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Food as a Creative Tool in Elderly Work

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2017 Laurea



Laurea University of Applied Sciences

Food as a Creative Tool in Elderly Work

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Degree Programme in Social Services
Bachelor's Thesis
May, 2017

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Year	2017	Pages	50
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The purpose of the study is to give an overview of the sociological significance of food and its relation to social work, present the developing and implementing process of the workshop for the elderly, and assess its impact as a creative method. Sociology of food, food communication, and food design were addressed in order to make sense of food as an eligible tool in a social work context.

The project develops 'Food as a Creative Tool' model in elderly work. In this model, food is used as a medium of bringing narratives and positive reminiscences from individuals. 'Flavours of Life' workshop, a set of a workshop with three separate sessions, was developed, implemented, and assessed. The workshop was run in Loppukiri senior community in January and February 2017. Information about the workshop was announced to Loppukiri's English speaking club so the members could participate on a voluntary base. Originally, the workshop was planned for a group of five to seven people, but each session drew ten, ten, and seven participants.

The sessions were designed and developed with a purpose of collecting stories and delivering positive experiences to the participants. The topic of the first session was food experience. The group of people were gathered and shared their special memories of food and food experiences. On the second session, participants talked about the meaning of a happy life and had a playful time expressing 'a happy life' on their plates, using food ingredients. Participants got to share their recipes and tips during the last session. Although food and food experiences were seen to be the main subject, discussion about one's self-image, values, people around them, childhood memories, the idea of happiness, and life experiences flowed into the conversation naturally.

A theoretical framework was based on empowerment theory, preventive social work, creative methods, and activity theory. The project was evaluated in the end with three divisions. The tool; 'food as a creative tool' model, the workshop; 'flavours of life' workshop, and self-growth were assessed. Observation, reflection and feedback from the group were used as assessment tools.

The result of the project suggests that food as a tool have considerable merit in social work practice as it draws interests from the participants, promotes interaction and reflection, generates new topics, works as an inclusive medium, brings out positive memories, and encourages participants to be creative.

Keywords: Creative Methods, Food as a Tool, Elderly Work

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1 Introduction

There are different backgrounds why I became interested in looking at food as a creative tool in social work practice. Since I came from a culture that puts significant meanings to food, social aspects of food particularly, 'eating food' meant a lot more than just 'food eating' in my life. In Korea, people typically ask "did you eat your meal?" when greeting each other instead of a just simple "hi" and the term "let's eat together next time" is widely used when keeping or making a social contact. Also, 'eating together' or 'togetherness when eating food' is strongly emphasised in the culture and, often, foreigners visiting or living in Korea find it peculiar. I remember that eating at least one meal a day altogether has been the norm and an important virtue in my family when I was growing up.

As I moved to Finland in 2011, I have been experiencing different cultures and also, very importantly, different foods and food cultures. I believe my range of food has been significantly expanded in proportion to the expansion of my social contacts. It is, as I assume, because I got to experience and explore things that were not familiar to me by meeting people from different cultures and backgrounds as a girl coming from a relatively collective and homogeneous society. And I may say in confidence, it has been the beauty of living in a new country, even if there are no single family members, relatives, old friends or acquaintances who would ask me if I had my meal every day.

I, however, have been noticing and experiencing the social aspects of food in a different way here and it has been a great tool in socialising and communicating with various people, as well as with myself. By saying that, it means that food is not a tool to only connect myself to other people around me but also it has been a good tool to affect and promote my personal well-being. As I mentioned earlier, the meaning of food has been given in social contexts and eating together has always been an important part of my life, and it made me often put aside the importance or joy of eating food when I'm alone and forget that it is also important to treat myself.

As a student studying social services, I learned that people with migrant backgrounds might experience the feelings of loneliness, isolation, alienation, and low self-confidence which would affect their both mental and physical health in the process of settlement and integration. It was important to me in a sense that it's not only about knowing about the future clients that I would possibly work with but it would apply to me directly, and it could be a story of mine. So I started to think myself as a client in practice and to give more attention to my well-being and growth. Since I know food is an important part of my life and something I enjoy, I thought it could be an excellent tool and began to explore and practice different foods

by myself aiming to promote my well-being and prevent possible risk factors, as well as to gain cooking skills which are essential when living alone.

Of course, people do cook and eat because a food is one of the necessities of life, but I would like to address that there could be more meanings in it and it could bring joy to people when they become conscious and notice it as small achievements and treats in life. Then, cooking and eating can be purely therapeutic. So my idea of using food as a creative tool in social work arose with this simple question on my mind; *Isn't it amazing if something so small and natural in everyday life can be therapeutic and brings a joy?*

2 Working Life Partner

Loppukiri Senior Community

In the Autumn of 2015, I got to visit Loppukiri and hear about the concept of the community and how it has been working out for the residents there. Loppukiri is a cohousing community located in Arabiaranta for the mid-aged and senior citizens. It was founded by Active Seniors Association to develop an alternative life model for the people in their later lives. Through a long planning stage, the communal house was planned, designed, and managed by the residents and for the residents. The people living there have their personal flats and live styles, but there are many club activities and happenings in the joint areas. The building has seven stories with 58 flats and common areas include a dining area, roof terrace, sauna, exercise room, etc. There are different sizes in apartments which vary from 36 to 80 square meters. At least one person in the flat requires being at the minimum age of 48 years. There are no care workers, and it is the residents who keep their independence and decision power within the community. The seniors living in Loppukiri are divided into six groups, and they take a turn in taking care of the common tasks such as dinner preparation on weekdays, cleaning, and maintenance of the common areas. I got an impression that it is a place that promotes active ageing with a good balance of a community life and a personal privacy at home. The residents I met were very satisfied with their lives in Loppukiri and, at the same time, proud of the community that they have built and contributed. I also found that they are very open and welcoming for new projects, activities and events so figured it would be a good place to carry my thesis project with.

Loppukiri 'Young at Heart' Group

Loppukiri's English conversation club 'Young at Heart' is run by Bitte Askelund who is the English teacher of the group and also a resident in Loppukiri. Ms. Askelund has been teaching languages to seniors in Porvoo kansalaisopisto for more than ten years. When she moved to Loppukiri two years ago, her new neighbours heard that she still gives English conversation lessons in Porvoo and asked if

she could give pro bono sessions in Loppukiri as well. Her sessions of 1 1/2 hours contain three parts: first a short discussion in pairs of something topical. This is to give everybody a chance to talk as much as possible at the start. After the separate conversations, she pulls the whole group together to share briefly what has been discussed. Each week she prepares one A4 sheet of text for next time; various themes, mostly topical, sometimes funny, sometimes serious. Next time the group deals with expressions and challenging words, discussing what we have learned from that text, and get a new one. The last part of each lesson is a song, as a kind of "light dessert" when their minds are getting a bit tired, having used a foreign language for over an hour. Ms. Askelund has the lyrics of the songs written down, and always chooses beautiful songs and singers others may not have heard before, with subjects that contain interesting expressions. All this is to enlarge their vocabulary and enjoyment.

Ms. Askelund says it has been a very rewarding activity for herself. The dictionary of idioms describes the term 'young at heart' as someone who is old in years, but still thinks in a young and lively way. She recalls that this came into her mind while she was having a lesson in Porvoo.

"I once made a list of all the idioms that contain the word heart and found there are at least 30 of them. One of my students commented that the idiom Young at Heart applies to the persons in our group. Immediately when he said those words, I knew that I had found the name for my conversation groups from then on! Firstly, because I love idioms and like to share as many as possible of them with my students, and secondly because it sums up how I want my students to feel about themselves."

In December 2016 I was introduced to the group and got to present my ideas and plans for the workshop. We had one small gathering while enjoying our Christmas dinner prepared by residents in Loppukiri. I remember the members of the group were very open-minded and welcoming to new projects and activities. It didn't take long to realise that 'Young at Heart' would be the perfect target group for my project. I figured that language would be the biggest barrier when the participants are not comfortable in expressing themselves in English.

Communication plays a significant role in my project since the workshop is designed and developed to draw the narratives and stories of persons through a medium which is, in this case, food. I wanted to make sure the participants are willing to communicate in English and not feel uncomfortable. So we decided that I will hold my workshop in January and February 2017.

3 Background of the Project

3.1 Food as a Tool

As I have decided to develop a series of workshops using food as a tool, I carried out a background research and found relevance in the sociology of food, food communication, and food design. There has been number of studies that looked into food beyond its nutritional function and found meanings from different aspects. They became important sources for developing my project and framing the workshops. In this respect, I cannot agree more with Corby (2006) who argued that research carried out by non-social work academics does not make it of less value to social work practitioners. She addresses that much of the research stemming from other studies has considerable relevance for social work practice. I believe the idea perfectly applies to food studies as they bring multiple scientific, social scientific, humanistic and other methods into play, crossing all disciplines. (Cooks, 2012).

