

Artist-led projects with asylum seekers as a means of strengthening
community cohesion: policy, practice, measurement and outcomes

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Abstract

This research aims to identify whether artist-led projects with asylum seekers can strengthen community cohesion. It concentrates on New Labour Government policy and the current debate relating to the intrinsic and instrumental worth of the arts. These are considered alongside debates on measurement. The research is focused on projects within Tyne and Wear. The methodology used is three-fold involving, attending the arts projects, participant observations and individual semi-structured interviews with each participant. Data is gathered from participants, artists and funders to ensure a holistic picture of each projects is built up. In doing this, social capital and identity construction are identified as effective areas where the arts projects can be seen to be having a positive impact on participant's personal community cohesion.

This research establishes a two-strand framework for community cohesion from which arts projects effectiveness can be studied; examining both collective community cohesion and personal community cohesion. The arts projects are seen to have a more direct impact on the personal community cohesion of asylum seekers, tackling issues such as isolation, mental health needs, language barriers, negative stereotypes, cultural isolation, lack of self esteem, lack of social contact and issues around identity which are specific barriers to community cohesion. The funding of different projects is discussed, as is the influence of New Labour Government policy (1997-2010) on locally funded projects. 75% of the projects within this study would not now be granted funding if starting in 2011.

It can be concluded from this research that artist-led projects with asylum seekers can be used as a means of strengthening community cohesion. This appears to be most effective when there is clear and close communication between the funding organisation and arts project, when long-term project funding is available and when participants are treated as individuals whose needs are considered. Ways in which the arts projects can reform themselves within the current economic climate are suggested both by working in partnership with other services and through focusing on solidifying the evidence base for the arts so that they may be in a stronger position once funding is available again.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

In 1999 asylum seekers in the UK started to be dispersed to the North of England to relieve the pressure on London¹ and in 2001 the North East saw its first major intake of asylum seekers. Whilst community cohesion has been on The New Labour Government's agenda since the 2001 race riots² a definition for community cohesion is still hard to agree on. One Local Government document summarises it as 'Community cohesion focuses on the principles that everyone should feel a sense of belonging in the community and have equal opportunity to live in peace and security together, to enjoy a decent standard of living, a fair share of resources, equal chances in life and good health and wellbeing.'³ Another common view of community cohesion amongst Local Governments is that of 'Bonding, Bridging and Mingling' which are used within the community to give residents opportunities for social interaction, Mingling – attending the same events, Bridging – communicating between groups and Bonding – an opportunity to spend time with people from within the community which they would not otherwise do and learn more about each other forming meaningful friendships⁴. This view of community cohesion stems from social capital theory where Putnam distinguishes bonding capital and bridging capital⁵. A report looking at the challenges faced by newcomers to communities, talks of the scope for promoting bonding as well as bridging across new communities⁶. There is a belief that the arts do have a role to play within community cohesion. Although this belief is not held by all there are New Labour Government policy documents which seek to encourage the arts and their role within community cohesion. One such document states

'Arts build community pride. We believe that culture and the arts should be placed

¹ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/551880.stm> [18th June 2010]

² Ritchie, D. Oldham Independent Review, 10, (The Ritchie Report)

³ Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council (2007) *Meet Your Neighbours A lesson in community cohesion* Communities and Local Government, unison, and I&DeA

⁴ Alice Tligui Training (October 2008) Getting to Grips with Community Cohesion Conference

⁵ Putnam, R. D. (2000) *Bowling Alone* New York: Simon & Schuster

⁶ Blake, G. Diamond, J. Foot, J. Gidley, B. Mayo, M. Shukra, K. and Yarnit, M. (2008) 'Community engagement and community cohesion An exploration of the challenges to be addressed if Government policies to promote community engagement are to be genuinely inclusive of newcomers as well as more established communities.' Joseph Roundtree Foundation

firmly at the heart of both neighbourhood renewal and community cohesion. The arts have the capacity to: Develop individual pride and community spirit; Help reverse the spiral of decline in disadvantaged areas by fostering a new sense of community and civic pride amongst residents.⁷

One issue with such generalised statements is the lack of substance to back it up as throughout the literature on this topic the problematic questions of measurement rises again and again.

There is a longstanding divergence of opinion regarding the primary function of arts, as either instrumental or intrinsic. This debate is found both in practice and within literature. The debate is summarised in *Cultural Trends*⁸ where Ruth Levitt, Lianne Gibson, Stuart Davies, Clive Gray and Joanne Orr contribute to the debate. Two players in this debate are Appleton and Fleming. Fleming's⁹ standpoint is an instrumentalist one suggesting, "Objects are a means to an end and not an end in themselves." Whilst Appleton¹⁰ believes the core function of arts is their intrinsic value and criticises the adoption of the wider social agenda. Government policy relating to arts has, since the 1980s, been focused on the measurement of benefit projects bring as a way of justifying the investment of public funding into them. A focus on new public management within all New Labour Government services led to a review of private sector service provision and how private sector practices could be adopted within the public sector to enable The New Labour Government to deliver more effective services¹¹. This pressure has led to debates both about the measurement of benefits, how these are defined and attacks on many different methodologies used. Merli¹² writes a paper of 2003 attacks the methodologies of Matarasso's (1997)¹³ paper on the social impact of participation in the arts, which had been accepted widely as being solid evidence for the arts. Since then many

⁷ http://www.culture.gov.uk/what_we_do/arts/4076.aspx [19th Feb 2009]

⁸ *Cultural Trends* (2008) Special issue: The consequences of instrumental museum and gallery policy 68 17 (4)

⁹ Fleming, D. (1997) 'The Regeneration Game' *Museums Journal* 97 (4): 32-33

¹⁰ Appleton, J. (2001) *Museums for the people* Institute of Ideas London

¹¹ McLaughlin, K. Osborne, S.P. Ferlie E (eds.) (2002) *New Public Management Current Trends and Future Prospects* Routledge

¹² Merli, P. (2002) 'Evaluating the social Impact of Participation in arts activities' *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 8 (1): 107-118

¹³ Matarasso, F. (1997) *Use or Ornament: The social Impact of Participation of the Arts* Comedix Bournes Green

academics, including Newman and Mclean,¹⁴ have ventured down different routes of data collection but no consensus has yet been reached.

This research, therefore, seeks to establish a framework for community cohesion from which the effectiveness of arts projects can be studied and appropriate aims and measurement criteria for arts projects with asylum seekers can be debated as well as outlining how such projects can be optimised to meet the desired outcomes. This research contributes to the debate on the measurement of benefit and outcomes, alongside studying effective use of artistic media to ensure real benefit to participants.

Attendance at five main arts projects with asylum seekers in Tyne and Wear was undertaken on a weekly basis between (November 2008 – September 2009) alongside semi structured interviews with participants, artists and funders from each project to ensure that a holistic perspective is maintained throughout the research. Two pilot projects took place where focus groups were initiated to understand what individual participants perceive as their needs and the strengths and weaknesses of the arts project they attended. The projects varied from a high budget project funded by Heritage Lottery and First Light Media to a small self-funded initiative run by Gill Longfield, a local artist. The projects all ran within Tyne and Wear in 2009 and were free for asylum seekers in the area to attend. Attending the project weekly enabled data to be gathered which would otherwise have been missed and a rapport to be built up with participants and artists. This allowed for more honest open interviews to take place. The research also looked into the different funding sources these various projects have access to and how this ties into New Labour Government policy, particularly focusing on how any restrictions of the funding available impacts on the projects.

Government policy is a fluid entity and responds both to changes in public perception and changes in the economic climate. In May 2010 The New Labour Government was replaced by The Coalition Government and this coincided with a

¹⁴ Newman, A. & McLean, F. (2004) 'Presumption, Policy and Practice' *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 10 (2): 167-181

sustained downturn in the economic climate within the UK. The changes this will make to policy are not yet clear however some changes must be acknowledged. In England the MLA has been dissolved, many of its functions are currently undertaken by the Arts Council. This research was conducted into the policies and financing of New Labour towards their time in office. The Coalition Government will inevitably take a somewhat different view of arts and art funding and the constrained economic conditions will make funding evermore challenging to secure. This research sits in a specific timeframe in political history however many of the conclusions of the research are not specific to one Government or another. They relate to gathering evidence which considers the benefits arts projects can have on community cohesion which is an issue of importance to the Coalition Government as well as to New Labour. The economic downturn was already impacting funding before the change of government and continues to do so. However the need to gather compelling evidence of benefits remains of importance for anybody seeking government funding. In addition The Coalition Governments “Big Society” purports to, “give citizens, communities and local government the power and information they need to come together, solve the problems they face and build the Britain they want¹⁵” Clearly there are ongoing opportunities to take the output of this research and move forward with arts projects aimed at community cohesion under the evolving political situation. However a detailed investigation is outside the timeframe of this research.

¹⁵ http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/sites/default/files/resources/building-big-society_0.pdf.

Chapter 2. Aims and Objectives

This research seeks to find out if artist-led projects with asylum seekers are a means of strengthening community cohesion. In doing so it will study what the different views of community cohesion are and define the concept of community cohesion used in this research. Issues specifically affecting asylum seekers will be investigated and discussed. In light of ideas around the possibility of the arts strengthening community cohesion, the current debate of the intrinsic and instrumental worth of the arts will be considered alongside debates on measurement.

This research seeks to determine the reasons why participants attended the art projects, identify the factors that influence participants' enjoyment of the art projects and discover ways in which participants feel the projects could be improved. The views of the artists and funders within the project will also be gathered to ascertain if these views are shared amongst participants, artists and funders. Commonalities and differences between projects will be distinguished.

The research also looks into policy and funding for artist-led projects with asylum seekers. It investigates the current policy on the arts and investigates any impact this policy may have on projects in the North East. The research also seeks to find out how current funding structures affect the projects studied in this research. Any restraints on the projects from the funding will also be identified.

Main aim: to identify if artist-led projects with asylum seekers can strengthen community cohesion.

Aims and Objectives	Methods
What are the different views of community cohesion?	Literature Review
Can the concept of community cohesion be defined in this research?	Analysis stemming from Literature Review
Are there issues specifically	Literature Review & attending asylum

surrounding asylum seekers?	seeker drop in centres and groups in the region
Can the debate of the arts intrinsic and instrumental value of the arts be considered alongside debates on measurement of the arts?	Literature Review
Can factors that influence participants enjoyment of the art projects be identified?	Attending projects and interviewing participants
Can the reasons why participants attended the art projects be defined?	Attending projects and interviewing participants
Can ways in which participants feel the projects could be improved be identified?	Attending projects and interviewing participants
Can similar views on the projects be found amongst participants, artists and funders?	Interviewing participants, artists and funders
Can commonalities and differences between projects will be distinguished?	Analysis
Can a current policy on the arts be identified?	Literature Review
Do those involved feel policy is having an impact on projects in the North East?	Talk to people involved in the projects studied
Within the arts which different funding structures exist?	Literature Review, interviewing funders
What form did the funding which each of the projects take?	Researching projects and talking to funders of each project
How do current funding structures	Literature Review and Research into

affect the projects studied in this research?	projects
Are there any restraints on the projects from the funding that can be identified?	Attending projects & interviewing participants, artists and funders

Chapter 3. Methodology

Government policy relating to the arts has, since the 1980's, related to ideas surrounding New Public Management and has been focused on attempting to measure benefit in order to justify the spending of public money. In turn this has brought about a debate in literature about the validity of different methodologies, how these are implemented and the robustness of data produced. This can be seen in two prominent papers by Matarasso (1997)¹⁶ on the social impact of participation in the arts and Merli (2003)¹⁷ evaluating the social impact of participation in arts activities. Merli presents a critique of the current methodology being used and thus the validity of any findings. She makes a strong criticism of Matarasso's methodology which has been adopted as mainstream in collecting this data. Her criticism is based around his samples being too small and not representative of the wider community. Thus she claims they should not be generalised. Newman and McLean have studied, in depth, ways in which museums and galleries may contribute to social wellbeing and various approaches to measuring this.¹⁸ Their research, supported by others, addresses the fact that questionnaires used alone cannot be relied upon as a method of data collection and suggest that, particularly for those who are vulnerable, a more interactive, flexible and less threatening method is therefore appropriate. Belfiore and Bennett published a paper which 'attempts to move away from a paradigm of evaluation based on a one-size-fits-all model usually reliant on empirical methodologies borrowed from the social sciences.'¹⁹ They suggest a more humanities-based approach may lead to a clearer understanding of the role that ideas and beliefs can have in policy making.

Ideas on appropriate methodologies vary within different subject areas. Just as there are ideas in the arts sector of ways to measure the impact of arts project on

¹⁶Matarasso, F. (1997) *Use or Ornament: The social Impact of Participation of the Arts* Comedis Bournes Green

¹⁷ Merli, P. (2002) 'Evaluating the social Impact of Participation in arts activities' *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 8 (1): 107-118

¹⁸ Newman, A. & McLean, F. (2006) 'The impact of museums upon identity' *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 12 (1): 49-68

¹⁹ Belfiore, E. Bennett, O. (2010) 'Beyond the "Toolkit Approach": Arts Impact Evaluation Research and the Realities of Cultural Policy-Making' *Journal for Cultural Research* 14 (2): 121 — 142 p.1

social elements, there are guidelines published by the community cohesion unit looking into measuring community cohesion and the impact of different projects²⁰. The Home Office's 2005 publication 'Community Cohesion: Seven Steps, A Practitioner's Toolkit' talks about identifying a baseline for measuring your impact of community cohesion and identifying possible fault lines in the community within which you are working. It identifies, in another Home Office report from 2003, areas of performance information that are relevant to cohesion as:

- user satisfaction with council, with key services and community engagement and decision making facilities;
- access to services;
- hate crime reporting and figures;
- number of consultations, area forums, representation on decision making bodies of black and minority ethnic and faith communities;
- perceptions of community cohesion using survey questions; and
- community tensions information

Merli's document in 2002 outlines some difficulties in gathering data from people who may be culturally deprived stating 'Involvement in participatory arts is a cultivated cultural need and not a primary need, thus asking people if they are satisfied with participatory arts programmes is arguably not fair unless those who are being surveyed are fully aware of their cultural deprivation'²¹. She concludes that it is not satisfactory to use questionnaires to establish whether socially deprived people are satisfied with participatory arts projects, suggesting that in-depth interviews may be a better way to collect data because they allow the interviewee to respond and dialogue to take place. She explains that in-depth interviews allow 'the interviewee to ask questions and obtain information from the

²⁰Home Office (2005) *Community Cohesion: Seven Steps, A Practitioner's Toolkit* Cohesion and Faith Unit

²¹ Merli, P. (2002) 'Evaluating the social Impact of Participation in arts activities' *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 8 (1): 107-118 p.17

researcher, and enable the researcher to understand - and not simply to measure - the ideas and the feelings of the interviewee.' ²².

In January 2006 a conference, *Capturing the Public Value of Heritage*, was held to talk about cultural values²³. It discussed a number of different methodologies used across the cultural sector including quantitative data collection designed for the Nation Trust by Accenture which measured an eclectic mix of indices and produced a score at the end. Newman and Mclean²⁴ present identity construction as an alternative means of measuring both the instrumental and the intrinsic value of the arts. This is presented in their paper 'The impact of museums upon identity' in which they produce an empirical study investigating the social impact of museums and galleries by looking at a series of exhibition and museum based community development projects.

Selwood suggests the format of reference groups and the identification of impact indicators as significant shortcomings in research methodologies and says

'The reference groups that evaluations are based on. In general, these tend to refer to staff and project workers rather than project participants - which undermines the theoretical validity of user-based evaluation. Another frequently cited shortcoming is the identification and use of appropriate and meaningful indicators of impact.'²⁵

She feels the lack of robust evidence renders it almost impossible to meet the political aspirations which are trying to build up a complete picture of the social impact of the arts. The variety of design and size of smaller studies is criticised, as these studies cannot be generalised and, due to their different executions, can appear inconsistent. 'Whatever the benefits of the arts, the lack of identifiable outcomes means that we do not have enough information to judge whether such

²² Merli, P. (2002) 'Evaluating the social Impact of Participation in arts activities' *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 8 (1): 107-118 p.17

²³ Newman, A. (2006) 'The Challenge of Measurement: Instrumental Museum and Gallery Policy in the UK' pre publication p.16

²⁴ Newman, A. & McLean, F. (2006) 'The impact of museums upon identity' *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 12 (1): 49-68

²⁵ Selwood, S. (2002) 'Measuring Culture: Collecting statistics to prove the 'use' of the arts has been largely useless' Spiked Culture <http://www.spikedonline.com/index.php/site/article/6851/> [22nd Feb 2009]

gains are enough or are efficiently and effectively gained'²⁶. She identifies that despite being susceptible to these same criticisms Matarasso's *Use or Ornament*, which aimed to identify the social impacts of the arts, reshaped qualitative research. His ideas with regard to surveying participants rather than institutions, and addressing outcomes rather than outputs became accepted into mainstream qualitative research.²⁷ Generic Learning Outcomes²⁸ and Generic Social Outcomes²⁹ have been employed by the MLA to try to measure and provide evidence of the benefits of museums.

In setting the framework for the methodology used in this research the needs of the groups involved within this research were first considered and the different types of methodologies that can be used for collecting a variety of types of data was looked into. The framework for the six main projects in the research used a three-fold, in-depth method of data collection that involved:

- 1) Attending the art sessions being researched on a weekly basis, getting to know the people involved in the projects and keeping a research diary;
- 2) Individual semi-structured interviews with each participant, artist and funder;
- 3) Participant observations based on the categories developed by Bales³⁰ to record the group's interactions.

This framework allowed for triangulation, drawing on all available data from each of these different research methods to look for broad patterns of convergence amongst projects. The participant observations were based on Bales model using interaction process analysis. Benefits of using participant observation have been identified as

²⁶ Selwood, S. (2002) 'Measuring Culture: Collecting statistics to prove the 'use' of the arts has been largely useless' Spiked Culture <http://www.spikedonline.com/index.php/site/article/6851/> [22nd Feb 2009]

²⁷ Selwood, S. (2002) 'Measuring Culture: Collecting statistics to prove the 'use' of the arts has been largely useless' Spiked Culture <http://www.spikedonline.com/index.php/site/article/6851/> [22nd Feb 2009]

²⁸ <http://www.inspiringlearningforall.gov.uk/toolstemplates/genericlearning/> [18th Aug 2010]

²⁹ <http://www.inspiringlearningforall.gov.uk/toolstemplates/genericsocial/> [18th Aug 2010]

³⁰ http://www.infed.org/thinkers/robert_freed_bales.htm [25th Feb 2009]

'You use yourself as the equipment for this research. You are fully involved and taking part, and can register the experiences and behaviours at first hand from the inside.'³¹

The time spent with the participants and the artists at the projects enabled the interviews to be free flowing and for conversations to develop naturally. This method enabled data to be gathered that the interviewees might have been cautious of disclosing so openly to someone who they were not familiar with.

The framework for the two pilot arts projects studied in this research was more concise due to the limited time that the pilot projects were working within. The framework adopted for these two involved:

- 1) Attending the art sessions being researched getting to know the people involved in the projects and keeping a research diary;
- 2) A focus group with all the participants at one of the sessions;
- 3) Individual semi-structured interviews with the artist and funder.

Due to the pilot projects happening over a shorter period of time, and therefore the lack of opportunity to get to know the participants, focus groups were used with participants as an alternative to semi-structured interviews³². These enabled the researcher to find out more information in a short space of time and enabled the participants to have the security of being in their usual location and amongst the group.

Safeguards were adopted and the research went through University ethical approval. The vulnerabilities of the subject group were considered and in particular the sensitivity of the position in which asylum seekers and refugees found themselves in and any difficulties arising from English not being their first language. The potential risks arising from these were mitigated by having all research consent forms and topic guides translated into Arabic by Newcastle City Council. Interpreters who were known to the participants and had been attending the art

³¹ Wisker, G. (2001) *The Postgraduate Research Handbook* Palgrave Macmillan p.182

³² Wisker, G. (2001) 'The Postgraduate Research Handbook' Palgrave Macmillan

workshop were offered if they felt this would be beneficial to them. It was very important to gain informed consent from everybody involved in the research prior to the research commencing, so each participant involved in the research was spoken to, to ensure they understood the research, topic guide and research consent form. Culturally many of the women would not have felt comfortable talking to a male in an interview situation so the fact that the research was carried out by a female was an important aspect of it. Lectures on ethical issues provided by Newcastle University were attended and appropriate websites were looked at to ensure ethical codes of practice were adhered to³³.

Many different interview approaches exist and different forms of interview style and questions are appropriate depending on the type of research that is being constructed. The four main strategies are: loose-questions; tight questions; converging questions and response guided questions. For the interviews in this research a semi-structured, loose question approach was taken so that participants felt as comfortable and as able to openly express themselves as possible. 'The purpose of a loose or broad-question strategy is to elicit respondents' interpretation on a very general query.'³⁴

Within the semi-structured interviews three main questions were asked. While it was felt that these should be consistent in the type of information they intend to elicit, the wording was modified to relate to the different expectations and identities of funders, artists, and participants. The questions were introduced as part of a conversation rather than as three isolated questions and framed by the Topic Guide, which provided a 'softer' lead-in to questions, and built-in prompts to raise them.

In structuring the research questions the underlying aims of the research were considered:

³³ <http://ethics.grad.ucl.ac.uk/links.php> [22nd June 2009]

³⁴ Murray Thomas, R. (2003) *Blending Qualitative and Quantitative research methods in theses and dissertations* SAGE Publications Inc (USA) - Corwin Press p.63

- * To see the aims of the projects and the hopes of the participants when getting involved in them
- * To see how the delicate nature and needs of the participant group have been addressed
- * The effects the projects have had on community cohesion from the participants, artists and funders point of view
- * To see if there is any way that the projects could be more successful
- * To look how the projects are funded and any issues arising from this

In order to enable a conversation to develop three simple questions were used to create the framework for the conversation:

- * Why did you get involved in this project?
- * What do you think has been the best thing about the project?
- * What might you change about the project to improve it?

Having a semi-structured framework allowed the interviewees to steer the conversation and avoid the interviewer biasing responses. In asking for a narrative it gave the interviewee the opportunity to answer questions freely. This approach gave less bias answers and helped overcome some of the cultural differences where people (particularly asylum seekers who can be in a vulnerable mental or emotional position) often anticipate what you want them to say and try and give you the 'right' answer. The location for the interviews with the participants was considered to be particularly important and needed to be a space within the building in which they were working where they would feel comfortable and able to express themselves and not be overheard by other members of the group or the artists. The interviews with the artists were carried out in neutral spaces so they too would feel free to talk honestly about the project and organisations with which they had been working. The funder's interviews were carried out at the funder's organisations throughout England as it was felt that it was important to go to these organisations and allow them to be in their own environments where they were comfortable for these interviews.

Chapter 4. Literature Review

4.1 General Overview of Issues

There are far more basic and pressing human rights than that of cultural inclusion however participation in cultural life features in Article 27 of Universal Declaration of Human Rights 'Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.'³⁵ Social exclusion and economic marginalisation tend to be much more commonly understood concepts but it is interesting to look at the ideas of cultural inclusion in the light of it's declaration as a 'human right'. 'By cultural exclusion we mean exclusion from access to cultural goods and resources that are regularly accessed by the better-off in society.'³⁶ This poses a difficulty for transient populations such as asylum seekers who may arrive in their new country with little or no understanding of the culture.

In his articulate address to the National Economic and Social Forum Matarasso put the case for cultural inclusion even more strongly. It is, he said 'fundamental to democratic society that everyone has an equal right to participate in the nation's artistic and cultural life, alongside the right to participate in formal democratic processes'³⁷. However, the problem for asylum seekers being included into their 'host' country is precisely that they don't have the same right to participate in the democratic process in the country in which they arrive. Even this, which for Matarasso is the benchmark to set cultural inclusion against, is not available to asylum seekers. Therefore we must remember that there are many factors at play in the lives of asylum seekers which put them at the margins of society including; both a lack of a cultural understanding of their host country and lack of rights to participate in other aspects of society in which they arrive.

In a speech delivered at The Social Inclusion Forum in Dublin on the 4th November

³⁵ <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/index.shtml#a27> [27th January 2010]

³⁶ NESF (2007) *The Arts, Cultural Inclusion and Social Cohesion Report* 35 p. vi

³⁷ NESF (2007) *The Arts, Cultural Inclusion and Social Cohesion Report* 35 p. vi

2009 Hanafin the Republic of Ireland's Minister for Social and Family Affairs, highlighted the emerging severity of the problems currently facing marginalised communities

'The current economic downturn means the challenges we are facing in reducing poverty are more complex than they had been in recent years. Much of the progress we made in recent years in reducing poverty was made possible by the high levels of economic growth we experienced³⁸.'

Ireland had experienced larger, faster economic growth than the UK and collapsed to a greater extent, however the issues faced, limited funds and growing poverty, are also very apparent in the UK. The research presented here is set against this backdrop of diminishing funding and growing pressure to prove arts value, be it social, instrumental, intrinsic, inherent or economic.

³⁸<http://www.welfare.ie/EN/Press/PressReleases/2009/Pages/pr041109.aspx>[28th January 2010]

4.ii Policy Issues

The policy to be looked at in this research is three fold, community cohesion policy, asylum seeker policy and participatory arts policy. This involves drawing together policy from The Social Exclusion Task Force, The Home Office and The Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS). Some documents studied covered two of the three topics but no New Labour Government policy document directly covered all three topics.

4.ii.a Community Cohesion

The concept of community cohesion itself can be traced back as far as the 1980s and Finsterbusch's paper attempts to provide a conceptual framework for the assessment of community cohesion.³⁹ The Arts and community cohesion is a more modern subject with 'community cohesion' having been a prevalent term since 2001. The Museums, Libraries and Archive Council (MLA) included a section looking at the impact arts can have on community cohesion in 2005⁴⁰ and concluded that cultural diversity would become a crucial factor driving policy and that public organisations were starting to understand the case for the arts and embrace the impact they can have on inclusion.

The last decade has seen social policy dominated by the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU). In June 2006 the SEU developed into the Social Exclusion Task Force (SETF). This has responsibility for developing policy that addresses concerns over social exclusion and maintaining a coordinated approach in the development and implementation of such policy across all UK Government departments. When the Labour Party was elected in 1997 a new approach was taken to social exclusion based on a belief that each Government department had a role to play in helping alleviate social exclusion. 'Social policy was constructed around the need to resolve problems of social exclusion and all Government departments were expected to

³⁹ Merli, P. (2002) 'Evaluating the social Impact of Participation in arts activities' *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 8 (1):107-118 p.114

⁴⁰ MLA (2005) *New Directions in Social Policy: developing the evidence base for museums, libraries and archives in England* Burns Owens Partnership

contribute.⁴¹ Newman and Mclean observed that from the mid-1980s many Local Authority run museums had developed a clear social agenda. These were in turn taken up by local authorities and embraced as part of their social agenda. When New Labour returned to power in 1997 they adopted many of these local level policies and expanded them into their national mainstream Government agenda⁴². Eighteen Policy Action Teams (PAT) were set up with PAT 10 in charge of looking at the contributions the DCMS could make. At this point it was not necessarily that The New Labour Government had identified the arts as having a major role to play in social reform but that when setting their own policy or applying for funding, arts organisations had to be aware of the SEU's agenda.

The vision in the UK is one of a shared and equal society. The Community Cohesion Framework states that 'Everyone deserves to live in a strong community, where people get along with each other, where no-one feels excluded, and where everyone has the chance to play a full part in local life.'⁴³ This is the ideal, however the reality has not always been such. In 2001 there were riots involving large numbers of people from different cultural backgrounds in cities across England, including Burnley, Bradford and Oldham. The Ritchie Report was commissioned by The New Labour Government following these riots to investigate their underlying causes. The report suggests that segregation and racial tensions were the root cause of the riots. Racially biased reporting in some local media and the efforts of far-right extremists were also highlighted in the report as influencing widespread perceptions and exacerbating racial tensions.⁴⁴ Once the report was published, there were questions raised as to whether the problem had actually been as racially motivated as the report suggested or if poverty had had a bigger role to play than was initially recognised.⁴⁵ 'The Home Secretary's response was to set up a

⁴¹ Newman, A. (2006) 'The Challenge of Measurement: Instrumental Museum and Gallery Policy in the UK' pre publication p.4

⁴² Newman, A. & McLean, F. (2004) 'Presumption, Policy and Practice' *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 10 (2): 167-181

⁴³ Cohesion Delivery Framework (2008) *Our national understanding of community cohesion: A local understanding of community cohesion: Deciding on a local set of actions* Communities and Local Government p.3

⁴⁴ Ritchie, D. Oldham Independent Review, 10, (The Ritchie Report) p.64

⁴⁵ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/2073038.stm> [22nd Feb 2010]

Ministerial Group on Public Order and Community Cohesion to examine and consider how national policies might be used to promote better community cohesion, based upon shared values and a celebration of diversity.⁴⁶

Many of the policies surrounding community cohesion stem from these riots, in fact, it was the repercussions of the riots which led to community cohesion being included in so much of UK politics, combining notions of social exclusion, diversity and developing shared values. 'Community cohesion' is a term commonly misunderstood and notoriously difficult to define. Following these riots the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (NRU) set up The Community Facilitation Programme which worked on conflict resolution and community facilitation in areas experiencing racial tensions.

