measure the impact of the KnitWell proposition. There were additional, unforeseen benefits of the DWKS, most notably that it mitigated some of the limitations for self-expression of emotion in the DKJ. The DWKS therefore also warrants integration into future iterations of the KnitWell proposition. It is apparent that the DWKS made participants more aware of their emotions, and from this enhanced awareness they were better able to express their emotions in knitting.

This research indicates that free knitting affords knitters the opportunity for play and experimentation; as time went on, the participants became more adventurous and experimental with their choices. This, in turn, enhanced some participants' knitting skills and self-confidence in their personal practice and has changed the way they think about knitting as a means for expressing themselves, confirming the opportunities for a knitted journal to be a mechanism for self-expression. Although there was a limitation for some participants in the knit-only DKJ approach, when the written journal aspect was added in Phase 2, this generated a dual approach towards individual expression.

> **RQ3: Explore the manner in which a knitted journal may generate benefits in terms of mental wellbeing.**

In Chapter 2 (Section 2.1), I determined a dual approach to wellbeing whereby the research into the KnitWell proposition measured elements of both eudaimonic and hedonic wellbeing. Daily knit journalling is an active, eudaimonic pursuit and naturally a highly subjective activity. Therefore, in order to best answer RQ3, and to measure the overall impact knitted journalling might have on mental wellbeing, it was imperative to use a more objective, quantitative metric alongside the more subjective daily knit

journalling and subsequent qualitative analysis; the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) and DWKS provided this.

Having these quantitative measures in place meant that I was able to analyse the results from each phase of participant activity. The WEMWBS and DWKS data informed the material elicitation interviews for each phase, as well as being analysed discretely (see Section 5.5). The DWKS data was more useful for the material elicitation interviews and creative visual analysis; it is the WEMWBS data that is more relevant to this RQ. The WEMWBS analysis directly indicates the beneficial impact of creating a DKJ in terms of mental wellbeing. Prior to the Phase 1 knitting month, an average [28] of 67% of participants had 'low' wellbeing and 33% of participants had 'moderate' wellbeing. The WEMWBS taken at the end of the Phase 3 knitting month indicated that an average of 20% of participants had 'low' wellbeing and 80% of participants had 'moderate' wellbeing. Therefore, 'moderate wellbeing' increased by 47% throughout the span of the participant study and so, participants experienced an increase in their wellbeing overall. I am aware that the change in participants' wellbeing over a 13-month period may not wholly be down to participating in this research. External life factors will have impacted this to some greater or lesser extent (see Section 5.5). Even so, it is evident that participants' wellbeing did improve between the beginning and end of the study.[29] Overall, there is substantial evidence that KnitWell – specifically daily knit journalling and the free knitting practice utilised within the DKJ – provided benefits in terms of mental wellbeing as evidenced in the WEMWBS data analysis.

9.2   PARTICIPANT BENEFITS

The participatory aspect of this research was a core part of the methodology. Beyond the impacts that the RQs sought to identify and understand, it was important to me that the participants not only enjoyed their experience of taking part in the research but also found it beneficial to their knitting practice. As evidenced by the Call for Participants and

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[28] See Chapter 3, Section 3.6.1 for how the WEMWBS was analysed, and to see the criteria for low, moderate and high wellbeing. Overall, an average is generated by adding each participant's WEMWBS score and dividing by the number of participants in the study.

[29] See Section 9.2, for the benefits of the DWKS associated with a specific participant.

Participant Information Sheet, Appendix B, I anticipated that there was the potential for participants to benefit from:

- Growth in their repertoire of knit stitches and construction, gained from taking part in taught workshops.
- Experimentation with a new way of expressing themselves through daily knitting practice.
- Being involved in researching free knitting and its potential effect on mental wellbeing.
- Meeting like-minded knitters online – in the taught workshops – and being able to explore, enjoy, and play with their knitting practice in a safe space.

Analysis of findings confirmed that all of these benefits were realised and that participants did associate them with taking part in the research. Participants also identified additional benefits. One participant noted the advantages of daily knit journalling and taking time out to register her emotions with the DWKS; this enabled her to articulate, and evidence, concerns around her mental wellbeing, leading to a diagnosis of anxiety and depression from her medical doctor. Participants also shared that through contributing to the research they became more aware of their emotions and how they felt on a daily basis:

> I don't think I usually think about my feelings much, I more just feel them. And of course, how I'm feeling influences everything, but having to categorise how I'm feeling has made me think much more intellectually about it all. (Participant 11, Text Message, 2021).

9.3 REFLECTIONS ON LIMITATIONS

As with any research project, there were limitations to this study. Firstly, as discussed in Section 9.1, the DWKS morphed from being purely a research method, to a more integral part of the KnitWell proposition. Therefore, the DWKS may have influenced the participants' wellbeing outcomes rather than just measured them (see Section 7.5). Ultimately, this highlights a limitation in the KnitWell proposition as a knit-only

approach: although the act of knitting was beneficial, it was connecting the knitting to their emotions, which occurred via the DWKS and the written journals in Phases 2 and 3, which impacted the participants' overall experience. To mitigate this perceived limitation, future iterations of the KnitWell proposition should include the DWKS and written reflections as elements of the process. These additions will aid in counteracting a futher limitation of the knit-only approach, where some participants struggled to express their emotions using only knitting as a method for communicating their emotional state. Once the written journal was introduced in Phase 2, it offered a wider scope for self-reflection and self-expression through both the knitter's vocabulary and written language.

I cannot ignore the limitations in the WEMWBS and DWKS data which may have been affected by participants personal lives, separate from this research (see Section 5.4). There might have been external influences that impacted the participants' overall wellbeing; the changes surrounding COVID-19, and government-initiated lockdowns lifting in the UK, is a particular contextual factor for this research which should not be overlooked.

In terms of measuring wellbeing, this research had a small sample size – 11 participants – which could be seen as a limitation; a larger sample size has potential for different findings. However, this small number of participants allowed for greater depth and insight into each aspect of the study and enabled a close bond with each participant. Arguably, developing a close bond with my participants through one-to-one exchanges instead of group interactions could be seen as a limitation and risk to objectivity. However, I propose that a close bond enriched the experience for each of the participants and ensured their prolonged commitment to this research.

It also should be noted that all my participants were women and knitters prior to the study. Potentially, the results of this research may have been different if participants were of other genders or if they came to the KnitWell proposition having never knitted before.

In Chapter 6, Section 6.1.1, I shared two participants' experiences of feelings of anxiety surrounding the free knitting and daily knit journalling process in Phase 1; this must be acknowledged as a limitation, considering the aim of this research. However, the participants' feelings of anxiety centred on 'doing it right' and being aware that it is a research project. Outside of this research, the KnitWell proposition counteracts this limitation as the knitter would be knitting for themselves, without an external impetus, potentially alleviating the anxiety about getting it 'wrong'.

The benefits of my autoethnographic practice are shared in Chapter 4. I discovered limitations to this practice, namely in the analysis (see Section 3.6.3). In common with my participants, my involvement was affected by unforeseen personal and political events – an established risk in autoethnographic research (see Section 3.3.5). My response to these events were all recorded within the written reflections alongside the DKJs. At the time of developing the research methodology it did not occur to me that I would find re-reading these reflections painful during the analysis.

COVID-19 has to be mentioned here; it brought limitations to this research. Not only did it impact the development of the methodology, it also impacted the participants' level of interaction with myself and each other. At a different time, outside of a global pandemic, my participants may have interacted with the project differently; the external influences they faced during the timing of this study may have been more, or less, substantial, and more varied. It was initially intended for the workshops to be in person, which would have created a different dynamic to the group. Solely online interactions led to issues such as bad internet connections and poor visibility that would not have happened in person. Despite the limitations, I am happy that I still managed to create a rigorous methodology and provide a meaningful experience for the participants.

9.4 CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE
The contributions to knowledge made by this study are detailed below:

A Knitter's Vocabulary

As discussed in Section 9.1, this research has demonstrated that different elements of a knitted structure, including yarn, colour, stitch and shape, can be used to record and communicate a knitter's emotional state in a non-verbal manner. The choices a knitter makes regarding knitted structure engage the individual knitter's unique vocabulary serving as an alternative for words in written language. Through the process of generating a DKJ, using free knitting to construct experimental knitted structures encourages a spontaneous, original mode of self-expression and is a form of visual and material processing. Each element of the daily knitting exercise offers myriad ways for the knitter to express themselves, see Chapter 7, Section 7.1.

The knitter's vocabulary is unique to each knitter, with each aspect having the capacity to convey particular emotions at the time of creation. While the fundamental elements associated with knitting – yarn, colour, stitch, shape – offer a shared language, each knitter's approach to communicating emotional experience through knitting has highly variable characteristics, see Chapter 7, Section 7.2 - 7.4. This variability highlights the potential for other creative practices to explore similar methods of self-expression. For instance, musicians might choose specific chords or beats to portray their emotions, drawing upon their own 'musician's vocabulary'. The diverse range of options available ensures that the vocabulary of each specific creative practice are varied but ultimately unique, underscoring the individuality of self-expression. For example, each creative practice offers a wide range of options for individual expression, but these options are often guided by specific principles, ground rules, and vocabularies unique to that discipline. For instance:

- **Knitting**: Uses yarn, colour, stitch patterns, and shapes to convey emotions.
- **Music**: Uses chords, rhythms, and melodies to express feelings.
- **Painting**: Utilises colour, brush strokes, and composition to communicate.
- **Writing**: Employs words, narrative styles, and literary devices to share experiences.

These are just four examples and while the tools and methods differ, the underlying principle of using a unique 'vocabulary' to express personal emotions and experiences is possible within all creative practices. This diversity within a structured framework allows for both individuality and a shared understanding of how these practices may be used as a form of self-expression and a record of emotional experiences.

Flexibility in Meaning and Emotions

The concept of a knitter's vocabulary aligns with the idea of flexible meanings as a means of self-expression facilitated through free knitting. The knitter's vocabulary is not rigid or fixed; it is malleable and open to change. Through the process of free knitting, the knitter embeds their emotions and experiences into their work. Consequently, there is encoded meaning within the material being created. Although this encoded material may become unknowable to the creator over time, it does not diminish the standalone experience of portraying emotional states at the time of creation. Sometimes, the encoded material resonates with key events, moods, and emotions that the knitter can easily recall, as discussed in Chapter 8, Section 8.2. At other times, the meaning may remain elusive, reflecting the complex and evolving nature of personal expression.

This research has identified flexibility in the meanings encoded within the Knitwell materials, as discussed in Chapter 7. There are two reasons for this: firstly, the meaning behind a specific piece may become unclear over time, and the events and emotions linked to when the knitting took place can be misremembered. Secondly, emotions can vary greatly, which affects how meaning is captured within the DKJ. For instance, as discussed in Chapter 5, Participant 10 shared that through the DWKS, she became aware of experiencing a variety of emotions each day. Other participants noted this as well, and the DKJs themselves demonstrate how varied each knitter's emotions were at any given time.

Reflecting on my research questions, it might seem that emotions can be captured, implying we feel one emotion at a time. However, this research has shown that capturing or expressing emotion is complex and dynamic. For example, through my autoethnographic practice and participants' reflections, I realised that documenting an

emotional state often involves interconnected emotions rather than a single specific emotion. Therefore, when trying to document an emotional state through knitting, the emotion might change, or the knitter might use knitting to regulate or counteract the emotion rather than capture it. Emotions are endlessly varied and changeable, and individuals can actively impact and counteract how they feel through creative practice. Through free knitting, the knitter can change, portray, mitigate, and respond to their emotions as needed at the time of creation. Evidently, it is possible to bestow meaning onto the experience of creating.

Key Points:

- **Flexible Meanings in Knitting**: The knitter's vocabulary is adaptable and open to change, allowing for self-expression throughout the creative process. This flexibility means that the meaning encoded in the knitted material can evolve over time.

- **Encoded Emotional States**: Knitting can capture emotional states at the time of creation. While these emotions might become unclear to the creator over time, the act of knitting still serves as a meaningful expression of those emotions.

- **Variability in Emotional Capture**: Emotions linked to knitting can be misremembered or change over time. This research highlights that emotions are not static and can vary greatly, making the process of capturing them through knitting complex and dynamic.

- **Creative Practice and Emotional Regulation**: Knitting allows individuals to actively influence their emotions. Through the act of knitting, people can portray, mitigate, and respond to their emotions, using the creative process as a tool for emotional regulation and expression.

These points emphasise the dynamic and personal nature of knitting as a form of self-expression and emotional documentation.

A knitted journal offers benefits in terms of mental wellbeing

It is evident that one of the benefits of a knitted journal in terms of mental wellbeing is the experience of generating a DKJ as a type of recording of the knitter's experience of

life in the moment. Indeed, the KnitWell proposition has had a positive impact on participants' mental wellbeing. The WEMWBS (Section 3.3.4) supplied data to measure the impact of daily knit journalling on mental wellbeing over a longer period of time (Section 5.5), and confirms the overall positive impact of the KnitWell proposition on participants.

The KnitWell Proposition

The KnitWell proposition offers a new approach to knitting for wellbeing, which has been tested through academic research but could be applied within a real-world context to support individual knitters and knitting groups. Knitwell is different to the two established approaches typically associated with the subject of knitting for wellbeing, which highlight the physical and social benefits of knitting (Myzelev, 2009; Riley et al., 2013; Corkhill et al., 2014; Mayne, 2016). Overall, this participatory project has developed a new method of knitted textile creation – a daily knitted journal – that enables self-expression as an alternative to written journalling in support of mental wellbeing. This research has proven that free knitting and the creation of a DKJ (Section 1.6) offers the knitter an opportunity to contemplate their emotions from day to day, contributing to the research on creative diary keeping.

A new measure for wellbeing - DWKS

I have developed a unique, visual, wellbeing scale – the Daily Wellness Knit Scale (DWKS) (see Section 3.3.4), which accrued data about an individual's emotional state at the time of knitting. This contributes to knowledge on wellbeing scales (Larson & Csikszentmihalyi, 1992; Christodoulou et al., 2014; Kettley, 2016; Warwick Medical School, 2021), as well as on daily knit journalling. The DWKS was intrinsically linked to the DKJ, therefore contributing knowledge in the use of wellbeing scales linked to creative practice, which ultimately generates a space for the participant's contemplation and reflection on the day.

Creative Data Visualisation

This research created a new method for analysing visual knitting practice. Creative data visualisations aided the opportunity to break down the DKJ into each individual knitted

diary entry, to then compare them with the DWKS results (see Figure 7.13 and Figure 7.14). This innovative approach has generated a new method for analysing subjective, qualitative visual data against the quantitative metric of the DWKS. Utilising these two forms of data, I have been able to discuss the impact of specific elements of the visual data, for example, colour and how colour is used when specific emotions are experienced.

The KnitWell Website

The KnitWell website[30] acts as a method of dissemination, visually communicating each participant's creative knitting practice. Owing to the large-scale data collection, creating a visualisation that can be shared and accessed by different audiences has become an important part of my practice. It is important to me that this research and its findings are accessible to lay people interested in the benefits and possibilities of free knitting, as well as those within academia. The KnitWell website allows the viewer to explore the research in a manner that allows them to analyse and understand a specific piece of knitting. Finally, the KnitWell website extends the lifetime of this research project, and will be maintained through the hosting platform, where I can check the website performance, create regular content updates on the blog and ensure regular backups.

9.5 FUTURE WORK

Outcomes from this research present the potential for future work. This research has highlighted a focus on the creative properties of knitting to communicate emotional states and support self-expression. As discussed in Section 9.3, while this research focused on a relatively small sample, overall the positive impact of the research on the participants' mental wellbeing highlights the potential to open up the study to a larger sample group – including different age groups and genders. There is a possibility to develop the KnitWell method to make it available to wider audiences, including individuals and groups. KnitWell could also be employed by wellbeing practitioners, to measure the impact of daily knit journalling within the wellbeing and mental health sectors.

