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The Power of Making

Memory, emotion, subjectivity and materiality are bound together through everyday making (Kettle & McKeating, 2012). The process of making, moreover, perhaps more than the artefacts made, serves as a means of communicating, memorialising, and making self with others in distinctive ways. 'Stuff', as anthropologist Daniel Miller (2010) reminds us, is central to identity formation, not just as metaphor but also in terms of our physical experience of it, both individually and collectively. Freud, meanwhile, argued that needlework can induce daydreams or hypnoid states implicated in the shaping of the self (Breuer & Freud, 1955/2001), and textile historian Lesley Millar (2012) - describing a public 'embroidery performance' by a group of Muslim women refugees - observed how making became a collective 'act of catharsis and repair' as story and stitch combined, both 'holding the memory and bearing witness'.

This paper, which explores the power of intergenerational making as a means of materialising cultural memory, focuses on a mother (diagnosed with mid stage Alzheimer's) and her daughter. It combines arts methodologies of material crafting/making with narrative theory: the notion of oral histories as 'co-constructed', 'situated dialogues' and performative acts, for instance (Portelli 1991), to explore how affective making might materialize memory and subjectivity through a process of collaborative self-reflexive re-making. As such, it considers how applied crafts-practice might be used to work with community co-participants to improve health and wellbeing in a family setting. And how the emergence of 'bloom spaces' (Stewart, 2010) offer opportunities where we can understand ourselves and others differently, with new depth and clarity and calm, despite challenging circumstances.

This work, which is a pilot for a larger study, builds on the outcomes from a number of Arts and Humanities Research Council UK-funded projects that have interrogated creative making as: 1) a means of community co-production; 2) promoting and evidencing wellbeing; and 3) a mode of being through connecting (Co-Producing CARE 2014; Beyond the Toolkit 2014; It's Nice to Make 2011; Hackney 2013; Hackney et al 2016)

A short film by Mah Rana, made specifically for this paper, will be shown as part of the presentation. Preview of film is available via this link: <https://vimeo.com/180566371>

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<https://cocreatingcare.wordpress.com/the-project>

<http://www.itsnicetomake.com>