'The aim of the programme was to reduce inter-ethnic community conflict in high-risk areas by:

- Improving intelligence gathering;
- Undertaking conflict resolution/prevention work where tensions are identified
- Developing quick response interventions when disturbances occurred
- Strengthening the existing capacity for conflict resolution
- Removing barriers to the effective implementation of the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal within neighbourhoods experiencing conflict.⁴⁷

The Community Facilitation Programme was a short-term reaction to the riots and in 2002 it was disbanded with the focus from the NRU moving to an emphasis on community cohesion as the collective responsibility of all New Labour Government departments. The recognition of community cohesion led to the development of a set of Neighbourhood Renewal Advisors who are deployable to any area where tensions are rising and conflict may break out. This new role that the Neighbourhood Renewal Advisors took on also involved developing conflict resolution work in 88 local authority areas including Newcastle.⁴⁸ 'The aim of this intervention will be to tackle the root causes of local inter and intra ethnic conflict

⁴⁶ Ritchie, D. Oldham Independent Review, 10, (The Ritchie Report)

⁴⁷ <http://www.neighbourhood.gov.uk/page.asp?id=1197> [3rd March 2010]

⁴⁸ <http://collections.europarchive.org/tna/20090106142604/http://www.neighbourhood.gov.uk/page.asp?id=613#a12> [23rd March 2010]

and to raise local capacities for conflict resolution and prevention.⁴⁹ The final strand to their mainstreaming strategy is to ensure that policy supports community cohesion and does not lead to further issues.

The Community Cohesion – Action Guide: guidance for local authorities published in 2004 defines a cohesive community as one where

- There is a common vision and a sense of belonging for all communities
- The diversity of people’s different backgrounds and circumstances is appreciated and positively valued
- Those from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities. Strong and positive relationships are being developed between people from different backgrounds and circumstances in the workplace, in schools and within neighbourhoods.⁵⁰

One view of community cohesion is that it should emphasise shared social norms, values and understandings. This view is one which can be seen as a response to the riots, a way of trying to help people to see similarities amongst the different people living in their community. However, it does not go as far as to try to achieve a sense of community through encouraging an appreciation of how different values and understanding can be harnessed to enhance the community. Another way to look at community cohesion is ‘closing the gap’ within the community between both a social and economic sense.⁵¹

In 1996, Wilkinson drew together a body of evidence showing a correlation between life expectancy and social cohesion. He claims that:

‘Life expectancy in different countries is dramatically improved where income differences are smaller and societies are more cohesive. The social links between

⁴⁹ <http://www.neighbourhood.gov.uk/page.asp?id=1197> [22nd Feb 2010]

⁵⁰ Local Government Association (2004) *The Community Cohesion – action guide: guidance for local authorities*

⁵¹ MLA (2005) *New Directions in Social Policy: developing the evidence base for museums, libraries and archives in England* Burns Owens Partnership p.20

health and inequality draw attention to the fact that social, rather than material, factors are now the limiting component in the quality of life in developed societies.⁵²

Wilkinson thus defines community cohesion as a limited difference in people within society and their similar life opportunities. He argues that poor but egalitarian societies have a high level of good health, putting this down to the social cohesion that this type of community creates. More recently Wilkinson and Pickett have gathered additional evidence to support their view and their study published in 2009 again shows that the quality of social relations deteriorates in less equal societies. They hold the view that inequality is divisive and that greater differences in the equalities of members of societies can make a big difference to many aspects of that society. Within societies with larger equalities differences this can be seen with less money given to charity, higher drug use, lower life expectancy and less trust felt within that society.⁵³ This implies that a less equal society is less tolerant of each other with people being seen more as 'the other'. Within societies where inequality is higher people are less generous to one another. Where there is less inequality people trust others more and are more generous to those in need. Since Britain 'entered the 21st Century with a higher level of income inequality than at any time since World War Two'⁵⁴ combined with the recent collapse in the economy, the outlook is not very promising⁵⁵.

In 2005 the MLA found that literature suggested that the arts have a role to play in community cohesion primarily by

- Acting as a safe place for meetings
- Intercultural understanding
- Overcoming social Isolation (for groups as well as individuals)⁵⁶

⁵² 'Wilkinson R, G. (1996) *Unhealthy Societies The Afflictions of Inequality* Routledge

⁵³ Wilkinson, R. & Pickett, K. (2009) *The Spirit Level; Why more equal societies almost always do better* Penguin p.52

⁵⁴ MLA (2005) *New Directions in Social Policy: developing the evidence base for museums, libraries and archives in England* Burns Owens Partnership p.20

⁵⁵ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2010/apr/21/danny-dorling-charles-dickens-social-inequality>
[21st April 2010]

⁵⁶ MLA (2005) *New Directions in Social Policy: developing the evidence base for museums, libraries and archives in England* Burns Owens Partnership p.21

Another way of looking at community cohesion is to break it down into different forms of capital, including social and cultural capital. That is to say, an individual's social network and links helps to embed them more securely into a community. Moreover, cultural links that an individual might make to others from the same culture or outside their culture, will add to the individual's cultural capital and ensure they are more deeply connected within the community; improving their community cohesion. This is a personal way to identify with community cohesion which is inextricably linked to notions of identity construction. The evidence base identified by the MLA suggests that cultural participation is beneficial because it builds social capital.

Identity issues and intercultural understanding are key to community cohesion whether it is considered an issue of imbalance within a society, promoting values and understanding or social capital; these are all areas where the arts have a role to play. These varied definitions appear to suggest that community cohesion can be seen as having dual strands with the two separate elements encompassing:

- Personal community cohesion, which includes how connected you feel, your social capital and cultural capital, as well as your own personal sense of identity construction.
- Collective community cohesion, which is more specific to areas and how others in the area value each other and their differences, and relates more to notions of social exclusion.

One definition of the term social inclusion which was used by The New Labour Government before community cohesion became so widely used is idea that it is the process by which people and communities at the margins of society are enabled to participate more within that society by removing barriers which they identify both as financial inequality and low status in terms of cultural identity.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ NESF (2007) *The Arts, Cultural Inclusion and Social Cohesion Report* 35 p.1

When social inclusion is looked at this way it is apparent that it is not just about addressing income and material equality but also about understanding both culture and identity. The Richie Report also picked up on identity as an issue which can add to feelings of alienation and specifically recognised asylum seekers as an at risk group for these types of difficulties: 'Alienation is most acute when there is both social and economic deprivation.' Within their report they found that those who suffered most were refugees and asylum seekers as they had significantly more barriers to overcome than established BME communities.⁵⁸

Research in Slough by the Local Government Association showed that neither the established BME communities or the refugees and asylum seekers in the area were feeling well integrated.⁵⁹ The research in Slough does assume that to be well integrated into society is both what is good for BME communities and what they want. This research attributed some of the problem to issues the host communities may have due to the media representation of issues: The research exemplifies the challenges set out in the White Paper '... established communities can feel uneasy with change. They begin to hear and believe stories about ethnic minorities getting preferential treatment and can develop a sense of grievance.'⁶⁰

Another hindrance to community cohesion comes from the prejudices which host communities may have before asylum seekers arrive in their locality or intolerances which are enflamed by the media or far-right groups once asylum seekers have started to be dispersed within their area. The Richie Report identified this problem which had arisen in a small minority of places when it asked about the role and nature of political organisations and parties and the impact of extremist groups.

'Only a small minority of respondents reported significant extremist group activity in their areas. It was suggested that such groups exploit opportunities afforded by national and international news stories and events (e.g. the plight of asylum seekers and the war in Afghanistan) to promote racist messages and set

⁵⁸ Ritchie, D. Oldham Independent Review, 10, (The Ritchie Report) p.61

⁵⁹ Local Government Association (2007) *Estimating the scale and impacts of migration at the local level* Institute of community cohesion p.83

⁶⁰ Local Government Association (2007) *Estimating the scale and impacts of migration at the local level* Institute of community cohesion p.83

communities against each other.⁶¹

The report identifies that ‘There is now an urgent need to recognise a more diverse and sophisticated approach to ‘needs’, which takes on board, for example, the new requirements of recent asylum seekers and the growing disaffection of young males from some established white communities.⁶²

In Britain since the riots some progress towards community cohesion has been made. The Community Cohesion Framework points out an improvement on the way most people feel about their communities.

‘We have learnt to celebrate the talents and contribution to our society of people from different backgrounds, races and faiths. We are becoming more comfortable in our differences and confident in our shared values.’

The latest data from the Citizenship Survey shows that 82% of people feel that individuals from different backgrounds get on well in their area.⁶³ However, it is in the remaining 18% of communities where people of different ethnicity do not feel welcomed, a problem which most occurs for most asylum seekers as they are the hostile neighbourhoods where asylum seekers are likely to be housed.

⁶¹ Ritchie, D. Oldham Independent Review, 10, (The Ritchie Report) p.61

⁶² Ritchie, D. Oldham Independent Review, 10, (The Ritchie Report) p.40

⁶³ Cohesion Delivery Framework (2008) *Our national understanding of community cohesion: A local understanding of community cohesion: Deciding on a local set of actions* Communities and Local Government p.3

4.iib Asylum Seekers Issues

'Asylum seekers were a major focus of attention at the turn of the century. Their numbers, including dependents, grew from 41,500 in 1997 to 103,100 in 2002 in which year they accounted for around 25 per cent of all non-British in migration. Numbers have fallen steadily since this peak to 28,300 in 2006. Asylum seekers now account for only 6 per cent of non-British in migration. The principal countries of origin for asylum seekers in 2006 were: Eritrea, Afghanistan, Iran, China and Somalia.'⁶⁴

When talking about asylum seekers, it is first important to have a clear understanding of the definitions of some of the terms used: for example, in the UK, relevant terms are defined as the following:

- An asylum seeker is someone who has made a formal application for asylum in the UK and is waiting for a decision from the Home Office on their claim.
- A refugee is someone who has gone through the process of applying for asylum and has been granted leave to remain in the UK by the Home Office.
- An illegal immigrant is someone who has entered the UK with false documents, has entered without Government permission or has stayed on once their legal permission has expired.

There is no such thing as an illegal asylum seeker, under the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights article 14 'Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.'⁶⁵ The UK, along with over 130 other countries, signed the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the status of refugees. One of the main reasons to draw up the convention was in

⁶⁴ Local Government Association (2007) *Estimating the scale and impacts of migration at the local level* Institute of community cohesion p.28

⁶⁵ <http://www.un.org/rights/50/decla.htm> [18th Feb 2010]

response to the large numbers of European refugees resulting from the Second World War.

‘The right to asylum was incorporated into UK law in 1993. This means that by law anyone has the right to apply for asylum in the UK and remain until a final decision on their application has been made.’⁶⁶

Having signed this agreement the UK has promised to provide sanctuary to those fleeing persecution.

In March 2009 there was an integration conference⁶⁷ held by the Refugee Council aimed at finding ways to change policy on integration and to help improve the system for asylum seekers. The conference recommendations were then fed back to help inform new Government policy. The conference focused on four main areas: housing, volunteering, education and children and families. The Refugee Council believes that integration takes place from arrival and is a two-way and multi-faceted process. Successful integration benefits everyone, and contributes to the development of safe and cohesive communities. They believe there are aspects of New Labour Government policy that directly contribute to community tensions and hinder efforts to increase community cohesion. Issues in New Labour Government policy identified as contributing to tensions were: the long decision making process; lack of the right to work; lack of immediate access to ESOL classes (English for Speakers of Other Languages); limited access to mainstream services and forced dispersal.⁶⁸

Asylum is often confused with debates about immigration but they are quite separate issues. ‘Asylum applications accounted for only four percent of the total UK immigration figures in 2007.’⁶⁹ Much effort has been made by The New Labour Government to reduce the perceived incentives that may draw people seeking

⁶⁶<http://www.newport.gov.uk/dc/index.cfm?fuseaction=refugeesasylum.frequentquestions>[18th March 2010]

⁶⁷ Refugee Council (25th March 2009) Integration Conference: Building a life in the UK

⁶⁸ Cutler, S. (2007) ‘Refugee Council Response to the Community Cohesion and Migration Inquiry by the Communities and Local Government Committee’ Policy Response Refugee Council

⁶⁹ Home Office (2008) *Asylum statistics United Kingdom 2007* Office of National Statistics

asylum to the UK. However there is no simplistic relation between the support offered to asylum seekers in the UK and the number of applicants arriving here. A piece of research looking at reasons why people seeking asylum may come to the UK found the main reasons were colonial links, family ties and a belief in a fair justice system here.⁷⁰ It must be remembered that often asylum seekers have no choice as to which country they arrive in. It is suggested that these misguided attempts to stop the UK being an 'attractive' place to come to seek asylum has actually resulted in policy withholding access to vital services for asylum seekers alongside having no impact on the numbers arriving in the UK.⁷¹ Reasons asylum seekers may come to the UK are complex but overall indicators for the last ten years show the reasons are consistent globally with a correlation between the highest number of applicants and countries that are war torn or under political oppression.⁷² The New Labour Government's proposition for a cap on immigration would restrict the number of migrants coming to work in the UK from outside the EU but would not have an impact on those coming to the UK to seek asylum.⁷³

Often people who are seeking asylum have experienced persecution or torture in the countries they are fleeing. This can be for many reasons including religious beliefs, sexual preference, membership of a particular group or political activities they have been involved in. Many have left homes, children, livelihoods and possessions in search of safety. When an asylum seeker finally arrives in a safe country and applies for asylum their lives are on hold until a decision on their claim has been made. This process in the UK can take months or even years. Many people seeking asylum have mental or physical health conditions as a result of what they have endured in their country of origin. For these reasons the set of challenges asylum seekers face are different to those faced by other migrants.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Robinson V et al (2002) 'Understanding the decision making of asylum seekers' Home Office

⁷¹ Prior J et al. (2009) 'Asylum Matters: Restoring Trust in the UK Asylum System' Centre for Social Justice p.3

⁷² www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/immigration-asylum-publications.html [24th Feb 2010]

⁷³ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/2010/jun/26/non-eu-immigration-uk-statistics> [26th June 2010]

⁷⁴ Cutler, S. (2007) 'Refugee Council Response to the Community Cohesion and Migration Inquiry by the Communities and Local Government Committee' Policy Response Refugee Council

Asylum seekers suffer specific barriers which prevent community cohesion; these include

- The sensitive mental and physical state they may be in when they arrive
 - Language barriers
 - Poor housing provision
 - Negative stereotypes
- Mental and Physical Health Needs

A document published by the Refugee Council 'Policy Response Refugee Council response to the Community Cohesion and Migration Inquiry by the Communities and Local Government Committee' (2007)⁷⁵ identifies some issues concerning asylum seekers which have a specific impact on community cohesion. Some asylum seekers arrive in the UK feeling that they have fled political oppression and come to a fair country but if they are treated badly here, for example not given a fair hearing or the decision making process takes years, they can start to internalise their feelings and think that their situation must be a reflection of themselves. If this happens it can be very damaging to the person as an individual and also to any chances of that individual feeling integrated into British society. The report 'Estimating the scale and impacts of migration at the local level' when looking at increased pressures on public services, noted that 'Mental health needs are being identified particularly for asylum seekers and refugees who have experienced trauma.'⁷⁶ The Health Education Authority states

'Mental health is the emotional and spiritual resilience which enables us to enjoy life and to survive pain, disappointment and sadness. It is a positive sense of well-being and an underlying belief in our own and others' dignity and worth.'⁷⁷

If asylum seekers are treated with little dignity it arguably has a direct link to

⁷⁵ Cutler, S. (2007) 'Refugee Council Response to the Community Cohesion and Migration Inquiry by the Communities and Local Government Committee' Policy Response Refugee Council

⁷⁶ Local Government Association (2007) *Estimating the scale and impacts of migration at the local level* Institute of community cohesion p.6

⁷⁷ MLA (2004) *New Directions in social policy: Health policy for museums, libraries and archives* p.5

problems they may have around mental health. It has been suggested that for people with mental health needs, participating in artistic activities can improve their social skills and self esteem. This can equip them much better to cope with their own situations. If this is the case then it may also be able to build their confidence and also help them integrate into society with new found self-belief.⁷⁸

- Language

The language barrier is apparent with most asylum seekers who come to Newcastle as English is not their first language.⁷⁹ The Newcastle Asylum Seekers Unit Annual Report 2006/07 shows only 67 of the 449 asylum seekers they support speak English. Asylum seekers are unable to access state English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes for the first 6 months from their arrival in England. This can increase isolation and dramatically reduce their chances of integration with the host community.

'After six months, people with an ongoing asylum claim are eligible for Learning and Skills Council (LSC) funding to learn English. The Refugee Council believes that access to language classes is key to integration, and believe that asylum seekers should be eligible for funding from the date of their claim.'⁸⁰

In Newcastle there is a good level of free ESOL classes available to asylum seekers when they first arrive in England provided by a number of charitable organisations in the city. However there are not enough places on these classes for all asylum seekers and it is hard for them to hear about and access them.

Newcastle City Council has now acknowledged the importance of ESOL classes and in the regeneration strategy for Newcastle in 2021 comments on its provision of ESOL classes for refugees and asylum seekers committing to help meet the growing demand for ESOL classes in the region⁸¹

⁷⁸ Social Exclusion Unit (2004) *Mental Health and Social Exclusion Social Exclusion Unit Report Summary* Office of the Deputy Prime Minister p.79, p.80 & p.83

⁷⁹ Your Homes Newcastle (2007) *Annual Report 2006/07' Local Solutions to international problems* Newcastle Asylum Seekers Unit p.10

⁸⁰ Cutler, S. (2007) 'Refugee Council Response to the Community Cohesion and Migration Inquiry by the Communities and Local Government Committee' Policy Response Refugee Council p.3

⁸¹ Newcastle City Council (2007) *Newcastle in 2021: A Regeneration strategy for Newcastle* p.89

- Poor Housing

Another immediate barrier to community cohesion that specifically affects the collective community cohesion in the neighbourhoods in which the asylum seekers are housed, is the levels of deprivation in these areas. The Refugee Council acknowledge that 'The reality is that most asylum seekers' accommodation is in 'ghettos' in deprived areas.⁸² Asylum seekers are generally housed in accommodation where no one else wants to live, in areas of high deprivation and high crime rates. If asylum seekers are being housed in areas which already have very low levels of community cohesion it will make it even harder for them to find a place in the immediate community around them. The current level of harassment asylum seekers often face in the areas where they are housed, combined with limited or no access to state ESOL classes for the first 6 months of being in the community, are contributing factors which encourage asylum seekers to group together and lessen integration. This can result in them becoming viewed even more so as 'the other' and potentially targeted as another gang in the area. 'Many asylum seekers have reported that they are housed in places where they do not feel safe, and are subject to harassment and sometimes violence.'⁸³

The transient nature of asylum seekers does not help in the quest for collective community cohesion as the cohesion deliver framework accepts 'Levels of population churn or mobility, whether new migrants or new residents, high community transience will make it difficult to develop community links⁸⁴' They also acknowledge that in areas which have a high proportion of transient residents it will affect the level of housing on offer in that area.

'Linked to churn and mobility will be the quality, type and supply will determine the

⁸²http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/campaigning/takeaction/campaigners_pack/press_myths [14th May 2010]

⁸³ Cutler, S. (2007) 'Refugee Council Response to the Community Cohesion and Migration Inquiry by the Communities and Local Government Committee' Policy Response Refugee Council p.3

⁸⁴ Cohesion Delivery Framework Our national understanding of community cohesion A local understanding of community cohesion Deciding on a local set of actions July 2008 Communities and Local Government: London p.31

type of people living in the area and whether they stay. Large social housing estates or swathes of expensive properties will shape the local population.⁸⁵

The Ritchie Report found that when asked about the extent to which different groups were economically and socially separated 'respondents were generally strongly against geographic segregation for resident and asylum seeking minority ethnic groups because they felt it fostered a rather polarised 'them and us' mentality.'⁸⁶ However, large geographically segregated minority, ethnic populations only existed in a minority of areas.

The Ritchie Report also recognises that

'The impact of housing policies on community cohesion seems to have escaped serious consideration to date. This is in contrast to the substantial work on equal opportunities in relation to access to local authority and RSL (Registered Social Landlords) housing. However, this is clearly a major determinant of the shape of communities and will have profound implications on the relationship between different races and cultures.'⁸⁷

It is acknowledged by Durham County Council that there is a growing need for housing for asylum seekers in the North East. There was a significant increase in the number of asylum seekers arriving in the area in 2002 when the Asylum Seeker Unit first started dispersing asylum seekers to the North East. Durham County Council committed to trying to overcome housing difficulties that the increased numbers of asylum seekers arriving in the area can create, commenting that 'At the local level, district-housing officers will be endeavouring to provide decent housing for asylum seekers and transitory migrants.'⁸⁸

- Negative stereotypes

⁸⁵ Cohesion Delivery Framework (2008) Our national understanding of community cohesion: A local understanding of community cohesion: Deciding on a local set of actions Communities and Local Government p.31

⁸⁶ Ritchie, D. Oldham Independent Review, 10, (The Ritchie Report) p.60

⁸⁷ Ritchie, D. Oldham Independent Review, 10, (The Ritchie Report) p.42

⁸⁸ Local Government Association (2007) *Estimating the scale and impacts of migration at the local level* Institute of community cohesion p.114

Asylum seekers get lots of column inches in the press and there is considerable misrepresentation; notoriously confusing the terms asylum seeker, refugee, and illegal immigrant⁸⁹. In October 2003, the Press Complaints Commission published guidance to editors and journalists on coverage of asylum seeker and refugee issues, reminding them that ‘there can be no such thing in law as an illegal asylum seeker.’ Many newspapers, however, continued to use this incorrect term in 2005 as evidenced in The Sun, The Times and The Daily Mail.⁹⁰ This negative and confused reporting surrounding the issue of asylum seekers is recognised by many, including the Refugee Council⁹¹, to add to the difficulties asylum seekers face in this country. The report, Asylum Matters published in 2009, acknowledges that the public have lost confidence in the asylum system and yet have very little understanding of the matter. ‘Sensationalism of the asylum issue by the media and politicians has further contributed to the breakdown of trust and has led to a polarisation of views.’⁹² The term is still occasionally misrepresented by The New Labour Government too, as shown in a 2007 report published by the local Government Association which referred to illegal asylum seekers.⁹³ A report published by the Institute for Public Policy Research concluded that ‘The tabloid press’ reporting of asylum has too often been unbalanced, inaccurate, irresponsible and lacking in context.⁹⁴

Integration is still difficult once an asylum seeker has been granted leave to remain in the host country and has progressed to becoming a refugee as Government support is withdrawn within 7 days. The Asylum Matters report states ‘immediate removal of support is inhumane and makes final resolution harder...even when given a positive decision, to withdraw support within as little as seven days makes

⁸⁹<http://www.ncadc.org.uk/archives/iled%20newszines/oldnewszines/Old%2051-100/newszine71/unhcr.html> [13th May 2010]

⁹⁰<http://www.ncadc.org.uk/archives/iled%20newszines/oldnewszines/Old%2051-100/newszine71/unhcr.html> [13th May 2010]

⁹¹ http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/campaigning/takeaction/campaigners_pack/press_myths [14th May 2010]

⁹² Prior J et al. (2009) ‘Asylum Matters: Restoring Trust in the UK Asylum System’ Centre for Social Justice p.1

⁹³ Local Government Association (2007) *Estimating the scale and impacts of migration at the local level* Institute of community cohesion p.115

⁹⁴ Greenslade, R. (2005) ‘Seeking Scapegoats The coverage of asylum in the press’ Institute for Public Policy Research

integration into the British way of life almost impossible.⁹⁵ The UK Border Agency (UKBA) in March 2009 acknowledge that to optimise the contribution refugees can bring to the UK they have to 'provide critical support immediately after grant of refugee status⁹⁶'. There is a stark contrast with UKBA admitting that refugees need critical support, the report mentions many things which may be able to be done to help refugees integrate, but there is nothing in the report about what should happen in the critical months or years leading up to a decision being made when the person is still an asylum seeker living in the UK. This is potentially the most crucial time for integration to take place.

Other ideas that Policy Response Refugee Council response to the Community Cohesion and Migration Inquiry touches on are: forced dispersal, where different members of the same family may not be placed in the same area; access to mainstream services being limited, due to them not being entitled to the same services as British Citizens and language barriers to the limited services they can access.⁹⁷

Asylum seekers are in a state of limbo whilst they are waiting for a decision to be made. They are not allowed to work in the UK and this is another cause for them becoming isolated, suffering from mental health problems and becoming de-skilled and de-motivated whilst they are here. A recent campaign, Let Them Work, has been launched to try and get asylum seekers in a position where they can start supporting themselves⁹⁸.

The Annual Report 2006/07 by Newcastle Asylum Seekers Unit, suggests that asylum seekers appear to be divided in their opinion of Newcastle.

'In 2007, as in 2003, the most common thing people liked about living in Newcastle

⁹⁵ Prior J et al. (2009) 'Asylum Matters: Restoring Trust in the UK Asylum System' Centre for Social Justice p.9

⁹⁶ Homer, L. et al (2009) 'Moving on together: Government's recommitment to supporting refugees' UKBA Home Office

⁹⁷ Cutler, S. (2007) 'Refugee Council Response to the Community Cohesion and Migration Inquiry by the Communities and Local Government Committee' Policy Response Refugee Council

⁹⁸ <http://e-activist.com/ea-campaign/clientcampaign.do?ea.client.id=121&ea.campaign.id=2672> [21st June 2010]

was the friendly people. 34% of respondents said that this was something they liked. "I really like living here. It feels like home. The people are friendly. The community is great."⁹⁹

At the same time the report acknowledges that

'Racism is still a problem. As in 2003, the main issues that respondents did not like about living in Newcastle were linked to crime, harassment, racism or problems with anti-social behaviour of either adults or children in their area. Altogether 38% of respondents cited these kinds of issues as being something they do not like about living in Newcastle.'¹⁰⁰

The population in Newcastle is changing. The city's population is diversifying between 1991 and 2001, the BME community in Newcastle's grew by nearly 60% to 6.9% of the total population. Over 5,000 asylum seekers have been housed in Newcastle and since 2001 the city has had over 3,750 international students each year.¹⁰¹ The estimated total population of Newcastle in 2008 was 277,800 people changes in migration are seen to be the main reason the figure is 1.5% higher than the previously estimated 273,600. 'The revised estimates suggest that in 2008, there are around 3,800 more people moving into Newcastle than leaving - an extra 900 people compared to the previous estimates.'^{102,}

Newcastle Asylum Seekers annual report showed sensitivity to some of the issues faced by asylum seekers in recognising that they have had to leave their countries because of grave concerns and fear for their lives. The report acknowledges that there are some areas of Newcastle where asylum seekers are housed where there are racial tensions which have built up over time.

'Changing prejudices built up over generations is more difficult and some of the results of this year's satisfaction survey of clients demonstrates that there is no overnight fix. Anti-social behavior and harassment remain unwanted problems for too many clients who clearly have enough to deal with as they await the verdict of

⁹⁹ Your Homes Newcastle (2007) *Annual Report 2006/07' Local Solutions to international problems* Newcastle Asylum Seekers Unit p.4

¹⁰⁰ Your Homes Newcastle (2007) *Annual Report 2006/07' Local Solutions to international problems* Newcastle Asylum Seekers Unit p.7

¹⁰¹ Newcastle City Council (2007) *Newcastle in 2021: A Regeneration strategy for Newcastle* p.51

¹⁰² <http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/core.nsf/a/popcurrent?opendocument> [17th July 2010]

the Home Office.¹⁰³

This realistic admission that there is no over night fix to some anti-social behaviour and built up negative feeling, shows that the ASU realise what they are dealing with. However, if community cohesion is to be pursued, something must still be done to try and address these negative feelings and help end anti-social behaviour. The Newcastle Asylum Seeker Unit has shown national excellence and was invited to speak at a national seminar in Edinburgh about community cohesion. In 2006/2007 they were nominated for two awards, one for Public Servants of the Year run by Public finance and the other for Excellence in delivering mixed community awards run by the Chartered Institute of Housing.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ Your Homes Newcastle (2007) *Annual Report 2006/07' Local Solutions to international problems* Newcastle Asylum Seekers Unit p.5

¹⁰⁴ Your Homes Newcastle (2007) *Annual Report 2006/07' Local Solutions to international problems* Newcastle Asylum Seekers Unit p.11

4.ic The Arts

Current thinking on the social impact the arts can have on these communities, has stemmed from decades of debates looking at the intrinsic impact of the arts compared to its instrumental impact. The DCMS is The New Labour Government department which creates and implements Government policy on the arts; they are advised by the MLA and Arts Council England (ACE) on policy and how it could be changed or improved. Policy is now driven by The New Labour Government's need to prove the worth of its services and the need for evidence to enable this to be proved. This 'evidence based policy' and New Public Management coming to the fore has translated to the arts and led to much debate on the measurement of the arts, which will be looked at in more detail later in this research. It has been suggested that using mainly quantitative measures is not appropriate to the arts or sensitive to the qualities they have.¹⁰⁵ This has been the centre of much discussion in the mid 2000s because performance targets and objectives, which are addressed in quantitative terms, are at the heart of the funding agreement between the HM Treasury and the DCMS. The DCMS has had to continue to strive for evidence based policy targets despite recognition that implementation of this in the arts is problematic.¹⁰⁶

The most recent policy ideas emerging from the DCMS are in the McMaster Report. It acknowledges to some extent the faults which this measurement technique employs, bringing the emphasis back to the judgment of professionals; another age old debate on the 'excellence of the arts'. The report says: 'If culture is excellent it can help us make sense of our place in the world, ask questions we would not otherwise have asked, understand the answers in ways we couldn't otherwise have understood and appreciate things we have never before experienced.'¹⁰⁷ There are

¹⁰⁵ Gear, J. (1986) 'Eysenck's visual aesthetic sensitivity test (VAST) as an example of the need for explicitness and awareness of context in empirical aesthetics' *Poetics* 15: 555-564

¹⁰⁶ Newman, A. (2006) 'The Challenge of Measurement: Instrumental Museum and Gallery Policy in the UK' pre publication p.16

¹⁰⁷ McMaster, B. (2008) 'Supporting Excellence in the Arts, From Measurement to Judgement' Department for Culture Media and Sport p.9

extremely optimistic elements in this report which acknowledges the changing face of Britain and the positive role this can play in culture.