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[30] www.KnitWell.org.uk

Future research could also involve participants who are non-knitters or new to knitting. This could explore what the knitters' experiences would be like if they started KnitWell from scratch, offering the potential to examine the difference between more and less experienced knitters and how this affects participants' experience of KnitWell.

Given my unintended findings linked to the DWKS – it made participants more aware of their emotions – an idea for further research arose. The DWKS could be the sole focus of an investigation, where participants only completed a DWKS to test whether the act of completing a visual wellbeing scale (see Section 3.3.4), and the moment of reflection and contemplation required to do this, is of itself a way of supporting and possibly improving wellbeing.

It could be interesting to build on Participants 5's suggestion in Chapter 8 (Section 8.5), and study knitters undertaking DKJs deliberately across significant moments of their lives, and then invite them to reflect on how the DKJ recording process helped them to cope with, or reflect on those events. Further research could also include expanding the KnitWell proposition to using other textile crafts such as crochet, embroidery and weaving; this could be a valuable way of exploring craft-based journalling and the significance that this form of everyday creativity might have on mental wellbeing. Throughout the process of testing the boundaries of knit journalling (see Section 4.2) I also experimented with dual craft diaries: I created a number of machine knitted diaries as well as a combined hand knitted and woven diary which highlighted the potential for multi-craft journalling. Likewise, some participants, when unable to knit, turned to other textile crafts such as crochet and embroidery to fulfil their daily entries; again, this opens up the potential for a Daily Craft Journal. Research of this nature could shed light on the impact of different crafts for wellbeing, potentially asking questions such as, which crafts do people use when experiencing a specific emotion?

9.6 CAST-OFF

This thesis began by sharing my first experience of a knitting group, a moment that I treasure in its simplicity and importance. As such, it is evident that this research is

steeped in my tacit knowledge and understanding of knitting. My experience of knitting has grown and developed throughout this project, coalescing with that of the research participants and transforming into something tangible: KnitWell as a proposition – a new approach to knitting for wellbeing.

10 Outputs

There were three main areas of dissemination regarding this research and my practice outcomes: Exhibitions (Section 10.1); Conferences (Section 10.2); and the KnitWell website (Section 10.3). All are detailed below.

10.1 EXHIBITIONS

Rickard, E. (2023). KnitWell. The Hub, Sleaford, United Kingdom, 18th March – 11th June 2023. Illustrated in Figure 10.1 and Figure 10.2.

Rickard, E. (2023). KnitWell, A Daily Knit Journal. Bonington Atrium, Nottingham Trent University, United Kingdom, January 2023. Illustrated in Figure 10.3.

Rickard, E. (2022). Craft Season. LCB Depot, Leicester, United Kingdom, 16th May – 1st June 2022.

Rickard, E. (2022). Fashion and Textiles Season. LCB Depot, Leicester, United Kingdom, April 2022.

Rickard, E. (2022). The International Foundation of Fashion Technology Institutes. Bonington Atrium, Nottingham Trent University, United Kingdom, April 2022.

Images from my Solo Exhibitions:

Figure 10.1 Close-up of my hand spun Stitchplorations and KJs that formed part of my solo exhibition at The Hub, Sleaford, March - June 2023

Figure 10.2 Overview of my DKJs and i-Cord Stitchplorations that formed part of my solo exhibition at The Hub, Sleaford, March - June 2023

The exhibition at the Hub, Sleaford had great feedback from patrons which the gallery passed on to me – some comments are evidenced below:

02/04/23 – Very enjoyable and thought provoking.
04/04/23 – Makes me want to start knitting.
07/04/23 – Art that warms and heals is the most valuable.

Figure 10.3 Images from the Bonington Atrium Exhibition, January 2023

10.2 PUBLICATIONS

Rickard, E. (2022). KnitWell: The importance of colour choice when recording emotions in knitting. In: Fleece to Fashion: Creativity, Authenticity and Sustainability in Knitted Textiles Past and Present, University of Glasgow, United Kingdom, 8th - 9th September 2022.

Rickard, E. (2022). KnitWell: Recording 'loss' through creative, open-ended knitting practice. In: FTC, FUTURESCAN 5: Conscious Communities, Nexus, University of Leeds, United Kingdom, 7th - 8th September 2022.

Rickard, E. (2022). KnitWell: The role of creativity when recording emotions through open-ended knitting practice. In: Everyday Creativity Research Conference, University of Brighton, United Kingdom, 13th June 2022.

Rickard, E. (2022). KnitWell: Recording emotional state through creative, open-ended knitting practice. In: IFFTI: Fashion Re-imagined, Nottingham Trent University, United Kingdom, 5th - 8th April 2022.

Rickard, E. (2020). Exploring the use of creative, open-ended knitting as a form of journalling to record emotions. In: Knitting History Forum, Online, 7th November 2020.

Rickard, E. (2018). Co-design and collaboration in the KnitWell project: using colour and emotion to enhance wellbeing through a knitting collective. In: In The Loop at 10, Winchester School of Art, United Kingdom, 19th – 29th July 2018.

10.3 WEBSITE

www.KnitWell.org.uk

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12　　　Appendices

A. Autoethnographic Practice

Name:	Combined Bobbles and Slip Stitchploration
Date:	July 2021
Stitch / Technique:	• Bobbles • Slip stitch
Purpose:	To test how these stitches work together. Completed as a show and tell for Participant workshops in Phase 2.
Used in Workshops:	Yes / ~~No~~ = Phase 2, Workshop 1 – bobbles and wrap stitches
Attributes of Stitch:	• Bobbles add texture and 3D elements.
Reflections regarding expressing emotion:	• Bobbles are able to express something stand out from the day as they are 3D so protrude from the piece.
Reflections regarding ease of knitting:	• Combination of yarns did not work very well together (mercerised cotton and merino), but it does show the stitches well. It worked as a good example to show participants. • Personally, I do not like bobbles, they are a faff. I did use them occasionally in my Phase 2 DKJ but did not enjoy the process.

Name:	Handspun GSRs
Date:	July 2021
Stitch / Technique:	• GSRs • Stocking stitch
Purpose:	Continuing exploration into GSRs and how they can change direction in knitting, to create interesting shapes.
Used in Workshops:	Yes / ~~No~~ = Phase 1, Workshop 2, GSRs
Attributes of Stitch:	• The GSRs were knitted in stocking stitch which makes them stand out in order to show how and where the change in direction happens.
Reflections regarding expressing emotion:	• GSRs are good for changing direction in the knitting which can show a change in emotions or direction in the day.
Reflections regarding ease of knitting:	• Knit in hand spun and feel really proud of the gradient and how it knit up. • Knitting the GSRs in a different stitch effectively shows where they are and how they were utilised within the piece. It is a good example to share with participants.

Name:	Slip Stitchploration
Date:	February 2020
Stitch / Technique:	Slip stitch
Purpose:	To test different slip stitch patterns and how they work in single and multiple colours.
Used in Workshops:	Yes / ~~No~~ = Phase 2, Workshop 2, Slip stitches
Attributes of Stitch:	• Creates texture and interesting colourwork effects
Reflections regarding expressing emotion:	• Slip stitches distort the linear rows of knitting, can show mixed emotions or emotions that linger to the next day.
Reflections regarding ease of knitting:	• I found the more in-depth slip stitch patterns too complicated to learn by heart and when changing yarns, they did not work as well. • The different tensions of each stitch distorted the fabric, so it was not even a successful piece to show in participant workshops.

Name:	Stacked Stitch for Workshop
Date:	February 2022
Stitch / Technique:	Stacked increases and stacked decreases
Purpose:	To create an example that shows the stitches shared within participant workshops.
Used in Workshops:	Yes / ~~No~~ = Phase 3, Workshop 1 and 2, Stacked stitches
Attributes of Stitch:	• Creates interesting organic shapes. • The stacked increases and decreases work in both garter and stocking stitch – gives the knitter choice.
Reflections regarding expressing emotion:	• It is a useful stitch to know when contemplating self-expression in knitting because of how it effects all the knitting surrounding it which could cater for an all-encompassing emotional response.
Reflections regarding ease of knitting:	• Successful sample to show participants. • It shows shapes that can be made as well as how this technique affects the knitting that came before. For example, the pink cotton is distorted by the stacked decreases.

Name:	Linking I-cords Stitchploration
Date:	March 2021
Stitch / Technique:	• I-cords • Stocking stitch • Garter stitch
Purpose:	Experiment and play with i-cords and how they can interlink with previous knitting.
Used in Workshops:	Yes / ~~No~~ = Phase 1, Workshop 2, I-cords
Attributes of Stitch:	• The nature of i-cords means the knitter is working with a small number of stitches and makes it easy to interlink through previous i-cords and stitches.
Reflections regarding expressing emotion:	• Interlinking i-cords with previous knitting can show emotions are the same as the previous day. Equally it can show how emotions are taking all the attention from other things.
Reflections regarding ease of knitting:	• This is a great example to share with participants in the workshops, it shows how i-cords can work with other stitches. • For me, this is a successful exploration of how i-cords interlink and play with the other stitches and knitting surrounding them.

Name:	Combined I-cord and Slip Stitch Stitchploration
Date:	March 2021
Stitch / Technique:	• I-cord • Slip stitch • Garter stitch
Purpose:	To explore combining attributes of two different stitches on a small scale.
Used in Workshops:	Yes / ~~No~~ • Phase 1, workshop 1 – I-cords • Phase 2, workshop 2 – Slip stitches
Attributes of Stitch:	• I-cords – can create 3D shapes and also link to previous parts of the knitting • Slip-stitch – gives effect of colourwork.
Reflections regarding expressing emotion:	• I loved looping the i-cords through themselves and linking to previous rows of knitting, I think this is really effective and could be used in multiple ways within a DKJ to express emotion.
Reflections regarding ease of knitting:	• Using two different stitches like this would be good to show participants, to give examples of how combining stitches like this work together.

Name:	Combined I-cord and Garter Stitchploration
Date:	March 2021
Stitch / Technique:	- I-cord - Garter stitch - Moss stitch
Purpose:	Combining multiple stitches to see how they work together. Focus in introducing i-cords within the knitting.
Used in Workshops:	Yes / ~~No~~
Attributes of Stitch:	I-cords draw attention as they move in many directions.
Reflections regarding expressing emotion:	It is quite busy and jumbled, the i-cords create 3D shapes and kind of illustrate a messy mind.
Reflections regarding ease of knitting:	- The knitter can decide how many live stitches to work from when knitting i-cords, it does not have to be all the working stitches. - I-cords create interest and draw attention, so the garter stitch blends into the background. - This was a fun experimentation to knit and explore the capabilities of these stitches together.

Name:	Two Week DKJ
Date:	May 2022
Focus of KJ:	Time
Type of KJ:	~~Exploring free knitting~~ / Recording emotion
Frequency:	Daily
Duration:	Two weeks
Knitting Time:	Minimum 20 minutes
KJ Restriction:	Knit every day for two weeks
Stitches commonly used:	- Garter rib - Moss stitch - I-cord
Purpose:	Emphasis on time, testing daily knit journalling over two weeks
Key Reflections:	- Trying shorter scale DKJ again after the participant study to compare difference. - Two weeks is not long enough, it felt like it ended abruptly.

Name:	15 Stitch KJ
Date:	March 2021
Focus of KJ:	Form
Type of KJ:	Exploring free knitting / ~~Recording emotion~~
Frequency:	Not tracked
Duration:	Not tracked
Knitting Time:	Minimum 20 minutes
KJ Restriction:	Do not exceed 15 stitches when knitting.
Stitches commonly used:	- I-cord - Slip stitch - Laying-in yarn
Purpose:	Intentional restriction of 15 stitches at all times with one cast-on and one cast-off edge.
Key Reflections:	- This worked well as having a small number of live stitches meant that a lot of knitting could be achieved in a short time frame. - Laying over yarn is quite fiddly and not appropriate to share in participant workshops. - Only time I deviated from 15 stitches was when knitting i-cords, i-cords separated out the stitches but there were always 15 stitches at the beginning and end of the knit.

Name:	I-cord KJ
Date:	April 2021
Focus of KJ:	Form
Type of KJ:	~~Exploring free knitting~~ / Recording emotion
Frequency:	Not tracked
Duration:	Not tracked
Knitting Time:	Not tracked
KJ Restriction:	Knit only i-cords
Stitches commonly used:	• I-cords
Purpose:	To explore the technicalities of knitting i-cords but also with how expressive they could be.
Key Reflections:	• The colour changes add an indication of how I felt at the time of knitting, or what I was trying to release into the stitches. For example, the burgundy wraps around and encases the self-striping yarn, almost suffocating it. • On reflection when I feel like there is a lot going on and I tend to feel stressed, anxious or flustered this style of i-cord reflects that quite well.

Name:	IFFTI note-taking i-cords
Date:	April 2022
Focus of KJ:	Form
Type of KJ	Exploring free knitting / ~~Recording emotion~~
Frequency:	Keynote lecture
Duration:	One lecture
Knitting Time:	One lecture
KJ Restriction:	Only knit i-cords
Stitches commonly used:	• I-cords
Purpose:	To test knitting as a form of notetaking or memory keeping
Key Reflections:	• During the International Foundation of Fashion Technology Institutes (IFFTI) conference, I knit i-cords throughout each of the keynote speakers presentations. • The pink i-cord was knitted during Grace Wales Bonner's talk about her brand, its heritage and how it began, and the knit has the look of a foetus, this brand was born from her and that was the overriding message I took from that talk. • In hindsight, I have the memory of knitting these pieces but other than the pink i-cord I cannot remember anything specific from the other presentations.

Name:	21 stitch KJ
Date:	March 2021
Focus of KJ:	Form
Type of KJ:	Exploring free knitting / ~~Recording emotion~~
Frequency:	Not tracked
Duration:	Not tracked
Knitting Time:	Minimum 20 minutes
KJ Restriction:	Knit with 21 stitches.
Stitches commonly used:	- Elongated stitch - Lace holes - GSRs
Purpose:	Experiment with small number of stitches and new techniques, continuing experimentation with one cast-on and one cast-off edge.
Key Reflections:	- Did not enjoy knitting this, I don't know if that is because of colours or lack of inspiration. - Elongated stitches are quite interesting to do and distort the fabric surrounding it. - GSRs used to change direction and create shapes. - Never finished this piece, it is still attached to knitting needles.

Name:	Caterpilar KJ
Date:	February 2020
Focus of KJ:	Form
Type of KJ:	~~Exploring free knitting~~ / Recording emotion
Frequency:	Daily
Duration:	Not tracked
Knitting Time:	Not tracked
KJ Restriction:	Knitting to create different shapes, not just straight lines.
Stitches commonly used:	- Garter stitch - Slip stitch - Wrap stitch
Purpose:	Open test of knit journalling.
Key Reflections:	- One of the first KJs I created. - I wanted to test how easy it would be to pick up stitches along a diagonal edge – relatively simple. - Single colour and multi-colour slip stitch patterns are effective. This is when I first thought about using slip stitch techniques in the participant workshops.

Name:	Straight Edge KJ
Date:	February 2020
Focus of KJ:	Form
Type of KJ:	~~Exploring free knitting~~ / Recording emotion
Frequency:	Daily
Duration:	Not tracked
Knitting Time:	Not tracked
KJ Restriction:	Keep straight edges at all times.
Stitches commonly used:	- Garter stitch - Stocking stitch - Different rib stitches
Purpose:	Experiment with the form of a KJ
Key Reflections:	- I tried to keep straight edges on this piece so that, if necessary, it could be made into something like a scarf, even though that is not the intended purpose of a DKJ. - I struggled and failed to keep to the imposed restriction. I found it boring and therefore two of the edges are not straight. I meant to keep working on it, to add to it further to make the edges straight again but did not return to it. - This could be because I also found the colour choices boring.

Name:	Begin with Pi KJ
Date:	February 2020
Focus of KJ:	Form
Type of KJ:	~~Exploring free knitting~~ / Recording emotion
Frequency:	Daily
Duration:	Two weeks
Knitting Time:	Minimum 20 minutes
KJ Restriction:	Open
Stitches commonly used:	- Garter stitch - Partial knit
Purpose:	Initial test of what a KJ can be and picking up stitches from a curved edge.
Key Reflections:	- Areas that do not lie flat as I was still learning to pick-up stitches at this point, therefore not as successful as future explorations. - Quite boring stitch choices and shapes of knitting each day. - This made me want to explore more interesting shapes within knitting.