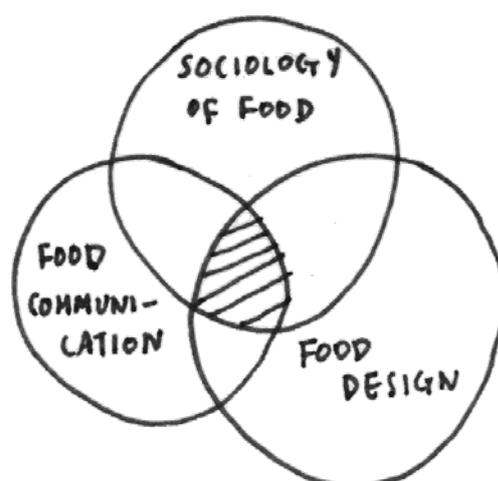


Figure 7. Locating 'food in social work practice'

When interacting with the group, I expect 'food as a medium' will play a key role in bringing the narratives and stories from the participants. In studying lives and lived experiences, stories and narratives come valuable. As Punch (1998) argues, '*narratives can give a uniquely rich and subtle understanding of life situations, and the story is often a feasible way of collecting data just because it is such a common device in everyday interaction. People use metaphors constantly as a way of making sense of experience, and of expressing and conveying its meaning*' (Punch, 1998). Thus, recognising the significance behind the metaphors is also an important part of the process.

Through this project, I will be emphasising the social aspect of food and food experience (sociology of food), using food as a medium of bringing narratives (food communication), in a creative way (food design). So I would like to locate the 'social work using food' model between these three studies.

3.1.1 Studies on Food

Sociology of Food

Sassatelli argues that sociologists have been already emphasising the role of food, cuisine, and eating in forming individual's social identity. Food is a part of culture that influences a person's life and lifestyle. For example, a person, cultural object, and a social world interact and connect each other in a multidirectional way. Griswold displays these elements in a diamond shape. In order to understand one element, attention needs to be given to other elements that interplay with it. In this case, food can be projected as a cultural object, and it can be explained that it interrelates with a person and the social world.

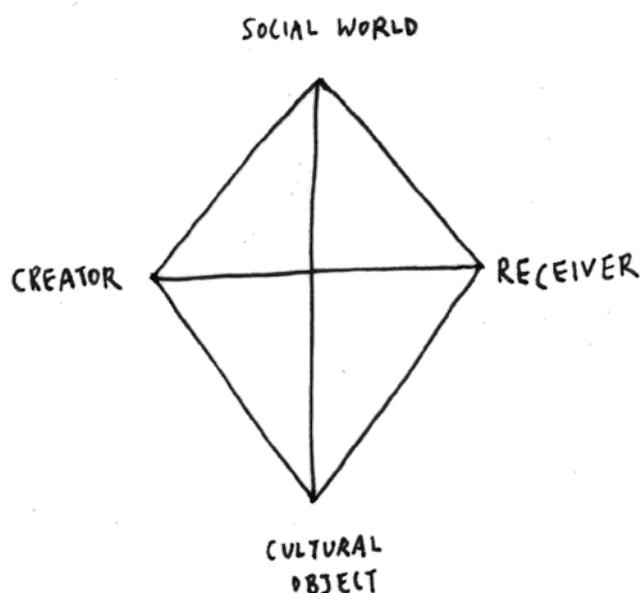


Figure 6. Cultural Diamond
(Griswold, 2008)

Food Communication

Communication can be defined in various ways. Some say it is a process of creating and achieving shared meaning, and it is influenced by numerous variables including people engaged with, context, motivations and purposes. Others argue that there is something more than just creating external interaction. It is an activity that delivers information and exchange of thoughts through speech, signals, writing, or visuals. It is subject to be influenced by a culture and the society (Stajcic, 2013). Barthes (2008) puts the function and role of food into context of communication. He stresses the function of food as a sign, a sign that people communicate with things and others. Stajcic points out the unique character of food communication, and how people perceive it.

'An important aspect of food communication is its everydayness, its ubiquity in ordinary life. Our taking food and our relationships to it for granted may have contributed to the ignorance of food as an object of study (Stajcic, 2013).'

Food Design

Although food design is more of an art field rather than social work, I have been researching and following different activities and activists in this area with a keen interest. I have attended several food design workshops hoping that it would inspire me in a variety of ways. The reason I found food design close to my topic and interest is that many of food design workshops had factors that are related to what I'm planning to develop. Martí Guixé, a Spanish designer and one of the pioneers in food design, defines food design as 'the design of food which is thought, perceived, contextualised, ritualised, implemented and consumed as an object.' (Guixé, n.d.) Francesca Zampollo who is the founder of the International Food Design Society categorises food design to sustainable food design, food system design and critical food design. In critical food design, there are five sub-disciplines; design for food, food product design, design with food, food space design, eating design, food service design. (Zampollo, 2016) Eating design is the topic I am more interested because it is a subject that tackles how 'people' interact with food and the eating atmosphere.

Marije Vogelzang is an Amsterdam-based designer which identifies herself as an eating designer rather than food designer. She once said, "food is perfectly designed by nature. What is more interesting is the act of eating. Design is a tool. It's more about design thinking than actually making a shape of something." (Vogelzang, 2010) I was intrigued by her work through TEDxMunich video and got to find different projects she did with people as a sort of a 'people work.' I will introduce some of her works that I found inspiring for my project later. I always wanted the workshop to be intriguing and visually attracting, so food design gave me significant amount of inspirations.

What I want to stress here is that food can be a useful and creative tool in social work practice as well when it is planned and used adequately and sophisticatedly. So through this project, I aimed to learn and develop how to use it properly in the context of social work.

3.1.2 Workshops

I'd like to introduce some of the workshops and projects I found interesting and also related to the topic. I have also held workshops using food for children in Korean Saturday School. All of the workshops have used food as a medium to achieve certain objectives. They are perfect examples that demonstrate the idea of 'food beyond the plate' and could be linked to social work practice.

Food Memory Workshop

The workshop was designed by Marije Vogelzang, an eating designer based in Amsterdam, and done with senior people. The aim of the workshop was to hear their stories and memories associated with food. For the workshop, small portions of typical old Dutch food were served, and participants' stories were collected. Their thoughts about modern food culture were also discussed during the session. After sharing the stories, participants made edible sculptures with their stories. (Vogelzang, n.d.) With the description of the workshop, I got curious what kind of stories were shared. By the fact that the dishes were typical food, I am sure the participants had lots of memories and stories coming out. I believe there are foods that have the representation of certain periods of time in every culture. I got to be curious about that kind of food and stories around those foods as well.



*Image 1. Food Memory Workshop by Marije Vogelzang
(Vogelzang, n.d.)*

Veggie Bling Bling

The idea of this workshop was generated by Marije Vogelzang as she had a concern, not as a designer but as a mother of a young girl. Vogelzang was worried when her 2.5-year-old daughter didn't like to eat vegetables and found a way to deal with the problem as an eating designer. She once read in the article that children have to taste something seven times before they start adapting the flavour in their palette. So she got an idea and invited all the children

from her daughter's daycare. She said that they are going to make jewellery and bling blings together. The key idea is that the bling blings were made out of different vegetables and they had to use their teeth to make shapes. The children get to chew and nibble lots of vegetables and try its tastes while decorating themselves. (Vogelzang, n.d) I think it is a perfect activity for children since it can change their experiences with vegetable from negative to a positive response. Also, children get to use various senses and develop their motor skills. Here, it shows that food has another benefit as a tool. It is a safe material to use with children because they are encouraged to bring things to their mouth, which they love to do naturally, in this workshop. They are welcome to explore and discover everything during the session because all the ingredients are edible.



*Image 2. Veggie Bling Bling by Marije Vogelzang
(Vogelzang, n.d.)*

Tea Ceremony in a Primary School

In April 2017, a primary school in Kallio, Helsinki had a special class where the children were gathered to learn peace and thoughtfulness through an act of cultural art, tea ceremony. (Aalto, 2017) The tea ceremony is an activity that is widely practiced in Asia and it conveys more meaning than just drinking tea. It is also about practicing calmness and respect to others. According to Helsingin Sanomat, children in different age group participated Oriental tea

ceremony and they were told about etiquettes, tips, and stages of the ceremony. The participants were paired up and served each other a cup of tea. Since the dishes are fragile and the water is hot, children had to be conscious of what they are doing and concentrate on each other. When I saw the video in this article, I was very surprised and amazed how it can work for children. The kids in the video seemed focused, calm and respectful. I believe it also helps children to understand discipline and practice their sense of control. There are many virtues and values children get to learn as they grow up, and this is a good example of being creative with a lesson.



Image 3. Oriental tea ceremony with children
(Aalto, 2017)

Flavour Exploration Workshop

In Autumn 2016, I had a workshop with 8-11-year-old children in Korean Saturday school. There were 10 participants, and we started to explore different scents and tastes of vegetables and herbs. I designed this workshop to encourage children to use their multiple senses. They observed the shapes and colours of vegetables and herbs. They sniffed to describe the scents. They were also tasting and touching the ingredients. The children got to explore some of herbs and spices they were not so used to. After the flavour exploration, the participants made creatures using the ingredients we had and shared the stories behind their veggie-creatures. In this way, the children got to express their creativity after stimulating their senses and getting inspired from it. They were also allowed to use knives to make the shapes they want under the guidance of teachers.



Image 4. (left) Herbs and spices for exploration

Image 5. (right) Veggie creatures

Food Art Workshop

With nine children in Korean Saturday school, my friend June and I ran two workshops using food as a tool. Our goal was to let children create words using food and make recipe notes to share with their close friend. The first session was about expressing words with food ingredients. Since the school is for Koreans living in Finland, the primary objective in learning is about Korean language and culture. We decided to let children write their friend's name in Korean using food ingredients as a tool. Most of the participants chose their Finnish friends and had fun writing their friends' names with Korean alphabet, decorating them with different colours and materials. On the second session, we discussed food, mainly Korean food. Children talked about their favourite food and what are their comfort foods. Then they chose one food they want to introduce to their friends. They scraped images from a cookbook and found ingredients and directions on the internet or a cookbook. We made the recipe notes foldable and printed the images of names that children made on the first session. The image was used for decorating the cover. Participants were excited to give a recipe note to their friends as a present. They also said they are looking forward to finding out how their friends will find their favourite Korean food and the taste of it. Through these workshops, we expect that a cultural exchange experience would happen while the children introduce the food and Hangeul, the Korean alphabet, to their friends.