‘Artists, practitioners, organisations and funders must have diversity at the core of their work. Out of the society in which we live today the greatest culture could grow, but this will only happen if the cultural sector is truly relevant to 21st century Britain and its audiences.’¹⁰⁸

Art has been identified as having a part to play in the integration of asylum seekers. The New Labour Government’s social exclusion report in 2004,¹⁰⁹ recognises that

‘Using community services can improve self-confidence and self esteem, provide opportunities to meet new people, and help strengthen existing relationships with families and friends. Local services such as colleges or arts and sports activities, can offer opportunities to meet people ... and integrate into the local community.’

The 2007 report estimating the scale and impacts of migration,

‘Discovered that the majority of new ethnic communities raised the need for more activities, particularly for their young people. Ideas included youth clubs, sports activities and arts activities. Refugee communities were concerned about their young people potentially becoming involved in drugs and crime. They wanted to see activities which they could take part in as ‘for some, mainstream youth clubs were seen as places of exclusion rather than integration.’¹¹⁰”

Language difficulties was seen to be one of the barriers that young people from recently arrived communities attending mainstream youth provision faced. The New Labour Government’s social exclusion report in 2004 also expresses that ‘benefits arising from learning include...having a greater sense of purpose, establishing new friendships and access to better jobs and housing.’ These outcomes can be achieved to a certain extent through learning within art. The report acknowledges that ‘Arts are believed to have a therapeutic role as well as helping people reintegrate into wider society by increasing self esteem, confidence and social

¹⁰⁸ McMaster, B. (2008) ‘Supporting Excellence in the Arts, From Measurement to Judgement’ Department for Culture Media and Sport p.9

¹⁰⁹ Social Exclusion Unit (2004) *Mental Health and Social Exclusion Social Exclusion Unit Report Summary* Office of the Deputy Prime Minister p.79, p.80 & p.83

¹¹⁰ Local Government Association (2007) *Estimating the scale and impacts of migration at the local level* Institute of community cohesion p.97

networks.' The role the arts can play in these situations and whether art can be used to advance levels of community cohesion within Tyne and Wear will be discussed in this research.

4. iii Arts Funding

'The Art's Council Royal Charter (1967) contains an explicit pronouncement of the Council's obligation to increase the accessibility of the arts to the public throughout Britain and across social classes.'¹¹¹

In the early 80's Government emphasis on the arts was on economic growth with little attention being paid to the social aspect of arts in politics. By the mid 80's measuring the economic impact of the arts was seen to have stalled, so attention moved to the social impact the arts could have. As early as 1986 the ACE had recognised the benefit of art to the wider community. In their publication 'Partnership: Making Arts Money Work Harder' It declares the arts can 'Bring new life to inner cities' and 'help develop the skills and talents of ethnic minorities and other specific communities'¹¹²

In the late 80's there was a change in the way arts were funded. Between 1988 and 1989 for the first time local authority spending on arts exceeded that of central Government. This resulted in less and less attention being paid to the aesthetics of art and more to the social impact of arts projects. This is true too on a European level where between 1989 and 1993 only 7.7% of funding for arts came from specific cultural programmes; the majority came from structural funds which promote balanced social and economic development.¹¹³

The arts sector recognised decades ago the importance of making art accessible to all sections of the community and in more recent years of acknowledging the positive impacts around social exclusion, community cohesion and neighbourhood renewal. Since then the rise in interest in how the arts can impact on the socially excluded has grown in the UK and throughout Europe. This interest has increased proportionately to social and economic difficulties, however in the light of the

¹¹¹ Belfiore, E. (2002) 'Art as a means of alleviating social exclusion: Does it really work? A critique of instrumental cultural policies and social impact studies in the UK.' *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 8 (1): 91-106 p.92

¹¹² Arts Council (1986) *Partnership: Making Arts Money Work Harder*

¹¹³ Belfiore, E. (2002) 'Art as a means of alleviating social exclusion: Does it really work? A critique of instrumental cultural policies and social impact studies in the UK.' *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 8 (1): 91-106 p.92

current 'social and economic recession' and considerable cut backs on all elements of funding activities, inevitably investment in arts activities for the socially excluded has been cut back at a point when it can be argued that it is needed the most. With these funding pools drying up it would appear that many of the projects with the most vulnerable people, including those with refugees and asylum seekers, are amongst the hardest hit.¹¹⁴

The Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) prides itself on England being a balanced country where the arts are funded through a variety of means with money coming from Government subsidy, private donation, business sponsorship and earned income. This helps England sit in the middle ground between countries that are almost entirely dependent on the state such as France or Germany and countries including the USA which are almost entirely dependent on private investment¹¹⁵. It could therefore be expected that with funding provided from a broad range of public/private sources that greater opportunity for social and economic growth exists in the UK.

As part of central New Labour Government the DCMS has to follow what their policy dictates and allocate funding accordingly. Local Authorities are run regionally and have more input into how money is spent in their particular areas. The DCMS is responsible for New Labour Government policy in many areas including the Arts, Olympic Games 2012 and tourism. In 1997 the DCMS was re-named from the Department for National Heritage (DNH). The DCMS does not fund the arts directly, this is administered through the Arts Council, an arms length organisation, which distributes money to the arts from both The New Labour Government and the National Lottery. Local Authorities do put significant investment into the arts. They are left to decide how to fund the arts as they are able to support the arts regionally but this is not a statutory requirement from central Government. Therefore the levels of arts funding from Local Authorities in different areas across the UK differs dramatically.

¹¹⁴http://www.asaproject.org/web/index.php?view=article&id=132%3Apress-release-lack-of-public-funding-for-asylum-support-appeals-causes-unnecessary-destitution&option=com_content&Itemid=72
[27th Aug 2009]

¹¹⁵ DCMS (2007) *Guide to Arts Funding in England* p.5

In 2007 when the Guide for Arts Funding in England was published the availability of money for the arts was already beginning to tighten.

‘Increasing pressures on local authority budgets mean that dedicated funds for arts projects are becoming less common. However, there is a growing body of evidence illustrating the wider benefits of the arts and local authorities are therefore engaging with cultural organisations to help deliver their broader objectives for local communities.’¹¹⁶

These wider benefits acknowledged by many local authorities include developing healthier communities and building safer and stronger neighbourhoods. With these double agendas in mind the majority of the arts funded by Local Authorities has at the forefront of its funding, the idea of using art as an instrumental tool to address a different New Labour Government target.

Four key New Labour Government initiatives which address social issues and work with socially excluded groups are The Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, New Deal for Communities, Positive Activities for Young People and The Children’s Fund. These initiatives acknowledge the role arts can play in helping them achieve their targets however funding is again regional and therefore depends of the priorities of each individual Local Authority as to whether they tap into these funds to access money for the arts.

ACE, an arms length organisation not directly linked into central Government agenda but who still follow it invested £1.1 billion of public money from The New Labour Government and the National Lottery in supporting the arts between 2006 and 2008. This provides a large foundation of support for the arts. Two of their six aims for this period were internationalism and celebrating diversity. ACE has to show, through a series of performance indicators defined by the funding agreement with the DCMS, that it is actively seeking to fulfil The New Labour Government’s

¹¹⁶ DCMS (2007) *Guide to Arts Funding in England* p.7

objectives for the arts¹¹⁷ The majority of funding ACE receive from the DCMS is awarded to organisations on an on-going basis. A second key function of ACE¹¹⁸ is to forge partnerships by match funding and also supporting relationships between arts organisations.

The other major contributor of funding to the arts for which The New Labour Government sets the agenda is the National Lottery. This is split into two main categories Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) dealing with all aspects of heritage from nature conservation to oral histories and The Big Lottery which funds everything community related from health to education within each of these there are smaller streams of funding to support. The National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA) was established by an act of parliament in 1998 they use an endowment fund originally established from the Lottery but do not get regular instalments of Lottery money. NESTA also contribute to funding the arts mainly focusing on fellowships and learning opportunities. See Appendix a for a map of Government arts funding distribution¹¹⁹.

The Government also distribute funds through The Museums Libraries and Archives Council (MLA), which is a company with charitable status and is sponsored by the DCMS. Within the new budget cuts The New Labour Government have announced that the MLA will be abolished in April 2012. It has been suggested that the MLA may become part of ACE¹²⁰. 'MLA's vision is to be a strategic leader; to be a source of expert advice; and to promote best practice, encourage innovation and broker partnerships that build a confident and sustainable sector.'¹²¹ They deal specifically with Museums Libraries and Archives. One of their targets for 2008/09-2010/2011 is to increase the number of visits by adults from priority groups which include British Minority Ethnic (BME) to

¹¹⁷ Belfiore, E. (2002) 'Art as a means of alleviating social exclusion: Does it really work? A critique of instrumental cultural policies and social impact studies in the UK.' *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 8 (1): 91-106 p.93

¹¹⁸ DCMS (2007) *Guide to Arts Funding in England* p.12

¹¹⁹ www.artquest.org.uk [24th Jan 2010]

¹²⁰ <http://www.museumassociation.org/museums-journal/news/27072010-mla-arts-council> [22nd Aug 2010]

¹²¹ DCMS-MLA (2008) *Funding Agreement 2008/09-2010/11*p.2

museums.¹²² One of the main projects has been 'Renaissance' which aims to transform England's museums and assist in community development, education and economic regeneration. In light of the abolition of the MLA the Coalition Governments cultural minister, Ed Vaizey, said: 'There is now an opportunity to integrate Renaissance and the other important functions of the MLA into the wider cultural framework.'¹²³ The Renaissance is delivered regionally, the North East's mission statement is 'To extend and improve museum provision, through partnership, creativity and innovation, for the benefit of the North East and its diverse communities.'¹²⁴

In contrast, private funding for the arts comes from business sponsorship, although this type of funding is harder to secure and has to have a commercial advantage for the business, trusts or foundations these are generally a more easily accessible source of funding, particularly for smaller arts organisations. Trusts and foundations, as a general rule, try to support projects which fall outside Government funding remit. These often tend to focus on access to the arts for disadvantaged or minority communities and new experimental methods of tackling current problems through the arts. Arts projects within the UK can also look further a field for funding to international funds including funds set up by the EU to tackle economic imbalances. These applications can be complex and lengthy because of the strict specifications but when successful do tend to release significant funds.¹²⁵

In 2002 Belfiore identified the change in emphasis of the DCMS to focus on the contribution the arts can make towards 'alleviating the symptoms of social exclusion'. This shift in emphasis has also been reflected in the agendas of other funding bodies for art across the UK. 'Young people and the socially excluded seem to be now – in the rhetoric of the Department of Culture, Media and Sport - at the top of the funding agenda'¹²⁶. This in itself should have been a positive move for

¹²² DCMS-MLA (2008) *Funding Agreement 2008/09-2010/11*p.7

¹²³ <http://www.museumassociation.org/museums-journal/news/27072010-mla-arts-council> [22nd Aug 2010]

¹²⁴ http://www.mla.gov.uk/what/programmes/renaissance/regions/north_east/who [14th May 2010]

¹²⁵ DCMS (2007) *Guide to Arts Funding in England*

¹²⁶ Belfiore, E. (2002) 'Art as a means of alleviating social exclusion: Does it really work? A critique of instrumental cultural policies and social impact studies in the UK.' *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 8 (1): 91-106 p.91

public funded arts projects which include asylum seekers however it does bring with it problems. With the new focus on the socially excluded and emphasis on art as an instrumental tool to achieving New Labour Government agendas also came questions of measurement and how to show the value of such projects to ensure sustained funding for them.

4.iv The Instrumental or Intrinsic Debate in Art

Throughout history there has been a divergence of opinion regarding the primary function of art galleries, as either instrumental or intrinsic. Initially art was viewed for its beauty and its greatness, thus seen as having an intrinsic value:

‘Historically and somewhat ironically ... many publicly funded cultural initiatives may have been anything but democratic, or even publicly focused. Instead, they have been the preserve of a self-serving cultural elite more concerned with impressing each other than delivering public value or benefit.’¹²⁷

However many see art as always having been instrumental. Bennett and Belfiore’s book *The Social Impact of the Arts*, views Instrumentalism within the arts as 2500 years old and purports that it is the arts have always been a tool to express power in social relations.¹²⁸

As far back as the nineteenth century, free national galleries were opened with the intention of culturally educating the working classes through the instrumental value of the arts. Some art galleries were opened with the specific purpose of engaging the poor, attempting to improve them through the rosy portrayal of middle class culture in the art on show. One of these galleries was the Whitechapel Gallery in the East End of London opened by wealthy patrons as an alternative place to gather than the local alehouse.¹²⁹ Some members of that society saw art as being able to influence people and communicate a message that would help them join the improving cultures of the time. This idea, however, was not met with support from everyone, despite being championed by the Government at the time and the wealthy classes. Some felt that far from appreciating the art and being inspired to a better life by the qualities of the artefacts on show, the working class men and women were simply seeking shelter from the elements.¹³⁰ Gibson (2008) in her article ‘In defence of instrumentality’ points out that using the arts as a social tool to

¹²⁷ Coles, A. (2008) ‘Instrumental death of a reductionist’ *Cultural Trends* 17 (4): 329 -334 p.330

¹²⁸ Belfiore, E. & Bennett, O. (2008) *The social impact of the arts* Palgrave

¹²⁹ Wilson, S. (2000) ‘The Highest Art for the Lowest People’ In: Barlow, P. and Trodd, C. (eds.) *Governing Cultures* Ashgate Publishing Ltd p.172-187

¹³⁰ Trodd, C. (1994) ‘Culture, Class, City’ In Poynton, M. (ed.) *Art Apart* Manchester University Press

re-integrate citizens into society can be seen at the end of the First World War. In this instance, a range of cultural programmes were used to help educate returning soldiers and post war citizens so they could better aid the reconstruction efforts in the country. She also points out that ideas around community cohesion have been prevalent in art for some time:

‘Nor is the use of cultural programmes to effect community cohesion an invention of New Labour; the first chair of the ACE was economist Maynard Keynes whose aim to ‘pump prime’ the arts was, at least in the very early years of the Arts Council’s history, to do with community re-building after the First World War.’¹³¹

Through the 1980s it became clear that the arts were seen to have social benefit and became widely accepted as playing a role in political agendas. The *New Museology* (1989)¹³² makes this shift apparent with many of the authors touching on the instrumental impact the arts can have on society. The updated focus was to look towards the arts being used directly for social impact on current Government issues, to look beyond the intrinsic value of the arts to how they might be used to add to society. Newman suggests that a New Public Management¹³³ was put into play and this change in policy was ‘a response to fiscal pressures and an attempt by Government to manage the public sector by adopting principles and practices derived from the private.’¹³⁴ The New Labour Government could see the potential that the arts could have on social regeneration by creating jobs and tourism as well as addressing their concerns of social integration.

This debate has been as prominent in literature as it has been in practice. In 1997 Fleming published an article in the *Museums Journal*, claiming that ‘objects are a means to an end and not an end in themselves.’¹³⁵ Fleming argues that the quality of urban life is defined by a city’s cultural activity: ‘It can generate community pride it promotes self-development and equal opportunities, it celebrates culture and

¹³¹ Gibson, L. (2008) ‘In Defence of Instrumentality’ *Cultural Trends* 17 (4): 247-257 p.249

¹³² Vergo, P. (1989) *The New Museology* Reaktion Books

¹³³ Newman, A. (2006) ‘The Challenge of Measurement: Instrumental Museum and Gallery Policy in the UK’ pre publication

¹³⁴ Newman, A. (2006) ‘The Challenge of Measurement: Instrumental Museum and Gallery Policy in the UK’ pre publication p.3

¹³⁵ Fleming, D. (1997) ‘The regeneration game’ *Museums Journal* 97 (4): 32-33

ethnic diversity, it provides opportunities, choice and access, and it can help bring about social cohesion.¹³⁶ He persists that the arts can be used as a tool for social reform and he feels this is still not being utilised to its full potential by everyone involved in the cultural sector even though historically the arts demonstrate it can be instrumental in aiding the reconstruction of communities. In the same year that Fleming wrote this article the New Labour Government came to power. This is the first year in which it is suggested community cohesion issues could be addressed through the arts. This new Government created a fresh focus on community cohesion and regeneration, articulating clear ideas about the arts being used in their social agenda. This agenda dealt with both theoretical debates and the practicalities of arts being used as a tool for social regeneration at a new level.

Since Fleming, both Brighton^{137 138} and Appleton¹³⁹ have criticised the adoption of the wider social agenda defending the arts' intrinsic value. Brighton expresses strong views that art should not be used as a means to achieve social inclusion as this is degrading the art itself. He refers to 'Making it Count: the Contribution of Culture Media and Sport to Social inclusion' published by the DCMS in 2002 stating that this document shows 'that 'soul measurement' (the impact of arts on social inclusion) has failed.'¹⁴⁰ He uses this as an example of how ludicrous it is attempting to use art for something that it is not. He goes on to purport that The New Labour Government is blind to unsuccessful initiatives calling failures 'challenges'. He feels strongly that the rise of the importance of quantitative data and the wider The New Labour Government's control over the arts, the more culture is valued for its impact rather than it's intrinsic value.¹⁴¹

Coles is strongly against the idea of art as an instrumental tool:

¹³⁶ Fleming, D. (1997) 'The regeneration game' *Museums Journal* 97 (4): 32-33

¹³⁷ Brighton, A. (1999) 'Towards a command culture: New labour's cultural policy and soviet-socialist Realism' *Critical Quarterly* 41 (3): 101-120

¹³⁸ Brighton, A. (2003) 'Save our Souls' *Museums Journal* 103 (7): 18-19

¹³⁹ Appleton, J. (2001) *Museums for the people* Institute of Ideas London

¹⁴⁰ Brighton, A. (2003) 'Save our Souls' *Museums Journal* 103 (7): 18-19

¹⁴¹ Selwood, S. (2002) 'Measuring Culture: Collecting statistics to prove the 'use' of the arts has been largely useless' *Spiked Culture* p.1 <http://www.spikedonline.com/index.php/site/article/6851/> [22nd Feb 2009]

'It is, therefore, my contention that the application of this taxonomy to the public value of cultural activity is unnecessary, unhelpful and sometimes damaging to that which it seeks to classify. It is a construct that has distracted us, albeit unwittingly, from examining the true significance of what we do (and what we can do), and has ultimately been used against us to question our motives, our effectiveness and our impact.'¹⁴²

Coles feels that to reduce the social impact of the arts to instrumental is to strip away what is at its core. He believes that these effects are not instrumental but they are what the arts exist to do. To call the art instrumental is, in his opinion,

'Such a reductionist approach would obscure, distort and demean the complex and interrelated factors at play. The impacts and the benefits that participants report and the value that accrues are the natural result of engaging with enriching cultural experiences, often with other people. Call it culture, even call it civilisation – but do not call it instrumental because it is not ancillary to some greater purpose - it is why public cultural institutions exist.'¹⁴³

Indeed, Coles warns that the adoption of labels such as instrumental is unhelpful and meaningless to the cultural sector sensing that this sends out a confused message with one interpretation being that culture can not make a large impact on mainstream agendas and another interpretation of the word to imply that if cultural experiences contribute to social agendas by developing communities or personally affecting individuals that this is merely a subsidiary impact of culture which bears no relation to the true role of culture.

Gibson argues that instrumentalism 'has always been integral to cultural policy, and that instrumental cultural policies are in fact policies of production.' She quotes O'Neill who notes that 'the lack of historical context means that museums can be presented as being outside history, having an un-changing essence that is now under attack.'¹⁴⁴ Gibson also points to Bennett, Dodsworth and Joyce, highlighting that the current process of evidence gathering, operates over too short a time frame to be considered of any significant relevance. She feels looking to the past and expecting that the culture was instrumental, can give us a better idea of the longer-

¹⁴² Coles, A. (2008) 'Instrumental death of a reductionist' *Cultural Trends* 17 (4): 329 -334 p.330

¹⁴³ Coles, A. (2008) 'Instrumental death of a reductionist' *Cultural Trends* 17 (4): 329 -334 p.334

¹⁴⁴ Gibson, L. (2008) 'In Defence of Instrumentality' *Cultural Trends* 17 (4): 247-257

term social impact culture might have. She then goes on to question the term's instrumental and intrinsic values and the different definitions that have been given to them. Whether learning is of instrumental or intrinsic benefit to art has been questioned. To address this, Hewison and Holden (2004) developed a framework for the assessment of cultural value where Holden referred to learning as instrumental. Scott highlights the potential confusion when he used the Holden framework and deems learning an intangible, and therefore of intrinsic benefit of museums.¹⁴⁵ Gibson also alludes to Belfiore's writing, which points to the limitations of the evidence and suggests it is commissioned and presented in a way which attempts to prove social impact. In discussion of Belfiore, Gibson feels that the most constructive way to view culture is to think of 'culture is not a means to an end. It is an end in itself'¹⁴⁶, Gibson goes onto question whether the real challenge particularly for cultural policy analysts is identifying a justification for public spending on culture and ways which culture can be supported in a way that is both democratic and accountable.

Gibson cries out for a constructive guide other than those which simply criticise each other, suggesting that much debate is about non-agreement and not enough is practical guidance: 'In the absence of analyses that seek to follow up these deconstructions with alternative proposals for ways of thinking about culture and its administration the field is left open for a return to the kinds of elite, exclusionary policies which have characterised cultural administration in the past, and in many cases still do.'¹⁴⁷

In a study by the ACE in 2006 to try and gauge the public's perception regarding the value in culture, they discuss with members of the public how to spend public money on the arts. They felt that 'the introduction of questions around public funding prompted a shift in favour of more 'instrumental' concerns.'¹⁴⁸ A collective responsibility appears to have arisen when discussing public spending. The

¹⁴⁵ Gibson, L. (2008) 'In Defence of Instrumentality' *Cultural Trends* 17 (4): 247-257

¹⁴⁶ Gibson, L. (2008) 'In Defence of Instrumentality' *Cultural Trends* 17 (4): 247-257

¹⁴⁷ Gibson, L. (2008) 'In Defence of Instrumentality' *Cultural Trends* 17 (4): 247-257

¹⁴⁸ Bunting, C. (2008) 'What instrumentalism? A public perception of Value' *Cultural Trends* 17 (4): 323- 328 p.327

question is not so much whether art has an intrinsic value or should be used as a tool for a social outcome, but more about focussing on the most effective use of public money. Some findings from this study are illustrated bellow.¹⁴⁹

‘Less engaged participants conveyed some powerful negative feelings towards the arts. Many described a sense of being excluded from something that other enjoy, which led some to feelings of resentment and hostility¹⁵⁰,

‘There was a prevailing sense that while in theory the arts may have a lot to offer they are currently too exclusive and too far removed from most people’s experience of life.¹⁵¹,

‘Participants concluded that the ACE should seek to benefit society as a whole by building the capacity of individuals and communities to understand, imagine and shape the world around them and to enjoy a richer, more creative life.¹⁵² The ACE’s plan for 2008 – 11’s mission statement it ‘Great art for everyone¹⁵³,

Current thinking has moved on from considering art as merely intrinsic in the original sense, to a period where participatory art was funded and thought of as almost entirely instrumental. A new phase of thinking accepts art at it’s core as both intrinsic and capable of a secondary instrumental influence too; able to impact people and have life changing consequences. This current thinking is highlighted in the 2008 DCMS publication ‘Supporting Excellence in the Arts’ (also referred to as the McMaster report):

‘The driver must be not the achievement of simplistic targets, but an appreciation of the profound value of art and culture. Just as the new society we live in has immense potential for the creation of art, so art has never before been so needed to

¹⁴⁹ Bunting, C. (2008) ‘What instrumentalism? A public perception of Value’ *Cultural Trends* 17 (4): 323- 328 p.326

¹⁵⁰ Bunting, C. (2008) ‘What instrumentalism? A public perception of Value’ *Cultural Trends* 17 (4): 323- 328 p.325

¹⁵¹ Bunting, C. (2008) ‘What instrumentalism? A public perception of Value’ *Cultural Trends* 17 (4): 323- 328 p.326

¹⁵² Bunting, C. (2008) ‘What instrumentalism? A public perception of Value’ *Cultural Trends* 17 (4): 323- 328 p.326

¹⁵³ Bunting, C. (2008) ‘What instrumentalism? A public perception of Value’ *Cultural Trends* 17 (4): 323- 328 p.326

understand the deep complexities of Britain today.¹⁵⁴

Perhaps because of difficulties in gathering evidence for the arts with regard to social impact, the DCMS strips away the values of targets which it had been striving for, such as inclusion, and lifts art back up to a status where excellent art does by its very nature as excellent, bring society together. Sir Brian McMaster also holds a belief that the excellence in art, which we can unlock in our current society, comes from the diversity within our society; a potential that should be harnessed:

‘Artists, practitioners, organisations and funders must have diversity at the core of their work. Out of the society in which we live today the greatest culture could grow.¹⁵⁵,

McMaster argues that contemporary British society is the most exciting there has ever been. He goes on to assert that societal experiences have the potential to produce the greatest art yet, if we can understand the core of Britain’s current identity.¹⁵⁶

In this report, McMaster claims that art still has an intrinsic value in Britain today. If communities embraced the culture in which they are living then it could be possible to push forward and produce art work which excels in excellence. To do this the arts sector has to discover how to utilize the exciting resources offered by a diverse society. McMaster argues that the desire and ability to innovate, and willingness to take risks is essential when in pursuit of excellence in the arts, admitting, however, that financial security is also essential for this.¹⁵⁷

McMaster’s view is supported by James Purnell, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport (1997–2010): ‘The move from measurement to judgment which Sir Brian suggests is a vital one, and one that will allow all of us to articulate better the

¹⁵⁴ McMaster, B. (2008) ‘Supporting Excellence in the Arts, From Measurement to Judgement’ Department for Culture Media and Sport p.5

¹⁵⁵ Ibid p.5

¹⁵⁶ McMaster, B. (2008) ‘Supporting Excellence in the Arts, From Measurement to Judgement’ Department for Culture Media and Sport

¹⁵⁷ McMaster, B. (2008) ‘Supporting Excellence in the Arts, From Measurement to Judgement’ Department for Culture Media and Sport p.7

importance of the arts, how and where they add value to our society and why, now more than ever, they are deserving of public funding.¹⁵⁸ He acknowledges that even in a time of recession when funds are limited, art can justify its existence in society to the point where it should still be funded. Despite this apparent return to a belief in the intrinsic value of the arts, the arts still need to show where they add value to society and that evidence for funding still needs to be produced.

The McMaster report has already been criticised by many, including Gibson who is concerned that if instrumentalist claims are deconstructed without another option presented, then it is handing culture back to the elites: 'To conclude from this that instrumentalism per se is a 'threat' is to hand over rationales for culture's management to those who believe that cultural funding and management needs no justification and should not be accounted for because certain people 'just know' what is worthy.¹⁵⁹ She asserts that McMaster is returning to these problems, stating from the report: 'It is an excellent example of the types of policy proscriptions that result from a return to a discourse based on 'provide excellence and they will come', most notoriously in its proposal to open high cultural institutions to the general public for free a week every year.'¹⁶⁰ She is concerned that this is too simplistic and ignores the 'myriad' of research that shows participation and access is dependent on many complex factors where by ideas such as simply reducing entrance fees won't serve any purpose. She uses the example of the British Museum, who in 2001, removed their entry fees. This only attracted the existing, primarily middle class, audience to visit more frequently but did not succeed in broadening the audience base. Gibson concludes that 'in this social and political context, critical engagement that is grounded in the practicalities of culture's administration is crucial if we are to develop analyses that seek to understand and contribute to the development of programmes that break with the elitism characterising past couple programs.'¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁸ McMaster, B. (2008) 'Supporting Excellence in the Arts, From Measurement to Judgement' Department for Culture Media and Sport p.4

¹⁵⁹ Gibson, L. (2008) 'In Defence of Instrumentality' *Cultural Trends* 17 (4): 247-257 p.250

¹⁶⁰ Gibson, L. (2008) 'In Defence of Instrumentality' *Cultural Trends* 17 (4): 247-257 p.250

¹⁶¹ Gibson, L. (2008) 'In Defence of Instrumentality' *Cultural Trends* 17 (4): 247-257 p.255

What Gibson argues clearly is that to see real change 'we' have to get to the heart of cultural institutions administration and accept that internally these institutions maybe divided. To gain real inclusion goals we 'have to be practical to what can be achieved through culture in order to ' break with the elitisms which have characterized cultural programmes in the past'. Gibson cries out for a constructive guide beyond ones which simply criticise each other suggesting that much debate is about non-agreement and not enough is practical.

4.v Measurement

Each of the areas under consideration; asylum seekers, community cohesion and art, have a measure of diversity in their definition. Next to this there is the demanding situation presented by the lack of clarity in measuring outcomes of the arts. The difficulties in assessing the social impact of the arts has been attributed to the challenges posed by measuring these subjective, diverse issues. However, this desire to understand the power of art is not a new concept as the idea goes back to the Ancient Greeks who debated what made art special¹⁶².

When looking at the value in culture Olva Velthuis in his review of the book 'Beyond Price' by Hutter and Throsby (2008) looks to theories of the 1980's when William Grampp, a significant cultural economist, argued that aesthetic value was simply another form of economic value. However Velthuis purports that discussions have moved on in the last 20 years and that 'the academic discourse on the value of art and culture has gradually become less polarised, more interdisciplinary and, probably because of that more insightful.'¹⁶³ Grampps hold on cultural economic arguments has lessened and now, the two renowned cultural economists, Michael Hutter and David Throsby argue in their introduction that 'there is indeed value beyond price'¹⁶⁴. Velthuis concludes by saying that so many scholars in the book create their own value of culture such as representational value, transformative value and entertainment value that the discussion has become so confused that there are no clear lines of argument left, 'The danger is that what once was a double discourse on value, will now turn into a babylonice confusion.'¹⁶⁵. In 2000 Frey suggested that economists cannot measure the true value of art.