Name:	Trial KJ
Date:	February 2020
Focus of KJ:	Form
Type of KJ:	~~Exploring free knitting~~ / Recording emotion
Frequency:	Not tracked
Duration:	Not tracked
Knitting Time:	Minimum 20 minutes
KJ Restriction:	Knit every day
Stitches commonly used:	• Lace holes • Stocking stitch
Purpose:	Testing the practicalities of a KJ
Key Reflections:	• Unsuccessful KJ as did not track it properly. I was not registering how I felt. This was more focused on actually knitting every day. • To me this is boring and uncommunicative. The needle size doesn't feel right and therefore the tension is bad.

Name:	One cast-on, one cast-off edge
Date:	May 2021
Focus of KJ:	Form
Type of KJ:	Exploring free knitting / ~~Recording emotion~~
Frequency:	Daily
Duration:	Two days
Knitting Time:	Not tracked
KJ Restriction:	Only knit with hand-spun yarn
Stitches commonly used:	- Garter stitch - GSRs
Purpose:	Using GSRs to change direction and keeping it one continuous piece, no cast off edges.
Key Reflections:	- More satisfying to knit when using my own hand-spun yarn, stronger connection to the knitting. - Really enjoyed the continuous flow, each piece is wholly connected to the one before.

Name:	I-cord exploration in hand-spun yarn
Date:	May 2021
Focus of KJ:	Form
Type of KJ:	Exploring free knitting / ~~Recording emotion~~
Frequency:	Daily
Duration:	One day
Knitting Time:	Not tracked
KJ Restriction:	Only knit with hand-spun yarn
Stitches commonly used:	- cords - Garter rib
Purpose:	To test connection between knitting with hand-spun yarn and shop bought yarn.
Key Reflections:	- The enjoyment I felt knitting with yarn I had formed in my hands was unlike any other. - A lot of effort and time goes into hand spinning fibre into yarn. I felt precious about the final yarn and how I was willing to knit with it.

Name:	Machine Knit
Date:	May 2022
Focus of KJ:	Fibre Craft
Type of KJ:	Exploring free knitting / ~~Recording emotion~~
Frequency:	N/A
Duration:	One day
Knitting Time:	Not tracked
KJ Restriction:	Machine knit only
Stitches commonly used:	- Lace holes - Partial Knit - I-cords
Purpose:	To replicate hand knit stitches on a machine with the intention of discovering whether I was able to connect with the knitting in the same way as hand knitting.
Key Reflections:	- I felt less connected to these experiments as there was no solitude in this knitting, it was completed in a studio and so I was constantly aware of others around me. - The beauty of hand knitting is that it is possible to sit with my thoughts, to register my emotions and decide how to knit them; when a machine is involved it automatically changes that connection. - There has to be more thought and preparation with machine knitting. - Machine knitting is very loud, metal on metal, a swoosh as the carriage crosses the needle bed and blind hope that the stitches stay on the needles and don't come crashing to the ground. There is an element of stress in this process.

Name:	Tapestry journal
Date:	June 2022
Focus of KJ:	Fibre Craft
Type of KJ:	Exploring free knitting / ~~Recording emotion~~
Frequency:	Not tracked
Duration:	Not tracked
Knitting Time:	Not tracked
KJ Restriction:	Weaving on a tapestry loom
Stitches commonly used:	- Plain weave - I-cord
Purpose:	To try journalling with a different fibre craft
Key Reflections:	- I am not a proficient weaver and therefore, this gave me an insight into what it might feel like for a participant who was a beginner knitter. As I am no longer a beginner knitter, it is hard to put myself back in the mindset of a beginner. Weaving in this manner allowed insight into what it is like to be a beginner or not confident in a specific craft. - Combining hand and fibre crafts in this manner allowed for a slowness and connection to process and thinking through the hands, that the experiments with machine knitting did not achieve.

Name:	Conference Workshop Free Knitting Experiments
Date:	June 2022
Focus of KJ:	Fibre Craft
Type of KJ:	Exploring free knitting / ~~Recording emotion~~
Duration:	Not Tracked
Stitch / Technique:	Garter stitch and GSRs
Purpose:	To have knitting available for workshop participants to add to, rather than starting from scratch.
Used in my KJs:	~~Frequently~~ / ~~Sometimes~~ / Never
Attributes of Knit:	• Used a piece of CAD knit to pick up and knit around. • Cast off on larger needles so it would be easier for workshop participants to pick up stitches more easily.
Key Reflections:	• The CAD knit pieces were too big at A5 size, felt quite intimidating to workshop participants to have such a large piece to work from.

Name:	First full month DKJ
Date:	December 2020
Frequency:	Daily
Duration:	31 days
Purpose:	To test daily knit journalling for one full month.
Stitches from workshops:	Yes / ~~No~~ • I-cords
Stitches commonly used:	• Garter stitch • Garter rib • I-cords
Substitute yarns:	~~Yes~~ / No • This was before the yarn palette had been developed.
Written reflection:	Yes / ~~No~~

Name:	Additional DKJ
Date:	April 2022
Frequency:	Daily
Duration:	28 days
Purpose:	To continue daily knit journalling after fulfilling the participant study.
Stitches from workshops:	Yes / ~~No~~ • Stacked increases • I-cords • ~~GSRs~~
Stitches commonly used:	• Garter stitch • GSRs • I-cords
Substitute yarns:	Yes / ~~No~~
Written reflection:	Yes / ~~No~~

B. RECRUITMENT AND CONSENT DOCUMENTS

Can you knit?

Would you like to explore knitting in a new way?

Is knitting your hobby?

Are you fed up with following knitting patterns? Would you like to experiment with free knitting?

I am a PhD candidate at Nottingham Trent University, who is looking for knitters to take part in my research study.

The study explores an unconventional approach to knitting practice: free knitting. Free knitting focusses on working without a pattern to create a freeform piece.

Please join this 2 hour taster workshop to find out more about free knitting, including 2 activities exploring different knit stitches.

Come along with a pair of knitting needles, some yarn and an open mind!

You don't have to be an expert knitter. However, you should be able to cast on and off, knit and purl.

If you would like to know more, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Date: ../../....
Time: ..:..

Taking part in this taster workshop does not obligate you to take part in the wider study.

Contact:
Emily Joy Rickard
Email: emily.rickard@ntu.ac.uk
Phone: 07414 087287

KnitWell: Exploring creative, open-ended knitting as a form of journalling to record emotions, with consideration for mental wellbeing.

Participant Information

This research project invites adult knitters to take part in exploring an unconventional approach to knitting practice: free knitting. You don't have to be an expert knitter. However, you should be able to cast on and off, knit and purl.

Who?
Emily Joy Rickard is a PhD candidate based at Nottingham Trent University. This research project is entitled *KnitWell: Exploring the use of creative, open-ended knitting as a form of journalling to record emotions, with consideration for mental wellbeing*

What does taking part involve?
I am inviting you to take part in a study that spans a nine-month period and comprises three main phases of activity. Throughout each phase you will be asked to create a daily knitted journal for a period of one month. The structure of each phase is as follows:

Month One:
- Briefing and taught workshop (Phase Two and Three will include a recorded, group discussion about the previous phase) – Two hours.
- Q&A about the initial taught workshop and knitted journal task – Two hours.

Month Two:
- Completion of the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS), the evening before the daily knitted journalling commences – 15 minutes.
- Daily capture of thoughts and emotions through a knitted journal. At the end of every day, you will be asked to knit using an appropriate yarn, colour and stitch to reflect upon and document how you feel (at the time of knitting) regarding your emotions from the day – 20-30 minutes.
- Completion of a daily knit diagram. The daily knit diagram is a wellbeing scale based on 7 statements and scored on a 5 point scale from extremely agree to extremely disagree – 5 minutes.
- You will be asked to take photographs of each day's knitting in order to create a timescale for your knitting.
- Scheduled weekly check-in via email or text to provide guidance or help if needed.
- Completion of WEMWBS; the day after the knitted journalling ends – 15 minutes.

Month Three:
- One-to-one interviews based on your knitted journal – One hour.
- Phase Three will have a final, recorded, group discussion, allowing for reflection on the whole process – One hour.

This pattern of activities will be repeated throughout each phase.

Phase outline:

- **Phase One**: you will keep a knitted journal, a daily capture of thoughts and emotions through stitch and colour choice, in order to become familiar with the process of daily journalling through the medium of knitting.
- **Phase Two**: you will keep a written and knitted journal; this enables the research to investigate how you express yourself in each format.
- **Phase Three**: you will be asked to choose between the formats of Phase One or Phase Two, including an option to rework the knitting made in each phase. This allows you to choose the style of knitted journal that is most effective for you.

What will I need to provide?
- You will be issued with a yarn palette of varied texture, colour and thickness that will help you to express your emotions and cater for different moods.
- You will need your own knitting needles of varying size.
- You will need access to a smart phone / computer.

What will I get out of this?
- Take part in taught workshops, building on your repertoire of knit stitches and construction with materials provided.
- Experimentation with a new way of expressing yourself through knitting.
- Be involved in researching free knitting and its potential effect on mental wellbeing.
- Meet like-minded knitters and explore, enjoy and play with your practice in a safe space.

Commitment:
This project is designed around a small number (8-10) of participants attending (virtual) taught workshops as well as undertaking individual knitting practice over a period of nine-months. Owing to this, I ask that each of you are able to confirm that you can commit to the three phases of the project as a condition of enrolment. If for any reason you would like to pause involvement owing to personal circumstances, this will be possible.

This being said, ethical research depends on your consent. Therefore, you are free to withdraw from the study up to the end of December 2021, without giving a reason. If you do choose to withdraw from the study, the data already gathered will be dealt with as explained in the following sections.

What data will this research generate?
During the project I will collect a range of different information, or 'data' from you: The 'knitted journals', completed wellbeing scales, photographs of the knitted journals, recordings of interviews and taught sessions and the written journals from phase two. Reflective notes will be taken by the researcher throughout each online meeting.

Video and audio recordings of the interviews and group discussisons will be anonymised and transcribed into text form before the files are deleted. Any written responses following the interview will be similarly anonymised. Text files will be analysed to identify key themes and quotes from the interview data. Quotes may be used in future research outputs (e.g. publications, presentations, online resources or teaching materials) but will be anonymised and not attributable to any identifiable individual. Photographs you share of items you have made may be used in future research outputs to illustrate points discussed in the interview, but only where no individual is personally identifiable in the image.

How will you protect my confidentiality and anonymity?

Any personal information you provide, such as your name and contact details, will be kept confidential, stored securely on NTU servers, and then deleted at the end of the project. The information that you provide during interviews, workshops and in your knitted journals will be fully anonymised so that you are not personally identifiable within the data. Where this anonymised data is subsequently used in the form of quotes, a pseudonym will be used so that you are not identifiable. In line with research best practice and NTU's Research Data Management Policy, the fully anonymised data from this study may be made available to those conducting subsequent studies in a form where no individual is identifiable. Any images you share of items you have made may be reproduced in materials published from this research. No image in which you are personally identifiable will be used or shared under any circumstances.

What happens if I want to withdraw?

You are welcome to withdraw from the study at any time, you do not need to give an explanation and you have the right to ask for your data to be removed and destroyed, if you wish.

How can I find out more about the project and its results?

Lead researcher: Emily Joy Rickard, School of Art and Design, NTU, Email emily.rickard@ntu.ac.uk | **Director of Studies: Dr. Amy Twigger-Holroyd**, School of Art and Design, NTU, Email amy-twigger.holroyd@ntu.ac.uk | **Supervisor: Dr. Anne Boultwood**, Faculty of Arts, Design and Media, BCU, Email anne.boultwood@bcu.ac.uk | **Supervisor: Dr. Katherine Townsend**, School of Art and Design, NTU, Email katherine.townsend@ntu.ac.uk | **Chair of the College of Art, Architecture Design and Humanities (CAADH) Research Ethics Committee, NTU**: Professor Michael White, michael.white@ntu.ac.uk or 0115 848 2069

B.3   CONSENT FORM

CONSENT FORM – KnitWell: Exploring creative, open-ended knitting as a form of journaling to record emotions, with consideration for mental wellbeing

Please read and confirm your consent to participating in this project by ticking the appropriate boxes and signing and dating this form.

1. I have read the project description and had the opportunity to ask questions which have been answered satisfactorily. ☐

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary, and that I am free to withdraw from the study up to the end of December 2021, by informing the researcher without giving any reason. ☐

3. I give permission for the interviews and group discussions to be video recorded . ☐

4. I understand that the recording will be treated confidentially, anonymised and transcribed into text before being destroyed securely. ☐

5. I understand that quotations from the interview or responses given in writing, which will be made anonymous, may be included in material published from this research. ☐

6. I understand that any photographs I share of items that I have made may be included in material published from this research, but only where no individual is personally identifiable in the image. ☐

7. I understand that the anonymised data from this study may be used by those conducting subsequent studies but only in its anonymised form in which I am not identifiable. ☐

8. I am willing to participate in this research project. ☐

9. I give permission for photographs I have taken to be used within this research. ☐

_____   _____   _____
Participant's name   Date   Signature

_____   _____   _____
Researcher's name   Date   Signature

Lead researcher: Emily Joy Rickard, School of Art and Design, NTU, Email emily.rickard@ntu.ac.uk | **Director of Studies: Dr. Amy Twigger-Holroyd**, School of Art and Design, NTU, Email amy-twigger.holroyd@ntu.ac.uk | **Supervisor: Dr. Anne Boultwood**, Faculty of Arts, Design and Media, BCU, Email anne.boultwood@bcu.ac.uk | **Supervisor: Dr. Katherine Townsend**, School of Art and Design, NTU, Email katherine.townsend@ntu.ac.uk | **Chair of the College of Art, Architecture Design and Humanities (CAADH) Research Ethics Committee, NTU**: Professor Michael White, michael.white@ntu.ac.uk or 0115 848 2069

C. WORKSHOP OUTLINES

C.1 WORKSHOP OUTLINE – PHASE 1

Workshop Outline

10.00
Online etiquette, what to expect from the workshop.

10.10
Free knitting techniques

10.45
Workbook guidance

11.05
Comfort break

11.10
Free knitting techniques.

11.45
Any questions about upcoming knit month.

D. Workbook Guides

KnitWell Workbook

by

Emily Joy Rickard
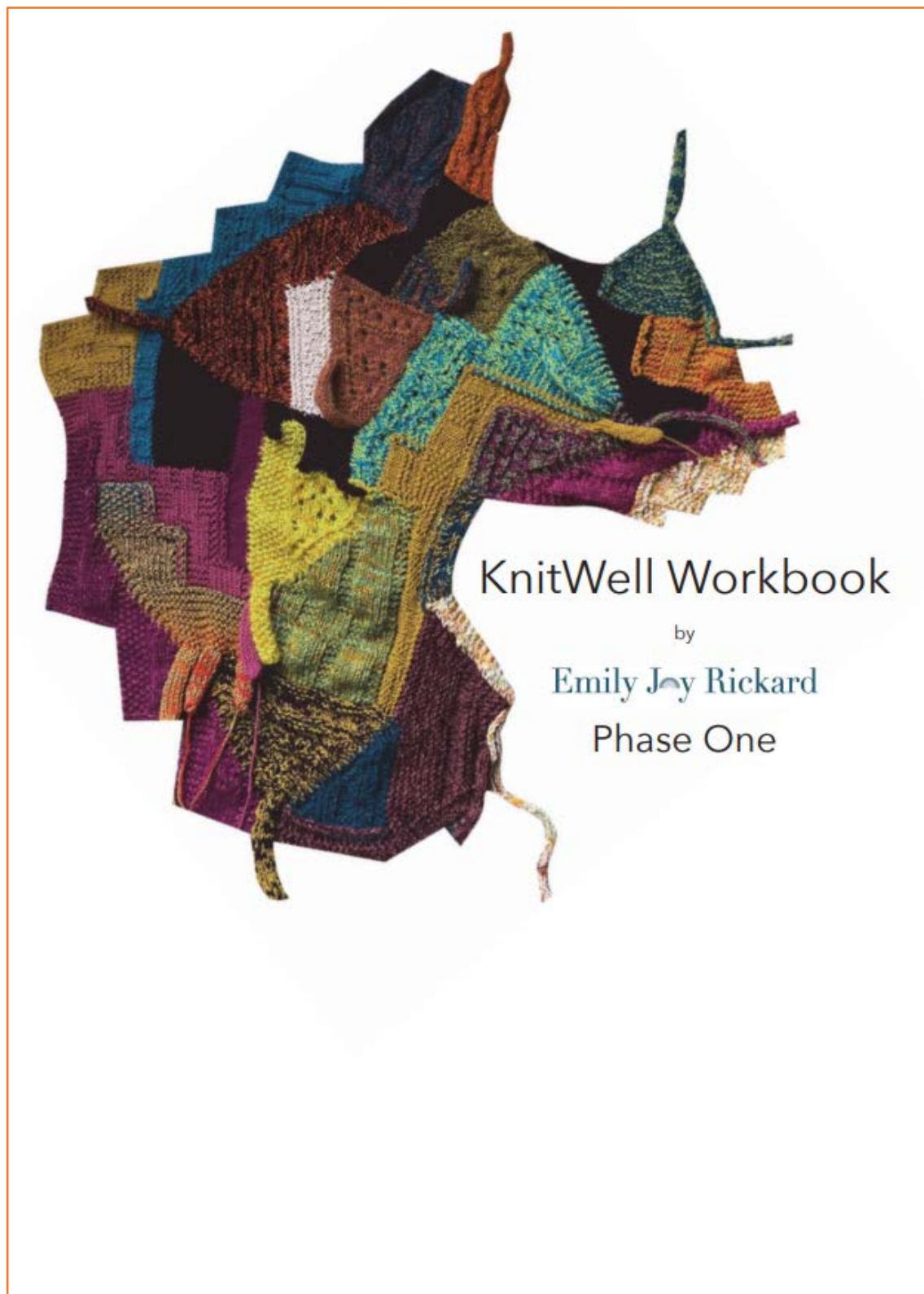
Phase One

this workbook belongs to:

....

date:

....