Image 5. (left) 'Emilia' written in Korean
Image 6. (right) Recipe note made during the workshop

Under the Sea Workshop

This workshop was planned and implemented to bring the subject of 'sea lives' to children in Korean Saturday school. In order to spark the participants' creativity and encourage them to use multiple senses, several dried seafood products (anchovies, shrimp, baby octopus, and seaweed) were brought and used to express the sea lives on the paper. The smell of dried seafood stimulated children's memories about sea and made the workshop more interesting and interacting for them. As a background music, songs related to sea were played to help them get into the mood. The participants enjoyed the experience and a lot of stories were brought up during the session.



Image 7 & 8. Expressing sea lives using dried seafood

3.2 Target Group

When using food as a tool, there is no limitation on applicable client groups but I decided the elderly as a target group in this particular project. In my third year in school, I had a project that involved the elderly and youth, and got to visit different service centers for the elderly. I met the senior people there and interviewed them about their experiences, perceptions, and values in life. This experience worked as a positive interact and gave me so much help in understanding the elderly. I learned a lot about their issues, thoughts, and also the way to interact with them. I continued visiting the service center and participated different activities together with them as a voluntary worker. Some of the elderly people I met there often talked about the lack of 'happenings' or 'excitements' in life and lack of 'variety' in daily routine. So I had a personal interest in working with the senior citizens with creative methods and kept thinking it would be nice to organise some out-of-the-routine events for them.

Linking my idea of using food as a creative tool and working with the elderly happened when I was watching a film called Honokaa Boy which is a Japanese film by Atsushi Sanada. The film is about a friendship of a young man who just moved to Honokaa town in Hawaii and an old lady who likes to cook and loves to play pranks on people. It is one of my favourite films so I have been watching it many times until one day I could truly see how much the old lady enjoyed life as she added a new routine in her daily lives; cooking for her young friend and seeing him enjoying her food. The food was the start of their friendship, her way of showing love, means of communication, as well as a representation of her. I began to think about different things people gain as we age; wisdom, skills, experiences, etc. Perhaps, most importantly in this context, cooking experiences and memories attached to foods can be described as something that piles up as time goes by. So the combination of the elderly and food seemed like there is a lot to tell and discover.

Ageing and Later Life

The foundation of elderly work focuses on the promotion of mental and physical health and well-being, and the prevention of risk factors such as depression, isolation, anxiety, falls, and physical illness. If we look at figure 1, it is noticeable that one's functional capacity declines after it peaks in adulthood and the gap in a range of function in individuals gets the biggest in older age. The conditions and capacities in older age could vary and improve with sufficient care and support. Also, the functional capacity in later life falls into the biggest disability threshold. Ensuring the quality of life gets more important than any other life periods.

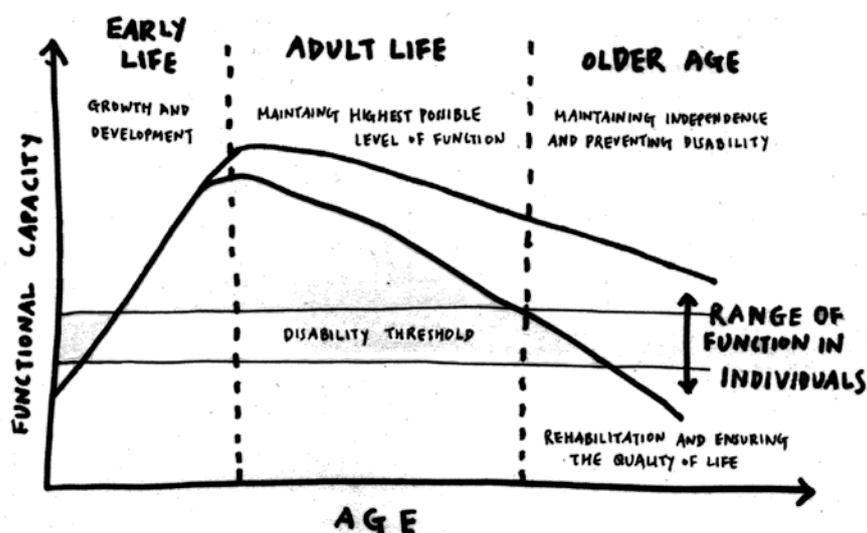


Figure 1. Maintaining functional capacity over the life course
(WHO, 2002)

According to Davies & Leonard, one interesting factor when having a conversation with older individuals is that the discussion often implies the uncertainty of their everyday lives. They get to wonder what would happen to them and how this would affect their body and sense of continuity. Uncertainty especially plays a daily role in times of crisis or illness, disability or decline. (Davies & Leonard, 2004) When engaging with the older adults, I have to pay more attention to myself not to display any negative stereotypical views of ageing and ageing person. According to Hall and Scragg (2012), negative stereotypes unsurprisingly can interfere with peoples' enjoyment and flourishing in their later life. They can also have a detrimental impact on people's health and well-being as they age. It is imperative that social workers are mindful of the impact of these stereotypes on individuals' self-value, worth and health. It requires social work practitioners to be 'sensitive' in this sense, again. We cannot know every sensitive aspects of the group or the individuals but it is necessary to understand that everyone has their own sensitive parts and be aware of the situations that might arouse possible sensitive issues or emotions.

However, it is also crucial to acknowledge old people's identities are not bounded to the moment of the past in a static way. Aging people formulate and reformulate the symbols of their past in personal and cultural level, and this process creates a coherent and meaningful sense of oneself. The process of identity reformation in late life is on-going and continuous. (Kaufman, 1986)

To better understand ageing and later life, I have read books but also gone to an exhibition called Dialogue with Time - The Art of Aging which was held in Heureka, Vantaa. The exhibition allows the audience to experience the world of older people in a creative and playful way. There are various interactions with the experts who are at least 70 years old. Audiences also get to experience different kinds of difficulties which are natural to come along with ageing; difficulties in hearing, trembling, and declines of vision and sense of touch. I feel like I've learned a lot about old age and the process of ageing through this experience. I got to feel what it is like to be an older individual through different installations and plays. I'm such person who prefers to learn through senses than texts, so I think it worked as a good way of understanding the group.

4 Theoretical Framework

4.1 Person-in-Environment Approach

Ochs & Schieffelin (1983) argue that we, as human beings, organise and make sense of ourselves and attempt to become competent members of society within an unfolding series of face-to-face, here-and-now interactions. *The person-in-environment perspective in social work is a practice-guiding principle that highlights the importance of understanding an individual and individual behavior in light of the environmental contexts in which that person lives and acts* (Kondrat, 2008).

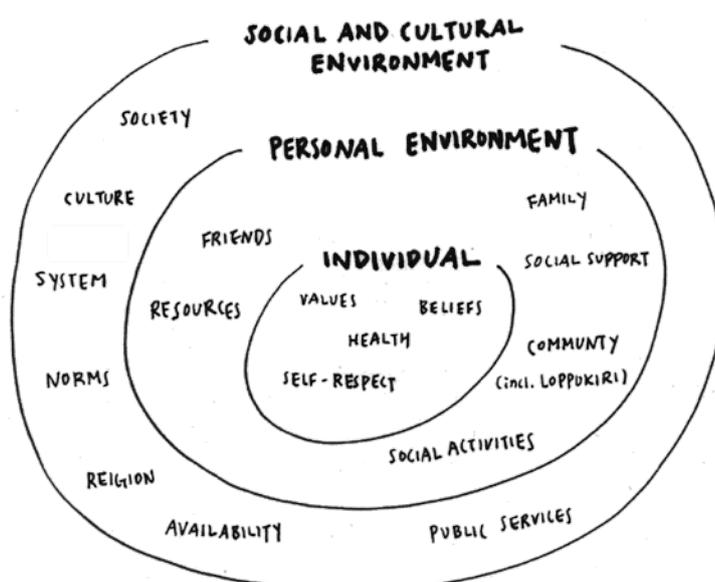


Figure 5. Mapping variables of the elderly

With the person-in-environment approach, I have made a map of variables that would affect the older adults in general. Identifying variables of a person in relation to three different level; individual, personal environment, and social and cultural environment level, would help me gain a holistic understanding of the older persons. Also, these variables will be taken into account when identifying their conditions, resources, and needs. Through the activities and questions in the workshops, participants will be able to identify what variables they have and recognise their resources.

Questions behind the workshop could be formed based on the following research questions:

- What are the variables in yourself, your environment, and social and cultural environment?
- What are you satisfied within yourself, community, and society?
- What are the least valuable parts in the variables?
- What can be done to improve the relationships within yourself, your environment, and social and cultural environment?
- What are your needs from the variables?
- How do you see them and how do they see you?