'According to the economic approach, the individual preferences for art are recorded, but no normative judgment about it is given: art in this sense is what

¹⁶² Cowling, J. (ed.) (2004) *For Art's Sake? Society and the Arts in the 21st Century* Institute for Public Policy Research

¹⁶³ Velthuis, O. (2008) 'Book Review Hutter, M. and Throsby, D. (eds): 'Beyond Price. Value in Culture, Economics and the Arts' *Journal of Cultural Economics* 32 321-324 p.321

¹⁶⁴ Velthuis, O. (2008) 'Book Review Hutter, M. and Throsby, D. (eds): 'Beyond Price. Value in Culture, Economics and the Arts' *Journal of Cultural Economics* 32 321-324 p.321

¹⁶⁵ Velthuis, O. (2008) 'Book Review Hutter, M. and Throsby, D. (eds): 'Beyond Price. Value in Culture, Economics and the Arts' *Journal of Cultural Economics* 32 321-324

people think art is. Economists cannot, and do not want to, say what constitutes good or bad art; this is not within the realm of their professional competence.¹⁶⁶

20 years ago the Policy Studies Institute made the first attempt to collect and analyse statistics on the arts in the UK. They set out to find out 'what was spent on the arts; how many people they employed; what they earned; the number of events provided; and who went to see what.'¹⁶⁷

Dictated by Government pressure the arts has had to try and justify itself on two different levels, social and economic. In 1988 John Myerscough's published research looking at the economic impact of the arts. His research proved influential as he saw the arts as a major contributor to the economy in creating jobs, generating tourism and adding to urban renewal. As a result of this research many Local Authorities invested in the arts seeking to use this as a tool to regenerate their areas which were suffering the effects of post-industrialisation.¹⁶⁸ In 2009 McKinlay and Smith published a book that went even further and looked at the creative industries as a sub-sector of economics.¹⁶⁹

As Selwood presents, 'The current Government's preoccupation with data collection was foreshadowed by successive Conservative Governments demands for accountability and strategic management within the public sector.'¹⁷⁰ The Thatcher Government had a desire to use private sector economic ideas and apply them to the public sector. In 1995 Moore suggested that 'The job of the public sector is to maximise value to the public in the way that their counterparts in the

¹⁶⁶ Rushton, M. (2006) 'Book Review John Carey What good are the arts?' *Journal of Cultural Economics* 30 317-319 p.317

¹⁶⁷ Selwood, S. (2002) 'Measuring Culture: Collecting statistics to prove the 'use' of the arts has been largely useless' Spiked Culture <http://www.spikedonline.com/index.php/site/article/6851/> [22nd Feb 2009]

¹⁶⁸ Selwood, S. (2002) 'Measuring Culture: Collecting statistics to prove the 'use' of the arts has been largely useless' Spiked Culture <http://www.spikedonline.com/index.php/site/article/6851/> [22nd Feb 2009]

¹⁶⁹ McKinlay, A. & Smith, C. (2009) *Creative Labour working in the creative industries* Palgrave Macmillan

¹⁷⁰ Selwood, S. (2002) 'Measuring Culture: Collecting statistics to prove the 'use' of the arts has been largely useless' Spiked Culture <http://www.spikedonline.com/index.php/site/article/6851/> [22nd Feb 2009]

private sector seek to maximise value to their shareholders.¹⁷¹. They sought to use the arts as an economic tool, as Myerscough suggested, they looked to the arts to generate income through tourism, creating jobs and social regeneration¹⁷².

In the last recession of the 1980s the arts came under greater pressure to justify themselves financially

‘The ACE actively sought to increase its grant in aid on the basis of making an economic case for increased public investment in the arts. It introduced the notion of the arts as an industry, and listed the returns that the Government could expect for ‘a small increase in public funding’, including the low cost of creating new jobs, savings on unemployment and recycled tax.’¹⁷³

Much more direct Government involvement in the arts occurred after 1992 when the Department of National Heritage (DHN) was first established just after the Conservatives election victory. Unlike the departments that had gone before it, the DHN was a Department of State which had representation at the Cabinet. This move was felt in the arts with much more Government interest in the arts and more direct pressure to achieve their targets. The Secretary of State had both an involvement in decisions about where money should be spent in the cultural sector and also an involvement in its direction.¹⁷⁴ ‘The Department for Culture’s predecessor, the Department of National Heritage (DNH), sought to broaden the cultural sector’s funding base, which drove the sector to justify its subsidies in economic terms and identify itself as a wealth creator.’¹⁷⁵ It is interesting that in 1992 there was the second wave of pressure on the arts to establish them as a financial contributor to public economy.

¹⁷¹ Bunting, C. (2008) ‘What instrumentalism? A public perception of Value’ *Cultural Trends* 17 (4): 323- 328 p.323

¹⁷²Belfiore, E. (2002) ‘Art as a means of alleviating social exclusion: Does it really work? A critique of instrumental cultural policies and social impact studies in the UK.’ *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 8 (1): 91-106

¹⁷³ Selwood, S. (2002) ‘Measuring Culture: Collecting statistics to prove the ‘use’ of the arts has been largely useless’ Spiked Culture <http://www.spikedonline.com/index.php/site/article/6851/> [22nd Feb 2009]

¹⁷⁴ Selwood, S. (2002) ‘Measuring Culture: Collecting statistics to prove the ‘use’ of the arts has been largely useless’ Spiked Culture <http://www.spikedonline.com/index.php/site/article/6851/> [22nd Feb 2009]

¹⁷⁵ Selwood, S. (2002) ‘Measuring Culture: Collecting statistics to prove the ‘use’ of the arts has been largely useless’ Spiked Culture <http://www.spikedonline.com/index.php/site/article/6851/> [22nd Feb 2009]

In the early 1990s 'access' was the focus of the arts with increasing the depth and breadth to which the arts reached being of central importance to Government policy at the time. This increase in access sought to help urban regeneration through participation in arts projects. This then became closely linked to data collection and pressures to assess to what extent the targets were being delivered. Following this pressure the Strategic Access Initiative was set up which sought to provide 'the opportunity for as many people as possible to benefit from the arts, heritage and sport'¹⁷⁶. The Government felt there was a responsibility to prove to the taxpayer that the money was not only being spent effectively but also that their money was being invested in a way that they could benefit from the services provided.

As the economy picked up so did the focus on the arts as a tool for urban regeneration. In the run up to the 1997 election the DNH focused on developing a programme of volunteering throughout the country to help increase the involvement of local communities in their areas. They thought that volunteering in the community and participatory arts would encourage the development of community pride, satisfaction, self-confidence and help improve people's quality of life.¹⁷⁷ Before the 1997 election, DNH also set up a number of other initiatives as well as the ones discussed above based on volunteering and access. These included further work and investment in museum education, looking at opportunities for people to benefit from the arts, encouraging and supporting young people and participatory projects and community development looking to add to neighbourhood renewal. They had also set up funding agreements which linked the ACE and the MLA to distributing money in line with their targets and they attempted to monitor the influence the funding was having.¹⁷⁸ As Selwood explains 'cultural policy is driving an imminent process in which the gathering of evidence about its impact has to all intents and purposes assumed centre stage. And, as a result of initiatives going back to the

¹⁷⁶ DNH (1994) *Annual Report 1994* HMSO p.4-5

¹⁷⁷ Bottomly, V. (1996) 'Building Communities: Community Development, Participation and Partnership.' Department of National Heritage

¹⁷⁸ Selwood, S. (2002) 'Measuring Culture: Collecting statistics to prove the 'use' of the arts has been largely useless' Spiked Culture <http://www.spikedonline.com/index.php/site/article/6851/> [22nd Feb 2009]

1980s we have by now accumulated a mass of primary data.’¹⁷⁹ The sector has been driven to evidence collection by policy. ‘The gathering of evidence about the impact of the arts has assumed centre-stage in cultural policy.’¹⁸⁰

When New Labour came into power in 1997 they expected all Government departments to contribute to wider social agendas. The Department for National Heritage subsequently became the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). This impacted on the DCMS as they sought to address issues such as social inclusion and neighbourhood renewal through the arts. As the DCMS tried to fit into these Government agendas it

‘Hopes to monitor the value for money and efficiency of those organisations to which it grants funds; measure the extent to which its ambitions are achieved; and, evaluate the precise impact that they are having. Consequently, data collection has become central - theoretically pivotal, even - to the DCMS’s operations.’¹⁸¹

Hence gathering data to show the social impact of the arts became a highly politicised issue. Selwood amongst others implied this led to the boundaries between advocacy and research becoming blurred and data collected not being entirely sound. Belfiore and Bennett share this view and feel that the popularity of the simplification of the arts and their measurement stemmed from ‘its perceived advocacy potential rather than to any demonstrable contribution it may make to a genuine understanding of the nature and potential effects of artistic engagement.’¹⁸²

In 1997 Matarasso published a study into the social impact of the arts. The study’s results claimed to show that the arts, amongst other things, increased personal development, social cohesion, community empowerment, self determination, and

¹⁷⁹ Selwood, S. (2002) ‘Measuring Culture: Collecting statistics to prove the ‘use’ of the arts has been largely useless’ Spiked Culture <http://www.spikedonline.com/index.php/site/article/6851/> [22nd Feb 2009]

¹⁸⁰ Selwood, S. (2002) ‘Measuring Culture: Collecting statistics to prove the ‘use’ of the arts has been largely useless’ Spiked Culture p.1 <http://www.spikedonline.com/index.php/site/article/6851/> [22nd Feb 2009]

¹⁸¹ Selwood, S. (2002) ‘Measuring Culture: Collecting statistics to prove the ‘use’ of the arts has been largely useless’ Spiked Culture <http://www.spikedonline.com/index.php/site/article/6851/> [22nd Feb 2009]

¹⁸² Belfiore, E. Bennett, O. (2010) ‘Beyond the “Toolkit Approach”’: Arts Impact Evaluation Research and the Realities of Cultural Policy-Making’ *Journal for Cultural Research* 14 (2): 121 — 142 p.1

local image.¹⁸³ In a series of publications based on the social impact of the arts, which included Matarasso's 'Use or Ornament?', Comedia claimed arts-based projects 'served as a tool for social renewal - in that they enhanced amongst other things social cohesion; improved local image; reduced offending behaviours; promoted interest in the local environment; developed self-confidence'¹⁸⁴. Newman acknowledged that despite Matarasso's work being methodologically and conceptually flawed it became 'politically important to practitioners and policymakers during the 1990s because it seemed to offer a solution to answering the problems of measuring impact and so provide evidence to support instrumental policy claims.'¹⁸⁵ It was for this reason that Merli thought it worthy of producing a critical review of Matarasso's work. She questioned the quality of his research claiming that his desire to be relevant and useful to policy has been achieved but in doing so he lost the integrity of the research.¹⁸⁶ Through a thorough analytical investigation into Matarasso's working methods she delivered cutting criticisms suggesting his questions were biased, the hypotheses flawed, the research methods not applied in a rigorous way and the conceptual basis questionable. Selwood also saw the political significance of this document. 'Use or Ornament?' exerted considerable political influence and effectively consolidated a near-consensus in Britain among cultural policymakers. However she also acknowledges the critics point that 'the data collected cannot support the conclusions reached, and that the methodology and the analysis are suspect.' Despite these wide criticisms the document has been hugely influential in the shaping of Government policy on the social impact of the arts in the late 90's.

The initial DCMS annual report identified four main objectives 'the promotion of access, for the many not just the few; the pursuit of excellence and innovation; the nurturing of educational opportunity and the fostering of the creative industries,

¹⁸³Matarasso, F. (1997) *Use or Ornament: The social Impact of Participation of the Arts* Comedis Bournes Green

¹⁸⁴Selwood, S. (2002) 'Measuring Culture: Collecting statistics to prove the 'use' of the arts has been largely useless' Spiked Culture <http://www.spikedonline.com/index.php/site/article/6851/> [22nd Feb 2009]

¹⁸⁵ Newman, A. (2006) 'The Challenge of Measurement: Instrumental Museum and Gallery Policy in the UK' pre publication p.11

¹⁸⁶ Merli, P. (2002) 'Evaluating the social Impact of Participation in arts activities' *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 8 (1): 107-118 p.108

which provide a growing proportion of Britain's employment and wealth¹⁸⁷. Very shortly after winning the election New Labour set up a Social Exclusion Unit and Policy Action Teams (PAT). PAT10 were in charge of seeing what contribution the arts could have on social inclusion. This placed even more pressure on the arts to deliver new Government agendas and the DCMS reported to PAT 10 that art and sport 'can not only make a valuable contribution to delivering key outcomes of lower long-term unemployment, less crime, better health and better qualifications, but can also help to develop the individual pride, community spirit and capacity for responsibility that enable communities to run regeneration programmes themselves.¹⁸⁸ Coles felt this is too tall a task for the arts holding the opinion that there is little point in trying to establish the arts impact on health or education, as return on finances put directly into the health or education sectors would deliver more fruitful returns.¹⁸⁹ There was also added pressure to deliver financially too as the more money that was invested in the arts the more results were expected and the more proof for the public investment was needed¹⁹⁰.

The DCMS started to take funding and evidence of this funding more and more seriously and vowed no more 'grants for grants' sake'.

'This is not something for nothing. We want to see measurable outcomes for the investment which is being made. From now on there will be real partnership, with obligations and responsibilities.'¹⁹¹

Some of these obligations were to coherently measure the impact the arts were having to a satisfactory standard in order to justify expenditure to the public and The New Labour Government. With the pressure to measure the arts success with regard to social impact irretrievably tied up with allocated Government funding the

¹⁸⁷ Selwood, S. (2002) 'Measuring Culture: Collecting statistics to prove the 'use' of the arts has been largely useless' Spiked Culture <http://www.spikedonline.com/index.php/site/article/6851/> [22nd Feb 2009]

¹⁸⁸ Selwood, S. (2002) 'Measuring Culture: Collecting statistics to prove the 'use' of the arts has been largely useless' Spiked Culture <http://www.spikedonline.com/index.php/site/article/6851/> [22nd Feb 2009]

¹⁸⁹ Coles, A. (2008) 'Instrumental death of a reductionist' *Cultural Trends* 17 (4): 329 -334 p.332

¹⁹⁰ Selwood, S. (2002) 'Measuring Culture: Collecting statistics to prove the 'use' of the arts has been largely useless' Spiked Culture <http://www.spikedonline.com/index.php/site/article/6851/> [22nd Feb 2009]

¹⁹¹ DCMS (1998) A new contract: Increased Investment: Greater Efficiency: Structural Reform

attempts to measure funding were taken to a new level. The New Labour Government's approach has been questioned and whether the arts should have to justify themselves against a specific Government social inclusion agenda. Selwood presents the idea that this agenda might be delivered more effectively and efficiently through other means. 'Some have argued that the cultural sector is making itself susceptible to having to accommodate shifting perceptions of benefits which might be subject to revised political judgments.'¹⁹²

Though Coles appreciates that The New Labour Government's desire to see return on their investment in culture is fair, he feels the demands for evidence produced by instrumental Government policy leave less time to do the job of delivery. He feels arts organisations were forced to become insincere as the demands for justification of public spending and proof of delivery of value for money led to a genuine desire to understand the impact of the arts into a time consuming performance management regime.¹⁹³

In 2004 the MLA developed an initiative 'Inspiring Learning for All'. This was driven by the need for evidence in the arts however it resulted purely in a new metric being developed to assess whether learning had taken place. Newman¹⁹⁴ proposed that an over simple method of collecting data was used by means of a questionnaire with yes/no answers. For the complex issues which it was attempting to address a more suitable, and admittedly time consuming, data collection method should have been used. He suggests sensible alternatives to be focus groups or interviews. Another alternative, but perhaps not as appropriate an approach for this subject matter, is that of Randomised Control Trials (RCT) as recommended by Geddes 'it is the study most likely to produce an unbiased estimate of the effect of treatment

¹⁹² Selwood, S. (2002) 'Measuring Culture: Collecting statistics to prove the 'use' of the arts has been largely useless' Spiked Culture <http://www.spikedonline.com/index.php/site/article/6851/> [22nd Feb 2009]

¹⁹³ Coles, A. (2008) 'Instrumental death of a reductionist' *Cultural Trends* 17 (4): 329 -334 p.331

¹⁹⁴ Newman, A. (2006) 'The Challenge of Measurement: Instrumental Museum and Gallery Policy in the UK' pre publication

and replication of a finding in several RCT would obviously constitute very strong evidence.¹⁹⁵

In 2005 the MLA recognised the constraints of evidence measures and commissioned a report by Burns Owens Partnerships to increase understanding of the methods used to gather evidence and to see if there was a way to measure this evidence¹⁹⁶. The report looked at six main areas

Social inclusion

Neighbourhood renewal

Community cohesion

Cultural diversity

Health, particularly mental health

Regeneration

The MLA 'evidence base for the arts' highlights the difficulties in establishing causality in any kind of social research particularly those which focus on impacts such as community cohesion. They make the point that in an area where there is a Neighbourhood Renewal Team, a New Deal for Communities Programme, an Education Action Zone, a Regeneration Team and a Sure Start Programme there is difficulty in establishing which one is having an effect on that community.¹⁹⁷ With these difficulties the MLA found that practitioners fell back on techniques of measurement based on assessing commitment and effort, not effectiveness. One problem with this is it can end with measuring output and not outcomes. Outcomes are imperative to community cohesion as opposed to outputs which do not necessarily have any impact on community cohesion as they are looking at the effort put into the arts not the affects of the arts. The report also points out that policy is very slow to move away from empirical data to qualitative data. However

¹⁹⁵ Geddes, J. (2004) 'Art and mental health: building the evidence base', in Cowling, J. (ed.) *For Art's Sake? Society and the Arts in the 21st Century* Institute for Public Policy Research

¹⁹⁶ MLA (2005) *New Directions in Social Policy: developing the evidence base for museums, libraries and archives in England* Burns Owens Partnership p.1

¹⁹⁷ MLA (2005) *New Directions in Social Policy: developing the evidence base for museums, libraries and archives in England* Burns Owens Partnership p.63

much the indefinable qualities of the arts are argued for 'we simply privilege certain kinds of knowledge; the scientific and the rational, usually the preserve of culture and economic elites, above the more informal or intuitive 'local knowledge'.¹⁹⁸

After this report in 2005, which tried to identify an evidence base for the arts, the MLA was restructured to include the Research and Evidence Strategy. The development of this department came with the thinking that to get in line with evidence-based policy the MLA would advance its own evidence-base. However, there are many problems with this 'evidence based' approach that the arts are forced to try and adhere to. Hammersley¹⁹⁹ illustrates the search for empirical data's lack of understanding of other forms of data and its disregard for personal experience which can be so vital when in discussions about social inclusion and the arts. Another issue that he takes apart is the ease with which ideas are presented as evidence based research when in fact they are still ideas with no evidence to back them up. There is also purported to be naive acceptance of evidence-based research led by the introduction of evidence based policy and funding. Hammersley is not happy about this either, 'whatever efforts are made to prevent bias from extraneous factors, whether these are the beliefs of researchers or pressure from sponsors, we can never ensure that no distortion has occurred'²⁰⁰

It has been said that 'to try and distil the essence of the arts is to sound its death knell.' Jamie Cowling agrees 'a substantial part of that essence is beyond capture' he also believes that its possible to have a better understanding of the circumstances, factors and characteristics that go towards delivering special impact in arts and culture.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁸ MLA (2005) *New Directions in Social Policy: developing the evidence base for museums, libraries and archives in England* Burns Owens Partnership p.64

¹⁹⁹ Hammersley, M. (2005) 'Is the evidence practice movement doing more good than harm reflections on Iain Chalmers' case for research based policy making and practice' *Evidence and Policy* 1(1): 85-100

²⁰⁰ Ibid. p.86

²⁰¹ Cowling, J. (ed.) (2004) *For Art's Sake? Society and the Arts in the 21st Century* Institute for Public Policy Research

One of the problems with the ideas illustrated is that they all rely on the results of evidence gathering on data and quantitative measurements. Newman highlights this concern saying ‘approaches to measuring learning and social impact are based upon the premise that professional judgement by practitioners is inferior to the results of ‘scientific study’ and that ‘study’ is more convincing if it includes percentages, which provide an illusion of accuracy and validity.’²⁰². It is interesting then that the current ideas coming from the DCMS bring the focus back to trusting the judgments of qualified professionals.

The McMaster report puts forward one of the latest ideas for measurement coming from the DCMS. Its suggestion as to how the arts can justify themselves are in line with its current ideas that supporting excellence in the arts will in itself enable them to be instrumental in the people that they affect. When addressing the issue of how the arts can be best assessed they suggest a system which focuses on judgment and not measurement of the arts but one which ‘In making judgments on excellence, innovation and risk-taking, doesn’t end up discouraging all three.’²⁰³. The report acknowledges that current systems of measurement are in danger of discouraging risk taking and innovation in the arts and suggest that their new system of measurement will move away from these pitfalls and ‘top-down’ targets. The three points it recommends funders to follow in its new assessment framework are

- Self-assessment by cultural organisations and practitioners as the starting point;
- Complemented by a system of peer review managed by the funding bodies;
- Informed by funders confident in their judgments and equipped to take strong action where necessary.

Although self-reflection is an essential part of the creative process the report suggests that the arts sector lacks the culture of thorough and constructive self-

²⁰² Newman, A. (2006) ‘The Challenge of Measurement: Instrumental Museum and Gallery Policy in the UK’ pre publication p.14

²⁰³ McMaster, B. (2008) ‘Supporting Excellence in the Arts, From Measurement to Judgement’ Department for Culture Media and Sport p.21

assessment. It advises that representatives along with people from cultural organisations put together a good practice guide to self-assessment focusing on the three main aims excellence, risk taking and innovation. One issue with this is that there is no baseline to judge self-assessment from, making it very difficult for this to be used as an accurate measure.

Peer reviews are encouraged as a useful way of judging artistic excellence and also as a useful process to the further development of those involved in peer reviews as they give opportunities for shared best practice. There is still the question of how peer groups might go about this and what they should be looking for to ensure a level judgment across the board. In response to this the report suggests

‘I would envisage these peer review groups consisting of a small number of individuals appropriate to the organisation they are assessing. They must champion diversity and internationalism in their assessments.’²⁰⁴

However this again is not a clear and useable guide.

For their third suggestion to be successful the funders have to have confidence in their own judgments and this too has to be reflected by a confidence within the arts community in their ability to make decisions. For this last stage the funding organisation is asked to look at the self-assessment and the peer reviews when choosing which arts projects to fund. In order to be able to get rid of ‘cumbersome targets’ the funders have to accept that more lines of communication between themselves and arts organisations have to open up. The report suggests again that this should be done with a focus on excellence, risk taking and innovation.²⁰⁵

Susannah Eckersley’s ‘Supporting Excellence in the Arts: from measurement to judgement’ (2008) review of this DCMS report criticises it saying ‘Although many of its intentions are laudable, the report fails to resolve the inherent problems

²⁰⁴ McMaster, B. (2008) ‘Supporting Excellence in the Arts, From Measurement to Judgement’ Department for Culture Media and Sport p.22

²⁰⁵ McMaster, B. (2008) ‘Supporting Excellence in the Arts, From Measurement to Judgement’ Department for Culture Media and Sport p.23

associated with defining, measuring and judging cultural 'excellence', even though this forms the core of McMaster's argument about how policy should develop.²⁰⁶ Eckersley argues that without a re-acknowledgement of cultures intrinsic value and a broader change in Government policy the ideas they set out will simply leave 'excellence' as the current buzzword without actually contributing to the sector. The key terms used in the document have to have clear definition before they can have meaning, something which Eckersley views as missing in the key terms used such as 'excellence' and 'quality'. She purports that measuring the value against something which itself is subjective like 'excellence' will always result in a report based on personal opinion and nothing more. McMaster suggests excellence can be interpreted as

'Excellence in culture occurs when an experience affects and changes an individual. An excellent cultural experience goes to the root of living'²⁰⁷.

With response to this and the statement McMaster makes that 'There is a fundamental mismatch between the way we talk about culture and the values we attach to it' Eckersley responds suggesting that 'that fundamental mismatch appears to be not so much in the difference between the way we talk about culture and the values we attach to it, but rather in the attempt to attach a definitive, logical terminology to an experience which is, even according to McMaster's own definition above, subjective, often illogical, and qualitative rather than quantitative.'²⁰⁸ It is clear that still there is no commonly agreed measurement of the arts that will keep the public, artists, practitioners and policy makers in agreement.

Even before this new measurement system came out Newman was dissatisfied with the assumptions by New Labour Government that social impact is measurable²⁰⁹. Coles²¹⁰ also accepts that there are problems in establishing

²⁰⁶ Eckersley, S. (2008) 'Supporting excellence in the arts: from measurement to judgement: Policy Review' *Cultural Trends* 17 (3): 183 -187

²⁰⁷ McMaster, B. (2008) 'Supporting Excellence in the Arts, From Measurement to Judgement' Department for Culture Media and Sport p.9

²⁰⁸ Eckersley, S. (2008) 'Supporting excellence in the arts: from measurement to judgement: Policy Review' *Cultural Trends* 17 (3): 183 -187 p.184

²⁰⁹ Pers Com October 2008

²¹⁰ Coles, A. (2008) 'Instrumental death of a reductionist' *Cultural Trends* 17 (4): 329 -334

causality, measuring impacts and attribution. He suggested that this might be because 'we constantly delude ourselves into believing that we can measure some of these effects in a parametric way when in most cases we cannot'²¹¹. Newman concludes that the systems which have developed lack methodological rigor and have been designed to facilitate The New Labour Government's own agendas. Selwood shares this view that it is New Labour Government targets which have led to arts trying to become measurable and evidence based. She feels evidence such as pen portraits of particular projects, brief accounts and aggregation of case studies are not only accepted as data but used to base policy on 'These characterise a number of advocacy cum policy documents published by DCMS and the Arts Council. But few pass muster in relation to current critiques of the evidence, which seem to have been prompted as much by scepticism about the apparent bias in most of the literature, as by the need to base policy development on an impartial and robust evidence-base.'²¹² She feels evidence and hope become confused 'Rather than illustrating actual impact, these studies tend to provide evidence of engagement with the local community and of the organisations' belief in their potential to make a social impact.'²¹³

The case being argued is that The New Labour Government needs measurement for the arts in a way that the arts are not capable of producing so excessive amounts of 'flawed' data has been produced in the attempt to meet these Government targets. However when unpicked there is still no substantial metric which has been agreed on and used consistently enough or with enough flexibility in The New Labour Government's agenda to allow data with real relevance to be collected. Coles sees Instrumentalism as a social construct which has been used to measure very subjective achievements in order to prove the arts have indeed achieved what they set out to do. He suggests that it is tempting to create structures to evaluate and justify the arts, particularly when there is public

²¹¹ Coles, A. (2008) 'Instrumental death of a reductionist' *Cultural Trends* 17 (4): 329 -334 p.332

²¹² Selwood, S. (2002) 'Measuring Culture: Collecting statistics to prove the 'use' of the arts has been largely useless' Spiked Culture <http://www.spikedonline.com/index.php/site/article/6851/> [22nd Feb 2009]

²¹³ Selwood, S. (2002) 'Measuring Culture: Collecting statistics to prove the 'use' of the arts has been largely useless' Spiked Culture <http://www.spikedonline.com/index.php/site/article/6851/> [22nd Feb 2009]

investment in them. There is a common consensus that much evidence is created to support the targets it sets out to achieve 'there is something ironic about the way we try and guard against our own subjectivity by erecting pseudo-objective constructs which we then apply in the most gratuitously subjective ways.'²¹⁴ It is interesting then that the policies that seek to support development in the arts by assessing the effectiveness of them, by creating an evidence base, are felt by some to be too rigorous and counter productive.

This is where Newman suggests identity construction as a way to understand the social impact of museums and galleries. Identity construction takes into account both the instrumental and intrinsic impact of the arts and can therefore claim to be a more thorough and fair way of measuring their social impact.²¹⁵ Identity construction can help people who are socially excluded such as refugees and asylum seekers get a better idea of who they are and get to grips with their current transient situation helping them become less socially excluded and hence adding to their social capital and enhancing community cohesion. Newman and McLean²¹⁶ propose that museums and galleries are the ideal place for individuals to explore identity construction through arts projects and gallery or museum visits they can both consciously and unconsciously deal with issues and achieve social objectives working towards cohesion.

The Ritchie report suggests that the education system is not focused enough on enabling either members of the host communities or asylum seekers to create and appreciate their own and others identities. In some cases the report claims that identity is being constructed around past views of their cultures and countries which can lead to confusion of their identity in modern society.

'Supplementary education also seems to reinforce cultural boundaries in some cases. Whilst it will be necessary to encourage youngsters to come to terms with their own identity there must be a clear commitment both to provide basic education

²¹⁴ Coles, A. (2008) 'Instrumental death of a reductionist' *Cultural Trends* 17 (4): 329 -334

²¹⁵ Newman, A. (2006) 'The Challenge of Measurement: Instrumental Museum and Gallery Policy in the UK' pre publication p.1

²¹⁶ Newman, A. & McLean, F. (2006) 'The impact of museums upon identity' *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 12 (1): 49-68

support and to develop cross-cultural contact.²¹⁷

'In such a climate, there has been little attempt to develop clear values which focus on what it means to be a citizen of a modern multi-racial Britain and many still look backwards to come supposedly halcyon days of a mono-cultural society, or alternatively look to their country of origin for some form of identity.'²¹⁸

Newman and McLean²¹⁹ specifically looked at the 'Making History Community Development Project' in Newcastle. They identified opportunities for identity construction and the opportunity for the participants to develop links with others hence increasing their social capital. In participatory workshops participants were assessed to have addressed issues such as lack of control over their situations through the arts based community initiative. This is a very complex and personal quality of art which is inherently difficult to measure. Despite these difficulties this approach is worth considering as developing identity construction and social capital are key aspects of personal community cohesion.