KnitWell Workbook: Phase One

Contents

KnitWell Workbook : Phase One

INTRODUCTION
TITLE
KnitWell: Exploring the use of creative, open-ended knitting as a form of journaling to record emotions, with consideration for mental wellbeing

STUDY NOTES
This participatory project investigates how aspects of a knitted fabric such as stitch, colour, texture, scale and shape can be used as a tangible, tactile language to record an individual's emotional state. The research will explore the opportunities and limitations that this recording method offers in terms of self-expression and what impact the creation of a 'knitted journal' could have on mental well-being.

MATERIALS
You have a yarn palette of varied texture, colour and thickness that will help you to express your emotions and cater for different moods.

To keep a track of your yarns, feel free to wind some off and place below.

If you run out of any yarn and need a replacement at any time during the study, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Happy Knitting!

Yarn One:

Yarn Seven:

Yarn Two:

Yarn Eight:

Yarn Three:

Yarn Nine:

Yarn Four:

Yarn Ten:

Yarn Five:

Yarn Eleven:

Yarn Six:

Yarn Twelve:

KnitWell Workbook: Phase One

NEEDLES
Any size you want to use ranging from fine to super chunky, for example; 2.5mm to 12mm

NOTIONS
Scissors
Tapestry needle - if you want to sew your ends in, there is no need to do so, it is up to you completely.

IMPORTANT DATES

PHASE ONE:
Month One: 16th Mar. – 16th Apr.

Month Two: 3rd May – 30th May

Month Three: 1st Jun. – 26th Jun.

PHASE TWO:
Month One: 5th Jul. – 23rd Jul.

Month Two: 29th Jul. – 25th Aug.

Month Three: 1st Sep. – 23rd Sep.

PHASE THREE:
Month One: 30th Sep. – 21st Oct.

Month Two: 28th Oct. – 24th Nov.

Month Three: 2nd Dec. – 16th Dec.

DIRECTIONS

Below Shows the outline for each month of phase one. This workbook is due to be completed throughout month two, however there are notes pages at the back for jotting down your thoughts throughout.

MONTH ONE:
Briefing and taught workshop – Two hours.

Q&A about the initial taught workshop and knitted journal task – Two hours.

MONTH TWO:
Completion of the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS), the evening before the daily knitted journaling commences – 15 minutes.

Daily capture of thoughts and emotions through a knitted journal. At the end of every day, you will be asked to knit using an appropriate yarn, colour and stitch to reflect upon and document how you feel (at the time of knitting) regarding your emotions from the day – 20-30 minutes.

Completion of a Daily Wellness Knit Scale. The Daily Wellness Knit Scale – 5 minutes.

You will be asked to take photographs of each day's knitting in order to create a timescale for your knitting and to share them daily via WhatsApp or email.

Scheduled weekly check-in via email or text to provide guidance or help if needed.

Completion of WEMWBS; the day after the knitted journaling ends – 15 minutes.

MONTH THREE:
One-to-one interviews based on your knitted journal – One hour.

KnitWell Workbook : Phase One

HOW TO: DAILY KNIT JOURNAL

Below is an example week of the Daily Knit Journal from day one throught to seven.

Everyday I knit for no less than 20 minutes, with a colour, stitch, yarn, needle that I felt most reflected my day.

DAY ONE

DAY THREE

DAY TWO

DAY FOUR

KnitWell Workbook: Phase One

DAY FIVE

DAY SEVEN

DAY SIX

Hi Emily, here is today's pic for the Daily Knit Journal. Thanks 😣   14:48

EXAMPLE

Sending daily progression photograph through WhatsApp

I invited participants to complete the WEMWBS once before the knitting month commenced and once upon completion of the knitting month (see Chapter 3), therefore it is in the workbook twice. The page below was included to give participants an example of how to complete the scale.

KnitWell Workbook : Phase One

10

Please complete the WEMWBS scale (opposite page) the evening before you start the Daily Knit Journal.

THE WARWICK-EDINBURGH MENTAL WELL-BEING SCALE (WEMWBS)

See a completed example below:

	None of the Time	Rarely	Some of the Time	Often	All of the Time
I've been feeling optimistic about the future	1	2	③	4	5
I've been feeling useful	1	2	3	④	5
I've been feeling relaxed	1	②	3	4	5
I've been feeling interested in other people	1	2	3	④	5
I've had energy to spare	①	2	3	4	5
I've been dealing with problems well	1	2	③	4	5
I've been thinking clearly	1	2	3	④	5
I've been feeling good about myself	1	2	3	4	⑤
I've been feeling close to other people	1	②	3	4	5
I've been feeling confident	1	②	3	4	5
I've been able to make up my own mind about things	1	②	3	4	5
I've been feeling loved	1	2	3	④	5
I've been interested in new things	1	2	3	4	⑤
I've been feeling cheerful	1	②	3	4	5

KnitWell Workbook : Phase One

HOW TO: DAILY WELLNESS KNIT SCALE

Today I have felt....
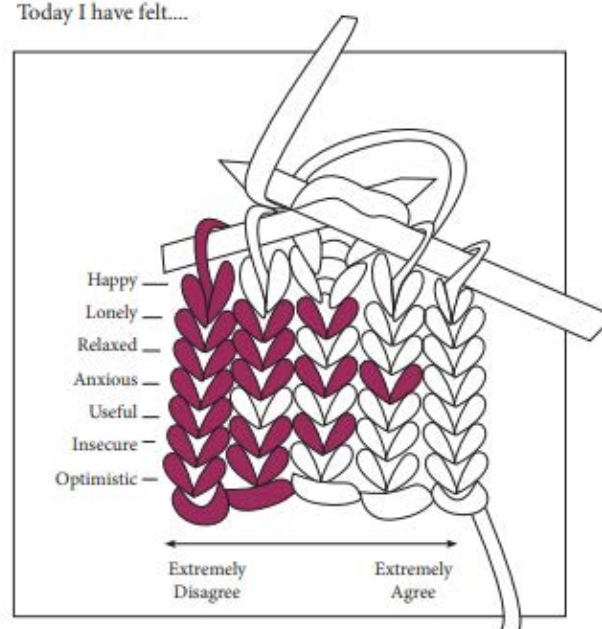
Each row of knitting represents one of the statements above. Fill in each row to show how you have felt that day. You can fill each stitch with colour. The scale ranges over five points from extremely disagree to extremely agree.

Above you can see a completed example of the scale. You can see on the day of completion, this person had a tough day and ended it feeling sad and anxious; they marked extremely disagree with feeling happy, neither agree nor disagree with feeling lonely and agree with feeling anxious.

During Phase 1, participants were asked to complete the Daily Wellness Knit Scale (DWKS) alongside their daily knitting practice. The workbook page below highlights how I invited participants to complete the DWKS throughout this phase.

KnitWell Workbook: Phase One

Notes:

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KnitWell Workbook: Phase One

YARN REQUEST FORM

For yarns that you need more of for the next phase, please request below by marking in the box provided.

Note: Please return any unused yarns at the end of the month, along with your Daily Knit Journal and workbook.

1 ☐ 38g

2 ☐ 11g

3 ☐ 12g

4 ☐ 42g

5 ☐ 24g

6 ☐ 20g

7 ☐ 15g

8 ☐ 21g

9 ☐ 33.5g

10 ☐

11 ☐ 40.5g

12 ☐ 47g

The Phase 2 and Phase 3 workbooks had the same outline and utilised multiple pages from the Phase 1 workbook. Below I share pages that differ from the Phase 1 workbook. These pages were included to give participants an example of how I had written a journal entry which highlights connections to my day as well as the knitting.

KnitWell Workbook : Phase Three

10

HOW TO: WRITTEN NOTES ON DAY

Date: 08 / 12 / 20

Happy
Lonely
Relaxed
Anxious
Useful
Insecure
Optimistic

Extremely   Extremely
Disagree   Agree
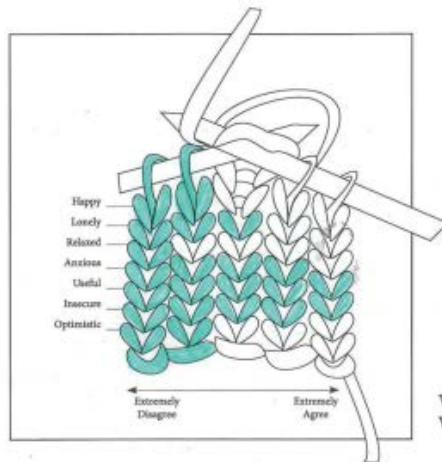
Where are you? : PhD office - Bonington
What time is it? : 2 - 30 pm

Walking through city centre = busy, people not wearing masks = scary.
    → coming into uni also scary.
anxious + insecure about my place and the space I fill / acquire
    → hard to be optimistic when filled with so much doubt.
    → feel useful as been productive = working on ideas and knitting.
    → how to show this in knitting...

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Version:1.1

KnitWell Workbook: Phase Three

HOW TO: WRITTEN NOTES ON KNITTING

The previous page (10) shows notes made about the day.

This page (11) shows notes made about the colour and stitch choice.

needed something comforting
today = knit stitches, easy
going

felt stressed but also productive

decreasing into a point
the stripe structure = tense

but also comforting

colour = 2 of my favourite
shades

→ burgundy + orange =
marl = appealing + made
knitting easy today

→ challenged myself with
3 on side pick-up = fun

miss 1st stitch in the i-cord = turmoil +
frustration — and hope — hope that one stitch
at a time will prevail

During Phase 2 I invited participants to complete the Daily Wellness Knit Scale (DWKS) alongside their daily knitting practice and also add written reflection. In Phase 3 participants were given the option to write or not write, choosing the format that best suited them. The workbook page below highlights how I invited participants to complete the DWKS and the additional space for written reflection.

KnitWell Workbook: Phase Three

15

Date:................................

Happy
Lonely
Relaxed
Anxious
Useful
Insecure
Optimistic

Extremely Disagree   Extremely Agree

Where are you? : ....
What time is it? : ....

Notes:

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E. Written Diary Entries

Day One – 29th July 2021
Where: at my desk
Time: 10.30pm
So tired today – pain levels high
- Just did knit stitches as easy and comforting
- Wanted to do some slip stitch stuff but didn't have energy to think it through.
- Thought I'd picked easy to use yarn but it was all splitty and I got very frustrated, then didn't have the headspace for fancy stitches.

Today has been tricky as had to go out to shops and that makes me anxious, but the fact I managed made me feel optimistic that it won't always be this way.

Day Two – 31st July 2021
Where: at my desk
Time: 11.30pm
Had a good day today
Chose to represent particular highlights using wrapped stitches (good stream on twitch, all my family here – both kids seeing wider family and having a lovely meal with husband and kids).
Carried on with the yarn already on needles for main knitting as wanted the colour change to represent mood lifting through the day.
Used stocking stitch as though still am v. tired I could cope with a little more than just the knit stitches of the garter stitch from before.

Day Three – 2nd August 2021
Where: on the sofa in family room
Time: 11.10pm
Chose favourite yarn (purpley colour) as happy all my family are visiting
Wanted to do slip stitches but couldn't make them work – a bit like my routines at the moment.
As the house is very busy it feels like everything is happening at once, so as well as attempting slip stitches, I made yarn overs and short rows.
I think my happiness and anxiety are shown in today's knitting and the way the wedge created by the short rows cuts through the slip stitch section feels a bit like how having everyone here cuts through my routines and the purple colours surrounding that is the happiness of having people around.

Day Four – 3rd August 2021
Where: on sofa in family room
Time: 11.10pm

Did garter stitch today as brain fried and needed easy stitches. Did bobbles as things are still hectic.

Grey yarn with loops chosen as I have lots going on with kids, assignments and routine out of whack.

Day Five – 4ᵗʰ August 2021
Where: in the front room
Time: 11.20pm
Picked the self-striping yarn as today has been very busy. Its felt like constant changes like the yarn colours.

As things are opening up again it feels like I'm being pulled every which way and so I did short rows at either end, pulling the stitches to make the German short rows, felt very apt.

Garter stitch because I'm tired and needed an easy base to work from.

Day Six – 5ᵗʰ August 2021
Where: at my desk
Time: 9.30pm
Pain levels v. high today so chose brightly coloured yarn as I find it very jarring, much like the pain.

As I feel like I only half function when in pain, I only knitted on half my stitches.

Day Seven – 6ᵗʰ August 2021
Where: in the front room
Time: 7pm
Pain still bothersome and so head feels foggy and frustrated.

Picked bright yarn for pain and loopy grey yarn for foggy head.

Didn't have the energy to do any fancy stitches so just did a reverse stocking stitch as when I feel like this my world feels back to front.

Day Eight – 7ᵗʰ August 2021
Where: in front room
Time: 11.45pm
Feel good this evening so picked self-striping yarn.

Pain levels still high so attached it to the bright yellow.

Decreased to a point in stocking stitch as I needed something easy but not plain as very tired.

Day Nine – 8ᵗʰ August 2021
Where: in the front room
Time: 10.45pm
Don't know why I picked the pink cotton yarn today, it just felt right.

Did some short rows and rib stitches as I think I feel like a lot of stuff is an uphill battle right now (assignment due in next week, head full of stuff).

Day Ten – 9th August 2021
Where: at my desk
Time: 11.50pm
Today I knitted whilst streaming online and talking to people about feelings.
I have been very foggy headed so picked the white floofy yarn and the green thread represented the community I was chatting to online.
I needed to do simple stitches so just did garter stitch and didn't have the energy to do a lot of knitting as well as all the other stuff I did today.

Day Eleven – 10th August 2021
Where: in front room
Time: 10.30pm
Feeling really good today so picked favourite yarn and added sparkle.
Added yarn on by picking up stitches as the good day came out of nowhere and so placing it at random seemed appropriate.
Did stocking stitch as its my favourite to knit and then added some decreases as I was happiest in the morning with a slight tail off through the day.