When I was planning the workshop practically, I have realised that it is impossible to tackle all of these questions I had within three sessions and the time I was given. The sessions were designed so that the participants are encouraged to explore and talk about the variables in individual and personal-environmental levels. Stories around their personal values, self-image, family, friends, community and resources were expected to be brought up and shared with the activities and questions in each session. Some discussions on social and cultural environment level might happen to flow along with other topics, but I believe it will require special sessions in order to truly get to hear their perspectives on those variables.

4.2 Empowerment Theory

Ochs & Schieffelin (1983) argue that we, as human beings, organise and make sense of ourselves and attempt to become competent members of society within an unfolding series of face-to-face, here-and-now interactions. *The person-in-environment perspective in social work is a practice-guiding principle that highlights the importance of understanding an individual and individual behavior in light of the environmental contexts in which that person lives and acts* (Kondrat, 2008).

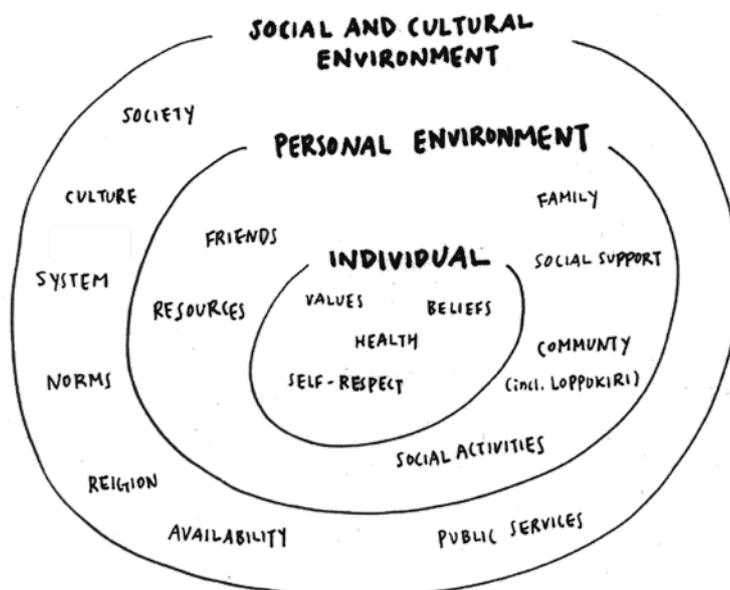


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4.2.1 Preventive Social Work

The goal of prevention practice is to prevent major problems of living and, by definition, prevention occurs before a problem is fully visible or developed. While the traditional classification system categorised prevention efforts as primary, secondary, or tertiary, the new classification uses the terms universal, selective, and indicated. (McCave & Rishel, 2011)

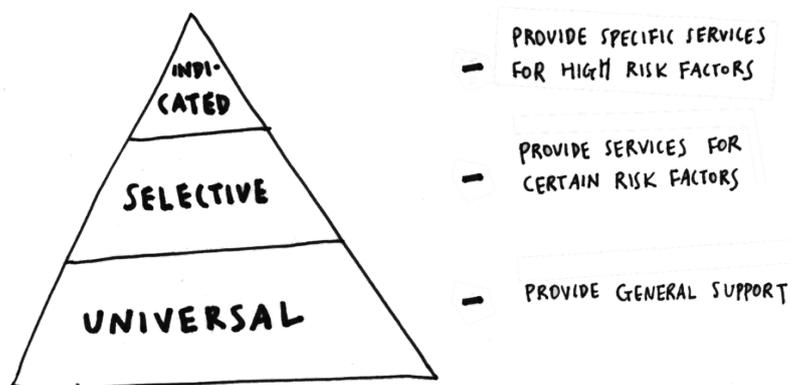


Figure 3. Categorise of prevention efforts
(McCave & Rishel, 2011)

Universal preventions are targeted at the general public or an entire population group. Selective prevention efforts are aimed at those who are relevant to a particular problem or risk factors. Finally, indicated prevention efforts are aimed at high-risk individuals, usually those who already demonstrate signs or symptoms of the targeted problem, but it has not yet fully developed (Rishel, 2007). By this classification, the workshops I am planning to develop and implement fall into selective prevention work since risk factors of ageing person are identified and shared. The risk factors in old age include depression, isolation, anxiety, falls, and physical illness. Through various questions and activities indicating current moods, condition, relationship with significant people, and their wishes, it would be able to identify their possible risk factors and recognise warning signs if they are demonstrated.

In preventive social work, it is important to recognise warning signs of problems and take early action against risk factors. It can help individuals get better more quickly and prevent problems from becoming worse by taking early intervention (Doyle, 2006). In practice, I will be first letting the participants explore their feelings and express their needs in the process of a creative interaction with food. Then the participants will also be exploring and addressing their qualities in life, self and others, as well as their worries.

4.2.2 Creative Methods

There are different ways to carry out social services to various clients. Creative methods allow social workers to communicate with the clients through creative tools such as art, music, physical activities, role play and psychodrama. *As social workers need to respond to unique situations of the clients and work with people who have unique, or a unique mixture of problems, it is important to have creative combinations of supports and services* (Jackson & Burgess, 2005). Leisure activities that associate with life reviews, physical activity, reminiscence, and fun are important in latter part of life. Activities with creative methods such as art, music, drama, dance, and creative writing encourage aging person to get involved in the creative expression, the release of tension, and personal exploration . (Kelly, 1993)

As Nancy J. Osgood argues, the art works as a means of allowing people to become more aware of one's self, more in tune with one's senses and body, and expand the consciousness. She addresses that creativity, including creative expression and creative ability, is subject to be stimulated and nurtured in later life through creative activities. In the later years of adulthood, people have more time to think and rest which makes them be freer to adapt the patterns of creativity. Creative expressions and creative activities can play a role in enhancing mental and physical health among the elderly and provide life enriching experiences (Osgood, 1998) In this study, I am testing out 'food' as a creative tool in social work. I believe cultivating one's creativity and thinking outside of the box are valuable attitudes for social work professionals.

4.3 Activity Theory

High involvement in social networks and social integration are positively related to high morale and life satisfaction. (Lemon, 1972) Activity theory is about successful ageing and suggests that people develop ideas about themselves and their identity from two major sources: the things that they do, and the roles they fulfill in life. This theory identifies the many roles that people give up as they age, and the impact this has on people's identity. Therefore, theoretical perspective supports the idea that new and meaningful activities need to be substituted for those that have been lost (Hall & Scragg, 2012). As it is addressed, engaging in activities is essential in order age and I would like to look at what kind of involvement and how much of involvement my target group, residents in Loppukiri, have and whether there are sufficient opportunities available for them. However, one important fact drawn by Biggs (1993) is that activity is not the same as being an active subject. One can engage in activity which has little to do with intentions, strategies, and outcomes that are created and owned. To make the activities more meaningful for the participants, the crucial parts of my project would be understanding older people, especially people in Loppukiri, and their values and interests. The process of gaining this understanding included general research, observation and engagement with the group.

Meaning in Life

Burbank (1988) studied the meaning of a life of older adults from a symbolic interaction perspective, and described a hierarchical model of meaning; the meaning of signs and symbols, the meaning of people, things and events in life, and the meaning of life as a whole.

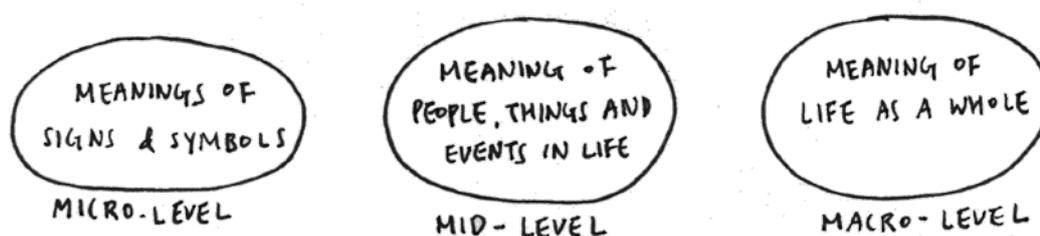


Figure 4. *Mapping meaning*
(Burbank, 1988)

The first level is labeled 'meaning of signs and symbols' and represents a micro-level perspective on meaning. This level is considered as a foundation or beginning of creating meaning.

The second level is 'meaning of people, things, and events in a person's life.' This midlevel of meaning builds on the first and assumes that 'a variety of things may be meaningful in varying degrees to different people' (Burbank, 1988) The final level of meaning is an abstract, macro-level, labeled 'the meaning of life as a whole.' Individuals may have no conscious awareness of this level of meaning, but rather function within a set of values and beliefs about life's meaning. This existential or cosmic meaning differs from the query, "what is the meaning of my own life" which reflects one's need to have a purpose in living. Burbank equates "meaning of life" as a whole, as interrelated to the other two levels and is seen as one's worldview. In conclusion, these levels of meaning may encompass humankind's capacity to find importance in the experiences of living (Zucker, 2009). By using food as a tool, the workshop was designed for participants to share the meanings in their lives; meaning of food, food experiences, people around them, significant events, and happy life.

Social Participation

Social participation is broadly defined as a person's involvement in activities that provide interaction with others. Providing opportunities for social participation among older adults is particularly important, as social participation decreases with age (Novek, Menec, Tran, & Bell, 2013). Changes throughout the life course, including life events (e.g. retirement, death or illness among friends and family, relocation etc.), health conditions, and socio-economic status can impact patterns of social participation (Ashida & Heaney, 2008).