Newman feels the emphasis placed entirely on the instrumental impact of the arts by The New Labour Government in order to try and meet social policy objectives has resulted in significant investment by The New Labour Government to try and provide this evidence. In reality it has not been possible and very little actual evidence has been collected. Selwood again agrees here stating that

'Because of 'the prevailing orthodoxy, it has become increasingly pressing for a distinction to be drawn between advocacy and evidence, potential and actual fact. While there is a large body of research, documented case studies and anecdotes, which are used to illustrate the impact of the arts, the sector is under increasing pressure to provide 'robust' evidence.'²²⁰

She goes as far as to argue that 'In fact, despite the existence of funding agreements for its sponsored bodies, DCMS is failing to produce much in the way

²¹⁷ Ritchie, D. Oldham Independent Review, 10, (The Ritchie Report) p.35

²¹⁸ Ibid p.9

²¹⁹ Newman, A. & McLean, F. (2006) 'The impact of museums upon identity' *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 12 (1): 49-68

²²⁰ Selwood, S. (2002) 'Measuring Culture: Collecting statistics to prove the 'use' of the arts has been largely useless' Spiked Culture <http://www.spikedonline.com/index.php/site/article/6851/> [22nd Feb 2009]

of evidence of social impact from the cultural sector.²²¹ Newman puts this lack of robust evidence down to the main flaw that 'The instrumental focus places little value on the difficult to describe intrinsic impacts of galleries, such as their role in identity construction.'²²²

In 'For Arts Sake' Jamie Cowling argues that current evidence rests on social and economic analysis. He wants to investigate the value culture has. He believes it has 'inherent power to move people, change people and give people new meaning to their lives.'²²³ Cowling sees The New Labour Government in general having a hunger for a revelation of culture and its impacts. He 'acknowledges the superficiality of crude numerical measures and targets suggesting we need something more' and believes there is an inherent value in culture that has a transformative power and cannot be measured by Government targets. 'This lack of robust evidence frustrates the possibility of meeting the political aspirations of building up a comprehensive picture of the social impact of the sector, measuring change, and indicating its relative value for money.'²²⁴

The current economic crash has accelerated the path the arts were already on and has created more of a focus than ever for them to be seen once again for the economic impact they can have on society. Social Return On Investment (SROI) is a current method of data collection being suggested by the MLA as a way that might be able to prove the economic value of the cultural sector. SROI²²⁵ is also being discussed more widely in current academic literature. 'Anecdotal evidence is no longer enough to persuade investors, public funders and commissioners of the

²²¹ Selwood, S. (2002) 'Measuring Culture: Collecting statistics to prove the 'use' of the arts has been largely useless' Spiked Culture <http://www.spikedonline.com/index.php/site/article/6851/> [22nd Feb 2009]

²²² Newman, A. (2006) 'The Challenge of Measurement: Instrumental Museum and Gallery Policy in the UK' pre publication p.2

²²³ Cowling, J. (ed.) (2004) *For Art's Sake? Society and the Arts in the 21st Century* Institute for Public Policy Research

²²⁴ Selwood, S. (2002) 'Measuring Culture: Collecting statistics to prove the 'use' of the arts has been largely useless' Spiked Culture <http://www.spikedonline.com/index.php/site/article/6851/> [22nd Feb 2009]

²²⁵ Stanziola, J. (2008) 'What is Social Return on Investment? Briefing Note' Museums Libraries and Archives

social and economic value of cultural organisations'²²⁶ The MLA's research suggests that a way of overcoming this is to use better impact methodologies to capture the value of the arts. SROI attempts to capture the social value of the arts in a way which can be translated into financial measures. In an article published on the MLA website in June 2009 Ailbhe McNabola, Head of Research and Evidence says:

'If we accept that anecdotal evidence is not enough, then we need to focus our efforts on robust assessments of the wider value of our sector. Demonstrating social impact is key. It is important for our sector to debate the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches to achieve this. Existing methodologies go some way in capturing the costs and benefits of different initiatives; few can promise to show the social, environmental and financial benefits of investments.'²²⁷

From the points of view of policy makers and funders the question may not be does the arts, or even this particular project focused on inclusion, benefit those it's working with but rather whether it does it more economically than the next activity or project being proposed. 'There is rarely an attempt to measure opportunity costs, that is the benefits of spending money on one particular intervention rather than others.'²²⁸ The delicate way that funding is linked to policy agendas and policy agendas to empirical data has led many in the arts sector to feel 'that without constant advocacy, funding will inevitably fail.'²²⁹ With the current economic climate and funding becoming more limited for arts projects the competition to prove them more effective than other options is fierce yet there is still no commonly agreed methodology or measurement system for doing this.

In the November issue of the *Museums Journal* in 2006 Julie Nightingale wrote an article 'Value Judgements' in which she acknowledged the struggle to prove cultures worth 'It is symptomatic of the prevailing problem for cultural services...in an era where everything in the public sector is required to be weighed and

²²⁶ Stanziola, J. (2008) 'What is Social Return on Investment? Briefing Note' Museums Libraries and Archives p.1

²²⁷ http://www.mla.gov.uk/news_and_views/news/SROI [16th March 2010]

²²⁸ MLA (2005) *New Directions in Social Policy: developing the evidence base for museums, libraries and archives in England* Burns Owens Partnership p.65

²²⁹ MLA (2005) *New Directions in Social Policy: developing the evidence base for museums, libraries and archives in England* Burns Owens Partnership p.65

measured.²³⁰ She paves the way for SROI suggesting that public value may be the way that the arts can prove their worth in society. A similar idea was implemented in Bolton where they used a methodology called Contingent Valuation (CV), this measures the economic impact of a service through individual willingness to pay for it even if they do not use it often. Interestingly this research discovered that people were willing to pay double the amount of tax to keep their local museums open.²³¹ ‘Contingent valuations studies ... quantify public valuation of art or heritage using ordinary consumer response as the only data.’²³² Snowball categorises CV into two strands Revealed Preference, this is related to how much money participants have spend to get to cultural activities or the increase in value to a house which is in a culturally prosperous area. The second strand is Stated Preference, which relates to the value participants place on cultural experiences.²³³

In 2003, in an article published in the *Journal of Cultural Economics*, Throsby argued that CV does not provide a full view of the nonmarket value of culture and that an alternative form of measurement should be developed to provide a holistic account of cultural value. Throsby, who has been exploring CV as a way of measuring the value of culture in Australia for over twenty years, questions whether

‘Within a neoclassical framework, such assessments are thought to provide a complete picture of the value of cultural goods. But are there aspects of the value of cultural good which are not fully captured, or not captured at all, within such a model?’²³⁴

One limitation of CV when used within the basis of culture can be that a distinguishing feature of culture is that it takes time to appreciate ‘they are classed as experimental or addictive goods where demand is cumulative, and hence

²³⁰ Nightingale, J. (2006) ‘Value Judgements’ *Museums Journal* 106 (11) :30 – 33 p.30

²³¹ Nightingale, J. (2006) ‘Value Judgements’ *Museums Journal* 106 (11) :30 – 33 p.30

²³² Rushton, M. (2006) ‘Book Review John Carey What good are the arts?’ *Journal of Cultural Economics* 30 317-319 p.317

²³³ Snowball, J. D. (2008) *Measuring the value of culture methods and examples in cultural economics* Springer

²³⁴ Throsby, D. (2003) ‘Determining the value of Cultural Goods: How much (or How Little) Does Contingent Valuation Tell Us?’ *Journal of Cultural Economics* 27: 275-285

dynamically unstable.²³⁵ So to provide enough information for everybody asked in a CV trial to make an informed judgment on their willingness to pay for cultural activities is not as straight forward as it first seems. Even if this initial problem can be resolved it is argued that a more inherent problem is that we still don't know if our willingness to pay gives us an accurate representation of the full cultural value. Throsby suggests that one way CV could be misleading is 'If value were somehow absolute or intrinsic to goods, such that their worth existed independently of any evaluation by consumers.'²³⁶ If art is thought to have intrinsic value as the McMaster report suggests then CV cannot capture this and the resulting measurement given by willingness to pay could be not only irrelevant but potentially misleading to the actual value of culture. Lorurdes Arizpe agrees that the value of culture cannot be captured wholly in monetary terms 'there is so much more to culture that lies outside the realm of exchange and valuation.'²³⁷

²³⁵ Throsby, D. (2003) 'Determining the value of Cultural Goods: How much (or How Little) Does Contingent Valuation Tell Us?' *Journal of Cultural Economics* 27: 275-285 p.277

²³⁶ Throsby, D. (2003) 'Determining the value of Cultural Goods: How much (or How Little) Does Contingent Valuation Tell Us?' *Journal of Cultural Economics* 27: 275-285 p.278

²³⁷ Velthuis, O. (2008) 'Book Review Hutter, M. and Throsby, D. (eds): 'Beyond Price. Value in Culture, Economics and the Arts' *Journal of Cultural Economics* 32 321-324 p.322

Chapter 5. Theoretical Framework

The analysis in this research adopted a theoretical framework that related to cultural capital, social capital, social exclusion, community cohesion and identity construction. 'Cultural capital is understood as a particular stock of cultural competencies, acquired from early socialisation, education and other forms of training, being an important mechanism in the processes of creation and reproduction of class inequality.'²³⁸ Within this definition of cultural capital it can be seen to be key to both an equal society and to build up a cultural understanding of the situation an individual is in. It is useful to look at how these arts projects can contribute to cultural capital as asylum seekers have moved from a different culture into the UK they are faced with a distinct cultural capital here and building up cultural competencies can include both art and language.

Social capital is highly relevant within the arts projects, as the social connections between humans are vital to wellbeing and contributing to a person's sense of community cohesion. Putnam purports in his book *Bowling Alone* that social capital is the core of our connections with each other which if not nourished impoverish our lives and the communities. 'Whereas physical capital refers to physical objects and human capital refers to the properties of individuals, social capital refers to connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them.'²³⁹

Policy documents normally refer to social inclusion, which does not have a clear definition, social exclusion is an easier term to categorise.

'Social exclusion is a term that covers, but is broader than, poverty. It relates to being unable to participate fully in normal social activities, or to engage in political and civic life.'²⁴⁰

²³⁸ Silva, E. (2008) 'Conceptualizing impact: Cultural capital and visual art in the contemporary UK' *Cultural Trends* 17 (4): 267–287 p.269

²³⁹ Putnam, R. D. (2000) *Bowling Alone* Simon & Schuster

²⁴⁰ <http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageld=71633> [4th Aug 2010]

This definition is an academic interpretation of the term social exclusion but when looked at in this way becomes clear that an ability to participate in social activities is necessary for social inclusion to take place. Community cohesion is also strongly linked to ideas around social inclusion.

‘Community cohesion is what must happen in all communities to enable different groups of people to get on well together. A key contributor to community cohesion is integration. This is what ought to happen to enable new residents and existing residents to adjust to one another.’²⁴¹

Newman suggests in his paper to be presented at ICCPR Finland 2010 ‘The social impact of museums and galleries: rethinking policy through a study of cultural consumption’ that within the context of art when cultural capital is lacking identity construction can be formed as a new way to access the meaning of a piece of artwork.²⁴² Identity construction is focused on in this analysis as it underpins the notions of well-being both in ones internal psychological world and their external social world²⁴³.

Cultural capital, social capital, social exclusion, community cohesion and identity construction are important concepts for this research as they cover the issues around cultural adjustment that asylum seekers go through when they arrive in the UK. The social and cultural adjustments that asylum seekers have to make when they arrive in the UK are both important aspects of rebuilding their lives and sense of identity. Changes in life can lead to changes in identity and a new identity being constructed around a new situation. This can be seen to happen when large life changing events occur including moving to a new country as an asylum seeker.

²⁴¹ <http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageld=1092345> [4th Aug 2010]

²⁴² Newman, A. (2010) The social impact of museums and galleries: rethinking policy through a study of cultural consumption p.11

²⁴³ Kroger, J and Adair, V. (2008) ‘Symbolic meanings of valued personal objects in identity transitions of late adulthood’ *Identity* 8 (1): 5-24

Chapter 6. Introduction to Case Studies and Participants

The Hubbub²⁴⁴

Art Project	The Hubbub
What they do?	Arts & Crafts
Asylum Seekers, Refugees, Male & Female All ages	
When they are on?	Tuesday 3:30 – 5:30
Westgate Road Church, West End	
Start date	On going
End date	On going
Tyneside Fine & Decorative Arts Society	

The Hubbub is a drop in for refugees and asylum seekers of all ages it includes an arts and crafts table run by a local artist.

Tyneside Fine & Decorative Arts Society (TYDFAS)²⁴⁵ fund The Hubbub to pay the artists to be there and to cover the cost of materials. (TYDFAS is a local branch of the National Association of Decorative & Fine Arts Societies – NADFAS an international arts based charity set up in 1968.) TYDFAS is run by volunteers and gives arts talks and put on arts events for members who all pay a subscription fee. The money that the society generates is then put back into the society or used to support community projects such as The Hubbub.

Participant facts:

1A: Female in her 40s from Libya who came to the UK 10 years ago because her husband came to study in the UK

1C: Female in her 30s from Afghanistan who came to the UK 1 ½ years ago as an asylum seeker

²⁴⁴ <http://www.westgatebaptist.org.uk/thehub/international/hubbub/> [5th May 2010]

²⁴⁵ <http://www.nadfas.org.uk/default.asp?section=209&page=1046> [5th May 2010]

1D: Female in her 30s from Afghanistan who came to the UK 10 years ago as an asylum seeker

1F: Female in her 20s from Afghanistan who came to the UK 2 years ago as an asylum seeker

1G: Female in her 40s from Iraq who came to the UK 8 years ago as an asylum seeker

1H: Female in her 20s from Iraq who came to the UK 6 months ago because her husband came to study in the UK

1J: Male in his 40s from Sri Lanka who came to the UK 9 years ago as an asylum seeker

1N: Female in her 20s from Denmark who came to the UK 10 months ago to try and new life for her and her children and to learn English

1P: Female in her 30s from Sri Lanka who came to the UK 8 years ago as an asylum seeker

1W: Female in her 60s from Sri Lanka who came to the UK 7 years ago as an asylum seeker

All participants lived within walking distance of the project highlighting the importance of this being in the local community. 4 participants lived in the West End, 4 in Fenham, 1 in Elswick and 1 in Newcastle city centre.

Asha Hope Bridge and Tunnel²⁴⁶

Art Project	Asha Hope Bridge and Tunnel
What they do?	Film Production
Male & Females from BME communities aged 16-30	
Monday 5 - 8	
Line Building, Newcastle University	
Start date	November
End date	March
FirstLight Media, Heritage Lottery	

Asha Hope was a project run by Bridge and Tunnel Productions to engage young adults from BME communities with the film making process.

Both First Light Media and the Heritage Lottery funded Asha Hope Bridge and Tunnel. First Light launched in 2001 their aims are 'to enable young people to realise their potential via creative digital film and media projects.'²⁴⁷ Heritage Lottery fund projects which have a focus on heritage and this includes recording histories of people and communities who have moved to the UK, preserving archaeological sites and projects with historic buildings or objects linked to our industrial past.²⁴⁸

Participant facts:

2A: A young female in her teens from Yemen who came to England 2 years ago as an asylum seeker

2B: A young man in his teens from Iran who came to England 9 years ago as an asylum seeker

2D: A young man in his 20s from Uganda who came to the UK 10 years ago as an asylum seeker

²⁴⁶ <http://www.bridgeandtunnelproductions.com/> [25th July 2009]

²⁴⁷ <http://www.firstlightonline.co.uk/> [5th May 2009]

²⁴⁸ <http://www.hlf.org.uk/HowToApply/Pages/whatwefund.aspx> [5th May 2009]

2E: A young female in her 20s from Burundi who came to the UK 5 years ago for a better life

2F: A young man in his teens from DRC who came to the UK 5 years ago as an asylum seeker

2G: A young female in her 20s from Rwanda who came to England 10 years ago as an asylum seeker

2I: A young female in her teens from Rwanda who came to the UK 4 years ago as an asylum seeker

2K: A young man in his 20s from Iran who came to the UK 2 years ago as an asylum seeker

2L: A young in her teens female from India who came to England with her family 10 years ago but does not know why

Over half of the participants were from South of the river Tyne despite the project being held in Newcastle City Centre. Overall the participants were from a wide variety of areas 3 participants lived in Gateshead, 2 in South Shields, 1 in Byker, 1 in Heaton, 1 in Kenton, and 1 in Walkergate.

Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums²⁴⁹

Art Project	Tyne and Wear Archives and
Museums	
What they do?	Textile Arts Alphabet Design
Asylum Seekers & Refugee Female adults	
Mon 1 - 3	
Monkwearmouth Museum Sunderland ²⁵⁰	
Start date	February
End date	March
DCMS	

Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums have a refugee and asylum seeker outreach officer to run art projects in the region. The position was originally funded via the DCMS Strategic Commissioning programme but it is now funded by the DCMS who also fund the same position in 3 other museums in the UK. This quartet of asylum seeker and refugee outreach workers is headed up by the National Museums in Liverpool²⁵¹. The other museums with refugee and asylum seeker outreach workers are Leicester City Museums Service and Salford Museum and Art Gallery.

Participant facts:

3A: Female in her 40s who works for the police who is from Colombia and came to the UK 12 years ago to study

3D: Female in her 30s from Sudan who came to the UK 4 months ago as an asylum seeker

3E: Female in her 40s who works for the NHS and has lived in the UK all her life

3G: Female in her 60s from Poland who comes to the UK to visit her family here

²⁴⁹ <http://www.twmuseums.org.uk/> [4th Feb 2009]

²⁵⁰ <http://www.twmuseums.org.uk/monkwearmouth/> [7th May 2010]

²⁵¹ <http://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/learning/community/diversity/refugees/index.aspx> [6th May 2010]

3H: Female in her 30s who works for the NHS who is from The Philippines and who came to the UK 7 years ago as her Husband is British

3J: Female in her 30s from Iraq who came to the UK 10 years ago as an asylum seeker

3N: Female in her 40s who works for the Local Education Authority has lived in the UK all her life

3S: Female in her 20s from China who came to the UK 6 years ago as an asylum seeker

3V: Female in her 20s from China who came to the UK 3 years ago, reason unknown

This project was held in Sunderland and the 8 participants lived in Sunderland. 1 participant lived in Newcastle City Centre; she was one of the participants attending as part of their job.

GEM Arts²⁵², Helix Arts²⁵³, Tyneside Women's Health²⁵⁴ Textiles

Art Project	GEM Arts, Helix Arts, Tyneside
Women's Health	
What they do?	Textile Workshop
Women from BME communities with Mental Health Difficulties	
Wednesday 12:30 - 3	
Swinburne House, Gateshead	
Start date	April
End date	July
Lankelly Chase Mental Health Trust	

This project involved three organisations working together to deliver the arts project. These were Gateshead Ethnic Minority Arts (GEM Arts), Helix Arts and Tyneside Women's Health. The project was split into two strands a textile workshop and a photography workshop. The project was run at Tyneside Women's Health in Gateshead with a group of ladies who had been attending an informal drop-in social session for refugees and asylum seekers who may be suffering from mental health problems.

The Arts Council funded the organisations to work together as part of an organisational development initiative but the project itself was funded by Lankelly Chase Foundation. Lankelly Chase is a foundation formed from the Chase Charity and the Lankelly Foundation amalgamating. Their mission statement is:

'The Lankelly Chase Foundation works to promote change which will improve the quality of people's lives. We focus particularly on areas of social need to help the most disadvantaged in our society to fulfil their potential²⁵⁵.

²⁵² <http://www.gemarts.org/home/> [6th May 2009]

²⁵³ <http://www.helixarts.com/> [3rd June 2009]

²⁵⁴ <http://www.tyneside-womens-health.org.uk/> [16th May 2009]

²⁵⁵ <http://www.lankellychase.org.uk/> [7th May 2010]

The organisation believes that participation in the arts can help transform people's lives whatever their situation.²⁵⁶ As well as supporting the arts Lankelly Chase also support people who have been subject to domestic abuse, developing communities and refugees and asylum seekers.

Participant facts:

4A: Female in her 50s from Iraq who came to the UK 8 years ago as an asylum seeker

4B: Female in her 30s from Sudan who came to the UK 4 years ago as an asylum seeker

4C: Female in her 40s from Iraq who came to the UK 6 years ago as an asylum seeker

4D: Female in her 50s from Iraq who came to the UK 7 months ago as an asylum seeker

4E: Female in her 40s from Iraq who came to the UK 10 years ago as an asylum seeker

4F: Female in her 30s from Iraq who came to the UK 1 ½ years ago as an asylum seeker

4G: Female in her 20s from Iraq who came to the UK 3 years ago as her husband got a job in the UK

Participants at GEM Textiles were from a narrow range of areas with all but one participant live south of the river Tyne that is in line with the project being located in Gateshead. 4 participants lived in Gateshead, 2 in Bensham and 1 in Prestwick.

²⁵⁶ Lankelly Chase Foundation (2009) Annual Review 2008/2009

GEM Arts, Helix Arts, Tyneside Women's Health Photography

Art Project	GEM Arts, Helix Arts, Tyneside
Women's Health	
What they do?	Photography Workshop
Women from BME communities with Mental Health Difficulties	
Wednesday 12:30 - 3	
Swinburne House, Gateshead	
Start date	April
End date	July
Lankelly Chase Mental Health Trust	

Participant facts:

5A: Female in her 30s from Iran who came to the UK 5 years ago as an asylum seeker

5B: Female in her 50s from Somalia who came to the UK 2 years ago as an asylum seeker

5C: Female in her 30s from Iran who came to the UK 6 years ago as an asylum seeker

5D: Female in her 30s from Iran who came to the UK 6 years ago as an asylum seeker

5E: Female in her 20s from Iran who came to the UK 1 year ago as an asylum seeker

5F: Female in her 20s from Iraq who came to the UK 1 year ago as an asylum seeker

5G: Female in her 40s from Eritrea who came to the UK 9 years ago as an asylum seeker

5H: Female in her 30s from Eritrea who came to the UK 5 years ago as an asylum seeker

5I: Female in her 30s from Eritrea who came to the UK 4 years ago as an asylum seeker

5J: Female in her 40s from Eritrea who came to the UK 6 years ago as an asylum seeker

5K: Female in her 30s from Eritrea who came to the UK 6 years ago as an asylum seeker

The majority of participants at this project were from south of the river Tyne this fits in with the project being located in Gateshead. 6 participants lived in Gateshead, 2 in Sunderland, 1 in Walkergate, 1 in Felling and 1 in Newcastle City Centre.

Linking Women of Africa²⁵⁷ (LWA)

Art Project	Linking Women of Africa
What they do?	Crochet & Embroidery
African Women	
Tuesday 12:30 – 2:30	
Crudders Park Community Centre	
Start date	June
End date	September
Arts Development Team, Newcastle Council	

LWA was formed in 2007. Their mission is to ‘Help African women to develop skills and confidence enabling them to become more independent and participate fully in the society.’²⁵⁸ The group was formed to try and enable African women to access information and advice as well as providing a place where they can meet people, share experiences and socialise. They are a group of refugees and asylum seekers based in the west end of Newcastle. They have previously run various events to seek to bring together women from across Africa to support each other and share their culture with others including the “Linking us event” African awareness and fun day and cooking. This project involved eight African women and one woman from Russia.

Linking Women of Africa approached the council hoping to get funding to enable them to meet on a regular basis and share their crochet skills with other members of the group. The council passed them through to the Arts Development Team who started working with them to assess their needs and see if there was any funding which they could access to be used for this project. It was agreed that an artists would come into work with them to teach them further skills and that another purpose of the group would be to improve their English language skills. This project was funded by the neighbourhood learning in deprived communities fund (NLDC)

²⁵⁷http://www.refugeevoices.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=126 [4th May 2009]

²⁵⁸http://www.refugeevoices.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=126 [6th May 2010]

from a block of funding the Arts Development Team had. NLDC seek to provide learning opportunities for residents of disadvantaged neighbourhoods within Newcastle. National guidance requires that the fund be used to prepare workless adults from disadvantaged areas skills to help them assess employment²⁵⁹. During some of the sessions people from other council departments came in to assess the groups needs and refer any onto other learning opportunities such as math's classes that might be relevant for them.

Participant facts:

6A: Female in her 20s from Cameroon who came to the UK 6 years ago as an asylum seeker

6C: Female in her 20s from Cameroon who came to the UK 6 years ago as an asylum seeker

6D: Female in her 30s from Cameroon who came to the UK 6 years ago as an asylum seeker

6E: Female in her 30s from DRC who came to the UK 4 years ago as an asylum seeker

6F: Female from in her 20s DRC who came to the UK 4 years ago as an asylum seeker

6G: Female in her 30s from Russia who came to the UK 2 years ago as an asylum seeker

6H: Female in her 30s from Ivory Coast who came to the UK 4 years ago as an asylum seeker

6I: Female in her 50s from DRC who came to the UK 9 years ago as an asylum seeker

6J: Female in her 20s from DRC who came to the UK 9 years ago as an asylum seeker

This project shows the largest spread of areas participants live in implying that it is not the locality which unites this group. The group Linking Women of Africa

²⁵⁹ Newcastle City Council (2009) *Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities 2009/10 Prospectus*

specifically attracts women from Africa who now live throughout Tyne and Wear. 2 participants lived in Walker, 1 in Gateshead, 1 in The West End, 1 in Shieldfield, 1 in Wallsend, 1 in Crudderspark, 1 in Newcastle City Centre and 1 in Sunderland.

Two Pilot projects studied

In Perspective and Newcastle Unity Project, PVE, GEM Arts

In Perspective

Art Project	In Perspective
What they do?	Learn painting skills
Who they involve?	Anyone
Wednesday 5:30 – 7:30	
The Castle Gate, Melbourne St, Newcastle	
Start date	April
End date	June
Action Foundation and self Funded by artist	

This is a small project run by an artist who takes the sessions on a voluntary basis because she feels that they bring benefit to others and there is a need for them in the area.

Action Foundation²⁶⁰ fund refreshments and publicity for In Perspective, the artist provides the materials free of charge and City Church provides the venue free of charge. Action Foundation was started as a response to the changing needs of the local community. They have two main projects which they run, a housing scheme to provide free accommodation to some of the destitute asylum seekers in the region and a free language school to people who can't access this elsewhere. Their venture into funding an arts project is led by a belief of their Manager that the arts can benefit vulnerable people by giving them a way of expressing themselves in a safe environment.

Participant facts:

7A: Female in her 20s from Iran who had moved over here with her husband

²⁶⁰ <http://www.actionfoundation.org.uk/> [10th July 2010]

7B: Female in her 20s from Iran who had moved over here with her husband

7C: Female in her 40s from UK who has lived here all her life.

Newcastle Unity Project, PVE, GEM Arts

Newcastle Unity Project, PVE, GEM Arts

What they do? Muslim Women's Art Group

Who they involve? Muslim Women

Friday 12 - 2

Nunsmoor Road Centre Fenham

Start date June

End date July

PVE, Newcastle City Council

This is a small pilot project run through GEM Arts and delivered by a local artist who is also the artist at The Hubhub. This project seeks to help Muslim women express themselves creatively.

The community cohesion unit of Newcastle City Council delivers the funding for this project, from the Preventing Violent Extremism fund²⁶¹. The Council fund five main projects with the PVE funding stream, a planning or steering group to direct fund allocation; a learning forum on violent extremism and islamophobia, following the national model; a women's group; a young people's group and a mosques group.

Participant facts:

8E: Female in her 40s from Libya who came to the UK 10 years ago because her husband came to study in the UK

8T: Female in her 30s from Iran who came to the UK 6 years ago as an asylum seeker

8Q: Female in her 20s from Afghanistan who came to the UK 2 years ago as an asylum seeker

²⁶¹ <http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageld=7890410> [25th July 2010]

8I: Female in her 40s from Afghanistan who came to the UK 7 months ago as an asylum seeker

8S: Female in her 30s from Saudi Arabia who came to the UK with her husband

Chapter 7. Analysis

Emerging opinions on the intrinsic and instrumental benefit of the arts show the power that art can play as a social tool. There is also a clear consensus from literature that insufficient or flawed measurement to demonstrate the social value of the arts has led to it being undervalued.²⁶² The economic climate and priorities of Government agendas increases problems surrounding the lack of continued funding for arts projects. Funding is fundamental to these projects and has been explored through the eight projects studied in this document to enable a clearer understanding of the situation in Tyne and Wear to be reached.

In all 65 participants were interviewed. Of these 42 had not attended an arts projects before.

Overall the projects the main three things which participants identified as the main reasons they got involved in the project were

1. Enjoying the art on offer
2. Learning new skills
3. Getting together and meeting friends

Overall the projects the main three things which participants identified as the best thing about the project were

1. Getting together and meeting friends
2. Doing the art on offer
3. Learning Skills

Overall the projects the main three things which participants identified as the things which they would change about the project were

²⁶² MLA (2005) *New Directions in Social Policy: developing the evidence base for museums, libraries and archives in England* Burns Owens Partnership p.21

1. Nothing
2. Continuing the project for more sessions
3. Going out more to galleries etc

For more details see Appendix b for graphs

Themes identified which were drawn out of the data were

1. Addressing Asylum Seeker Issues
2. Social Capital
3. Identity Construction
4. Arts Project Funding

Each of these themes is addressed in the next section of this research. Each theme is dealt with in turn looking at the participants perspectives, the artists perspectives, the funders perspectives, then drawn together in a discussion.