Day Twelve – 11th August 2021
Where: in front room
Time: 10.30pm
Decided to make rows smaller by decreasing needle size instead of knitting together.
Used subtle multi-coloured yarn as felt like lots going on but difficult to put finger on it.

Day Thirteen – 14th August 2021
Where: in front room
Time: 11.35pm
Small amount of knitting today as burnt my arm.
Picked a fuzzy yarn as head foggy because burn painful. - 11am treating it and it will be ok, it's just very sore right now.
Simple stocking stitch as needed to just do it.

Day Fourteen – 15th August 2021
Where: in the front room
Time: 10.15pm
Only had the brain power for small amount of knitting today – assignment due soon.
Picked the blue fluffy yarn as I wanted something soft and comforting.
Challenged myself a little though by knitting backwards rather than turning work around and purling.

Day Fifteen – 16th August 2021
Where: in the family room
Time: 10pm

Anxious day today – assignment due tomorrow.

Garter stitch as easy and comfortable.

Short rows as brain feels lopsided.

Holes as I think they represent trying to think about feelings and mood when head is in study mode. – It was difficult to let go and just knit today.

Day Sixteen – 17th August 2021
Where: in the front room
Time: 8.40pm
Got assignment handed in today so v. happy – chose favourite purple yarn.

Also extremely tired as was up till 4am finishing said assignment so picked favourite, fuzzy, teal/green yarn to go with it.

Only managed tiny bit of knitting as was falling asleep whilst doing it.

Day Seventeen – 18th August 2021
Where: in the front room
Time: 11.20pm
Kept going in same colours as still pleased about assignment.

Feeling more accomplished today so attempted to slip stitch in the 2 different textures of yarn. It didn't come out like I'd imagined, but that kind of fits with the whole assignment thing I guess.

Day Eighteen – 19th August 2021
Where: in the family room
Time: 10.30pm
Great day today with lots happening so chose yarn with colour I liked but was self-striping.

Made a regular diamond shape with increases and decreases as today has been quite structured.

Felt useful as been helping out with stuff, being interviewed for local radio show, people around town and met up with a friend who needed a chat.

Day Nineteen – 23rd August 2021
Where: in the front room
Time: 10.30am
Knit in morning today – much preferred it. Felt I could engage with it more and enjoy it.

Chose two colour changing yarns as feel quite positive this morning and did slip stitches as wanted something to think about and get involved in.

Day Twenty – 24th August 2021
Where: in the front room
Time: 10.45am
Very busy day coming up today so decided to carry on with busy self-striping yarn.

Decided on bobbles today as I'm anticipating a lot of going backwards and forwards but something good will come out of it in the end.

Day Twenty-One – 25ᵗʰ August 2021
Where: in the front room
Time: 11.30am
Picked loopy grey yarn today as was highly anxious. Went out to a comedy gig and there was no mask wearing or social distancing, still highly anxious this morning.
The wraps and yarn being carried on the front are because I feel like I'm tying myself in knots trying to work out how to start going out safely.

Day Twenty-Two – 26ᵗʰ August 2021
Where: in the front room
Time: 9.30am
Stuck with the self-striping yarn as everything seems to be constantly changing at the moment – my mood, covid rates, the weather etc etc etc
Did short rows as I want things generally to turn a corner but then stopped fairly quickly after that as who knows what's around there.
I'm still highly anxious and don't know which way is up.

Day Twenty-Three – 27ᵗʰ August 2021
Where: in the front room
Time: 8.45am
Picked the pink yarn as today is very grey and overcast and I wanted something bright and cheery to counteract that.
The holes are about anxiety hitting at random.
Today anxiety is high as I need to leave the house later but also there are workmen digging up the road outside the house so I can't relax here like I normally would.

Day Twenty-Four – 28ᵗʰ August 2021
Where: in the front room
Time: 11pm
Had a great day, got an assignment back and got a really good mark, so picked up my favourite colour yarn.
Had a really busy day so did random patterns – was supposed to be stripes of garter and stocking stitch, but ended up being offset. I left it like that as it has felt a bit like I'm constantly stopping and starting.

Day Twenty-Five – 29ᵗʰ August 2021
Where: in the front room
Time: 11.15am
Not sure why I picked today's yarns. Kept going with yesterdays and then wanted something of a similar weight and texture.

Tired today but wanted to knit something fun so did slip stitches which are fairly easy but fun to knit.

Day Twenty-Six – 30th August 2021
Where: in the front room
Time: 9.45am
Feel a bit flat today, picked yarn that is easy to knit with but tried to challenge myself a little by doing short rows to go around the corner of the knitting.

Day Twenty-Seven – 31st August 2021
Where: in my home office
Time: 2pm
Still a bit flat so just did some easy garter stitch.
Yarn chosen as fairly easy one to knit with.

Day Twenty-Eight – 1st September 2021
Where: in the front room
Time: 10am
Again, needed easy to knit yarn as quite tired.
Picked dark colour as I'm in quite a good mood and I prefer darker palettes.

Notes:
- Struggling to get this into routine this time
- Prefer not casting off and picking up stitches
- 18th August – I'm finding it harder to do the knitting this time. I think it is because I have other things I want to knit that are practical, so knitting 'just because' feels like a waste of knitting time, a bit.
- 23rd August – Switched to knitting in the morning so it feels like less of a chore to get done before going to bed.

F. Interview Guides

Name: ……………………………………………………………………

Date/Time: ……………………………………………………………

1. How did you find the experience of free knitting?
2. Which part of the piece do you feel most connected to?
3. Why did you use this yarn and colour choice?
4. How was the process of knitting every day?
5. Did you manage to knit every day? If not, can you say why?
6. Did you enjoy not following a pattern?
7. Did you find it challenging? If so, how did you overcome these initial challenges?
8. What does this stitch reflect?
9. How did you find reflecting on your day through stitch and colour?
10. Would you do this again?
11. Does how you feel about this piece of knitting differ to other projects? If so, why?
12. Can you see a correlation between the daily knit scale and your daily knitting?
13. How does it make you feel?
14. How would you describe your state of mind when you are knitting?

Questions to add:

1. ………
   ………
   ……………………

2. ………
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Name: ……………………………………………………………………

Date/Time: ……………………………………………………………

1. How did you find the experience of free knitting during this phase?
2. How did the knitting and writing elements work together?
   - For example, did you knit first, or did you write first?
3. Are there elements that you feel you could capture more in knitting than with words or vice versa?
4. Did you notice any correlation between your knit scale answers and your knitting?
5. Which activity made you think more in-depth about how you are feeling?
   - For example, did starting to write open up your thoughts or was it knitting?
6. Have you noticed a pattern forming with your stitch or colour choices?
   - Are you aware of using some textures more than others?
7. How was the process of knitting and writing every day?
   - Did you manage to knit and reflect every day? If not, can you say why?
8. Did you find it challenging?
   - If so, how did you overcome these challenges?
9. Which part of the piece do you feel most connected to?
   - Why did you use this yarn and colour choice?
   - How does it make you feel?

Questions to add:

1. ……
   ……
   ……………………
2. ……
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Name: …………………………………………………………………………

Date/Time: ………………………………………………………………

1. How did you find the experience of free knitting during this phase?
2. Have you noticed a pattern forming with your stitch or colour choices?
   - Are you aware of using some textures more than others?
   - What have you noticed about your knitting habits/patterns throughout the phases? Have they changed as you have become more used to the practice of free knitting? Explain...
3. Did you notice any correlation between your knit scale answers and your knitting?
4. Which part of the piece do you feel most connected to?
   - Why did you choose the yarn and colour choice?
   - How does it make you feel?

JUST KNITTING:

1. If you returned to knitting only, how did this feel?
   - Did you feel any limitations or opportunities in this? Explain...
2. How did you use knitting to explore your emotions?
3. How was the process of knitting every day?

KNITTING AND WRITING:

1. How did the knitting and writing elements work together?
   - For example, did you knit first or right first?
2. Are there elements that you feel you could capture more in knitting than with words or vice versa?
3. Which activity made you think more in-depth about your emotions?
   - For example, did writing open up your thoughts or was it the knitting?
4. How was the process of knitting and writing every day?
   - Did you manage to knit and reflect every day? If not, can you say why?

As this is the last phase of this study, I have a few questions relating to the project and your experience as a whole:

1. Are there any elements of the Daily Knit Journalling process that you will take forward with you? If yes, what are they? If no, can you say why?
2. What would you change about the process?
3. How has being part of KnitWell changed your relationship with knitting and how you practice knitting... if at all?
4. Would you recommend KnitWell and the practice of knitting your emotions to others?
   o If yes, why? What did you like about it? Who would you recommend it to? If no, can you say why?
5. Can you see yourself creating more Daily Knit Journals in the future?
6. Did you find any part of the KnitWell process challenging?
   o If so, how did you overcome these challenges?

WEMWBS:
1. How did you find completing the WEMWBS scale?
2. What changes, if any, have you noticed with your wellbeing?

Individual questions to add per participant:
1. ……
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……………………

2. ……
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HINT:

Try to get the participants to link their comments to the knitting, if possible. For example, if they said, "there were some days when I felt really happy and my knitting was nice and bright and strucutred", I need to ask them if they could point out one or two parts of that knitting that indicate that.

Discussion Outline

20 mins

General chat about the experience of keeping a Daily Knit Journal

20 mins

Discussion about two specific details about your Daily Knit Journal

20 mins

Discussion focused on specific parts of the Daily Knit Journal that stick out to you

G. INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

G.1   PARTICIPANT 1, PHASE 1, INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Wed, Jul 14, 2021 12:23PM • 37:13

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

knitting, people, bit, yarn, feeling, week, day, thinking, knit, guess, pain, couple, realised, point, colour, vaccine, big, excited, pick, flu

SPEAKERS

Participant One, Emily Rickard

Emily Rickard 00:13
Hi, how are you doing?

Participant One 00:22
Hello. Yes, I'm okay. Sorry my zoom for some reason doesn't always set itself to the same settings as my laptop and it always throws me because it doesn't look like I'm muted but it's going to the wrong place.

Emily Rickard 00:42
Yeah, no, I know what you mean. I love your hair.

Participant One 00:47
Thank you, very recently had it done purple.

Emily Rickard 00:51
Awesome.

Participant One 00:56
Sorry, my little dog just in the corner. She's making funny noises. She's been in a weird mood all morning. She went and just sat in her basket. Normally she sits here in the sunshine cuz she's worked out, you know, she's manoeuvred the cushions so that that's her favourite cushion, and she can sit there in the sunshine. For some reason she didn't want to do that this morning and went through and sat in the back room in her bed, which she doesn't normally do. So she's in a bit of a weird mood. And I've no idea why.

Emily Rickard 01:26
She looks quite content where she is now. Cleaning herself.

Participant One 01:32

Hello, you, okay? Good girl. Yeah, no idea. She'll be fine.

Emily Rickard 01:44

Yeah. If I share my screen quickly? Oh, no. Is it not open? Why isn't that coming up as an option? There we go. We should be able to see. Hopefully this. So an hour seems to be we've, like we've, what I've done so far, though, people I've spoken to so far, it's only been about 40 minutes. So I think an hour just. But generally, it's that and I put 20 minutes for each, but it's not necessarily. But I've got like a few like general questions, and then some specific, a couple of specific ones. And then if there's anything that you wanted to say that we've not covered then, or points that you bring up, and then I've got a photograph here that we can come back to basically. And yeah, that's kind of sort of structured. And it's being recorded, because I can't write fast enough. So I have it. I've got some software that can transcribe it later. So that's hopefully, what, what what will be going on. But I guess to start with, if we jump in, how did you find like, the experience of free knitting?

Participant One 03:20

Yeah, I really enjoyed it, it was different because I've only ever worked off patterns before. So um, so it was interesting. And the idea that I couldn't get it wrong, as it were, was quite freeing as I was doing it. So that was really nice. And yet, at the same time having anxiety, so I wasn't doing it right. In the same which sounds completely contradictory, but yet, both were kind of both true at the same time.

Emily Rickard 03:56

And I guess like, I don't know if you knit every day anyway, but how did how was like the process of knitting every day.

Participant One 04:03

I don't normally knit every day. At first, it was great. And I loved it. And it was really good. But I do tend to have about a three week attention span on things. And so for that last week, I was finding it a lot more difficult to do regularly. And so yeah, that last week, it was significantly harder to make sure that I'd done it and then a couple of times that week I forgotten and so that was a bit later getting to you and but that very much fits with how I generally am it just seems to be that after about three weeks my brain's gone, right now we've done that now, and he wants to do other things. So it wasn't new and shiny anymore. So I wasn't as engaged with it.

Emily Rickard 04:43

Yeah. Yeah. And I guess that kind of goes on to, did you manage to knit every day, but I know like there were a couple of days like in between that you didn't. And how did you find it not following a pattern?

Participant One 05:05

Umm some days I really enjoyed it. And some days it was a bit like, Well, what do I do with it now? I don't know what to do. I think that was more toward the end, when I was in less engaged with it that last week, I think I was finding it more difficult at that point. But at first, certainly, I really enjoyed it and just enjoyed kind of just knitting whatever came out at the end of my needles really.

Emily Rickard 05:39

And I guess that kind of leads, I've got these questions like written out, like, the kind of lead on but also are asking the same thing, but in a different way. So if it gets Yeah, but so I guess, towards the end, I was like, Did you find it challenging initially? Or? Or how, and how did you kind of overcome it?

Participant One 06:05

You know, initially, I didn't cuz I'm very much if something's new, then I, it that sort of sees me over any initial kind of hurdle generally, when I do things, and this was no different to that when the point at which generally, like I say, is about after three, about three weeks when the novelty has worn off. And so it was kind of making sure that was doing the work. There was a day I just completely forgot to do it, I think. And it's sort of Yeah, I think because I hadn't got it into a routine in that first few weeks where the novelty was still, you know, some days I was doing in the morning, some days, I was doing it in the evening. Whereas I think if I perhaps try to do it at the same time, every day, I may have been more successful in doing that, because it would have just been what I was doing every day rather than it being Oh, because I'd get to bedtime I think oh, I've got to do my knitting and I've not done my knitting yet. Yeah. Yeah.

Emily Rickard 07:13

So I think if I share this so we can see your knitting now. Is there a piece like looking back at it now that you maybe feel more connected to? Or that stands out to you?

Participant One 07:37

I can't exactly remember when I did a lot of them but the one I think it's the grey one that also has the ... With the sequins and so yeah, that bit there. I think I did as I was waiting for my vaccine in the car park and so I was quite nervous hence the sort of the grey yarn but the sparkles because I was quite excited at the same time. And I thought they were very even though they're very similar colour and you can't really see it they're very very different in texture and very different and that very much was how I really did feel at that point in time because I couldn't kind of get a handle on because it was also big and yeah, that it was kind of like Yeah, but I'm also nervous but I'm also excited and I don't quite know which is which. And I realised also that the fluffy yarns, the whites the big fluffy white one so all of those are the big three I've done three of those I think were days when I was feeling a bit very foggy headed with my pain and Fibromyalgia i think i messaged your own point and said I think I'm knitting my pain

experience more than my emotions and the yarn choice was more what I was feeling but then what I knitted was more to do with my pain levels, but at the same time they're interlinked anyway, so it's difficult to separate it out. And having said that, some of the days when I picked the vivid yellow yarn were days when I was in a lot of pain and that was all I could think about and that vivid colour kind of almost that linked in with my pain levels somehow This bit?

Emily Rickard 09:27
I think because it's so bright, it can be quite seen as quite aggressive in some like

Participant One 09:35
Quite jarring. I think was how I was looking at it. So it kind of Yeah.

Emily Rickard 09:39
And um ... How did you find the kind of reflecting on your day through this kind of ... or I guess saying with the pain like choosing, like stitching colour? Umm ... Did you find that you just kind of like, did you think about what you're doing? Or did it just come naturally? I guess ...