Research on social participation has demonstrated wide-ranging health benefits for older adults, including:

- *enhanced quality of life*
- *longer survival*
- *lower morbidity*
- *better self-rated health*
- *decreased risk of disability and functional and mobility*
- *decreased likelihood of depression*
- *decreased likelihood of generalised anxiety disorders*
- *decreased risk of cognitive decline*
- *decreased risk of dementia (Novek, Menec, Tran, & Bell, 2013)*

5 The Project

In order to design and bring a workshop that would interest and be suitable for the people in Loppukiri, I realised it would be essential to conduct a social research before the implementation. In the development phase of the workshop, I decided to make visits to Loppukiri and interact with the residents there. Those interactions will be a great source of understanding the target group and developing a concrete workshop which is suitable for them. I started to ask myself questions regarding what I want to know and achieve through this whole project. It wasn't an easy process when I tried to draw the whole picture in my mind, so I made one map which is inspired by Leary (2004)'s figure for exploring methodologies.



Figure 2. Mapping a big picture of the project

The following questions were built to better understand the target group and to be taken into account when designing the workshop:

- What are they like? (in individual, community and society perspective)
- What is their state of ageing?
- What are their resources (in self and others)?
- What are their qualities and values?
- What are their needs and expectations?
- What are their risk factors?

5.1 Planning and Designing

As Leary stated, the nature of research is an ongoing and iterative process of constant development and redevelopment. There have been several versions of the workshop, and the changes have occurred by noticing limitation and challenges. Questions dealt in each sessions continued changing and shifting before it got to the final form (Leary, 2004). When I was developing the workshops and shaping the questions, I tried to build a set of questions for each

session carefully. I kept in mind that the questions must be adequate for the purpose of understanding the participants and bringing positive experiences to them.

Also, it was important to know good and bad examples of questions so that I would be more careful and aware during the sessions. Good questions would be clear, answerable, interconnected, and relevant to the subject matter. Bad questions have characteristics of leading, biased, ambiguous, complex, offensive, poorly-worded, and based on assumptions (Punch, 1998). Based on this knowledge, I came to the conclusion that the questions I would have for my workshop would be open, easy to answer, and encouraging conversations and interactions.

Challenges and Limitations

Acknowledging the limitation of using facilities and human resources, I came up with the idea that has four themes; food, recipe, ingredient, and life. I planned different activities and questions for each theme and thought what kind of materials would be suitable and enjoyable to use. In the first session with them 'food', I planned to address social and cultural aspects of food and to let the participants reflect themselves by sharing their stories and memories associated with food. In the recipe session, sharing each other's knowledge and skills was expected. The third session was meant to tackle the nutritional aspects of ingredients and to explore different flavours, colours and textures of the ingredients. Another important part I thought was one home task between the third and the last sessions that I would ask the participants to choose one food that has a story (from session 1) or favourite recipe (from session 2) and make the food. Then they are supposed to share the food with a person or people they want and talk about the story behind the food, recipe and the ingredients. My expectation in this process was to create positive interactions and add another memory and meaning to the food they chose. The last ending session would be focusing on sharing their experiences and feelings where the participants can freely discuss this food workshop experiences and what they have achieved. I was pretty sure to go with this script and plan with further development of materials, but I was questioning myself what would these workshops bring to the participants since there are tasks that are expected to be done by the participants. So I made changes again, and development continued until the 'Flavours of Life' workshop was practiced in January 2017.

5.2 'Flavours of Life' Workshop

The final version of the workshop is divided into three sessions; My Favourite Food Experience, Ingredients for a Happy Life, and Sharing is Caring. Each session has different topics, activities, materials, and main questions. They are designed for an hour session with 8-10 participants.

MY FAVORITE FOOD EXPERIENCE

Activity: sharing stories related to food and food experience

Material: image cards (given to participants)

Questions:

- What image describes your favorite food experience?
- What is the story behind it?
- What makes a 'good' food experience for you?

INGREDIENTS FOR HAPPY LIFE

Activity: visualising important elements in life with food ingredients

Material: food ingredients, participants' favorite plate

Questions:

- What does 'a happy life' mean to you?
- What is the story behind your plate?
- What do ingredients on your plate represent?

SHARING IS CARING

Activity: sharing each other's favorite recipe and tips

Material: participants' recipe books or notes

Questions:

- What kind of memory do you have with your recipe book?
- What is the recipe you would like to share with others?

5.2.1 1ST SESSION: MY FAVOURITE FOOD EXPERIENCE

Date: 30.1.2017

Time: 16.00 - 17.00

Participants: 10

The first session started by introducing myself to the group. Then I explained about my thesis topic, background, and inspirations. After introducing myself and my project, I informed the participants what would be the today's session and also the following sessions. When I briefly described the second session where the participants are expected to bring their plates, one person suggested that they should also bring their forks and knives for food and a cup for drinks. I clarified that we are going to have food ingredients on the table as a material but we won't be eating those. And then I said bringing a glass or a cup is actually a good idea because I realised it would be nice to have some tea together in the next session. The participants were writing down things to bring so that they won't forget. One question arose in my mind, so I asked the group if there are too many things to bring for the next session, and one member answered "No, it's totally fine. We don't have far to go if we forgot them!"

When the theme of the third session was told, one person suggested widening the idea. She said she has found her mother's old recipes a couple of years ago and wants to bring it since it brings her a nostalgic feeling despite the fact that the recipes are not used by her. I replied that any recipes that can be discussed and shared would be appreciated. Then the session was about to start, and I handed out the image cards which are associated with different food experiences. Participants were asked to tell their names first, show the image they chose, and share the story behind it. One member, who had to go back to the kitchen for preparation of common dinner soon, has started sharing the story. She talked about Christmas time and how she enjoys making gingerbread cookies with her grandchildren. One of other participants commented how strongly Christmas is linked to the smell of gingerbread.

When the second person showed the image of her favourite food experience, a basket full of fresh mushrooms, one commented: "I thought you might!" Then the person continued sharing her recollection of her childhood and how the foraging became her hobby ever since.

"Picking mushrooms has been my hobby in all my life. I was a little child when my father took me to the forest to pick mushrooms, and I learned quite a lot about them already then. The basket of mushrooms in the image looks nice. I would go home with these mushrooms, clean them and eat them with my grandchildren. But now I'm not able to go to the woods anymore. But my children and grandchildren continue the traditions and bring me mushrooms instead."

Then the participants discussed the mushrooms on the image and wondered what this particular mushroom (herkkutatti in Finnish) is called in English. They figured out the term in Swedish but not in English. The English teacher, who is also one of the participants in this occasion said she would put it on the list to check and let others know later. Then we continued the session, and one shared a story of her Sunday mornings where she enjoys the long breakfast prepared by her husband as their Sunday routine.

“This image reminds me of our Sunday breakfast. It’s a special occasion that I don’t have to make anything. My husband’s specialty is making too much to eat for breakfast. Almost every Sunday, we drink a bottle of sparkling wine with omelet, mushrooms, and bacon.”

One person told me that her husband is an excellent cook. As the group members are in a community where everyone belongs to a group and takes turns in making shared dinner, it seemed like they also get to know each other’s cooking skills, too. Then she continued describing her Sunday breakfast time and said,

“Nowadays we read news on the internet, so we don’t read the newspaper with breakfast anymore. Since there’s no newspaper on the table, we get to have much more conversation while eating. It is nice to have a long breakfast like that.”

It was an interesting point of view because we frequently criticise how the development of technology made people disconnected. Her story, on the other hand, reflects a good side-effect of technology. Some of the participants shared their memories they got abroad. One said, *“this picture brings me back to Greece where I can drink freshly squeezed orange juice!”* The conversation went on, and cocktail became the topic. They shared different ways of enjoying Ouzo and bubbly. One member mentioned how the image worked as a good donkey bridge. She said it reminded her of the time she was in England and shared what came to her mind.

“I remembered that when I lived in England, my best friend who is like my sister had her birthday parties in midsummer. On her birthdays, she rented a boat, so we had boat picnics on the Thames. We were around 20 people, very diverse group, and we had lots of bubbly and lots of games. The year she turned 50, all of us friends made our quilts and sewed it into one big piece. When she turned 60, we all dressed up nicely with Venetian masks. She has taught me how to enjoy bubbly, picnics and being silly.”

One member was sharing her memories of summer cottage and smoking fish and recalled the memory,

“Imagine yourself in a little summer cottage, far from Helsinki. When you go to the dock, you see no other creatures. Only our little very modest cottage and a big lake.”

We also got to discuss different names of fish in English. Then the conversation flowed into various ways of smoking fish and meat, and also when many of Finnish lakes were originated. I said it is very informative and one said *“Yes, you learn a lot from us. And we learn a lot from you.”* When we finished circling the turns, I asked what makes good food experience. There were various answers, but the most of the replies were related to the atmosphere and people around the table rather than the food itself. One adequately commented *“That’s why we are here. This is the core of Loppukiri. That’s what all is about. We get to sit around the table together and share dinner. Not everybody, not all the time. But often enough.”* Other answers were using different ingredients while cooking and figuring out spices and right combinations. One hour was spent almost accurately, and we moved to the dining room together for dinner. The conversation continued after the session.