7.i Addressing Asylum Seeker issues

Participants Perspectives

Many participants at the projects experienced isolation and felt that the projects helped them overcome these issues, an important part of which was improving their English. These were most prominent in The Hubbub, where a female in her 30s from Afghanistan who came to the UK 1 ½ years ago as an asylum seeker (Participant 1C) said, 'I came here because I am going to have a conversation with the people and I am going to improve my English and I don't want to sit at home alone.' This was reiterated by another female in her 30s from Afghanistan who came to the UK 10 years ago as an asylum seeker (Participant 1D). She said,

'I am by myself in my home. Here I am going to visit lots of people. I am going to have a conversation. I am going to improve my English.'

At In Perspective a female in her 20s from Iran who had moved over here with her husband (Participant 7B) spoke of how with art there was no need for language and that this made it much more accessible to her.

A sense of building the community which they have in the UK was something which was a significant factor in participants' enjoyment of the projects and dedication to coming back week after week. This comment was shared by participants from every project studied. At the Hubbub a female in her 20s from Afghanistan who came to the UK 2 years ago as an asylum seeker (Participant 1F) said, 'We come in here because we have no family here and this place is a very good place to us because we come along here and have a conversation with the people.' She also spoke of how happy she was with the project and that when she attends it she feels happy and knows if she has any problems there are people who can help. At the Asha Hope Bridge and Tunnel project a young female in her teens from Rwanda who came to the UK 4 years ago as an asylum seeker (Participant 2I) spoke of isolation but that the project provided her with an outlet and somewhere to spend time that was not in her home.

One of the main issues for participants from the GEM Textiles Project was the sense of isolation they felt when they were at home, which made the social side of this group very important to them. A female in her 40s from Iraq who came to the UK 10 years ago as an asylum seeker (participant 4E) spoke of how at home things always went around in her mind but here she could relax and keep busy with friends. A female in her 30s from Iraq who came to the UK 1 ½ years ago as an asylum seeker (Participant 4F) and a female in her 30s from Sudan who came to the UK 4 years ago as an asylum seeker (Participant 4B) both spoke of feeling bored and isolated at home. Participant 4F found that learning a skill which she could do at home was very valuable in helping her overcome this whereas Participant 4B spoke of the group as her family. The GEM Photography participants shared the same sentiments. A female in her 20s from Iran who came to the UK 1 year ago as an asylum seeker (Participant 5E) spoke of how she appreciated organisations arranging groups like this because if they did not exist she felt she would not have a community and might never see others. Within the GEM Photography project a female in her 30s from Iran who came to the UK 6 years ago as an asylum seeker (participant 5D) also addressed the issue of being isolated and said, 'We don't have family or relatives here so it's good for socialising'. At the LWA project a female in her 20s from DRC who came to the UK 9 years ago as an asylum seeker (Participant 6J) said, when talking of what was best about the project, 'Most of us, we are quite isolated so I think we wanted something where we could just go every week because then we can meet our friends and have tea together.' She also talks more of how having something to do regularly and the structure helps her. The participants at In Perspective talk of being isolated and their desire for the art group to continue. A female in her 20s from Iran who had moved over here with her husband (Participant 7A) said, 'We don't have nothing to do during the summer because we just have to stay in Newcastle and this class is very useful for us is very good for us going out from home.'

Racism was an issue which was touched on in interviews with participants from Asha Hope Bridge and Tunnel project and PVE. Racism was dealt with in a different situation at the GEM Arts project with some interracial tensions between

asylum seekers coming to the fore. At the Asha Hope Bridge and Tunnel project a young female in her 20s from Rwanda who came to England 10 years ago as an asylum seeker (Participant 2G) talks passionately and at length about racism, the Home Office system and terrorism. She says, 'Terrorism, when that happened I was like ... that's not good because when you have things like that happening everyone gets judged straight away, like on the whole and it's not like you can go around saying OK it wasn't me I haven't done it.' adding

'I'm living here right. I class this as my country so If I see like any, you know like bomb attacks in London or anything I feel like it's affecting me as well. I feel bad for people who've lost their families and friends like it's affecting me.'

She also spoke of how being categorised as an immigrant by others from England was insulting but had made her stronger. A young man in his 20s from Uganda who came to the UK 10 years ago as an asylum seeker (Participant 2D) spoke of issues around knife crime and racism and his desire to be given more opportunity to use the project to explore issues which are affecting him now rather than the issues which led to him to be in England. He said, 'People would agree on one thing because knife crime affects each and everybody, racism affects each and everybody and I think these are some of the issues people would agree on.' The participants at the PVE project talk about getting involved in the project to dispel negative stereotypes against them. The participants have interpreted the project as preventing violent extremism against them a female in her 30s from Saudi Arabia who came to the UK 4 years ago with her husband (Participant 8S) says, 'My favourite thing from here is that I've gained experience and that after I've joined the project I gained the confidence to do a couple more sessions so really you know it has helped us without feeling ashamed or guilty.'

Two participants who were attending Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums project as part of their job commented on building up asylum seekers confidence to use services such as the police and mental health services in the NHS. A female in her 40s who works for the police who is from Colombia and came to the UK 12 years ago to study (Participant 3A) describes how through her work with asylum

seekers she is aware that they may have a negative view of the police from their own countries.

‘I work with refugees and asylum seekers as well as working in the hate crime department helping give people the confidence to report incidents. I’ve only been working in Sunderland since May so I’m trying to build up confidence within the community. I’ve done a lot of this kind of work In Newcastle and it takes a long time to build up rapport.’

A female in her 30s who works for the NHS who is from The Philippines and who came to the UK 7 years ago as her husband is British (Participant 3H) was aware that asylum seekers may be suffering from mental health needs. She spoke of her work with refugees and asylum seekers, and her engagement with asylum seekers regarding wellbeing and mental health support. Also at Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums project A female in her 40s who works for the Local Education Authority has lived in the UK all her life (Participant 3N) also spoke of how they have identified a need in provision of mental health services for asylum seekers who may be suffering from mental health issues and that it had been concluded that this art project would be therapeutic and help the ladies to start to overcome these mental health needs. A female in her 60s from Poland who comes to the UK to visit her family (Participant 3G) talked of how the project was lifting her spirits even when she was not there, reinforcing the idea that the project may be of benefit to participants mental health. She said,

‘This is very nice. I think about it every weekend it’s nice this project is for me a big relax.’

Some of the participants still suffer from trauma of the events that they have experienced which led them to come to the UK. One of the striking features of the GEM Arts Textile Group was the willingness of participants to share memories of traumatic events which had happened to them. This happened to a lesser extent with participants from the LWA project. Within the GEM Arts Textile Group Participant 4B, a female from Sudan who came to the UK as an asylum seeker,

explained to me some of the problems she had faced in Darfur and how it had not been safe for her to remain there any longer. Participant 4E, a female from Iraq who came to the UK as an asylum seeker, spoke of her life in Iraq and some of what she had had to give up when she fled to seek safety in the UK after her husband had been killed whilst Saddam Hussein was in power.

‘I had nice high life in Iraq because I was a teacher for 15 years and head teacher for 7 years. 22 years I was a teacher in Iraq but I left everything, came here to start and for my children’s future not for myself. It is too hard for me but for them it is good’.

One female in her 40s from Iraq who came to the UK 6 years ago as an asylum seeker (Participant 4C) spent over $\frac{3}{4}$ of the interview talking about her problems and how she could not cope. She clearly needed someone to talk to about her situation. Some participants from the GEM Photography strand of this project, also opened up about the difficult situations they had faced. These included a female in her 30s from Eritrea who came to the UK 6 years ago as an asylum seeker (Participant 5K) who spoke of the war and danger in her country. At the LWA project a female in her 30s from DRC who came to the UK 4 years ago as an asylum seeker (Participant 6E) spoke of some of the difficult situations she had been in in the DRC and how relieved she is now every night that she does not hear gunfire.

Cultural issues around fitting into society here were mentioned by participants at GEM Photography and LWA. At GEM Photography a female in her 30s from Eritrea who came to the UK 4 years ago as an asylum seeker (Participant 5I) mentioned issues she was having understanding her daughter’s school work.

‘My daughter is learning art photography so I am interested whenever I see her doing something. I don’t want to say, ‘I don’t know this, I don’t know this.’ so if I have this opportunity I want to use it.’

Participants at LWA spoke of problems with qualifications not being recognised and one participant of being here for 9 years before getting her refugee status when talking about the difficulties of moving to England. A female in her 20s from Cameroon who came to the UK 6 years ago as an asylum seeker (Participant 6A) became animated and passionate that learning English was an essential part of settling in, particularly if you have a child so you can help them with their education. Loneliness was also recognised as an issue which many of the women suffered from and a reason why the organisation LWA had evolved in the first instance.

Artists Perspectives

The artist for the Hubbub, an experienced female local community artist (A1), is articulate and shows awareness and concern over many issues which asylum seekers maybe facing and how the art group that she is leading could affect them. One of the artists for Asha Hope Bridge and Tunnel, a male filmmaker and scriptwriter (A2a), expressed awareness that asylum seekers are likely to come from poor backgrounds and have experienced a lot (of challenges) in their lives. The artist for Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums project, an experienced female textile artist (A3), shows an understanding of the sensitivity with which these projects have to be set up for them to work. The artist for GEM Textiles, an experienced female textile artist specialising in felt making (A4), tried to listen to the group and their needs. She asked her group what they wanted to do and then tailored the sessions to suit their needs. The participants said they would like to make something for their houses and there were some females who were very passionate to do fashion so A4 fitted this into the sessions. The artist for GEM Photography, a female French photographer specialising in documentary photography (A5), is aware of issues which asylum seekers may be facing with regard to the cultural differences. She spoke of how close she felt to the women involved in her project and how well they related to each other. The artist for In Perspective an experienced female artist who's spent much of her time working in schools in India (A7), talks of how empowering it is to have created an image that can be shared with many different people from many different backgrounds. The artist for PVE was also the artist at The Hubbub (when responding in the context of

PVE project she is referred to as A8). She demonstrates an understanding of the culture from which the women are coming,

‘I think it's more empowering for a woman to be informing a woman than a man to be informing her. Then that's the way it should be so I think, yeah it's definitely more powerful.’

A1 knows that the social elements are likely to be very important to participants at The Hubbub. When talking of some of the adults who only come to the arts table sporadically she says,

‘Some of them just go to socialise and have a chat and see friends and that's fair enough. It might be the only time in a week that they get to see their friends so there is also that aspect of it as well’.

A4 has worked with many different groups and can see a need for the kind of work done at the GEM Textiles project amongst vulnerable people. Within her group she gave the participants encouragement to be creative and also time to be in the group socialising. ‘I think it is really important that they can get a little bit of time to just interact with other women and have a laugh; to have a laugh is really important to them because their lives are so hard and we don't know the full extent but I just think it's vital.’ A7 is aware that participants may not be able to come week after week continually and has set the project up to accommodate this, ‘So people can just sort of dip in and dip out and trying to develop that to a degree where they can come away with something decent at the end that they're proud of or excited by.’

A1 realises participants need to work through issues in their own time. She talks of the ideas of doing issue based work with the group but acknowledges that the group is different from many other groups she runs. Since it is an informal drop in she would not wish to force issues on people if they had not signed up for it. When talking of The Hubbub at the end of this contemplation she says, ‘I think it is more to go and relax really more therapeutic than anything else.’ One of the artists for Asha Hope Bridge and Tunnel, a recent male graduate specialising in film editing

(A2b) spoke of media pressures and other reasons why asylum seekers might not feel confident to share their stories but wanted this project to give them a safe environment to do so, 'They could tell their stories without there being any external voice, press, whatever reason there might be too stop them from wanting to share their story in full.' He feels being able to share their stories is important for the participants, 'It's always been the idea that because of making the content available means that anyone who is a young refugee or asylum seeker or even other people outside of that niche can watch that and realise what the experience is like.'

A3 explains how she was worried about the low number of participants at Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums project that were turning up initially and realises that, 'It's more important to think very carefully about the lead into the project.' She had her own ideas as to how the textile arts that she can deliver could be turned into a project that could help the participants to become more familiar with their new environment. 'I did suggest to a female at Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums that maybe a good project would be to actually do a map, to do a big textile map using those techniques that they have learned and then they would know where lots of places were and you could talk about the park and say, 'Yes the park is free there is no charge.' I think I would like that if I was in a new city.' She is sensitive in trying to put herself in the shoes of those she is working with and also optimistic in seeking ways the project maybe able to progress. A7 realises that trust must be built up to maximise the potential of working on a combined large piece of work. 'It would be good to do a long term thing or work together on something but I think that might have to come last, when we're a bit more cohesive and we know a bit more who's coming because we are getting a lot of people who are coming in and out on the fringes who would maybe find it difficult who wouldn't relate to people straight away and would find it hard to work on a big project.' Using her understanding of issues participants maybe facing A8 wanted to put a positive spin on the project so the women engage with it. Her aims were mainly to look at any stereotypes, grievances or prejudices that Muslim women might face but she also wanted it to have a positive effect as well, 'So I thought it would be good if we looked at celebrating Muslim women and their own culture.'

A2a became even more aware of issues faced by asylum seekers as one participant could not turn up to the photo shoot because of immigration problems. A6 understood some of the difficulties the participants faced, realising that there were differences in timekeeping in different cultures, but did not feel comfortable addressing the issue fully.

‘I kind of made half-hearted comments about timekeeping and stuff but it was just washed aside and then I felt like I was being a bit petty if I mentioned it so, I don't know, I was a bit hopeless and I'm really annoyed at myself about the French-speaking thing. I didn't feel comfortable criticising them, they knew that they should be speaking in English as they are adults.’

Interestingly some of the participants were obviously appreciating someone being there on time, as one participant commented that the punctuality of the artist was an important element of the project. A4 also explained that she understood that different cultures have different concepts of time management and accepts, ‘There are some other cultures where it becomes very apparent, working with refugees and asylum seekers who are much more transient and much more relaxed when stuff is expected to start, and you can't force it.’

A5 was aware of and tried to allow for the fact that some of the women did not wish for photos of their faces to be taken. A5 speaks of one participant who was more difficult to work with, but was sensitive to other things happening in that participant's life and other reasons for this. ‘She had a lot of things going on in her life and also, because she was quite excited, often so excited about the whole thing that it was quite hard to just keep her down and ask, ‘now can you listen?’ A5 was taking guidance from the women at Tyneside Women's Health to learn and understand more about the participants in her group, ‘A worker at Tyneside Women's Health was saying sometimes some of the women suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder and they seem to consciously or deliberately block things out and therefore they don't remember what you have told them.’ She realised that the women in her group congregated together into the different language groups but felt that this was natural, to tend to go with people who speak the same language, and maybe have

a similar culture. A7 talks of word of mouth as a way of being able to attract more participants from asylum seeker and refugee backgrounds. She realises they are a transient group where mainstream publicity may be lost.

A3 views her role as a facilitator to others' creativities and acknowledges that there are skills which are required for the role which don't come naturally to every artist,

'I think from my point of view my job is to interpret what I am asked to do and then to facilitate it, encourage other people, so I think that it is quite important to have an understanding of the job. When I first started doing it I didn't really have that understanding and it's maybe something that can be looked at.'

She goes on to suggest that it might be useful for practitioners to be given a session on sensitive issues before they start working with groups. A1 believes in this project so much that to make it happen, she started it voluntarily, 'I think obviously I don't get paid very much to do it, which I don't mind, because I value the project, I see the value of having the arts there as well.'

Funders Perspectives

The Hubbub is funded by Tyneside Fine and Decorative Arts (TYDFAS) and their representative is referred to here as F1. She is actively interested in supporting asylum seekers as her initial involvement in funding the project started from her delivering clothes to West End Refugee Service. The GEM Textiles and GEM Photography project are both funded by Lankelly Chase and their representative is referred to here as F4&5. She had a clear grasp of many issues affecting asylum seekers and had worked not only funding projects with them for years but was now looking into research options too. She is clear on the definitions of asylum seeker, refugee and migrant, and views the projects as being fundamentally about putting the participants first. LWA is funded by The Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities (NLDC) through The Arts Development Team at Newcastle City Council and their representatives are referred to here as F6a and F6b. They both showed knowledge of some issues facing asylum seekers within the community. In

Perspective is funded by Action Foundation and their representative is referred to here as F7. He was very knowledgeable and articulate about issues facing asylum seekers, this gives him added insight into how the arts maybe useful for them.

‘Many of these folks have come from repressive regimes where they can’t express themselves freely at all so it’s kind of a whole new thing where they are told to say whatever or do whatever they want to do in terms of artistic expression. So that would be the main place really that they sort of start to open up and there’s a lot of physical and emotional healing that can take place through that.’

PVE is funded by Newcastle City Council and their representative is referred to here as F8. To understand the culture of the participants further F8 went on a training course, ‘I went on a course the other day an introduction to Islam and Muslim culture it was absolutely fascinating.’ F8 explains that the City Council are looking into funding more of their employees to go on courses such as this one to build up their understanding of the different communities in the city.

F1 realises how important the project is to the participants and that social interaction in a comfortable environment is an important aspect of their lives which The Hubbub can provide. F6a talked of how important the arts project had been to them in being able to be aware of these women and the needs that they had. F6b talked of how throughout the project they listened to the needs of the women and talked of ways the group could be supported by a learning skills tutor or how the Arts Development Team could put the women in touch with other services. F7 is aware of the chaotic lifestyles asylum seekers are often forced to lead, ‘Many of them will have requirements which they don’t know in advance like reporting to the home office or seeing a solicitor or even going to another part of the country to gather some evidence.’ So he feels that to keep the sessions as individual sessions for people to turn up to, not a series or whole course is the only way to work with these vulnerable people.

‘One of the things that asylum seekers suffer from most is that they are branded as different. They are an asylum seeker, they are a non-legal person in this country, so

anything that can tackle that, that makes them feel normal and in an environment where they are equal to anybody else in this country, enables them to have greater self worth and repair some of the esteem that's been lost.'

For him it is important that the arts group is open to everybody including asylum seekers but not aimed exclusively at asylum seekers.

Asha Hope Bridge and Tunnel is funded by FirstLight Media and Heritage Lottery. The FirstLight Media representative is referred to here as F2a. He is aware that you can't just demand a particular outcome and outcomes depend on the nature of the people you are working with, 'In our final report what we look for more are stories about how young people have benefited from the training and that could really vary depending on the nature of the young people, the project, any specific difficulties they may have and where they are starting from really.' F4&5 speak of the different cultural understandings of art and not wanting to force a western view of culture onto asylum seekers. 'We fund various art work with refugees and asylum seekers around the country and it's trying to enable them to express themselves rather than imposing some art form.'

Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums Project is funded by the DCMS and supported by the MLA. The MLA representative is referred to here as F3b. He can see that asylum seekers may have problems engaging because of their transient nature but feels museums have a responsibility to capture the heritage of this current situation.

'Because groups, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers are some of the hardest to capture anyway because by their very nature they are moving. They are often dominated by young single men who are the very last people who want to engage with these sorts of things. It is very very interesting. In the middle of it all is a real responsibility for museums though going back to all the intrinsic values to capture all of this.'

Asha Hope Bridge and Tunnel is funded by FirstLight Media and Heritage Lottery. The Heritage Lottery representative is referred to here as F2b. She showed an understanding that asylum seekers may not usually engage with heritage and they might be isolated from their own heritage.

F4&5 sees the fragile situation many of the participants face as, 'They are very cut off from their roots and this is a very disruptive and damaging process.' She acknowledges the mental health needs that often come with being an asylum seeker. She realises that people in the UK are much more stressed now about losing jobs and less tolerant of people coming into their country. Furthermore, she points out the dangerous way the media misrepresent asylum seekers using terms such as illegal. She explains that the very nature of asylum means that they are here because of a threat to their life. She goes on to talk about incentives that seek to use popular media to try and counterbalance these negative views.

F8 understands that some of the community may misunderstand the Preventing Violent Extremism funding stream,

'I think amongst the community's there was a fear that we had somehow secretly been commissioned by The Government to spy on them. I think there was that kind of perception, that it was all about surveillance.'

F1 acknowledges that, 'It's a shame that they don't do it twice a week but I don't know what the organisers other commitments are and whether the hall would be available.' However one of the major reasons stopping them from being able to offer The Hubbub twice a week is lack of funding.

Discussion

Most issues which emerged through the research presented here were related to participants suffering from isolation, a desire to fit in to society and improve their English skills. As found in the literature review, The Refugee Council reinforces the view that language is key to integration and suggests that more should be done to

enable asylum seekers to access language support, particularly within the first 6 months of their arrival when state ESOL classes are not provided.²⁶³ This research shows that many participants enjoyed the freedom that an arts project gave them to address language issues at their own pace in an informal and comfortable environment. Only one of the artists, A4 and one funder, F7 mentioned the significance of language acquisition that can be gained through the conversations which take place in an arts group. It is important here to note that the language learning which took place was not the main aim of these art projects but something which was enabled through the comfortable safe environment the art projects created.

Introducing language acquisition as an official part of arts projects is not without its problems. The project LWA was funded with part of its focus on providing a relaxed environment to speak English in. Speaking English was in fact less natural for this group, as French was a common language that most of the participants were more comfortable speaking, so making the effort to speak in English proved hard and many conversations which started in English rapidly turned into French. A6, the artist for this project, felt unable to address the issue satisfactorily. This added pressure on her as the artist to try and encourage the women to speak English within the group as well as leading the art. This could raise the questions as to what the primary purpose of the arts group is. The funding for the group was from NLDC which had a community learning focus to it and although the women came up with the suggestion that speaking English in the group was something which they wanted to achieve it might have been that the project was not long enough to facilitate such an ambitious aim. As the women were so much more comfortable speaking French it would have taken longer to overcome their habit of falling back into speaking in French. This fits into the literature which claims when the arts are used as a tool they lose their function as the arts and their intrinsic value.²⁶⁴ The artist and some of the participants suggested that if the project were to continue that they may try to attract a more varied group, opening the project out more

²⁶³ Cutler, S. (2007) 'Refugee Council Response to the Community Cohesion and Migration Inquiry by the Communities and Local Government Committee' Policy Response Refugee Council

²⁶⁴ Brighton, A. (2003) 'Save our Souls' *Museums Journal* 103 (7): 18-19

widely to women from other cultures. This in itself could enable English to be spoken more naturally in the group as with other projects in this research, it was seen that where participants spoke a variety of languages more of an effort was made to communicate in English, as a common second language, so that more people within the group could be involved in the project. As the French artist A5 points out it is natural for people to resort to speaking in their original languages and to communicate more with people who share these languages. It would appear that arts projects can have an impact on language for asylum seekers, which they themselves value, however when it is linked to the funding of the project and therefore becomes a fundamental element of the project this can cause added complications for the artist and be counter productive.

The research appears to show that language skills are a secondary benefit from arts projects and suggests that arts projects could be used as a way of helping with basic language skills for asylum seekers when they first arrive in the UK, before they can access state ESOL classes. This is supported by statistics produced by The Newcastle Asylum Seeker Unit that found less than 15% of the asylum seekers they support spoke English.²⁶⁵ However work would have to be done to attract more asylum seekers to such projects when they first arrive in the UK as, out of all the participants in the projects studied for this research, only one had been in the UK less than 6 months. To have an impact on English Language skills before an asylum seeker can access state ESOL classes and to enable integration through art to start at the earliest possible time, the arts projects must be able to make themselves both known to and more accessible to newly arrived asylum seekers. This could be done in partnership with local asylum seeker and refugee organisations or with The Newcastle Asylum Seeker Unit who house asylum seekers when they first arrive in the region. There is a tension here as when asylum seekers first get to the country with very limited English skills their lives can be extremely chaotic and this may stop them from being able to attend an arts projects. Also as we have seen from the LWA project when the focus changes from arts to language some of the intrinsic value of the project appears to be lost.

²⁶⁵ Your Homes Newcastle (2007) *Annual Report 2006/07' Local Solutions to international problems* Newcastle Asylum Seekers Unit p.10

However the research clearly highlights the benefit of building language skills to asylum seekers regardless of the time they have so far spent in the UK.

Asylum seekers are not a single cohesive group, they have come from many different situations, cultures and speak a variety of languages. This research was limited to seven projects in total, and five in detail. To overcome potential issues with participants in particular giving responses they thought were expected from them rather than honest ones the research at each project had to be for an extended period of time which limited those that could be studied. All the projects investigated were amongst the asylum seeker community in the Newcastle/Gateshead area and the participants in the 5 main projects were from 24 different countries and had been here between 4 months and 12 years. Within the projects researched there was a wide variety of countries represented, however the evidence show that individual projects tended to attract participants from a relatively narrow selection of countries. This confirmed the common perspective that people do naturally tend to gravitate towards people who are from a similar culture. It is interesting to note that projects tended to have more than one participant from each country represented. Even projects such as the one run with LWA where you may expect to see a wide range of African Countries represented, only involved women from 3 different African countries. The exception to this trend was the Asha Hope Bridge and Tunnel project where cultural commonality and language appeared not to be a factor. This may be because participants had been in England for longer and so were more settled and confident to attend a project as the only person from their country. As this research looked at projects where participation was on a voluntary basis it was thereby limited to only gathering data from asylum seekers who were sufficiently motivated of themselves to join such a group. Because of this participants may reasonably be assumed to be beginning to develop their own personal social capital at least at a limited level, at the start of each project. A further limitation of the research was that the majority of participants were women. Indeed 4 out of the 7 projects were specifically set up exclusively for women. Of the other 3 projects one had an even gender balance but the other two had only one male participant. It would be interesting to extend the work to look at arts projects with more of a gender mix and indeed arts projects focusing on men. However

during the period of this research no all male arts projects were identified in the area.

The natural selection to be with participants with the same language or country of origin was evident in the GEM projects. It is interesting to look at the two GEM arts projects as initially this was a single group. The participants in the group were able to choose whether to join the photography art group or the textiles art group. All the participants from Iran and Eritrea chose the same group and all but one of the women from Iraq chose the same group. There were some interracial tensions between asylum seekers which became apparent within this group. There were two Kurdish women who had originally signed up for the photography workshop but when the groups divided had decided that they wanted to stay in the textile group, as this was where the other Kurdish women were. This caused problems because there was not enough room for them in the textiles group and so they had to be asked to join the photography workshop. When finding out why these women did not want to join the photography group it transpired that the Kurdish women feel that the Farsi women looked down on them, and there are Farsi women in the photography group and Kurdish ladies in the textiles group. The Kurdish ladies felt excluded from the photography group because they were Kurdish. One Farsi female had told a member of Tyneside Women's Health that Farsi ladies accents are better and there's a hierarchy of languages and Farsi is superior to Kurdish, she had been generally a little bit derogatory about Kurdish people. This issue was carefully thought through by the artists and members of staff at Tyneside Women's Health after the workshop and it was decided that the two Kurdish ladies would be welcome to actively participate in the photography workshop or to attend the textiles workshop as onlookers, taking part only when there was enough materials to allow them to. These two women did eventually come into the photography workshop and one female stuck at it and as the workshop went on the Farsi speakers tried to include her, listen to her creative ideas and find words in their languages that were similar. This is a small step and could be seen to highlight difficulties which can occur within these the arts project, as there can be challenges bringing asylum seekers together due to interracial tensions that can be present. However within the context of the art group the women had managed to find

something in common and even the language, which was one of the elements initially causing tensions between them, became a way of finding common ground. This takes us back to the current Government document encouraging excellence in the arts, The McMaster Report ²⁶⁶ which is keen to capture the value of multi cultural Britain through the arts. The document purports that if we can understand the core of Britain's current cultural identity we could produce some of the greatest art yet. However, as seen through the example above this in itself comes with many subtle complexities and issues which have to be understood and dealt with with great sensitivity. It would also appear harder to run a truly diverse multicultural group, as participants from the same country tend to join the same art projects.

The negative way that asylum seekers have been represented in the past by the media has affected two of the projects in a profound way. Participant 2G a young female from Rwanda who came to the UK as an asylum seeker, felt that the media did not help in educating the British public about asylum seekers, refugees and migrants. She explained that she had been branded as an immigrant and told to go back to her country. This is supported by the evidence found that the press are still misrepresenting the terms asylum seeker, refugee, and illegal immigrant²⁶⁷. Also participants at Asha Hope Bridge and Tunnel talked about negative views that they wanted to get away from and a release at being able to tell their side of the story. Participant 2I, a young female from Rwanda who came to the UK as an asylum seeker, spoke of how being able to tell her story through the documentary film, made as part of the project, felt like a weight had been lifted off over her head. This art project was giving participants a direct way to express themselves, tell their side of the story in a supportive group. As the artist A2a noted, it gave participants an opportunity to tell of their personal experiences away from the press.