Participant One 10:16
I think it's a bit of both. I think it depended sort of day to day. Sometimes I think it can be easy to think about how you feeling when you're not feeling great.

Emily Rickard 10:26
Yeah.

Participant One 10:28
So on days when I was feeling all right, I just kind of would quickly knit something. And that would be because I didn't really reflect on that in quite the same way as you perhaps do if you're not feeling well. Because if you're not feeling good, it's like, well, why am I feeling like that? And you don't tend to do that as much with positive feelings as negative ones.

Emily Rickard 10:52
And I guess, like outside of the project, would you like do free knitting again?

Participant One 11:01
I'm not sure I would to be honest. I think part of what I was finding difficult, especially in that last week was the picking stitches. I don't like picking stitches up. And obviously, that's quite a big part of it.

Emily Rickard 11:15
Yeah.

Participant One 11:16
On a day to day basis.

Emily Rickard 11:22
Yeah.

Participant One 11:22
Yeah. So that was kind of putting me off doing it, sometimes. I thought I'm gonna have to come along here and pick off pick up bits there. And yeah, so I think that was quite a dis. Yeah. A bit of a distraction for me really.

Emily Rickard 11:48
Okay, cool. And I guess like looking if you look like, looking at this against a different, like, other knitting projects? Do you feel like a different connection to it? Or does your feeling towards this differ to something else that you've done?

Participant One 12:15
Interesting. I'm not sure it's much different, to be honest. No, no, it is different. It's different in that when I'm knitting something, I often knit for other people. And so I spend time thinking about them when I'm knitting. Whereas on this, I was thinking more about myself. And so now it has more of a, it feels more personal. But I think I'm almost less happy to look at it than I am other things that I've knitted for other people.

Emily Rickard 12:53
Okay. Um, um, is there like... can you see a correlation between filling out the scales and the knitting days? Like, I guess you were saying with the neon yellow, you, I guess if it was a high pain day is not a good day necessarily. So that sticks out as a whether there's any.

Participant One 13:43
Sorry, I didn't catch the very first thing you said when you started to ask me that question.

Emily Rickard 13:48
Whether there's like a correlation. Can you see a correlation between the scale and the knitting?

Participant One 13:55
The scale?

Emily Rickard 13:56
The well being scale that you filled out?

Participant One 13:58

Oh the Well being scale, Sorry.

Emily Rickard 13:59
Yeah.

Participant One 14:11
I think so. Yeah. Yeah, I think that it's difficult to say without my actual thing here in front of me to kind of Yeah, it's

Emily Rickard 14:35
I've got Um, there's a couple if I go across, click on ... I've got these two that are highlighted, because I found that they were I really liked how you included like the icord. Laid it in to this next day, and also doing an i-cord through, like holes that you've made. And I like... it really kind of draws your attention to it. And I was just wondering if you kind of remember when you did it or why, like, what made you decide to make it maybe a bit more textural?

Participant One 15:30
I can't off the top of my head, honestly, I really can't. I think it was. I mean, because I think because the the white one that you've highlighted the way that the thing comes through there. I'd sort of it was more it was less about the white bit than it was about the two that were connecting it, I think.

Emily Rickard 15:53
Okay. Yeah.

Participant One 15:55
And it was about sort of building on a past. You know, where I was that day was more about kind of having built on other days.

Emily Rickard 16:03
Yeah

Participant One 16:04
I remember that one. But I don't remember the other green one at all. I was surprised when I saw it because I didn't remember doing it, sewing it through. As I said the bit on the, as we're looking at the picture, the bit on the left of the white one. That was a separate day and was connected to the top of the I cord on what's not really an icord its just a longer bit of knitting. From the one in the middle.

Emily Rickard 16:38
Sorry, hang on my phone started calling and then it there we go. Okay, well, sorry, can you say that again?

Participant One 16:46
Yeah. So the bit on the left of the white one that you've highlighted. That one there, yea, was ... So that was attached onto the top of the the cord that came through so that the cord that came through was part of the knitting I'd already done for the day on the right.

Emily Rickard 17:06
Yeah, this one?

Participant One 17:10
Yeah, that one?

Emily Rickard 17:11
Yeah. That connected it together.

Participant One 17:16
Yeah. But again, I can't remember why I connected them together. But I can remember thinking that somehow it connected together.

Emily Rickard 17:23
Yeah. I've also whoops. This makes so much sense now, that it's really funny. Because Crikey. Everyone's trying to call. Sorry. Um, cuz so these two days, it's hard to see that white one. I think Cuz it's not, doesn't stand out as much, but they are tried to highlight them. And the grey because on your scale, these are both days where it's high on happiness and optimism. And I was like, so did you have use a sparkly yarn when it, I mean the sequiny one. Because I know you said that the grey for the colour and things was more nervous, but the sequins made it and like yeah, excited. Did you use those kind of thoughts with the yarns that you picked? Or?

Participant One 17:55
Yeah, Sometimes I think I did, certainly the white yarn that you've highlighted the white one at the top that white yarn I tended to use when I felt very foggy headed, and I couldn't really think so I think when I did that one, I had been to see one of my kids I think and so I've been excited because I've got to see them. But also it's been a really, really busy day. So you know, I had quite a lot my brain wasn't really functioning particularly well. So they were the ones that kind of came out. Yeah, I think I had the box of yarn in the in the car with me when we'd gone down. And then I did the knitting on the way back because it's a couple of hours drive so that I knew I was going to have time to do it. And it was that first week out of you know when they relaxed the rules slightly and my daughter was desperate to see us and so we travelled down to see her. Yeah.

Emily Rickard 19:43

And the thing with the yeah, the vaccine day, and I'm gonna go backwards back now. Essentially, I've kind of asked everything. Which is there? Yeah. I think if you don't enjoy picking up stitches in the next one, you could, if you wanted to, I guess leave not necessarily cast off, you could carry on, like, leave the needles on, and go. And I guess you could maybe create shapes and like casting off and then casting someone again, and picking up like when you felt like it, but not always, like, I guess there could be a way of making it more like something that Yeah, you enjoyed more maybe or, or didn't feel as put off by having to find a new gap to pick up from, would be an option

Participant One 21:17
That might be something that I looked at doing when we get the next. Yes. the next time through

Emily Rickard 21:24
The yarns will, the choices will be the same. The ones that are right behind me. The ones I had back and weighed them. And yes, they're now eagerly, I'm going to order more. So we get the weight is exactly the same as it was before, but you get the same amount. But yeah, and I saw your email, I know I didn't respond. Stop. I haven't I was away this weekend. So I wasn't able to the first day that I've had to kind of try and get into everything, which is fine. Yeah, if you can't tend to can't make the first one, it's okay. If we're basically the first one, about 40 minutes, or 30 minutes, half an hour or so, you know, we'll be covering or just having a discussion with so because there's the two sessions, so whoever's in the first one, and whoever's in the second one, will be the same, but it's of how we found like the first month, but like a general, I'm not going to show pictures or anything of anyone's knitting, it would just be like a general discussion about like, how we found it. Maybe like different things to try in the upcoming month and things and then we'll have some knitting time and maybe go over a couple of stitches. And if we do do stitches, if you can't make it, either one of them. Whatever stitches I discussed, I can try and find some YouTube videos and send them to you. Or at least like because if they're different to the ones that we did previously, then yeah, you'll kind of be able to see it. And the second one's probably more important, because I'll go through the workbook again, and how it's changed. And the slight differences that will be the next phase will kind of be about basically

Participant One 23:31
Yeah, yeah, the second one I can I can definitely make it's just that that first one the sixth of July, for some reason, I've had about eight different things that people have asked me to be at. And it's well no, I can only actually be one of them at that time. And they're everyone's pick the same day at the same time. But I'm not quite sure why but it's just happened that way. It's having you know, had weeks and months and months free with very little to do suddenly it's like all on one day, everybody. Yeah, maybe that does. Yeah, but hopefully I'll be okay after my second vaccine because, I mean, I know my husband's just had his and he was a lot better after a second after his first so I'm hoping that it won't hit me as hard as well, but because I've always thought the

underlying pain and Fibromyalgia might just kick in a bit more than it does for most people. So I have to be ready for that.

Emily Rickard 24:14
Well, how was the first one?

Participant One 24:29
Yeah, it won't be out for a couple of weeks. My fibro was playing up so I hadn't realised that that's I hadn't made the connection. I just realised that I was going to bed a lot more during the afternoon and stuff like that. And it was only talking to another friend with fibro who said Oh, yeah, it knocked me out after for a couple of weeks. I was like, Oh, yeah, that'll be what it is. And I hadn't put the two things together. So but yeah, immediately afterwards, I was a bit I felt a bit like I had the flu that evening umm I'd had it sort of 9/10 o'clock in the morning, and then sort by the evening just felt really like I had the flu and sort of through the next day, and then I went off my food for about 24 hours, which is very unlike me. And then, and then I was just wiped out after that. So I think most people, it would have been much quicker. And then Yeah,

Emily Rickard 25:19
I know. I had when I, so I've just had the first one, I've not had the second one. But I had like a migraine for three days. And then just a headache for the rest of the week. And I was just like, This is nice. Thank you. Thanks.

Participant One 25:40
I mean, the way I kind of looked at it was that at least I knew when I was getting the injection, so I could kind of plan around that. And I've deliberately cleared my diary, just in case things were a bit, you know, for a couple of weeks afterwards, I deliberately said to people like that I do regular online things with that I couldn't probably wouldn't make this that and the other just in case. And whereas I wouldn't know, you don't know if you're going to get COVID do you? So, you know, I'd rather have the injection than risk the sudden flooring. You know,

Emily Rickard 26:15
I know, like back in January, I was very much like, my friend was like, well, will you have have the vaccine if when it becomes available? And at that point, I was like, I don't know. I don't know. I've never had the flu joa. So I was always like, Oh, well. But the more as it was coming up, I was like, Well, fuck it. Excuse me, you know? Well. It's just like, it just makes sense. Yeah. And it's. And it's also like making sure that everyone that you're seeing ai safe as well. And I'm not like I'm not an anti vaxxer at all, like, it has nothing to do with that. It was just I don't know, it still feels so far away. Like, I don't know, close people really that have had it over. And I don't watch the news, because...

Participant One 27:07

I'm with you on that one.

Emily Rickard 27:08
Yeah, it's it's, there's I. Yeah, although I do know, people over the last two or three weeks. I know firsthand, people that have got have caught COVID. And I'm like, what's going on? How have we managed 18 months? And now it's because everyone's got the first job. And they think that it sets in straight away? Yeah, like going out and not being so careful. And coming back with ....

Participant One 27:37
Yeah, no, this is it. I'm still not at a point where I can go out and meet people yet. so I've met one friend, but that was around at her house in her garden. And I know that they're being very careful because they have to shield earlier on as well. So I knew that would be a safe environment to meet up in. But people keep saying Come and join us. We're all going out. I'm like, maybe in a month and a half, I might be ready for that step. But just now now I'm, I'll stick to where I'm at for now. And, and I think I'm just going to take slightly longer to get used to it again. Because, you know, and again, it's not so much that even though it would probably if I caught it won't be out for several weeks. It's more the idea that I could inadvertently pass it on to somebody. And less so now obviously, the vaccine seems to be very good at not stopping people being hospitalised and dying and so on. So it's less than because at first I was really worried about older people. But now I'm more worried about younger people who if they get it and end up with long COVID could end up with similar symptoms to the ones I have on a regular basis with the fibromyalgia and I would not wish this on anyone. So I can't feel even vaguely responsible for inflicting that on somebody else. So I'd rather just wait until it's past. Thank you very much. And I'll carry on later. You know, it's not that much time to wait in the long scheme of things and yeah.

Emily Rickard 29:04
Yeah, exactly. That's definitely. Yeah. But I guess just one if there are any points either in the knitting or anything that we've not covered that that that you want to pick up on, or I can share it again. Sorry. Just real quick.

Participant One 29:33
That's all right. I think I mean, sometimes the way the stitches I was picking the way I was knitting had a lot to do with my mental state of mind. So the days when there's lots of holes and it's like a random netting, were days where again, I wasn't really thinking I couldn't really think very well or felt very Worried or anxious? So I think that I think they may correlate I don't know if they do or not. But the one that I found interesting was the big sort of reddy purpley. One on the sort of top left corner. Yeah. Yeah, that one because mostly I was feeling okay. But there were a couple of things when I got thinking about them that I ended up with big holes for those things. And it was more kind of as I was thinking about how I was actually, mostly I was okay, but there were just some things that weren't quite right. And they came out as holes in

my knitting. So, yeah. Yeah, and sometimes I've only done a tiny bit of knitting. So you can see there's only the little tiny bit below that one that we're just talking about there. And it was just that I just didn't have it in me to do more than that. Yeah. Yeah.

Emily Rickard 31:17
Which makes sense. I love the marling ones, because it changes the tone so much, doesn't it? Like the the white and the mohair and the mohair with the neon makes it so much calmer?

Participant One 31:31
No, that was it. And I think that was a day that one that you've got your cursor over it. I mean, it was I was in quite a lot of pain. But there was something else going on as well. That was kind of having an effect on that. I can't remember what that thing was, or. And it will have been the same for the one at the bottom left, where there was something else going on, but I was very foggy headed, but somehow that whatever else was going on was kind of altering that a bit. Yeah. Thanks.

Emily Rickard 32:21
I think so. I thought that's ace, thank you. I think I said about the workshops. Yes. postage, have you got like paypal or something? But I can send the postage back to you on? Or?

Participant One 32:39
Yes. Although I never quite know how to get the money out of my paypal. Bank.

Emily Rickard 32:45
Yeah. Bank details.

Participant One 32:46
Would that be okay?

Emily Rickard 32:47
Yeah.

Participant One 32:48
Do you need it for each stage? Or can I just send it to you all at the end and just make one transfer at the end when I'm done?

Emily Rickard 32:55
Yeah. Okay.

Participant One 32:56
Because, yeah, otherwise, just if I suddenly see random tiny bits of cash going in, it gets a bit confusing.

Emily Rickard 33:02

Yeah, that's no worries. I can definitely, definitely do that. So ace. Yeah, I think that's basically everything. Thank you.

Participant One 33:18

No, I mean, overall, I have really enjoyed it. And I am really enjoying it. And I'm sort of excited again now to get the next slot. So you know, the novelty will be back again, when we when we start again. So it's been really interesting and thinking about it. And I don't know whether we're supposed to been part of an online knitting group and therefore they they always do or how's your week been? And but they call it your week in wool. And people talk about their knitting, but they use that as a springboard for coming off and talking about other stuff. And so they've all been really fascinated by this idea that on this day, this is what this was like. And on that day, I've done this bit of knitting, and they've they've, they've loved just hearing about it. And they found it fascinating. And the other thing I was going to mention to you that I'd forgotten until right now, and I can't remember the name of the lady, but I'm part of a thing called the footsteps festival online.

Emily Rickard 34:12

Okay,

Participant One 34:13

and it's a festival of things that have been set up by and for people in chronic pain. But one of the people doing a talk or has done a talk is a lady who looks at the way knitting relates to how you feel.

Emily Rickard 34:27

Okay

Participant One 34:27

and there's a talk of about she's done a talk online and she was doing stuff to do with it sort of by post in the 70s I think or the 80s. So way, way back before it was a big thing, and it made me think perhaps you'd be interested in looking up or finding out about it so I can have another look and I'll email you know, yeah, yeah, but but ya know, if I say it out loud, then I've got a fighting chance of remembering to do it.

Emily Rickard 34:57

That would be that would be really good. Yeah.