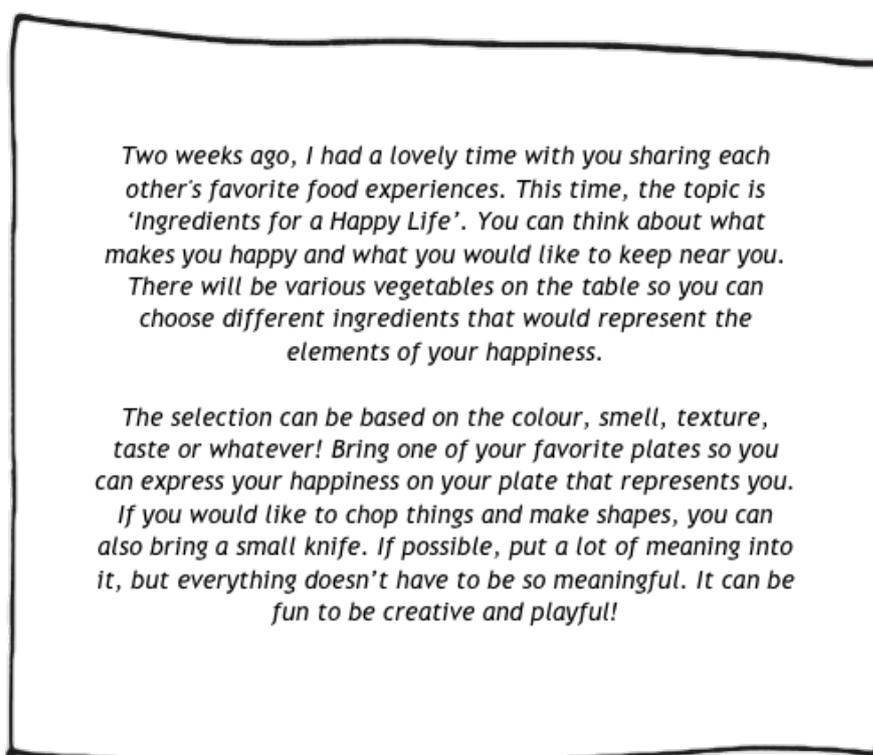
5.2.2 2ND SESSION: INGREDIENTS FOR A HAPPY LIFE

Date: 13.2.2017

Time: 16.00 - 17.30

Participants: 10

The session started with having some tea together. I brought Korean Yuja citrus tea for everyone, and the participants brought their plates and cups as they were asked. A couple of days before the session, I have sent a short description of the second workshop and a reminder of things to bring.



There were two people I haven't met before this time, I introduced myself again to the group and told them about today's activity. Also, in this session, I had two friends, June and Sana, who were assisting me with a documentation, so they had some time to introduce themselves as well. I told the group why I think food ingredients are a good material to play with. I mentioned that we were told not to play with food since we were young, but this time is all about making fun and art out of it. So today is one of the days you 'allow yourself to play with food.' Then I started to talk about the ingredients I prepared on the table, and we spoke of

the terms in English. There were potatoes, broccoli, eggplants, bell peppers, mushrooms, onions, carrots, ginger, pepper, dill, parsley, tomatoes, apple, spring onion, pasta, oats, flour, coffee beans, almonds, cashew nuts, black pepper, and other kinds of herbs on the table. One participant said she brought raspberries and would like to contribute them to the table. Before we started expressing a happy life in our plates, I kindly asked participants to wash their hands. After that, the group started making art on their plates. Lots of cutting and chatting were going on.

Group members freely asked each other to pass something to them or cut some ingredients for them, too. When one participant was asked to pass one 'yellow' bell pepper, she started to sing 'Yellow Submarine' by Beatles. The atmosphere was very cordial. In the middle, I asked if there were any ingredients they want but missing, and one said it would've been nice if there were blueberries. I also reminded participants that there are spices they can use also but it seemed like they were not so keen on using them. June mentioned that potatoes are so basic food ingredient in Finnish food but not many people are using it now. One participant replied, "It's so basic." Another one replied, "Too basic. There's nothing sexy about them." One said, "But they are beautiful." The group seemed to enjoy the activity, and there was a cheerful and playful atmosphere throughout the whole process of a 'play with ingredients' time.

When everybody was done with the plates, it was time to share the stories. One participant who sat next to me drew attention because she has brought a paper tightly filled with texts. I gently suggested her if she wants to start and she began reading from her hand-written paper. She began with a sentence that goes 'In this time of life, I don't gather any more of things. I have enough of things.' Then she continued telling her story behind her favourite plate and her appreciation of Birger Kaijainen's ceramic works. She said what she likes about the particular plate and how it associates with her summer garden. Then she shared what is a happy life for her and what are the ingredients for it. She said her children and their families with five wonderful grandchildren who are all boys are the primary sources of happiness. They bring her a connecting link of today's youth, and after she meets them, she would always feel so happy. Then she told us how important it is for her to keep a touch with her friends and different groups of her life. She finished her reminiscence by telling how she reflects her life and how grateful she feels about it.



Image 9. The plate of my happy life

"I feel the life itself as an interesting process. When you are near soon 80 years as I, you have more life behind you than in front of you. You have gone through several periods in life, and you learn a lot about yourself and other people. As a Finnish woman, I have had an opportunity to study and work out of home and be independent in many ways. I have lived my whole life in Helsinki except the years in Switzerland where I studied to be an alternative school teacher. And that's why I also live here now in an alternative community house. I have had opportunities to travel such places in the world where I have wanted to. So I am in many ways a happy woman. And I am grateful for it."

It was truly a beautiful experience to hear all these stories shared from her. I could notice the feeling of empathy from other group members. We all thanked her for sharing such a story. The next participant started to share the memories with her grandchildren. She told us about how much fun she and her grandchildren had when she allowed them to play with food, making sandwiches with faces. She recalls that they loved this little play in the kitchen so much that they would always go for the same programme whenever they come visit her. She then explained why she chose to bring this new plate despite all kinds of old plates she has. She said she bought the plate a couple of weeks ago, just one for herself, and enjoys that it's so new and fresh. She said the thought "I'm allowed to buy new plates if I want to" came across her mind when she bought it. One participant commented that 'it's her colour' and others agreed. She showed her masterpiece on her plate that looks like a face. The whole face symbolises humour she said.

“Happy life for me is very much circling around. First of all, friends, near and dear ones of course. But primarily, music. And also nature. These green stuff also symbolises that I need to see trees and grasses. The raspberry eyes symbolise the beautiful sunset I saw yesterday. The whole Helsinki was pink. My daughter came here for a walk and we walked around the shoreline for an hour. It was unbelievably beautiful.”

Other participants shared their thoughts on a happy life and stories behind the plates. It was surprising for me to realise there are strong attachments and memories associated with plates as well. I was very glad that I asked the participants to bring their plates and thought I would have missed out so many golden stories if I didn't plan to expand the idea like this. One member shared her story behind her golden-edge plate;

In my home, my parents had the same kind of plates like this one, which is very old. At that time I liked it so much. I remember my childhood when I see these golden edged plates. Now I own plates with golden edges. One day, I met a friend from Africa, and that inspired me to get something golden and strong as well. So I bought these and I have eaten with these golden plates ever since. I was thinking it is something golden in my life, too. I always think that I wouldn't like to eat with some very common plates at home.

It has to be something special.

Another reminiscence brought up with the 'plate' was one participant's memory with her husband and the life in Loppukiri with him.

“My husband lived with me here until he died in 2012. When we moved here, he said, ‘Now we take our best dishes and use them in our daily lives.’ That was a wonderful idea. We were eating from those best dishes we had every day so that they are not on the cupboard all the time. And another principal he suggested when we moved to Loppukiri is that we shall always sit at different tables when we come down for the common dinner. It's because we have conversations, eat and sit together at home whole day. I see some of the couples always sit together. But I think he had good ideas.

Ah, wonderful time. So I have nothing to blame him.”

One of the members commented that it's a good principal. We continued discussing the plates and I realised some of the participants had eaten the ingredients from their plates and they got empty. I mentioned in the beginning that the plates would be photographed after the story sharing session, but it was just natural that a bit of munching happened while the meaningful conversations flowed. When I reminded the group that the plates were supposed

to be photographed soon, one member laughed and said *“Excuse me. I forgot it. I’m just a child.”* We giggled and agreed how this creative activity brought our inner-child. Finally, the plates were taken to another table and photographed. They all looked beautiful with full of colours and happy energies. In the end, I gave the participants paper bags and asked to take all the leftover ingredients home. They were happy to take the ingredients with them since we gave so much meanings to each ingredients during the session. They were not just simple food ingredients. They were more of life ingredients.



Image 10. The plates of happy lives

When I heard one participant’s reminiscences of her husband, a realisation occurred in my head that a lot of people nowadays postpone happiness as if they are accumulating small bits of possibilities for happiness for later use. But that’s not the way it works. Happiness accumulates when you actually ‘practice’ it whenever you can in every life than ‘save’ it. People say that wisdom comes with experiences and age. The process of ageing makes us look back at things in life and realise something with a perspective that gets more mature and experienced day by day. I am not sure if I am old enough to say this, but I also have experiences in my life that things that I never understood suddenly made sense in every way after a certain period had passed. After the session has ended, I discussed so many things about life with my other two good friends who were also thankful to be shared all those valuable life lessons in Loppukiri. I came back home with full of happy energies and rich lessons, and hoped that this whole experience brought as much energy and happiness to each participants as I got from them.