One of the Funders, F7 published the report Asylum Matters that touches on the

²⁶⁶ McMaster, B. (2008) 'Supporting Excellence in the Arts, From Measurement to Judgement' Department for Culture Media and Sport p.5

²⁶⁷<http://www.ncadc.org.uk/archives/field%20newszines/oldnewszines/Old%2051-100/newszine71/unhcr.html> [10th March 2010]

sensationalism of reporting of asylum seeker issues²⁶⁸. The women involved in the project, funded by Preventing Violent Extremism, felt strongly that they wanted the chance to speak up and dispel negative stereotypes that may have formed against Muslim women, using the project as an opportunity to try and represent parts of their culture to the British public in a new way. One funder, F4&5, was concerned not only about the impact of misrepresentation of asylum seekers in the media but also lack of sensitivity about the actual facts about asylum seekers by the Government. She was looking into incentives which try and dispel these negative views and offer balanced reporting and acknowledged that there were few projects which seek to do so directly with asylum seekers. One project which she mentioned was Time to Change which addresses stigma attached to mental health issues which can affect many asylum seekers.²⁶⁹ Another project trying to give people the power to change perceptions of themselves is Photo Voice, a charity based in London which 'encourage the use of documentary photography by enabling those that have traditionally been the subject of such work [Media documentation] to become its creator - to have control over how they are perceived by the rest of the world.'²⁷⁰ It would appear from the issues raised by participants, artists and funders at the projects studied in this research, that initiatives to counter negative stereotypes and stigma so often portrayed in the media maybe a good starting point in aiding integration.

Many participants across all the projects spoke of feeling isolated. Some participants likened the art project to their family and others spoke of how without it they felt they would not have a community. This shows a fairly fundamental issue asylum seekers in this country are facing in terms of loneliness that can, especially when added to any trauma they may have experienced prior to arriving in the UK, lead to mental health needs. As the report 'Estimating the scale and impacts of migration at the local level' reveals, mental health needs caused by this kind of isolation impacts not only on the individuals mental health but also can add to

²⁶⁸ Prior J et al. (2009) 'Asylum Matters: Restoring Trust in the UK Asylum System' Centre for Social Justice p.1

²⁶⁹ <http://www.time-to-change.org.uk/> [9th June 2010]

²⁷⁰ <http://www.photovoice.org/html/whoarewe/> [14th May 2010]

pressure on public services.²⁷¹ Through this research it would appear that the community arts projects studied do have a positive impact in addressing these feelings of isolation and provide the asylum seekers with some structure to their week and a supportive community through the arts, which in turn leads them to have more social capital. This evidence suggests that some of these additional mental health problems may be prevented. This not only adds to the individuals' self esteem and ability to integrate into society with a new found self belief but also eases the pressure on public services. Indeed, mental health issues can be a personal barrier to integration and is an issue many asylum seekers face. These were mentioned by funders F4&5 and F7. F4&5 pointed to the way asylum seekers are cut off from their roots as a damaging process and one which may cause mental health needs. F7 also supports this view, looking to the fact that it may not be only the trauma asylum seekers suffered before they came to the UK that leads to their mental health deteriorating, but also the desperation of being in the UK and not knowing what their future is. F7 goes on to say, of the art project which they are funding, that to help counteract this and provide anything which helps participants to express feelings and to connect to each other in a positive and supportive environment can only be a good thing. The issues of mental health are still stigmatised to a certain extent in the UK²⁷² and have to be dealt with by asylum seekers who suffer with them on top of other issues they face associated with being in an unfamiliar country. The Stockport Mental Health Promotion Strategy²⁷³ states that poverty and social exclusion are known to increase vulnerability to mental health needs hence asylum seekers, because of the poverty and social exclusion they face in the UK, are likely to be at a heightened risk of social exclusion. It is therefore extremely encouraging to see that even though asylum seekers are aware of the isolation which they are facing that this research has found the arts project can give them some contact with others in similar situations or with people from the wider community which can help to dispel these lonely feeling and give asylum seekers a social context within which they can survive and build their

²⁷¹ Local Government Association (2007) *Estimating the scale and impacts of migration at the local level* Institute of community cohesion

²⁷² Social Exclusion Unit (2004) *Mental Health and Social Exclusion Social Exclusion Unit Report Summary* Office of the Deputy Prime Minister p.79, p.80 & p.83

²⁷³ Stockport Mental Health Organisation (2002) *Stockport mental health promotion strategy*

identities.

7.ii Identity Construction

Participants Perspectives

Identity construction is hinted at in a number of ways during the interviews with participants. At Asha Hope Bridge and Tunnel participants convey an enthusiasm for the project, as it is a place they feel is an exciting, accepting place to be where they are able to express themselves, somewhere safe and be themselves. A young female in her 20s from Burundi who came to the UK 5 years ago for a better life (Participant 2E) said, 'Here they said something and got us to do the exact same thing they've been talking about'.

Building an identity around others who are from the same country was significant for many participants. At the Hubbub a female in her 40s from Iraq who came to the UK 8 years ago as an asylum seeker (Participant 1G) expressed the joy of being able to meet others from her country of origin, 'Through this project I meet new people I saw some people here who are from my country and they speak my language, it is very good, yes'. At the GEM Photography project the opportunity to meet others from their countries of origin was also important to participants. Participant 5E, a female from Iran who came to the UK as an asylum seeker, speaks of the significance of being able to meet others from her own country,

'I have met so many people from my own country. Before I never had the ideas these people exist here but here I have become friendly with them.'

Participant 5K, a female from Eritrea who came to the UK as an asylum seekers, feels ties so strong with others from her own country she refers to them as family, 'We are sisters because it is in our culture it is different not in European culture when you meet ... she is coming from Eritrea I am coming from Eritrea see we are coming from one country so we are sisters'. Another female in her 30s from Eritrea who came to the UK 5 years ago as an asylum seeker (Participant 5H) speaks of the importance of being given an opportunity to mix with people from other cultures so she can understand them better and then engage with people better in the future

and how this will also help her make friends. Two women from LWA had been taught crochet skills by their mothers in Africa so it was an important part of them exploring their heritage and cultures being able to use skills which they had learnt in Africa in ways in England. Participant 6E, a female from DRC who came to the UK as an asylum seeker, talks of her and her children discovering the different culture in England and this having an impact on their identity she describes (When talking of her children's time in the UK),

'They saw things what they didn't know, like how the people are dressed here, you know in Africa it is hot but people are still clothed, not here when they saw that they were scared, they say why? But it's cold why people do that? I've said son everybody has their culture, there we had another one and now we can just stay here because in our country we can not stay there.'

At PVE many of the participants were excited to be able to take part in an art project particularly one which brought together Muslim women in Britain who were originally from all over the world. A female in her 20s from Afghanistan who came to the UK 2 years ago as an asylum seeker (Participant 8Q) was specifically interested in the opportunity to look at Islamic Art. Some participants felt a responsibility for dealing with the identity of Muslims as a group and representing them. A female in her 30s from Iran who came to the UK 6 years ago as an asylum seeker (Participant 8T) spoke of standing up for Muslim women who have been killed just for being Muslim and how the project has empowered them to do so,

'I think we must speak up for another people to know what Muslim is what is a women in the Muslim, this hijab does not mean I am a terrorist. I am not to kill any person no I am not vulgar I am not impolite I wanted to say something in here in this course then I found this hijab this title is very good to say something.'

A female in her 40s from Libya who came to the UK 10 years ago because her husband came to study in the UK (Participant 8E) agrees that it's good to be able to help dispel stereotypes, 'jumping to conclusions ... without even experiencing anything for yourself, it's really horrible.' Participants have felt empowered by this

project as 8S, a female from Saudi Arabia who came to the UK with her husband, explains 'I've felt working in this project that it could break down the negatives.'

At two of the projects, Asha Hope Bridge and Tunnel and LWA participants spoke of how the project had changed the choices which they would make within their lives. At the Asha Hope Bridge and Tunnel project 3 participants spoke of now having the experience and confidence to choose film studies as a further education option or a career route that they wished to pursue. Many participants felt empowered by the professionalism of the project and being taken seriously on the project. Participants at LWA spoke of the usefulness to them of learning more of the textile skills which they can use to help them decorate their houses and establish their identities there, with people talking of selling their work or looking more into college courses. The skills which the participants were learning within the project were seen to be particularly important to this group with some participants mentioning ideas of going onto further study or using the skills in their homes.

Gaining in confidence was the most universal way in which building identity construction was made with participants from every project mentioning it. A young man in his teens from DRC who came to the UK 5 years ago as an asylum seeker (Participant 2F), A young man in his 20s from Iran who came to the UK 2 years ago as an asylum seeker (Participant 2K) and Participant 2I, a young female from Rwanda who came to the UK as an asylum seeker, all speak of gaining confidence through the project. When talking of the project, participant 2F shows a genuine sense of pride, empowerment and achievement, 'It makes me feel talented, taking part in this group and there are a lot of young guys out there who are looking for this kind of opportunity so I feel really, proud ... really blessed I would say to take part in this.' Participant 2I also felt empowered by the project, 'I get the chance to talk about myself and say what I think, something like my story, I got the chance to express myself and I like to meet new people ... it was amazing it was like something has been lifted over my head it's nice and like I don't think I would have this chance if I stayed at home or if I didn't come to this project in the first place but I think it's a big chance for me.' Participants 2G, a young female from Rwanda who came to the UK as an asylum seeker, and 2I spoke of gaining confidence to speak

to people. Participant 2G said 'I used to see people and I'd think ... I'm not going to speak to her or I'm not going to speak to him, but then when you talk to people you find out that you've got more in common with them than with someone just because they're black or just because they look like you so I give them a chance for a talk and you know if they don't like me then that's fair enough'

At Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums project Participant 3N, a female who works for the Local Education Authority and has lived in the UK all her life, saw the importance of the women being able to bring out their own creativity and talents and this enabling them to be more confident. Identity construction is suggested in different ways at the GEM textiles project, some participants including Participant 4C, a female from Iraq who came to the UK as an asylum seeker, spoke of feeling happy and contented whilst at the project despite suffering from severe headaches a lot of the time. Participant 4E, a female from Iraq who came to the UK as an asylum seeker, had been referred to the project by her doctor said that the project made her feel comfortable. Participants at this project were quite articulate and made many comments that were relevant to how the project had impacted on their sense of identity. At the GEM Photography project participants also felt the project building their confidence one participant, a female in her 20s from Iraq who came to the UK 1 year ago as an asylum seeker (participant 5F), spoke of her need to build up her English language skills and be more positive in her life here in the UK, 'Here there are many British people here talking English like the female from Tyneside Women's Health and other staff and I want to learn from them English and to improve mine and to be not shy, more what we call confident'. At LWA a female in her 20s from Cameroon who came to the UK 6 years ago as an asylum seeker (Participant 6C) felt empowered that 'It was important for women to learn because some women didn't have the chance.' At the In Perspective project participant 7A, a female from Iraq who moved to the UK with her husband, explains that in her country she did not have time to paint so now she can she gets a lot of joy from it. At PVE participants also mentioned their sense of confidence and self-belief growing. Participant 8S, a female from Saudi Arabia who came to the UK with her Husband, talked about how the project has enabled her to grow in confidence.

'I really have been able to build my confidence to do more artwork and then to build to work in a group and do something what I haven't done before and especially with the artist encouraging. That really helped me start and we ended up with a more beautiful picture than I expected.'

Participant 8S also goes onto talk about how she feared criticism and did not even want to start making a mark but with the support of the artist and the group she has very much enjoyed being able to express herself.

At Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums project Participant 3A, a female who works for the police who is from Colombia and came to the UK to study, spoke of how important it was to have a crèche facility and for the women to feel safe using it not only for the children to be able to develop independence and learn to play with others but also for the women to be able to develop individual identities.

Artists Perspectives

Personal identities can be built up and shared with others in the comfortable environment of the art group where participants might not otherwise relate to one another. Artist A1 said 'That is a good thing as well, I think parents who wouldn't normally sit together might at the art table'. She believes that being able to express yourself creatively is a powerful tool for people. She has observed, in The Hubbub group that art can both ease peoples worries by giving them something to occupy themselves and make them happier. A7 the artists from In Perspective agrees that the creative process enables a freedom of expression that can help people build identities. She talks of how art can give people the power to visualise their world views without words and express themselves freely. She also speaks of creativity as a vehicle for exploring your own life and situation. 'Communication skills help them understand how they can see the world creatively and how they can react with themselves creatively because it gives you a lot of self worth.' The artist for LWA, local female textile and print artist (A6) understood the relevance to the African Women that they could keep some of their cultural identity, meet others and try and share experiences in a supportive environment. 'It was getting African

women who maybe didn't know other African women together as a group and making friends, making new contacts, getting to know each other from different parts of Newcastle in a social context.'

Confidence and intimacy that developed within the group during the project was commented on by many artists. A3 felt this was due to the fact that participants felt free enough to be creative without the concern of criticism. She explained how participants started to bring in items that they had made previously to share with the group. 'One female she brought in embroidery that she was doing at home and people were really impressed.' From this they not only gained the confidence to do the art on show but to bring in and share work which they had previously produced which is an expression of their own identities and the places they have come from too. Importantly for asylum seekers who are new to the language, A1 sees how art can transcend these language barriers and build participants confidence,

'It gives them new skills that it can help them with language barriers it can help them with self-confidence and self-esteem and give them a creative outlet. It gives them the opportunity to try something new.'

A2a talks a lot about issues around identity construction feeling that the core of what the Asha Hope Bridge and Tunnel project aimed to do was empowering the participants. He takes satisfaction from seeing people gaining confidence and developing during the project and finding their own talents. 'Shy people coming in initially and then expressing themselves in an artistic way. I thought it was really satisfying.' A5 commented on how the women had grown in confidence and, with the support of the group, were able to stand up for their own opinions. A5 speaks of how valuable the final photo shoot was and the women all being able to share food, celebrate cultures and have a different experience, 'I think it's being able to create a work that makes them happy and I mean a work that will hopefully be seen in the art industry but also that in the process we have made people happy and I think that's the aim of participating in the project, it is really giving them something to look forward to.' A8 was aware that the art was helping those at the project new to England construct their new identity around being a Muslim here in their current

situation. She speaks of how empowered they are, opening up and growing with confidence to want to show others about their culture. A8 talks of how the project could develop to enable to women to educate other women of their culture and have a Muslim and non-Muslim exchange.

Respect and being true to your word were regarded highly amongst the artists as an important factor when considering how the art project works and how identity can be constructed around the project. A1 said, 'everyone wants to be respected and that's between the artist and the people you work with and vice versa.' A2a also talks of his belief in doing what you say you are going to do and explains the process by which they let the participants choose the actors and actresses by auditioning each other then short listing and voting. 'Empowering, really empowering, I don't think you should just say that, whatever's on the label that's what it should be and I felt that it was right that we did that and I think that it's been justified because the leading actress did an excellent performance.' A2a talks of the importance of the concept of the film coming from the participants and how this gave them a commitment to the process as the ideas were coming from them. A5 also mentions how important the involvement of the participants was in the process and also her focus on a high end product, 'It is really about creating a high-end piece of work, but involving the women as much as possible, involving them in the process taking into consideration their thoughts helping them learn something new and feeling comfortable and confident when they are at the sessions.'

A8 felt that it was particularly important, because the funding for this project came from PVE, that the women were listened to so that she could treat the subject with sensitivity and help them feel a sense of ownership of the project. 'Much of the first session was spent discussing their ideas and discussing their views about Muslim women and I talked about some of the possible prejudices that the western world may have of Muslim women and we focused on the hijab as the reference if you like.' A8 explained that it was important that the women were the driving force behind the work. 'They decided what the work was going to be, they did the design for it and I just helped, I supported them and helped them make choices maybe about colours and scale and stuff like that but really the actual design was their

idea.’ A2a also knows the value of being in a safe comfortable environment, ‘One of the things which I emphasised was to respect each others opinions and to give them that freedom of expression.’ A2b also mentions the importance of an equal, mutual respect that they had with the participants. He has seen a lot of the young people grow through the process, ‘A lot of the feedback we have got has been about confidence, confidence within a group of people or confidence in doing something or achieving something which they didn’t think they were capable of doing.’

A4 values respect as a major part of the workshop and the element that enables the course to go beyond the art space. She feels being respected and gaining confidence may inspire participants to get involved in other aspects of society too,

‘The project was for the women to be in control of what they wanted from the artist and to produce something that may or may not be exhibited. For them to have time together as a group and to develop skills such as learning to use the sewing machine, embroidery techniques, techniques related to textiles and also looking at ways for them to develop those skills outside of that group, maybe looking for college courses or their own routes into something further.’

A4’s personal aims are to treat each participant as an individual and to try and draw out their own creativities and help them work their creativity into the project. A7 realises that respecting each person as an individual can have a large impact on their ability to create an identity, ‘We’ve said you don’t have to have any art skills so from that to people who are fairly skilled but I’ve found that people contribute at their own level and we work individually with people see where they’re up to see how we can help them to move on and I’ve really enjoyed it.’ The artist gets a lot of joy and satisfaction from seeing people grow whilst doing the project and encourages people to be supportive of one another. When planning for the sessions A7 takes into account that listening to and acting on what participants say can be a very important way of giving them self worth and empowering them to believe in and express their own opinions. She is working from a basis of her own

experience and knowledge of art, 'I just know how powerful it can be in peoples lives how powerful it's been in my life and just how fun it is.'

Funders Perspectives

Enhancing a sense of personal identity was mentioned by about half of the funders for these projects with the others looking more to other social aspects which the projects build such as networks and friendships. F4&5 understands that, 'If you're coming from a position of fear and distress you are not necessarily at your strongest point where you are able to integrate.' Each project they fund has to be aimed at the individuals and tailored to their needs so the projects tend to try and help strengthen the personal sense of identity for the individuals before working on integration. F4&5 has views on how to approach projects with vulnerable people. She talks of how you shouldn't bulldoze them into creating the identity you think they should have, but you give them an opportunity to explore their own identity, 'I think if you work with arts students in this country you can say that this is good, this is worthwhile you've probably got the skills, go for it, but if you're offering a traumatised group of very vulnerable people the opportunity to participate you don't tell them what they are going to do, you invite them to see what there is on offer'. F2a talks of the quality of the work being important to help the participants achieve something which they can be proud of, 'We are very keen to see the films that come out of it and outcomes for young people; that they are making films that they are really proud of which actually have some legs and can be shown at the festivals not only in this country but throughout the world.' F8 explains that the basis of this project was to enable the women to explore their identities and be able to relate that to their life beyond the art sessions. Another aim is to, 'Make people feel comfortable to express their identity within the wider community.' F8 explained that she doesn't think we get enough opportunities to be creative and that she sees a whole series of advantages of arts based projects.

In having such a focus on heritage a lot of what F2b says is relevant to identity construction, giving participants an opportunity to explore where they, and others have come from, 'our key aim is ... learning which is helping people to learn about

their and other people's heritage.' She speaks of how all their funding is based around heritage that is, 'very heritage focused looking at it in terms of conservation; conserving an intangible heritage by recording it and in terms of learning about heritage. It is getting people to learn heritage skills and to recognise their own heritage and explore that.' F3b feels strongly that it is a museum's responsibility to support immigrants and educate people about where Britain has come from and where we are now. 'What any good museum worth its salt is primarily about is stories ... here were people with very very powerful narratives. What museums also love is modern stories that either have a resonance with the past or that they can help normalise through the past and therefore there is a huge rush to say ah well all of us are immigrants in Britain all of us are migrants it has always happened. Some of our greatest people ever are migrants and therefore it's almost perfectly made for museums to build on.' When talking of a project which he had been involved in previously he commented that, 'When you spot that you have finally achieved something is where these groups do suddenly feel comfortable and some ownership around the whole thing.'

F2b feels that the challenge for museums to help engage refugees and asylum seekers in the community is a long term one, where you can get to a stage that you are not just engaging them but your museum is for them.

'If they're ever going to feel truly part of the community it is going to have to be a long-term thing. It is going to be their children in 10 years time which is why it is a real challenge ... again without being too simplistic whether we actually should be concentrating at a much more fundamental basic level about getting them as parts of society getting them proper jobs, getting them proper homes and then 10 years down the line worrying about then embedding them through museum work. In the meantime, museums should have the responsibility of capturing what is going on culturally and that in itself if we do it in the right way would have some value.'

F6a and F6b both commented on the positive affect long term funding could have on identity construction as this can take time.

'It would be nice to take a group and be able to take them through from the point they are at over a three-year period with a number of different art things using the same kind of model but actually really helping them gain confidence and getting them to a point where many more of them were assets to themselves and to the wider community, but there just isn't enough time.'

F6a and F6b talk of the confidence which the women have gained and the fact that towards the end, 'It is almost like going through that process means that they could sit there and admit their failings to you because they had built a relationship.' as the group had spoken of ways it thought it could improve. F7 talks about personal expression as one of the most important aspects of the project, 'providing an environment where people feel secure, accepted and that they can express themselves freely.' He sees that the art can have an effect on people on a personal level, 'A lot of the success is quite intangible, some of these things are that someone looks happier, that they feel more connected, they are emotionally more stable.'

F6a and F6b were aware that the women had not been enthused by the idea of a final piece. F6a acknowledges that the process is of paramount importance to the group but also feels that the final piece may have more impact than they think.

'I think they have trouble visualising and thinking about the activity in that way because I think when they saw the final thing then they liked the fact that they had been associated with it. I have got to present it to them properly for their centre so we shall see, but the process is the important thing.'

F7 talks highly of A7 in the project and feels the fact that she is approachable and can tell you her own stories of how art has empowered her and this enables her to help others use art as a channel to communicate some of the difficulties they have been through. F7 sees there is something specific to art that enables people to construct their identities from a level platform, 'because art is something that crosses cultural and language barriers I think probably it's somewhere where people can feel equal again in a way that perhaps in an English language class that

they can't.' F8 spoke of how art can be used in different situations, 'You can use it to explain your identity ... I think it's an extremely useful tool not just in work with Muslim communities but in working with young people or with anybody.' With the Muslim women's group F8 sees the focus is on them creating an identity for themselves free from restraints,

'With the Muslim women I think the role of Islam is very important. I think it is part of recognising that and just letting women meet together and explore themselves, their own interpretation of Islam, what that means to them and to try and feel confident within their own communities.'

Discussion

As discussed in the literature review the idea of identity construction as a means of sewing together both the intrinsic and instrumental values in art is emerging.²⁷⁴ Within the arts projects studied in this research many opportunities for identity construction were identified. Many participants throughout all the projects mentioned their confidence improving during the art project. Indeed, participants in the Asha Hope Bridge and Tunnel project mentioned gaining confidence through the project to the extent that they would consider continuing with film studies further, giving rise to an argument that the project has had a profound effect on helping some of the participants not only find an identity but also a potential career path. Participants at LWA also spoke of using the skills they had learnt during the art project to continue onto further study, although they seemed less clear what path this may take, they did not lack in enthusiasm for it.

The PVE project was set up for Muslim women. The women found it empowering to take on an opportunity to represent Muslim women and to speak on their behalf through the art that they were producing. This appears to have given them an opportunity to build a positive foundation as Muslims in their current social context. The art has given them the freedom to explore negative stereotypes, which they

²⁷⁴ Newman, A. & McLean, F. (2006) 'The impact of museums upon identity' *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 12 (1): 49-68

face, in a constructive way. Thus helping hugely in their identity construction and also helping them to take control over their situations.

The understanding which the artists had built up with their participants and the care which had been taken to get to know them individually was evident in the GEM Photography project. A5 knew her participants well and the background of one participant in particular so this participant was offered the opportunity to sit at the head of the table during the photo shoot of the banquet scene. The participant responded by talking about how special it made her feel as back in her country of origin she and her husband used to host big dinner parties. Through the art it was helping her marry her identity here in England and the identity she had had in her country of origin. The artist had known of her feelings of lack of self belief and something of her situation previously so had realised the significance that the opportunity to play out this situation through the photo shoot could have for her identity construction here.

Participants developing independence was mentioned by participants during the research, alongside feeling more able to do things independently outside the arts project. A female in her 30s from Cameroon who came to the UK 6 years ago as an asylum seeker (Participant 6D) talked of building skills so she could decorate her house and make it into a home, demonstrating that through the project she was able to project her own identity onto her house and use this to make herself feel more settled here. Participant 5H, a female from Eritrea who came to the UK as an asylum seeker, spoke of how important the project was for her as a way of learning about herself and being able to learn about others and express herself more fully. Another element which is important to the notions of developing independence in some of the projects was a crèche. There was one available at The Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums project and The LWA Project. This facility gave the participants an opportunity to have a break from being a parent and enable them to develop a sense of independence as well as learning to trust others to look after their children. This was done in particular in the project with Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums as the artist 3A explained the idea was to help the women feel comfortable to trust that the museum could put on events for children too, and

eventually encourage the participants to bring their children along to a nursery group, railway rascals, and add to the links the participants and their children were making. Social inclusion into wider community was also thought about with the funders from both LWA and PVE suggesting further ways of linking the groups into other already existing community groups as a way of helping overcome isolation.

Heritage projects and the opportunity to explore identities and histories were important to the Asha Hope Bridge and Tunnel project. It was mentioned in the Ritchie report²⁷⁵ that there were fears that people were not getting the opportunity to construct their identities around current situations; that they were linking to their own cultures through outdated ideas rather than through genuine forms of relevant current identity.²⁷⁶ This became apparent through this research with participants from many projects talking of the impact which meeting up with people from their country of origin had on them. Participant 5E, a female from Iran who came to the UK 1 year ago as an asylum seeker, spoke of the significance of being able to form friendships with others from her country of origin. Participants mentioned not knowing anyone else from their countries of origin before they had attended the projects and participants from GEM Photography talked of finding metaphorical sisters within the project, as did participants at PVE project. This shows how people need to know some of what their origin was and be able to remember as well as forget.

The expression of self through art was mentioned by A7, A1/A8 and A4 with artists mentioning their own personal benefits from and belief in the arts. With artists running projects based on their own experience this may well contribute to the participants being able to access similar benefits. A7 spoke of the joy and satisfaction she gets from seeing people grow on a personal level whilst creating their artwork and participants at the project spoke of how understanding and patient the artist was with English language skills. The three projects where participants mentioned the artist being able to engage with them on a significant level were the

²⁷⁵ Ritchie, D. Oldham Independent Review, 10, (The Ritchie Report)

²⁷⁶ Ritchie, D. Oldham Independent Review, 10, (The Ritchie Report)

projects run by these artists. As it is suggested in some of the literature studied²⁷⁷ Identity Construction can help people who are socially excluded get to grips with their current situations. Moreover, the responses from this research show that identity construction can impact on participants' identity in many different ways depending on the project, and the stage of integration the participants are at, and that the artists who run the project can have an impact on the participants' sense of personal belief and identity too.

²⁷⁷ Newman, A. & McLean, F. (2006) 'The impact of museums upon identity' *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 12 (1): 49-68

7.iii Social Capital

Participants Perspectives

Some of the main ways in which Social Capital is addressed in the interviews is by participants showing a joy in meeting people thus enabling them to not only to learn art skills but to extend their knowledge of the English Language. At the Hubbub a female in her 60s from Sri Lanka who came to the UK 7 years ago as an asylum seeker (Participant 1W) said, 'All the people are lovely, I like meeting people' A female in her 30s from Sri Lanka who came to the UK 8 years ago as an asylum seeker (Participant 1P) spoke of meeting English people being one of the things she valued most about the project. This view is also shared by a female in her 20s from Denmark who came to the UK 10 months ago to build a new life for her and her children, and to learn English (Participant 1N) who commented on the friendliness of the project and the importance of learning language for her and her children. Other participants also mentioned the importance of the links they were making with people but also spoke of their children getting the opportunity to meet with other children as important. This included a female in her 20s from Iraq who came to the UK 6 months ago because her husband came to study in the UK (Participant 1H) and a male in his 40s from Sri Lanka who came to the UK 9 years ago as an asylum seeker (Participant 1J). At Asha Hope Bridge and Tunnel a young female in her teens from Yemen who came to the UK 2 years ago as an asylum seeker (Participant 2A) said, 'The people you meet here get on well and you get to make friends, so the artists and all of them, they are very supportive.' As with another project a participant at Asha Hope Bridge and Tunnel compared the experience of being in a project to that of being in a family. Participant 2F, a young man from DRC who came to the UK as an asylum seeker, said, 'the people I worked with first of all ... they are all friendly and it's almost like home to me they're like brothers and sisters to me.' The project at Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums had had a positive affect on a female in her 30s from Sudan who came to the UK 4 months ago as an asylum seeker (Participant 3D) who said, 'I would like to come to another project like it' and female in her 20s from China who came to the UK 6 years ago as an asylum seeker (participant 3S) finds that it is a welcoming

environment she said, 'Here it's friendly.' The social aspect of the group appears very important to the women who attend GEM Textiles project. Participant 4B, a female from Sudan who came to the UK 4 years ago as an asylum seeker, spoke of how the group was very important to her and how much she enjoyed meeting people from any country, 'Any different country no problem, just meeting different people big important for me.' A female in her 50s from Iraq who came to the UK 8 years ago as an asylum seeker (Participant 4A) said

'I don't have any other community, I go to here now they know me. 2 years I have been coming here and I make friends from here.'

Participant 4A also spoke of how important to her meeting people from different countries was and that improving her English language skills by having conversations with people here was also something she valued about the project. Participant 4C, a female from Iraq who came to the UK as an asylum seeker, suffers from headaches and struggles to cope with aspects of her life was positive of the effect of the project on her social skills, she said, 'Everybody when comes here is happy because change of place and speak to people and see what happens outside not just sitting all the time.' Participants of GEM Photography particularly mentioned the importance of learning how to meet people. Participant 5H, a female from Eritrea who came to the UK as an asylum seeker, spoke of how important this was to her and that it was not only the skills in art she was learning that were valuable,

'You learn how to meet people how to discuss with people for example, some women when they are sitting at home they don't know anything, they go shopping and they come back after. When they are out some days they are ashamed they don't know how to speak to people but if you come here so many things, you learn, it's not only the art that is good for us.'