Participant One 35:00

But yeah, the way that I've not actually listened to the talk yet, but the way people were describing it made me think of this project a bit as well, because it was to do with knitting. And she would say that she would tell people that she knows people in

knitting and the crafting, they will, you know, they the mood improves, they get, they do get better, we've got, you know, she would say, well, but was doing it long before it was a kind of thing. So

Emily Rickard 35:26
yeah, that would be really interesting to see cuz I haven't heard of that before. So. Great. Well, thank you very much. I hope that the jab the second jab does go well. And or not as bad as the first one, which I think I know, while my mum was fine every every time but my nan really suffered with the first one. But the second one, no problems. So fingers crossed,

Participant One 36:00
That does seem to be the case that people don't tend to suffer as badly with both of them. So I'm hoping that even if it just wiped me out won't be for quite as long or you know, so then I'll still keep things relatively clear for the week or so afterwards. But when is it that we start knitting again? I know I've got it written down somewhere at

Emily Rickard 36:16
the beginning of August. Yeah. I guess we've got the two so the one on the week of the six and then one in the 20 something I can't really remember the day of the week of the second workshop. That's when I'll be getting everything ready to send so then whenever it arrives, you can feel free to wait until I think it's like let me see what why wait until the first Monday or whatever in August or start as soon as it comes. Whichever you whichever you fancy basically. Yeah, that's ace. And yes, maybe see you then or for you in the last one. Yeah. Yeah. Cool. Okay. Thank you, sir. Thank you.

Participant One 37:08
Thank you.

H. Coding Examples

Below is the initial codebook exported from NVivo. The highlighted codes are ones that initially piqued my interest in order to develop the themes discussed in Chapter 6.

Name	Files	References
'Safe' stitches	1	2
3D surface knitting	4	5
Ability to explore the fundamentals of knitting every day	1	2
Acknowledging comfort-discomfort in knitting and mood	6	9
Adapt free knitting into a final product	2	2
Adapt free knitting techniques to other fibre crafts	3	5
Aesthetically pleasing	4	6
Aided thoughts on being more creative in external knitting projects	6	6
Aids reflection on choices in relation to feelings	9	74
Allows for play with the 3D structure of knitting	6	9
Always knitting external from project	3	4
Ambitions to be creative in knit but then back to basics	3	4
Amount of time spent knitting varied	4	5
Anxiety at getting wrong because there are no rules	5	7
articulate expression	2	5
As time went on became more adventurous	6	7
Aware that feelings change throughout day and hard to know when to capture	2	3
Basic stitches - when not up to much	22	56
Basic stitches are ok if that is what feel like doing	9	12

Name	Files	References
Be mindful when to take on a DKJ as it is quite consuming	2	4
Became more conscious of self through knitting time	2	4
Became more experimental with stitches from phase to phase	2	2
Become playful during cast-off if not playful throughout knitting piece	1	1
Benefits through making conscious decisions	1	1
Braver with choices as Phases went on	6	6
Bringing elements of other knitting in to DKJ	3	4
Building on previous days to create something	9	14
Can knit anywhere but writing requires focus and quiet	1	1
Can remember distinct events from knitting	1	3
Can see feelings looking back at the knitting	6	9
Cannot connect self back to feelings when knitting now time has passed	1	1
Cannot remember why chose specific yarns or stitches	2	2
Capture essence of day in knitting unlike with words	1	2
Carry techniques forward from previous phases	4	5
Certain items only known to the knitter - there choice whether to divulge meaning	2	3
Challenge is good	1	1
Change approach to DKJ from phase to phase	2	2
Change approach to knitting	6	10
Change in each DKJ reflects life circumatances	7	18
Change needle size depending on yarn	1	1
Changed relationship with knitting	2	2
Changing attitudes to specific knit stitches	1	1
Chose to knit basic stitches	8	11
Chose to marl colours instead of colourwork knit	1	1

Name	Files	References
Coded to knitter	1	1
Colour and its connotations	5	10
Colour and stitch choice depends on mood and feelings	8	59
Colour and texture of yarns do not compliment each other	1	1
Colour and yarn SING or dominate	7	12
Colour as important as yarn	13	28
Colour choice relate more to feelings	14	34
Colour is stimulating	6	11
Colour stimulating but not relating to feelings	2	2
Colour to counteract the day	4	5
Colour, stitches, tension all different indicators to how feeling at time of knitting	14	142
Colours in yarn palette are not necessarily compatible	3	4
Comfort in order	2	3
Complex relationship with knitting	1	1
Complicated stiches have set rows to complete - not as free	2	3
Connect elements of DKJ together	7	10
Conscious and unconscious choices	11	47
Connecting knitting and writing shows reflection in choices	5	5
Conscious choices are more memorable	16	41
Constant newness	1	3
Constantly changing the context of bits before	1	1
Continuous decisions and choices have to be made	1	1
Correlation between knitting and DWKS	1	1
Could focus on DKJ when external 'life' was hard	2	2
Could use same stitches day-to-day but they could mean something very different	1	2

Name	Files	References
Create an online version	1	1
Create shapes in knitting	2	2
Create something within DKJ that can relate back to	3	4
Creating connections with other fibre crafts and their mindset	5	5
Daily knitting in response to emotions	1	1
Days flowed into one another when didn't cast off from one day to next	7	10
Definitely remember the feelings of the day	3	5
Definitive choice about what to knit	1	2
Describing how it was knitted	11	32
Developing stitch formations	1	1
Did not bore me like normal knit projects	1	1
Did not cast off everyday as takes so long	8	11
Did not like certain aspects of finished DKJ	5	7
Difference between reflecting day in knitting and knitting what feel like	3	3
Difficult as don't know what the final result will be	3	5
Distinct from usual knitting projects	1	3
DKJ 3D	6	9
DKJ aided reflection on self and days	12	21
DKJ aided resilience in dealing with emotions	1	1
DKJ allows for experimentation with yarn, stitch and colour choice	19	48
DKJ allows knitter to make choices about their knitting everyday	2	10
DKJ allows self to let loose	3	9
DKJ anchored wellbeing	6	11
DKJ as source to learn new knitting techniques	1	1
DKJ brings everything to the fore	5	10
DKJ changed partners attitude to knitting	1	1

Name	Files	References
DKJ counterintuitive to sustainability - no final, usable product	2	2
DKJ creates a record of a specific period of time	2	2
DKJ distracted from other projects	4	8
DKJ enjoyable but need time to really alllow to breathe	4	8
DKJ enjoyable process	9	14
DKJ expressive artform	9	18
DKJ felt like a whole when working on it rather than individual days	3	3
DKJ gave chance to pause and register self	6	11
DKJ gave space to reminisce	8	15
DKJ had a mind of its own	1	1
DKJ has helped to think differently about things	2	3
DKJ help design process	9	17
DKJ helped to enhance knitting skills	8	14
DKJ helped to manage how I felt without letting negativity take over	1	1
DKJ helped to order thoughts	1	1
DKJ helps to set a routine	4	6
DKJ is a type of mindmap	3	8
DKJ is energy replenishing	6	11
DKJ liberating	6	14
DKJ organic culmination of days	2	2
DKJ promoted exploration and experimentation	5	9
DKJ promotes play	7	26
DKJ reflection of month	4	14
DKJ space to practice new stitches	1	1
DKJ switches brain off	4	7
Do some kind of craft everyday	6	11

Name	Files	References
Don't always embrace the idea of free knitting	2	4
Drawn to a particular part of DKJ whilst knitting	1	1
Drawn to elements of DKJ that felt like achievement	2	2
Drawn to elements of knitting but cannot remember why they were knit	6	7
Drawn to sections of the knitting but not he memory of knitting it	8	15
DWKS aided self reflection	3	4
DWKS appears more negative than actual feelings	1	1
DWKS did influence what knitting felt compelled to do	1	1
DWKS difficult to fill in coherently	5	8
DWKS filled at different times depending on availability	5	8
DWKS highlighted living with mixed emotions	1	1
DWKS interacts with yarn and materials	4	5
DWKS nice but distracting	5	8
DWKS- Often feel one overwhelming thing	5	8
Easier when more alert and in tune with how feel	1	1
Elements of DKJ feel familiar, take back to when knitting it	2	2
Elements of DKJ were about resolving or remedying what came before	4	6
Embrace journalling through the DKJ	1	1
Emotional connection to colours	7	20
Encouraged me to be more adventurous with knitting	4	4
Enjoy because it is different	9	21
Enjoy becuase of materials	1	1
Enjoy freedom of not following a pattern	8	22
Enjoy playing with new to me stitches	1	1
Enjoy process more as each phase comes	8	13
Enjoyed as different to following a pattern	11	24

Name	Files	References
Enjoyed reflecting through DWKS	3	4
Enjoyed using stitches from workshops	6	14
Enjoyment in continuous knitting	2	2
Enjoyment in marling and creating new colours	8	17
Even if don't like the days knitting, get the chance to work it again the next day	1	1
Every day activity helps to register triggers and understand what is happening around you	1	1
Excited for the next phase	8	14
Experiment with yarn, stitches and colours would never have used before	5	8
Experimenting in a contained way	4	7
Exploration through manipulating stitches	3	3
Express feelings through knitting	6	12
External 'life' factors made it more challenging	6	10
External reasons why can't knit	4	7
False recollection of feelings	1	1
Feel content with explorations	1	1
Feel more able to deal with mistakes or errors in knitting	3	3
Feel the need for written reflection	3	6
Feelings came out in knitting	1	1
Feelings on the day depend on whether comfort knit or exploratory knit	3	3
Feelings towards DKJ change over time	1	1
Feels cringe, awkward to look at	5	11
Fell to certain stitches when felt a certain way	2	2
Felt like I should knit what I know not look it up	1	1
Felt more creative knitting outside	1	1
Felt more free as DKJ does not have predefined output	1	3

Name	Files	References
Felt protective of DKJ	5	12
Felt the need to connect elements of DKJ together	1	4
Felt the need to introduce newness rather than keep repeating self	1	1
Felt unable to knit on other projects	1	1
Filled DWKS in differently each day	1	1
Filling in gaps rather than creating new sections	7	15
Fluctuate between structural extremes - in knitting	1	5
Focus on colour OR stitch not both at same time	1	1
Force self to knit everyday	8	16
Forced to try new stitches but end up back to basics	5	11
Formed a nice routine	4	4
Found it harder as phases went by	1	1
Found writing daunting to begin with	2	2
Free knitting allows knitter to make their own rules	1	2
Free knitting and DKJ have added extra 'spice' into knitting practice	2	2
Free knitting and DKJ have changed way think about knitting	3	3
Free knitting and free writing	1	1
Free knitting enabled self to feel freer to connect with emotions	2	2
Free knitting flows easier than following a pattern	1	1
Free Knitting gave a certain freedom to go off piste	8	16
Free knitting has meant I now knit for myself	1	1
Free knitting skills progressed, became more experimental	6	6
Free knitting, sometimes forget 'how' to knit	1	3
Free to do what want only constrained by length ie. 28 days	1	1
Freedom for experimentation	17	41
freedom to use yarn and see where it goes	6	13

Name	Files	References
Fun with playing with knit stitches and CREATING	8	19
Getting frustrated about wanting to fix something in the knitting	4	8
Gives opportunity to consciously take stock	1	1
Go into own world when knitting	1	1
Go to stitch choice	1	1
Good days = favourite yarns	5	14
good days = more adventurous with stitches	5	12
Good to focus on one day at a time	2	4
Good to have lots of yarns to choose from	5	8
Good to have options to change colour and yarn whenever you want	5	11
Good to practice techniques	5	10
Growing confidence in free knitting	7	11
Growing confidence in knitting ability	8	12
Grown more comfortable with the process as time went on	3	3
Happier to substitute yarns as phases went on	4	4
Hard to motivate self to do DKJ	6	10
Hard to start without a pattern or rules to follow	5	8
Have to confront feelings more with words than knitting	1	1
Helped to gather thoughts and centre wellbeing	1	1
Helps to get feelings out in to the open	1	1
Hindsight smaller sections where just wanted to finish	1	1
How felt determined what was knitted	1	1
How to think about feelings through knitting	6	10
If a mistake is made, it is supposed to be there	7	13
If don't like knitting with yarn, find a way to finish quickly	1	1
If free knitting doesn't look 'right', change it to something else - no pressure	3	4

Name	Files	References
If gets annoying, it can change = satisfying compared to following a pattern	1	1
If relaxed knitting can flow more from fingertips	1	2
Immediately engaged with free knitting	1	2
Imposed own rules on DKJ	7	11
Include other fibre crafts in DKJ	4	6
Initial barrier to push through when knitting	1	1
Initially it is new, not challenging	4	7
Intentionally leaving ends as reflection on time or mood	5	8
Intentionally work with positive and negative space	4	8
Interesting shapes of knitting but basic stitches	6	9
Interpret day through a different medium	1	1
Intuitive rather than deliberate exploration	16	34
It's great to knit everyday	6	10
It's personal but looks boring	5	8
Joining writing and knitting to make connection to feelings	4	5
Just needed to dip into own brain for inspiration	5	7
Keeping a level of reflective journal has aided general mental health	1	1
Knit everywhere now	1	1
Knit first then write as knitting gave time to consider feelings	6	6
Knit more on DKJ as time went on	4	7
Knit to start the day	1	4
Knit what feels comfortable	8	14
Knit what felt like knitting at time	7	11
Knit without fear of going wrong	5	11
Kniting is expressive freedom	2	2
Knitter understand what is written and knitted = personal	1	3

Name	Files	References
Knitting = expressive and more about feeling, words do not have same connection	3	3
Knitting = expressive response to the day	12	59
Knitting allowed space to connect with how feeling	3	4
Knitting and writing complement eachother	3	4
Knitting and writing puts self in control	3	3
Knitting became a way to create space and slowness	3	6
Knitting choices structural not emotional	1	1
Knitting created a space to step away from feelings	1	1
Knitting created space to explore feelings	5	9
Knitting easier to look back at and jog memory to how was feeling	2	2
Knitting everyday began to feel like a chore	9	17
Knitting felt instinctive compared to writing	1	1
Knitting felt less forced as time went on	2	2
Knitting gave a chance to think about feelings but was not necessarily reflected in knit	2	3
Knitting gets feelings out and can then move on	1	1
Knitting gives time to consolidate mind	1	2
Knitting got me through hard times	2	2
Knitting has intrinsic value to life, it is not just about making stuff	1	1
Knitting helped to centre thoughts	1	1
Knitting helps create space to explore feelings and emotions	6	12
Knitting helps to process feelings	5	7
Knitting in morning made the whole process easier	2	4
Knitting induces memories	5	8
Knitting intuitve rather than restricted by feelings	6	7
Knitting invokes memories	6	23

Name	Files	References
Knitting is an aesthetic experience	7	11
Knitting is a form of relaxation	5	8
Knitting is good daily practice alternative to written journalling	5	8
Knitting is in the body, not the mind	5	8
Knitting is intuitive	3	4
Knitting is more open to interpretation	1	2
Knitting is a way of expressing self without being too precise	1	2
Knitting is safe	1	1
Knitting is the catalyst	2	2
Knitting made me more aware of how I was feeling	1	1
Knitting more nuanced than writing	3	3
Knitting more outside of DKJ than before	6	8
Knitting philosophy	1	1
Knitting speed	5	7
Knitting speed or lack of	5	7
Knitting stimulated thoughts	6	9
Knitting things that make one happy in order to brighten the mood	1	1
Knitting to interpret thoughts	1	1
Knitting took a lot of focus which was stabilising	1	1
Knitting triggered by surroundings	1	1
Knitting with the 'ends' of previous days	1	1
Knitting without a pattern = rewarding	1	1
Knitting without a pattern is not challenging	5	8
Lack of structure was challenging	1	1
Lacks funtionality of normal knit projects but that is good	1	1

Name	Files	References
Learn things about self through visual exploration	1	1
Learned a lot about knitting	1	2
Learning through doing - DKJ	8	11
Learning to knit - story	2	2
less challenging from phase to phase	6	7
Let go of what knitting 'should' be and went with the flow of free knitting	1	1
Level of familiarity to DKJ	4	4
Like to be able to get lost in knitting and let it just 'happen'	6	9
Liked the process of writing	2	2
Look at DKJ from all directions before choosing where to go next	3	3
Look back at DKJ it feels very familiar, part of me	2	2
Look forward to each day and how it will change	6	9
Looked forward to DKJ	6	9
Loose track of time whilst knitting	2	2
Low confidence in knitting abilities	7	10
Make a choice about moving forward	1	1
Make sure plenty of options for future days - DKJ	4	6
Makes one think about what it means to have something to do with the hands	1	1
Making connections between yarn and feelings	6	24
Meandering through knitting continuously	8	12
Memories arise on reflection of DKJ	2	2
Memories held in yarns	7	10
Memories in stitch choices	3	4
Mistakes or errors in knitting don't upset me in DKJ like it would in normal knitting	3	3
Mood reflects what to knit and what colour-yarn choice	5	5