5.2.3 3RD SESSION: SHARING IS CARING

Date: 27.2.2017

Time: 16.00 – 17.30

Participants: 7

The third and the last session started with a story of one group member's birthday which was last week. She told us the birthday was well spent with flowers and birthday wishes from good friends and family members. One of the members congratulated her and said *"Sweet fifteen!"* The session started with lots of energies and laughter. One participant apologised that she is late and said: *"I must remember that I should be here five minutes before it starts."* Another person who has moved to Loppukiri a few days ago came, and Bitte introduced her to the group. She explained about my thesis project and workshop, informing her that this is not a usual English speaking group session. She introduced herself and a little story of her life in America in 1971. One member made a light hearted joke by saying, *"Everything is always 40 or 50 years ago. Not for Sol"* and made us smile. Another member then said *"I can see people have done their homework,"* pointing out many of the participants had their recipe notes translated into English and written down to be shared with others. This time, I also brought my material and shared the recipes I have collected. One group member commented that I have a very practical way of categorising the recipes. Others started to ask me about typical dishes in Korea, and we discussed the noodles used in Asia, how they are different from pasta, and types of rice in different Asian countries. I showed the recipe books I brought for them. During previous meetings, we have talked about food and food culture in South Korea, so I promised to bring this one Korean recipe book which is written in Finnish and recently published by the Embassy of the Republic of Korea. I brought ten books so I can give them to the group members as a gift, a little memory of the workshop, and also new inspiration to them. We talked about the book, and they were surprised when I told them this book was designed by June and Sana whom they met two weeks ago and complemented their great work.

One participant shared her apple pie recipe which she goes for every time when she has guests over. She said her recipe is very simple and something that just can't go wrong. One commented on how beautifully the note has been made. One said with an enthusiastic voice, *"we must share this, yes."* The group members were busy taking notes from her recipe note, so I said I would collect all the recipes shared today and share those together. One member recalled and said, *"I used to have an apple pie recipe which was pretty much the only thing I knew how to make, but since I've moved here and don't live with family, I bake and cook even less."* Then they started to talk about the ingredients in the recipe. They were discussing whether baking soda works better than baking powder when you put sour milk, different ways of producing and selling foodstuffs in different culture, and how the amount of baking powder gets modified when you use the gluten-free flour. Practical tips and information were

discussed and shared. The conversation moved on, and there was a reflection of ageing and the aged group when one member said *"I never use internet or books. I have recipe scraps from my cousins. I write down on the paper,"* and other participant commented, *"that's our age."* But also, when a person regretfully said, *"I had a whole drawer for recipes, but they are all gone when I moved. I've never done anything after that,"* another said, *"well, start again."* This comment confronts the uncertainty in later life which is known to be commonly reflected among older-aged people.

Next person showed the books she brought and said she had found all kinds of recipe books which she didn't remember having. Among them, she brought two books which were one for picnics and one for sauces. She mentioned that now that she has found them, she is going to share them with her cooking group in Loppukiri. Then she shared a recipe that she was given in 1982 and recollected;

"When I lived in England, I realised how important Christmas was. It comes when you are not in Finland, and you are not with your family. The page that I'd always open automatically from this book is this traditional Christmas table. In Finland, we usually have Christmas dinner on the 24th which is the normal working day in England. And then I'd had an English Christmas table on the 25th. I've done these Christmas food recipes many many times. That became sort of my emotional recipe."

Then she also showed the group one recipe note which belonged to her mother who has passed away over 40 years ago. She said she didn't remember she owned it and felt very nostalgic when she found it. One commented, *"we have lots of things that we don't remember"* and made everyone burst into a laugh. She then pointed out how beautiful her mother's handwriting was. One comment noted that people had beautiful handwritings in the old days, and all the group members nodded and agreed. Another participant said people nowadays are too used to typing on computers and don't put so much effort to improve their handwritings. Others commented that it's a pity and sad. It was an interesting shift of topic from the recipe to handwritings, and to the difference between generations.

Another reflection of generation difference occurred when one participant indicated the changes in terms used for a recipe book in Finnish. She recalled that it was called 'keitto-kirja' when she was a child, and now it is called as 'ruokakirja'. Also, she referred the book that she always finds reliable, and said the book was so popular back in the days that everybody said, 'I have Liimatainen' instead of 'I have a recipe book.' Then she shared one memoir of her childhood;

“Now i’m going to tell you one recipe that I have written. If you wish to make it, you have to prepare the fishing rod and hook and go to the lake. When I was a little child in 1940s, I remember having porridge in the morning, potatoes for lunch and dinner and seldom some meat. Of course in the winter time, we didn’t have fresh greens or salads. When spring came at last and the ice went away from the lake, we went to the boat house and went for fishing. We would get a lot of small fishes from the lake, take them to the kitchen, clean them, put them in a kettle, put water and boil until they are totally mashed. Then we filter the soup and heat it again. In a big bowl, we whisk crème and egg yolks and pour them into the hot soup. It was the most delicious soup I ever had in my life. When we had chives growing in the garden, we would put it and it would make the soup better. If you want to taste this, you just have to come to the lake and fish. You need some salt but hardly anything else. It’s my memory from my childhood. I still make the soup for my grandchildren when they bring fish from the lake.”

I was very fascinated by the story, and it made me want to taste the soup so badly. At this time, I have realised one thing. The way the stories were told was so poetic and beautiful. When you recall something that happened a couple of days ago, the memory is still vivid, and you still can describe what exactly happened with details. But when you try to recall a dim memory which happened a long time ago, emotions and feelings run over what has happened because your feelings on something are stronger and stay longer than what you see or hear. You get to describe the atmosphere rather than details, and I think that makes these childhood reminiscences sound poetic and almost fairytale-like. I asked if she thinks the taste would be somehow similar when I cook it with fish from the market. Then she replied that it would be still good but feelings are so different, and the fresh taste that just comes out of the lake would be absent. One commented, *“but you take what you have”* and she said, *“that’s exactly what we did when we were children!”* How irony is that something that is inconvenient and requires much work now was back then, something people took with the least effort. I reflected it and also shared my memory in Posio where I got to eat the best-grilled fish in my life. I said the mixture of freshness, wilderness and nature made the whole experience enjoyable.

Then one member showed two vintage cookbooks. The books were written by three princesses of Sweden’s Royal House of Bernadotte in 1931 and 1932. She then shared her recollection related to these books;

“I’ll say how different we people are. When I lived in Åland for four years, the mother of the house who came from a very aristocratic family background had two things always with her. These books from three princess sisters of Sweden. She always had these books and always did excellent cooking. I got these books as a memory of her.”

Others commented how famous those princesses were and how beautiful the covers are. One person, on the other hand said, *“But I find old cookery books boring in a way. There are no pictures.”* It was interesting to talk about these royal recipes because I grew up thinking princesses and princes belong to old histories and story books. At the end of the session, I gave out Korean cookbook to each of the participants and the members asked if I can write down their name and my name in the back of the front page. I had some extra books so participants took them to give their children and family members. I wished we would have some time to reflect the experience during the workshop, but the conversation was so heated and so interesting that it couldn't be stopped. We spent 30 mins more than we planned although the group was smaller this time. Bitte, who is the teacher of the group, told about her reflection on the sessions we had together as a leader of the group.

“What I really liked about all these three different times we met, is that everybody was willing to share. Without any organising, the stories were all so different and diverse. It just happened naturally. Such a magical happening. We complement each other, and things were so interesting.”

Then we talked that we would meet again for the feedback session. Then they asked me about my thesis presentation, where would I be presenting, where my school is located and when would it be. I told them I would update them with my progress and will keep in touch with the group. I was asked to give help in the common kitchen the week after since the group was lacking people due to its members' health conditions and circumstances. I said I would be happy to lend a hand. I promised the group that I would come back with a small booklet based on the stories collected during the workshop, so we were all looking forward to meeting again in the near future.

6 Evaluation

The project was evaluated with the method of self-evaluation and based on the feedback from the group. I have divided the evaluation into three different parts so that it can be assessed efficiently. The three parts include; evaluation of tool, workshop, and professional growth. On the first part of assessment, 'food as a tool' in elderly work will be evaluated with reflection and observation. The second part will be an evaluation of 'Flavours of Life' workshop. The last part will be about my personal and professional growth throughout the project. I have formed several questions that can be used for evaluation and divided into the themes.

TOOL
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Did the tool meet the purpose? - What kind of resources were required? - What are its strength and weaknesses? - Did it draw active participation? - Was it an effective tool in elderly work? - Is the tool applicable for other groups?
WORKSHOP
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What kind of effect did it bring? - What went as expected and not expected? - Did it bring participants' engagement? - What was restricting or limiting? - How did it work in the participants' perspectives?
PROFESSIONAL GROWTH
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What did I learn through the project? - How was interaction with the participants? - What can be improved? - What can be continued?

These questions will be tackled with a method of observation and reflection. Observation is a way of gathering data by watching behavior, events, or noting physical characteristics. An observation assessment occurs when a researcher watches interactions, processes, or behaviours of participants. I drew up a plan for a concrete observation. First, I need to determine the focus of my observation; I wanted to pay attention to interactions of the participants and general atmosphere and flow of conversation. Secondly, I need to design a system for data collection; as the ways of collecting data during the observation, I used recording and note taking.

According to Cloutier et al. (1987), the components to observe would include:

- Characteristics of participants (gender, appearance, attitude towards self, others and subject, statement about values)
- Interactions (level of interest, power relations, cooperation, level of engagement and interest)

Reflection is a type of thinking which aims at a better understanding of certain things or group. Reflection is associated with profound thought. (Hall & Scragg, 2012). Boud et al. define reflection as 'activity in which people recapture their experience, think about it, mull over it and evaluate it' (Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 1985). After each workshop, I wrote notes on my reflection on the situation, atmosphere and sometimes certain statements and comments. In this way, I could keep the fresh thoughts and feelings which have occurred during the interaction with the participants.