Name	Files	References
More aware of knitting as expression now	5	7
More conscious about yarn choice than stitch choice	1	1
More conscious of yarn and colour choice now	1	1
More likely to try different techniques when in good mood	1	1
More personal than a usual knit project	7	10
Motivation expressed through stitch and yarn	9	16
Multi-ply yarns to create physical space in knits	5	9
Need an external impetus to knit everyday	1	3
Need to see progress in knitting and sometimes there is not enough time	5	7
Needed to create space to connect with emotions	1	1
Needle size determined structure	1	2
Never came to it with joy	1	1
Newness every day keeps it interesting	1	1
Nice to have another regular project to turn to	4	4
Nice to have the option of writing if want to	1	1
No intentional correlation beteen DWKS and DKJ	6	8
No pressure to make a certain way, sew ends in etc	1	1
No pressure to write every day	1	1
No yarn substitutes - no thought process behind picking	3	6
Normally if didn't feel like knitting, wouldn't knit but did not have that option here	1	1
Not always intuitive	1	2
Not dwelling on DWKS, just doing it	1	1
Not liking some yarns from palette	7	12
Not very creative in stitch choice	3	4
Nothing planned, just see what happens on the day	3	3

Name	Files	References
Often knit more than 30mins	3	4
On busy days had to change when knit to fit in	4	9
Once start knitting, don't want to stop	1	1
Open mind up to new yarns	1	1
Opens a dialogue with self	1	1
Opportunity for daily reflection	7	11
Organic evolution of free knitting	1	1
Other knitters find the project interesting	5	8
Outside factors made it hard to complete	1	2
Outside of comfort zone	3	6
Outside of KnitWell would feel need to unravel DKJ	4	7
Overall DKJ did aid wellbeing	1	1
Overall feeling a specific way but day to day knitting shows how I was willing to engage with that feeling	1	1
P2 DKJ felt more harmonious	2	2
P2 felt like had a rhythm to the DKJ	2	2
P2 felt more in control	2	2
P2 less forced	2	2
P2 more challenging as it was more time consuming	2	2
P2 more conscious about making decisions about yarn and stitches	1	1
P2 more selective about what to knit with	2	2
P3 no time to write every day	1	1
Pandemic responses	18	40
Phase two = more intuitive	4	6
Physical act of knitting made me aware of my body and tension	1	1
Picked yarns without realising feelings towards them	1	1

Name	Files	References
Plain knit stitches allow for freedom to stop and start	3	4
Play and explore stitches in a contained way	3	4
Play with contrasting yarns and stitches	1	1
Pleasure in using colours that really liked	11	20
Positive impact on overall wellbeing	1	1
Positive way of diverting from more negative distractions	6	10
Possible changes to KnitWell in the future	5	8
Process rather than product knitting is positive	1	1
Protect knitting time each day	5	10
Proud of DKJ as it is a reflection of the month	7	13
Really focuses energy on how feeling	1	1
Recommend as gives space to reflect	1	1
Recommend as knitting calms soul	2	2
Reflective process of thinking	4	4
Regularity helps to stop other activities and knit	6	11
Remember thinking that knitting reminded me of something	10	18
Remember bits that enjoyed doing	7	12
Remembered differently to time of knitting	1	1
Sections of DKJ look familiar	1	1
See knitting in a new light	1	2
Self expression is greater through knitting	2	3
Setting a routine is important to make sure it is achievable	6	11
Sewing in ends relates to pride in work	6	11
Short attention span - more difficult to complete after three weeks	6	13
So much going on, it was hard to separate from day-to-day tasks	4	6
Some continuous days form pattern, then BREAK IT	8	14

Name	Files	References
Some days it was easy to write and others it was very hard	1	1
Some days it was easy, some days had to force it	1	1
Some days it was hard to find motivation	1	1
Some days journalling came naturally, others it was hard.	1	1
Some days knitting DKJ felt repetitive, comforting, familiar	2	2
Some days simply didn't have the capacity to write, DWKS was enough	1	1
Some DKJ days better than others	3	5
Some parts were unsuccessful knitting but successful exploration	1	1
Some stitches more reflective of how feeling than others	2	3
Sometimes DKJ was box ticking	1	1
Sometimes knitting did the work, sometimes writing and vice versa	1	1
Sometimes use colour because happy and sometime use colour because want to be happy	1	1
Specific memories recorded in DKJ	15	25
Spent time trying to balance colours	1	1
Stitch choice because of texture	8	14
Stitch choice for specific feeling	15	34
Stitch choice reflection feeling	5	17
Stitches to stimulate brain	1	1
Stop DKJ when don't want to dwell on external factors	1	1
Stopped because end of 28 days not because bored	1	1
Strategy around yarn choice and casting on or off	8	15
Stressing over what to do made it a chore	2	3
Struggle to get in to Free Knitting	6	11
Struggled to knit without purpose - final product	2	2
Struggled to look at when finished as felt painful	1	1

Name	Files	References
Struggled to think how was feeling because more focused on what to knit	1	1
Struggled with DWKS	1	1
Subconscious decisions throughout	3	3
Subliminal knitting	6	11
Success in trying something new out there	7	11
Supported reflection at a difficult time	1	1
Surprise in marling	3	4
Surprised by lack of strong feelings	6	10
Surprise as couldn't remember doing specifics	7	15
Take daily journalling into other elements of life	1	1
Take knitting for a 'walk'	1	1
Takes a while to get into free knitting	6	10
Tend to free knit at the same time everyday	10	15
Tend to knit patterns from my head not follow a paper pattern	6	8
Tend to use same size needle which felt restrictive in hindsight	6	10
Texture of yarn is comforting	11	23
Texture of yarn is important	6	9
The added element of writing made P2 more challenging	3	3
The focus on my feelings has made me react differently to other life experiences	1	2
The idea of not being able to go wrong is freeing	9	15
The process aided mindfulness and managing how one feels	1	1
The process has changed my knitting practice	1	1
The process of knitting communicates more from the body - the process as well as physicality	1	1
There is more behind why I knit than just knitting	1	1
There is no pressure over free knitting	1	1

Name	Files	References
There was a need to unite the DKJ with itself	5	6
This feels different than normal projects because it is personal = uncomfortable	8	9
This has taught me to enjoy the process of knitting rather than the final product	1	1
This is something that didn't have to finish	7	7
This type of knitting is out of knitters hands, no pattern to follow	1	1
Time of knitting effects what stitches are knitted	1	1
Time spent knitting reflects mood and feelings	7	8
Too much freedom can be a challenge	1	1
Trying to control free knitting	5	5
Turn to texture for comfort not words	1	1
Unhappy with yarn choice prevented from using it again	5	7
Unlike knitting, writing was staring at a blank page	1	1
Unlike writing, knitting covers all dimensions	1	1
Use knitting to feel better	1	1
Use of different yarns show it is never just one feeling at one time	1	1
Use same needle size all way through	1	1
Used DKJ to teach self new techniques	1	1
Used structure of knitting to show frustration	2	8
Used the DKJ to 'check-in' and then 'check-out'	1	1
Used yarn for certain moods	6	7
Using knitting tools in different ways	1	1
Using yarns liked to bring change.	5	5
Usual knits have a purpose	3	3
Very tactile	9	11
View DKj as one whole rather than individual days	1	1

Name	Files	References
Visual feedback through knitting is important	5	5
Visual processing through knitting	1	1
Visual rather than language based	1	2
Want to be left alone to focus on DKJ without disruptions from others	1	1
Want to include other fibre crafts	1	1
Was never consciously thinking about linking knitting to DWKS	3	3
Ways to adapt KnitWell	1	1
Went on a journey through the knitting	1	1
What knit depends on type of day and how feeling at the time	1	1
When enjoy the stitches in knitting, do not want to stop	1	2
When feeling positive, more likely to take risks	4	5
When it gets tangled but leave it as expresses feeling	1	1
When looked at knitting, could see my feelings come through	1	1
When more experiemental, spent more time knitting	2	3
Without a pattern, could focus less	5	5
Words caught emotion more than knitting	1	1
Workshops generated a knitting community	7	8
Workshops increased knitting knowledge and skills	2	3
Would feel better if not pressured to knit everyday	6	7
Would free knit again as think it is good for me	6	6
Would free knit again but need to know more stitches	5	5
Would like to be more adventurous	5	5
Would need to set boundaries if free knit again	1	1
Would not free knit as don't like picking up stitches	5	6
Would pick a different yarn for something new	5	5
Would prefer if there was no obligation to do every day	1	1

Name	Files	References
Would recommend free knitting	2	2
Would want to make something useful but then would not be free knitting	6	8
Writing about the knitting made it stick in mind	2	2
Writing added an extra element to DKJ	10	13
Writing added to the process	4	4
Writing as an explanation of knit	1	1
Writing clarified thoughts after knitting	3	3
Writing for researcher benefit rather than own	7	7
Writing guided yarn and stitch choice	1	2
Writing has a start and end, knitting is more free	1	1
Writing helped focus thoughts on how day has been in order to knit	1	1
Writing helped to focus the knitting	1	1
Writing is a good prompt for reflection	2	2
Writing sequence reflects knitting process	8	8
Writing structured the knitting	5	5
Writing takes energy	1	2
Written diary really explores why certain things were knitted	1	1
Wrote first and that informed knitting	1	1
Yarn choice as celebration	5	6
Yarn choice because of what felt nice to knit with	7	10
Yarn choice because pleased with the outcome	6	7
Yarn choice could mean one thing one day but something different another day - nothing set	5	5
Yarn choice denotes stitch choice	1	2
Yarn choice depends on mood	9	15
Yarn choice for specific feelings	12	22

Name	Files	References
Yarn choice indicative of feelings	2	2
Yarn choice indicative of specific feeling	3	3
Yarn choice is important factor	3	3
Yarn choice would determine what to knit	2	2
Yarn choices feel familiar	3	4
Yarn might not be first choice but feels nice in hands	1	1
Yarn substitutes and feelings about why	10	12

Theme 1: Process and Participation – my hands took me somewhere, the activity is generating an emotional state, the experimental, playful nature is engaging, joy of 'free' knitting – *creative experimentation*

Structure of Knitting – Codes:

- 'Safe' stitches

- 3D surface knitting

- Allows for play with the 3D structure of knitting

- Become playful during cast-off if not playful throughout knitting piece

- Chose to knit basic stitches

- Would not free knit as don't like picking up stitches

- Unlike writing, knitting covers all dimensions

- Create shapes in knitting

- Developing stitch formations

- DKJ 3D

- DKJ allows for experimentation with yarn, stitch and colour choice

- Enjoyment in marling and creating new colours

- Experiment with yarn, stitches and colours would never have used before

- Exploration through manipulating stitches

- Fluctuate between structural extremes - in knitting +T3

- Free knitting skills progressed, became more experimental

- Freedom to use yarn and see where it goes

- If free knitting doesn't look 'right', change it to something else - no pressure

- Knitting speed

- Knitting speed or lack of

- Knitting with the 'ends' of previous days

- Surprise in marling

- Make sure plenty of options for future days - DKJ

- Success in trying something new out there

- Organic evolution of free knitting

- Plain knit stitches although for freedom to stop and start

- Play and explore stitches in a contained way

External Influences – Codes:
- Bringing elements of other knitting in to DKJ

- External 'life' factors made it more challenging +T2

- Include other fibre crafts in DKJ

- Want to include other fibre crafts

Free Knitting Experience – Codes:
- Ability to explore the fundamentals of knitting every day

- Anxiety at getting wrong because there are no rules

- Building on previous days to create something

- Can knit anywhere but writing requires focus and quiet

- Carry techniques forward from previous phases

- Change approach to DKJ from phase to phase

- Changing attitudes to specific knit stitches

- Did not bore me like normal knit projects

- Did not cast off everyday as takes so long

- Difficult as don't know what the final result will be

- Distinct from usual knitting projects

- DKJ as source to learn new knitting techniques

- DKJ enjoyable process

- DKJ helped to enhance knitting skills

- DKJ promoted exploration and experimentation

- DKJ promotes play

- DKJ space to practice new stitches

- Don't always embrace the idea of free knitting

- Embrace journalling through the DKJ

- Enjoy because it is different

- Enjoy freedom of not following a pattern

- Enjoy playing with new to me stitches

- Enjoyed as different to following a pattern

- Enjoyed using stitches from workshops

- Enjoyment in continuous knitting

- Excited for the next phase

- Experimenting in a contained way

- Felt like I should knit what I know not look it up

- Force self to knit everyday

- Free knitting allows knitter to make their own rules

- Free knitting flows easier than following a pattern

- Free Knitting gave a certain freedom to go off piste

- Free knitting, sometimes forget 'how' to knit

- Freedom for experimentation

- Getting frustrated about wanting to fix something in the knitting

- Good to practice techniques

- Growing confidence in free knitting

- Hard to motivate self to do DKJ

- Hard to start without a pattern or rules to follow

- If gets annoying, it can change = satisfying compared to following a pattern

- Immediately engaged with free knitting

- Imposed own rules on DKJ

- Initially it is new, not challenging

- Knit without fear of going wrong

- Knitting everyday began to feel like a chore

- Knitting is an aesthetic experience +T2

- Knitting is good daily practice alternative to written journalling

- Knitting without a pattern = rewarding

- Knitting without a pattern is not challenging

- Lack of structure was challenging

- Lacks functionality of normal knit projects but that is good

- Learned a lot about knitting

- Learning through doing - DKJ

- Let go of what knitting 'should' be and went with the flow of free knitting

- Liked the process of writing

- Newness every day keeps it interesting

- No pressure to make a certain way, sew ends in etc

- Normally if didn't feel like knitting, wouldn't knit but did not have that option here +T3

- Outside of KnitWell would feel need to unravel DKJ

- Process rather than product knitting is positive

- Some days it was hard to find motivation

- Some DKJ days better than others

- Some parts were unsuccessful knitting but successful exploration

- Struggle to get in to Free Knitting

- Struggled to think how was feeling because more focused on what to knit

- Takes a while to get into free knitting

- The added element of writing made P2 more challenging

- The idea of not being able to go wrong is freeing

- This is something that didn't have to finish

- This type of knitting is out of knitters hands, no pattern to follow

- Too much freedom can be a challenge

- Trying to control free knitting

- Used DKJ to teach self new techniques

- Usual knits have a purpose

- Without a pattern, could focus less

- Workshops generated a knitting community

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- Would like to be more adventurous

- Would want to make something useful but then would not be free knitting

- Writing added an extra element to DKJ

- Writing added to the process

- Writing as an explanation of knit

Time – Codes:
- As time went on became more adventurous

- Became more experimental with stitches from phase to phase

- Braver with choices as Phases went on

- Enjoy process more as each phase comes

- Formed a nice routine

- Found it harder as phases went by

- Grown more comfortable with the process as time went on

- Happier to substitute yarns as phases went on

- Knit more on DKJ as time went on

- Knit to start the day

- Knitting felt less forced as time went on

- Knitting in morning made the whole process easier

- Less challenging from phase to phase

- Look forward to each day and how it will change

- Looked forward to DKJ

- Need to see progress in knitting and sometimes there is not enough time

- Tend to free knit at the same time everyday

- When more experimental, spent more time knitting

External Knitting Practice – Codes:
- Aided thoughts on being more creative in external knitting projects

- Complex relationship with knitting

- DKJ help design process

- Encouraged me to be more adventurous with knitting

- Felt more free as DKJ does not have predefined output

- Free knitting and DKJ have added extra 'spice' into knitting practice

- Free knitting and DKJ have changed way think about knitting

- Free knitting has meant I now knit for myself

- Growing confidence in knitting ability

- See knitting in a new light

- Feel more able to deal with mistakes or errors in knitting