In addition to the self-reflective evaluation, feedbacks from the group were discussed and collected. Due to my personal circumstance, one meeting has to be cancelled, so the questions for the feedback were sent to Bitte. She has run the feedback session for me and gathered the feedback from the participants. The questions were formed to help understand participants' perspective on the tool and the workshop used in the project. Three sessions I held in Loppukiri were reflected, and the feedback was collected through following four questions;

- What is your feelings and thoughts about the workshop?
- What do you think was the general atmosphere during the workshop?
- How do you find 'food' as a topic / medium of conversation?
- What can be improved and what can be continued?

6.1 Evaluation of 'Food as a Creative Tool' Model

Questions to be dealt with;

- Did the tool meet the purpose?
- What kind of resources were required?
- What are its strength and weaknesses?
- Did it draw active participation?
- Was it an effective tool in elderly work?
- Is the tool applicable for other groups?

Overall, 'food as a tool' in my workshop brought surprises. The primary purpose of it using as a tool was to draw stories and brings positive memories to the participants. In this aspect, I can say that it has met the purpose and was truly a strong and efficient medium for it. First of all, it draws attention and attracts interests from the target group. When I first explained the base idea of this project and workshop, residents in Loppukiri showed a good amount of interests. I assume the reason behind it is that the topic 'food' makes the workshop sound fun but at the same time, not too heavy or demanding. It would sound very deep and heavy if I said that I'd like to have a discussion about their self-image, values, people around them, childhood memories, the idea of happiness, and life experiences. This draws my second point. Food as a tool brings conversation and reflection on so many things that you would ever expect. All these things listed were brought up in the discussion in a very natural manner. This second point makes 'food as a tool' interaction differentiated from cooking sessions. Cooking sessions with client groups also bring different positive effects but I have found that using food as a medium of conversation works more efficient way in bringing stories and understanding the person and the group. My third point would be that it is an inclusive medium. The nature of food and food experience is that it is so fundamental and essential in our lives that it doesn't exclude anybody based on their gender, age, nationality, occupation, skills, health or interests. The fourth point is positive memories are easily brought up. Although the degree depends on individuals, memories associated with food (both eating and cooking) tends to include human interaction, sensation, memorable occasions, and emotions. The last but not the least, food can work as a creative tool in so many ways. Interaction with food and food ingredients allow people to use multiple senses; colour, flavour, smell, texture, and sound. That is why I found food ingredients as a useful tool in an artistic way. The variety of colour, shapes, and textures make food ingredients already an applicable material for creative activities in social work. Plus, it is safe ingredients that can be used with all range of age groups.

However, it's limitations as a tool in social work would be the fact that it should be well-planned for the target group. I have run workshops using food as a creative tool for the older adults and children. For example, I designed the workshop more focusing on artistic and creative sides for children. I would not run a same set of the workshop with kids since their experiences and feelings associated with food are not as strong as old individuals. It wouldn't

work as a good tool to draw their narratives necessarily. With such purposes, senior citizens and people who have immigrant background would be good target groups.

When the participants were asked about their thoughts about food as a topic and a medium of conversation, positive feedback was given;

We felt that food really is a good topic of conversation in many different ways: Working in a kitchen or sitting around a dining table inspires conversation, food memories are very strong from both family life and travelling, Christmas traditions circle around food a lot, Loppukiri is very much built around the importance of making food together and also sitting down for meals in company.

I have no doubt that the tool brings participants' interaction and participation. As I mentioned, this tool rarely makes people excluded. So during the workshop, everyone had some stories to share, something to comment and enjoy with. I have found that food as a tool doesn't require a big amount of resources or costs to be used in creative activities.

6.2 Evaluation of 'Flavours of Life' Workshop

Questions to be dealt with;

- What kind of effect did it bring?
- What went as expected and not expected?
- Did it bring participants' engagement?
- What was restricting or limiting?
- How did it work in the participants' perspectives?

The outcome of the three set of sessions was definitely more than I expected. Although the workshop had several things that could have been modified or designed better, they were just was complemented by participants' active engagement and positive interactions. There were no challenges when it came to communicating and interacting with the group. During the workshop, I paid attention to participants' verbal and nonverbal behavior. Verbally, there were lots of interaction between the group members and commenting each other's story was natural. The fact that the group is already a formed and continuous one played a significant role in generating the comfortable and friendly atmosphere to share their stories and thoughts. Non-verbal behavior such as facial expressions, postures, gestures, and degree of

engagement was also observed during sessions. The general atmosphere was cordial and empowering.

The only limitation I had was the lack of time. During the lesson, I have learned about the importance of warm-up and closing activities while using creative methods. The warm up activities would be used for ice breaking, making atmosphere comfortable for participants to express themselves and also a tool to spark creativity in individuals. The closing exercise would be for reflection and sharing feelings that were generated during the session. It would have been nice to add some small opening and closing exercises if I was allowed more time or if the group was smaller. But then again I had to embrace the limitations, and it was noticeable that the group already has a bond that made members comfortable with expressing themselves. When I finished all the sessions, I realised that I could have also found other ways that would generate similar effects within my limitations. For example, on the second session, while participants were playing with food ingredients, a song (without a lyric) could have been used as a background music. General degree of engagement of participants was very high in each session.

The participants were asked about their feelings and thought about the workshop:

These are the words that we thought describe what we felt about the atmosphere and our feelings and thoughts about the workshops: positive, friendly, surprising, enjoyable, nice, lovely, interesting, unexpected, encouraging, astonishing, useful, feeding our curiosity. We all felt we got much more than expected: on top of the workshops, we were given the recipe book and helpful assistance afterwards in our kitchen.

What can be improved and what can be continued?

We felt that Sol's workshops were well planned and executed, gave us much more than we could have expected and we could not think of any improvements.

6.3 Professional Growth Evaluation

Questions to be dealt with;

- What kind of effect did it bring?
- What went as expected and not expected?
- Did it bring participants' engagement?
- What was restricting or limiting?
- How did it work in the participants' perspectives?

The outcome of the three set of sessions was definitely more than I expected. Although the workshop had several things that could have been modified or designed better, they were just as complemented by participants' active engagement and positive interactions. There were no challenges when it came to communicating and interacting with the group. During the workshop, I paid attention to participants' verbal and nonverbal behavior. Verbally, there were lots of interaction between the group members and commenting each other's story was natural. The fact that the group is already a formed and continuous one played a significant role in generating the comfortable and friendly atmosphere to share their stories and thoughts. Non-verbal behavior such as facial expressions, postures, gestures, and degree of engagement was also observed during sessions. The general atmosphere was cordial and empowering.

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We felt that Sol's workshops were well planned and executed, gave us much more than we could have expected and we could not think of any improvements.

7 Ethical issues

Informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity and sensitivity are the basic components of ethics that social workers need to practice. Sensitivity is especially emphasised when working with the elderly people. To be sensitive towards older people, it requires a prior research about the group and general sensitive issues among them, and careful observation to catch a sign. If sensitive topics are to be addressed during the workshop or other interactions, the participant's right to withdraw must be respected. This needs to be explained in advance as part of the process of gaining informed consent. David and Sutton (2004) suggest that introducing the themes of the project prior to its conduct would forewarn the participants and allow them to choose if they want to participate or not. Participants are encouraged to ask if there are questions they want to ask about the motives, content or intended outcomes of the work they have contributed to (David & Sutton, 2004). Also, it is important that I don't promise anything I'm not certain or cannot deliver so that I don't break any promises to the participants (Bell, 2005).

8 Conclusion

With the research and practice carried on during the project, I aimed to emphasise the sociological significance of food and its link to social work practice, present the process of developing and implementing the workshop for senior citizens, and assess its impact as a creative tool. While studies on food are being carried out and drawing attention in different fields, it hasn't been much studied or considered as an eligible tool in social work practice. I started to look at the sociological side of food and its impact on people's everyday life and everyday experiences. This project began with a simple question in my mind, but in the end, it certainly re-shaped my view on food and made me see beyond its nutritional value and cultural aspect.

The workshop was planned during the Autumn 2016 and carried out in Loppukiri senior community throughout January and February 2017. Three separate sessions had its own themes; 'my favourite food experience', 'ingredients for a happy life', and 'sharing is caring.' Each session drew 7-10 people, and the participants showed a high engagement and involvement level throughout the project. The topic of conversation never got bounded to food and food experiences and naturally expanded from one to another. Food as a creative tool brought new topics to the conversation, touching on elements of various subjects such as one's self-image, resources, values, perceptions, and knowledge. The participants gave positive feedbacks on the workshop afterwards and described the experience as positive, surprising, enjoyable, interesting, unexpected, encouraging, useful, and feeding curiosity.

Through the project, I have found that 'food as a creative tool' has several merits that I would like to emphasise. Food-related topics;

1. draw attention and interests from all groups
2. promote interaction and reflection among the participants
3. generate new topics of conversation
4. work as an inclusive medium
5. bring out positive memories
6. encourage participants to be creative and playful

These qualities make food as a valid tool as one of the creative methods. If we start to look at food beyond the plate, it can be used as a medium to bring a positive experience to clients and hear their stories. I look forward to developing the model further and its future use in elderly work and, by extension, in social work.

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