The supportive nature of the group was mentioned by many participants who felt this was an important aspect of the projects. At Asha Hope Bridge and Tunnel a young female in her teens from India who came to England with her family 10 years

ago but does not know why (Participant 2L) said, 'It just felt like we were all just working there for each other.' Participant 2G, a young female from Rwanda who came to the UK as an asylum seeker, says something similar in, 'The whole thing with filming you actually feel important and big even though I didn't have a part I still felt a part of something really big'. A sense of togetherness was felt by a young man in his teens from Iran who came to the UK 9 years ago as an asylum seeker (Participant 2B), 'When everyone's doing one job and it all creates this one big system.' At Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums project participant 3H, a female who works for the NHS who is from The Philippines and who came to the UK as her Husband is British, spoke of a sense of togetherness which the project had formed amongst the participants she said,

'All the women find the same joy from the project, there is no discrimination. It allows them to be themselves and explore their creativeness.'

At In Perspective a female in her 40s from the UK who has lived here all her life (Participant 7C) explained how important the dynamics of the group were,

'I think to be able to do anything creative you have to be relaxed and feel at ease in the company that you are in to do anything. I think it's both really it's the dynamics of the group.'

How skills, which the participants had learnt, could be used in wider society was mentioned in a couple of the projects. At the project at Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums Participant 3A, a female who works for the police who is from Colombia and came to the UK to study, identified a different way in which the women are able to further gain social capital in the sharing of skills and ideas from the many different countries they are all from. At Asha Hope Bridge and Tunnel participant 2B also felt the skills that they were learning would be valuable and could be used in wider society. At LWA participant 6D, a female from Cameroon who came to the UK as an asylum seeker, talked of how skills sharing within the project was valuable to her, when talking of the artist she said, 'She's very helpful because she teaches us how to do things, her skills because she got some skills

and our members have also got their own skills so we share our skills also and it's good to work together group work is very good.' At PVE the social focus is on the relationship participants have built with the artist. The participants have created a bond with A8 and feel a lot of gratitude towards her. Participant 8T, a female from Iran who came to the UK as an asylum seeker, says 'I feel the artist is like a friend, like a sister.' They talk of how encouraging she is and that she tries to understand them even if they are not good at English. Participant 8S, a female from Saudi Arabia who came to the UK with her husband, says, 'The artist made us feel even if what we are doing is not up to standard it is worth it because we can learn and carry on.' she goes on to add, 'I've never seen a negative side of her when she's not understanding anyone speaking in English she would try to understand or help, that makes you more workable and relaxed in the work and willing to do more.' A female in her 40s from Afghanistan who came to the UK 7 months ago as an asylum seeker (Participant 8I) also agrees commenting, 'The good teacher, like the artist to make us something good like this picture.' There is a lot of agreement and support within the group for each other expressed by the participants.

At GEM Photography gaining cultural understanding was seen to be an important factor in the project a female in her 40s from Eritrea who came to the UK 6 years ago as an asylum seeker (Participant 5J) also expressed a desire to become more familiar with the people and the culture in England, 'I want to know more of the people, to know the people and the culture'. Participant 5K, a female from Eritrea who came to the UK as an asylum seeker, agreed it was important to find out about different kinds of people and cultures and that this group was a place which enabled her to do so. The participants at LWA generally had a positive and determined outlook they were looking long term to how their children might settle into life in England. They were also keen to know more of the cultural aspects of the UK participant 6E, a female from DRC who came to the UK as an asylum seeker, said, 'After this we can find again some generation after us who can do more'. Participants were also keen to open the project to more people and felt it was important next time to get more people from other cultures involved. This is highlighted by a comment from Participant 6C, a female from Cameroon who came to the UK as an asylum seeker, when talking of how the project might be improved,

said, 'I would let different people maybe also English people come because you can learn from each other because they might come and they might also help us.' and Participant 6D said, 'There is not enough people, there is not enough people, I wish they could have at least 30 people.' At In Perspective a cultural understanding by participants from the UK had made settling into the project much easier. Participants 7A and 7B, who are both females from Iran who had moved to the UK with their husbands, made comments about how much effort the English speakers in the group put into understanding them and the fact that that makes the group much easier for them. 7A '[When] I am here most of the English people that come to this group they know that some of us we can't speak English well so they understand us.' 'They speak slowly to us but if we go to other English class they can't, we can't have a good relationship with them because they don't understand us but here now I am very glad to come here.'

Despite the artists both mentioning how important the participants opinions were there was contrasting opinions at Asha Hope Bridge and Tunnel as to whether the participants, had been considered. Participant 2E, a young female from Burundi who came to the UK for a better life, said felt that to some extent at least their opinions had been listened to, 'For the first few weeks it was like we kept doing the same kind of activities at the beginning but we told the artist that we wanted a change and he changed that.' However participant 2D, a young man from Uganda who came to the UK as an asylum seeker, felt they should have been consulted more. 'The idea comes in from the hierarchy from the bosses'.

Artists Perspective

Meeting people and having a place for a social network to start was felt by many of the artists to be a major strength of the projects. A1 talks of group dynamics with the participants' each having an opportunity through the art group to meet new people, to practice their English and to feel part of a community built by the drop in. At Asha Hope Bridge and Tunnel the artist A2a points to the importance of friendships which were made within the group and felt that no one was left out of the process, 'As an artist who works with young people you always want them to

create a cohesive team that works together and that obviously has a positive affect on the film it's good to see that there was no isolation.' A2a also explains how they tried to create an informal environment and allow the participants to get to know each other within the group. A2b talks of how comfortable the participants were with each other and that this came through and added to the films. At In Perspective A7 is pleased with the social aspects of the group, 'I think the way socially it's worked out they all really get on with each other and people have made good friends.' A7 expresses the enjoyment she gets from bringing people together and seeing people experiencing the creative process together. She talks of a part of the project when they did some acrylic work in little groups so that it was not so intimidating to approach a white canvas. Some of that work was sold and she spoke of the buzz that participants got from having their work sold. At PVE A8 observed that the women formed relationships with each other in a short space of time, 'The group were a really strong group and I think at the end all the women exchanged phone numbers and were wishing each other well and I think that was really nice to see.' A8 explains the importance of creating a space to work in which is safe and comfortable for the participants so they feel able to form friendships with one another. A8 saw the project take on an energy of it's own because of the participants enthusiasm.

'I really enjoyed it I benefited a lot from the project as well because of how much energy the women put into the project. That always makes a project successful for me that kind of energy from the group themselves so I am motivating the group but also from their motivation you can see projects grow which doesn't always happen.'

The supportive network within the group is also seen to be important by the artists. At GEM Textiles the artists A4 recounts an incident in the first session where a participant had brought in a video of a racist incident which she was dealing with at the time and shared it with the other women in the group. A4 let it interrupt the group, as she knew how important being able to share this within a safe group was for this participant.

'When something like that happens to you if you can't talk about it to anyone, if it's like 'we can't have any of that we are doing this, then I don't like that I just don't like that at all. I think we have to go at their pace no matter how slow it is.'

A6 the artist at LWA also noted that the group did expand and welcome all participants, they got to know each other and formed good bonds within the group.

Linking into other aspects of society was considered part of the arts project by A3 the artists at Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums. A3 is aware of how important social connections are in life not just within the arts project and explains that part of the idea of having the project at the museum is that a pre-school group, Railway Rascals, is run from the museum and the idea was to give the participants enough confidence that they may want to bring their children along to it as it is a place where the children get to be creative and the parents chat and have cups of tea. 'It is the real network, an alternative to a playgroup.' At In Perspective A7 talks about the impact which the arts project can have in other parts of participants' lives drawing attention to the importance of building a social network of support. 'There are lots of different knock on effects from just empowering people with skills which can help them create a social network.' Feeling that the PVE project had gone well A8 is looking to the next stage for the project. 'I mean in some ways you could argue that because it was a short project it was intense and the women did work harder but I do think that with their next project what might be a good idea is to open out to the wider community so there might be other women invited in as well.' A8 is helping the participants in other ways now that the project has finished she is in contact with some participants in the group helping them access other arts opportunities.

A3 sees her role as a social role as much as it is an artistic one, 'It's not for me to make a piece of work for myself, my role is a social one as well as a creative one, to try and get people to feel, that is so they can do their own thing.' She is aware that the final piece of work is for the group to produce and decide upon for it to truly be a community piece. A3 felt the room was a little small for the workshop as she felt that some of the social interactions which could have happened in a space

where participant could move around more easily had been lost here. However as the artist who was running the project she feels she has seen the enjoyment participants have got from being involved in the project and hopes that this is reflected in the participants now feeling that they know each other better. In contrast to this At GEM Photography A5 was very clear that she was an artist not a teacher and it was her job to inspire and to create a high end product in collaboration with the women. She felt her responsibility to the organisations that had employed her as an artist was to produce something technically and visually interesting.

At the hubbub the artists A1 feels the new skills which the participants are learning are an important way of helping them to feel they are advancing themselves on a personal level. A6 felt skills gained at LWA were about sharing because of the unique dynamics of this group and about the women being able to learn new skills to take their own work on further, 'I could teach them different textile skills and raise there level of skills and teach them something new and take their project a bit further really.' Artist at GEM Textiles A4 talks of the benefits she finds in artistic expression and how it takes her out of her current situation. She reflects that this may be a useful element of the creative process for the participants.

A5 realised that it took the women a little while to understand the concepts for the project and what was going to be created. She experienced difficulties engaging the women in the cultures of fashion photography with the women much of the time wanting to take photos of flowers and things which they found beautiful. A5 artist at GEM Photography explains that she normally works by getting to know a group and working with them for some time so they can create a really personal image but that this was not possible in such a short time space,

'It would be nice to now carry on something that would be a lot more personal from their point of view and I would love to do a documentary or a video with them and it would be about them but that's only once you know them, you can't do that in three months.'

A6 was also learning about some cultural difficulties and about the group. Though it had been difficult she had built up a rapport with the participants by the end of the project,

‘From a personal point of view it was disastrous however if I had a bit longer ... I would be interested to see if I can turn it around but its going to be quite hard you would have to change the structure entirely. If I went in a different frame of mind and put down some ground rules I think it could be really successful.’

Funders Perspective

The social role that the arts projects can have on participants is looked at from a variety of angles by the funders. F4&5 sees social equality as the core of what they fund, ‘everything is geared towards social justice and addressing the inequalities in society.’ She has a strong belief in the impact arts can have on society and a strong idea that these sorts of projects are vital for the people they empower. ‘The power of the arts to change people, to change people’s lives and attitudes, I do feel very strongly about that and that’s part of what I aim for with my work.’ F1 can see the social benefits of the art group and feels it maybe an example to other fine and decorative arts societies in the UK to fund similar projects. ‘It is very well thought of and everybody is always very friendly ... there is always a wonderful atmosphere there ... I think it has been a very worthwhile project and I’m very glad that we have financed it.’ At Asha Hope Bridge and Tunnel F2b explains that trying to get people to feel more included in society and heritage is one of their funding aims. Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums Project is funded by the DCMS and supported by the MLA. The Civil Servant representative is referred to here as F3a sees the role that The New Labour Government and funding can play in museums, to enable a network both in partnership with one another and build up more of a diverse client base that is ideally self sustaining. ‘It’s all about relationships and networks as opposed to money but the money helps start it off.’

F3b is sensitive to not running a tick box society and that is not a meaningful way of seeing if you’ve engaged with communities but that outcomes go much deeper. He

believes that there should be instrumental outcomes that can be seen but also acknowledges the problems in trying to capture these. 'I've got no real time for the intrinsic argument it just doesn't make any sense to me, if you are saying you are of value that value must demonstrate itself somewhere and if it demonstrates itself somewhere then you are instrumental.' He does also acknowledge the limitations of how far a museum can go providing the kinds of social capital which participants may need,

'I have to admit that its impact on society as a whole is relatively low-level and the old question what is more important a hospital or a museum? Is all this a bit of a luxury? Well it kind of is a bit of a luxury and it is a bit of a luxury that comes from wealthy western countries.

F6a spoke of a new awareness of UK cultures and timekeeping that the women have gained,

'I think as a group they were much more chaotic in reality than I was first led to believe but I think that is quite interesting and I think what is quite nice is that through the project they have become more vocal about their failings and I was pleased the other week when they were talking about their lack of ability to time keep and the issues around that and I think that them recognising about the learning thing has been problematic but I think that was part of the process of it.'

At LWA the funders felt the participants had taken the first steps to widening their social networks. F6a when talking of the participant who was not of African origin commented on how glad he was that the women accepted her into the group 'I was very pleased that she did stick to it and that they warmed to her as the project went on.' At In Perspective F7 talks of many of the social benefits that arts projects can bring such as making friends, feeling valued, social integration with other participants and the effect that can have further on their lives as they can find through art a way of expressing themselves. 'I think actually anything that can help them express their feelings and emotions and connect to other people in an environment which is positive and supportive can only be a good thing.'

Local connections are acknowledged to be important at both Hubbub and LWA. At the Hubbub F1 feels it's been her aim to try and make arts accessible to as wide an audience as possible and sees the benefits of the local level at which this is funded by an organisation based in Newcastle for a project grown out of a need in Newcastle. She explains how her aims were to engage, 'What has formally been a very deprived audience I think it is very nice to help out with the local little things.' At LWA through the project the women have built up social networks with the council which is of great importance to F6a. Many women's groups have been funded through PVE and F8 suggested they could all team up and this could be a way they could become more economically viable gain further local connections and give the ladies better social networks.

Some funders mention confidence as having an impact on the social capital of participants. At Asha Hope Bridge and Tunnel when looking at what they would like to see the project achieve F2a talks of how he hopes the project had given participants, 'Confidence and more skills and that has given them the ability to look at their life a little bit differently and say well actually I may not do well in this way but I am good at something which means they can stand up with their peers and be proud.' F2a finds the sense of pride many of the participants in projects they fund feel makes his job worthwhile and he finds attending the previews to see the participants' reactions the most rewarding element of funding the projects. F2a also spoke of one of the reasons this project was funded was the strong focus it had on participants having authorship of the project as they feel listening to young people is key to working with them. FirstLight Media now have young people sitting on their funding panel to make sure that they are in tune with what the young people think of the projects too and so ensure they fund the most relevant ones. F7 funder for In Perspective can see the social impact on participants,

'They are coming to an environment where they are accepted they're valued their contribution is valued so that has quite an obvious impact on their demeanour and their body language or how they interact with others. You know all of those are kind of really positive outcomes.'

The funder of PVE F8 feels that creating comfortable environments is what enables the social interactions through art to take place. 'It's all about creating safe environments I think when people are expressing themselves creatively ... they just feel perhaps sometimes through their art forms they can say things.'

Discussion

Social Capital is mentioned by the MLA as a benefit which can result from participating in culture.²⁷⁸ Within this research this point has been reinforced with participants from each project mentioning a desire to meet new people, a desire for a new life and participants often spoke of the social benefits which they felt they gained from attending the arts projects. Here it can be seen that Putnam's ideas of different types of social capital, bonding capital and bridging capital²⁷⁹ are relevant to the social capital in these arts projects. Some projects such as PVE sought to bring a group of people from the same religion together to make links with each other and produce a piece of artwork hence working on their bonding capital. LWA aimed to bring women together who were from the same continent to socialise and learn art skills. It is interesting to note that by the end of the project participants at LWA were suggesting that if the art project could continue it should aim to involve women from other countries including the UK, showing that these women felt able to move onto build bridging capital.

The social capital gained through the arts projects was apparent at different levels across all of the different projects studied. A view of community cohesion can be seen to have two strands; personal community cohesion, which includes how connected you feel, your social capital and cultural capital, as well as your own personal sense of identity construction and collective community cohesion, which is more specific to areas and how others in the area value each other and their differences, and relates more to notions of social exclusion. This view of community

²⁷⁸ MLA (2005) *New Directions in Social Policy: developing the evidence base for museums, libraries and archives in England* Burns Owens Partnership p.21

²⁷⁹ Putnam, R. D. (2000) *Bowling Alone* New York: Simon & Schuster

cohesion as a thread with two different strands developed during this research and shows that the arts projects can be seen to have a particularly profound impact on personal community cohesion, which on some levels is necessary to have before collective community cohesion can be achieved.

There were comments by participants about feeling relaxed and comfortable in the group, participants spoke of social isolation which they felt before attending the art group and how since they had been attending the arts group they had grown in confidence. They felt their language skills had improved and they had more social networks with people who they could relate to on different levels. This is the epitome of social capital as they are creating links across many different sections of society; women from LWA finding links with other council services and going on to do some sporting activities with another part of the council; women from PVE feeling linked to the artists in their group that they referred to her as part of their family and the projects by GEM where the women spoke of the importance of building friendships and being able to spend time with other people in order to feel a part of society. During the projects the participants built more knowledge of the area by getting out and finding the location of the project and being able to use public transport to get themselves to and from it. Some women took advantage of artists' knowledge about where to find art materials if they wished to continue with the different forms of art they had been learning. Participants at LWA project got some materials to keep at the end of the project and knowledge of where to source materials from and how to use them if the group did want to progress to selling items which they could make with the new skills which they had learned. A participant at PVE who had studied art previously in her country of origin took much time talking to the artist and finding out about courses in the UK and where to access materials. Participants at Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums project got an opportunity to meet representatives from other community organisations such as the police and NHS which they may need in the future. This put them on an equal level from which to ask questions and find out more about the needs of the other participants. No participants mentioned this being useful but this is something which could only be seen within the fullness of time. These social benefits are vital to anyone to function effectively in society and although not directly related to

collective community cohesion are nonetheless vital to build up personal community cohesion within oneself before looking outward to the community within which you are. It is interesting to note that participants across all the projects mentioned these social benefits but there were some projects which either stood out or were unique in some aspects. However each of the eight projects studied showed that participants gained social benefits from participating in the project. This evidence clearly shows that whatever the level the project is at the social impact is positive.

Social Capital can be seen as the ability to survive in a situation based on social links which you have with others. When an asylum seeker first arrives in England they will not have high social capital, they may know some others who have moved over to England but would not necessarily be able to contact them or to be placed in a city which is anywhere near them. As seen in the literature, social capital has been linked to being both physically and mentally healthier²⁸⁰ and this is of paramount importance for an asylum seeker who, as we have already seen, is highly likely to be in a vulnerable mental state and may well also be in a fragile physical state. With the different issues such as vulnerability to mental health issues and potential weak physical health it is very difficult for asylum seekers to build up social capital, particularly when considering the language barrier almost all of them face when arriving in England. One major question to be considered is causality. Whether it is the art projects in this case which is adding to participants' social capital or whether it is events outside the arts project. As all but one of the projects was run over less than 6 months the outside causes are limited because of the limited time factor. The fact that participants when asked generally about what they liked about the project gave answers which showed they had added to their social capital and therefore can be considered a strength by the research and a step towards a conclusion that the arts projects played a significant part in the added social capital participants felt.

At present only short term evidence exists to indicate social impacts which the

²⁸⁰ Newman, A. & McLean, F. (2006) 'The impact of museums upon identity' *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 12 (1): 49-68

project might generate. However, this research shows future potential, as Asha Hope Bridge and Tunnel participants indicated an interest in going on to further study in film, GEM Photography participants wanted to use their photography further and LWA were going onto make and sell their crocheted pieces of work. The fact that participants at these project by the end of the project felt that they could use their skills as a spring-board into further work and to change the directions of their lives is very encouraging for these projects, even though at this stage the measurable outcomes are limited. The fact that participants felt socially empowered enough to be thinking about a future that may involve the art forms they had studied is a massive step.

It is interesting to note that one of the benefits of the project cited by F6a was the value of having contact with a hard-to-reach group. This suggests that the council may be aware of the women's issues and so aiming to help them in the future. Tyne & Wear Museums and Archives project also attempted to help form links with wider services within the community giving the women contact with service which they may need at different points in the future. GEM Photography and Asha Hope Bridge and Tunnel projects approached linking into a wider community in a different way; taking photos and filming in and around the city participants gained a better knowledge of their local area. The only project covered in this research which advertised itself as an art project and open to all rather than an arts project aimed at asylum seekers was the In Perspective project. This had different difficulties with few asylum seekers attending the project at any one time but a very positive balance between welcoming people from the local host communities and asylum seekers when they did turn up. The F7 felt that this was very important to the social aspect in the lives of the asylum seekers they worked with in that the less they feel alienated and different then the easier it is for them to settle into British society and feel genuinely valued and equal. This is why they ran a project which was aimed at everyone and free for everyone to try and help integration from a basis where everyone was learning art and experiencing the creative process from the same point.

Developing Social Capital is a key element to personal community cohesion as is

identity construction. It is impressive to note how many times issues which can be related to both of these two ideas were addressed and resolved by participants' involvement in the arts projects. This occurred both in simple projects such as Tyne & Wear Museums and Archives and LWA aimed at a specific group to help them build confidence or a project such as Asha Hope Bridge and Tunnel or PVE which aimed to help participants deal with issues and express their stories through the art or the art group such as In Perspective which aimed to bring everyone together on an equal footing.

7.iv Arts Project Funding

Participants Perspective

Issues with funding tended to differ more significantly from project to project. There were some issues around funding raised by the participants at Asha Hope Bridge and Tunnel. Participant 2D, a young man from Uganda who came to the UK as an asylum seeker, mentioned not having enough equipment, suggesting the project invest in equipment bit by bit,

‘I think that they need some more cameras basically I know there are some cameras there, I know there are cameras and it’s hard to afford all of them because they are expensive but at the same time they can look for them and try and add things piece by piece.’

Participant 2G, a young female from Rwanda who came to the UK as an asylum seeker, felt that if they had had access to more equipment then more people could have been involved throughout the project, ‘So they had the camera and one or two people doing the filming, then you had many other people with nothing to do.’ At GEM Photography Participant 5F, a female from Iraq who came to the UK as an asylum seeker, showed a determination to learn something that she felt would be more relevant to someone of her age such as computing but she acknowledged this would need funding in some way. A female in her 30s from Iran who came to the UK 5 years ago as an asylum seeker (Participant 5A), when thinking how the project might evolve, brought up the idea of funding sports activities. At LWA there were a few issues around the funding of this project particularly with regard to the system of returning money for transport. A female in her 50s from DRC who came to the UK 9 years ago as an asylum seeker (Participant 6I) said, ‘Most of us are asylum seekers and I think the women would like to have a system with the transport because I know one, she doesn’t come anymore because she doesn’t have transport.’ Participant 6E, a female from DRc who came to the UK as an asylum seeker, felt that they needed more support to be able to carry on running the project, as there was interest in carrying it on from the women in the group.

At some of the projects the comments made by participants around funding were positive. At Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums Participant 3N, a female who works for the Local Education Authority and has lived in the UK all her life, identified that,

‘The crèche is a big help, without it we would not be able to do it. Funding for the crèche is seen to be very important.’

At GEM Photography there were some participants including a female in her 30s from Iran who came to the UK 6 years ago as an asylum seeker (Participant 5C) who mentioned how important it was for them that the project could afford to continue. At In Perspective there was overwhelming gratitude that the project was free. Participant 7, a female from Iran who moved to the UK with her husband, was very excited to be able to attend a free painting class as she did not think they existed. Participant 7B, a female from Iran who moved to the UK with her husband, agrees,

‘We don’t have free classes actually in my country. I know many people that want to know something, want to learn something but they can’t, but here there is a very good chance for people.’

Participant 7B also adds, ‘That it is free is very good and very good for some people that can’t pay more.’ Participant 7C, a female from the UK who has lived here all her life, suggests that they should have longer blocks of sessions and participant 7A feels the whole course should run for longer.

Artists Perspectives

There are two projects, The Hubbub and In Perspective where the artists have run the projects unpaid. Now the Hubbub is funded by TYDFAS A1 gets paid a contribution for her time but still goes above and beyond her role as an artist to try and keep the project going. Many of the artists show a passion for what they do and

a belief in the projects. The artist for GEM Photography felt that it was only because her work was worthwhile that she did it, because the number of extra hours as an artists she has to put in it means the job is not very well paid.

The limited funding of some of the projects affected how they could be delivered. At the Hubbub A1 spoke of the fact that it might be preferable to have a crèche facility for the parents to enable them to take part in the project without their children coming over. However she acknowledges the budget is too tight for this at the moment,

‘That would mean extra expense and it would mean that we couldn't do it. I don't think you can have them separated because there is no funding for a separate crèche.’

Limited funding and therefore limited places on the projects caused problems at GEM Textiles. A4 talks of the difficulties for the group going from being a drop in for as many women as wanted to turn up, to being an art group with specific limitations on numbers, as a big constraint on the project. The group being split into two also caused problems that she mentioned too with some confusion over which groups women had signed up for. A4 feels in the end they took the flexible approach that led to all the women being involved in the project. A6 understood what the participants wanted and how important the skills and social aspects of the group were to the women, it just frustrated her that within the constraints it was so hard for her to deliver it,

‘What they want is like a knitting circle, a knit and natter thing which is fair enough you know if that's what they want. It just seems a shame that the image is so important for the funding to progress.’

At GEM Photogaphy A5 was disappointed with the exemplar artist who was brought up from London, feeling she did not add much extra for the shoot and that she did not, for the money they had paid her, bring adequate equipment.

A5 also spoke of the confusions around working with different organisations and the additional length of time everything took as a result of it. At LWA A6 explains there was confusion over the budget and things were ordered which were not needed or used or were the wrong size because of the difficulties in communication amongst the group. A6 shows frustration that the materials for the project were not respected as many things which the women took home to use she did not get back. The main funding issue at In Perspective seems to be around the question of whether to charge participants a voluntary contribution for the for the group. A7 talked about idea of how to become more self sufficient and considered the possibility of charging people a nominal sum of money, as this may help participants feel an ownership of the project and to fund materials. However she does not wish to charge asylum seekers or single them out as different. She explains that she does provide the materials and is trying to find a way to finance these,

‘I’ve brought quite a lot of materials back from India and I do bring those in and let them use those. I think the way forward is to do a voluntary contribution for those who can pay and then use that to fund materials.’

A7 expresses gratitude to City Church who provide the building free of charge and Action Foundation for supporting the project but feels they need a way of financing the materials they are using.

There were many issues with the funding of the Asha Hope Bridge and Tunnel project mentioned by both artists. A2b talked of there not being the budget to follow through on some of the ideas and talents the participants showed and did not feel the project ran for long enough. A2a had some very serious issues with funding which he raised feeling that although the organisation had received the funding it was not being transferred down to the project, ‘Wages were, lets say only about 5% of the whole £80,000, so we spent in all £11,000 including my wages and the other project workers wages.’ He felt that the lack of funding coming through from others within Bridge and Tunnel and being spent on the project impeded its success and that the participants lacked adequate equipment and a proper preview.

'There were some workshop days when I had nothing to do, I didn't know what to say, so we just talked because there was no equipment coming in. I was meant to get a web designer in that day nothing was happening, the filming was over.'

He felt this was a big disappointment and also a let down to the participants and funders.

'The biggest success has been creating two films, a documentary and a film with only £3,000. I think that's been the biggest success in terms of money, I think if you look at it that was being quite creative. That was the worst situation I found myself in but because I had to play with this situation. I thought OK I only have this much to spend how can I do this?'

He talks in details of the finances of the project.

'My creative director told me to create one page from an existing website ... £50,000 was from Heritage Lottery and £30,000 was from FirstLight. FirstLight give for the films and Heritage Lottery Foundation give for the oral histories project and it was a £50,000 project just for the oral history project. If I am going to give someone £50,000 to make an oral history project I would expect to see a website but we had to resort to creating one page, two pages from an existing website as a link. I discussed with my creative director at the time that this is not value for money and my creative director answered to me I will decide what's value for money and obviously when your creative director says that you know you have to step back, you know you can't really do anything really, you're a professional and you have to get on with the job but you know on a personal level and an artistic level you've got your own standards. I don't think you know, we didn't even reach 20% of standards that I could have produced and I would have wanted to reach. I would have much preferred getting in professional web designers. We had the money we had £1,500 to get outside web designers to come in and develop this website and unfortunately that didn't happen.'

He also speaks of how he feels this impacted on the participants, 'I think the young

people were let down because we were meant to be taking them places we were meant to be taking them to trips to look at different projects one at the Sage, one to a museum, but we didn't have the resources to do that, we certainly didn't have the money to do that even though that was all part of the funding.'

Lack of ongoing funding is something which the artists feel affects several of the projects. At the Hubbub A1 admits that the lack of ongoing funding makes the project hard to manage, 'That's the major restraint, proper funding.' She goes on to explain that she is involved in writing the funding bids and is happy to continue to do so to try and help the project survive. A1 also talks of how the project could be added to by her having an assistant to work alongside and help deliver the arts projects, particularly during weeks when the art table gets very busy. A1 is happy to do this project on a lower wage than normal because she can see the value of having the arts on offer in the drop in. At PVE the only issue that A8 had which related to funding was the time restriction on the project being so short. 'We could have tried other mediums out, the only difficulty was that was the time restriction.' A8 expresses optimism about the fact that the project may continue 'I did really enjoy the project and I do think it works successfully, I am glad that there is a possibility that it is going to be continuing.'

Funding for interpreters was mentioned by Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums artist A3 saying that at certain points in the project it would have been helpful for an interpreter to be present to explain about the concepts of the project, about it being based on journeys and the English alphabet. At GEM Textiles artist A4 also mentions the need for a translator on some occasions to help clarify and speed up the process of paper work. At GEM Photography A5 expressed some frustration at the number of forms there were to be filled in and administration duties to be done during the time when the art sessions were running. Form filling for participants was complicated and time consuming.

Funders Perspectives

F1 stated that a lack of communication was a big concern for her as she had not

heard anything from The Hubbub since she gave them the money. She realised that they were very pleased to see her when she visited the project one week and enjoyed the informal atmosphere. 'It was very much, 'Oh how kind of you to come down and see what we are doing.' and everything and it was very much call in any time which is fine but ... I have got to present a written report and a breakdown of finances in September.' It is apparent here that the funder has got to report back to the TYDFAS committee in a more formal way than The Hubbub is reporting back to her. This lack of communication is affecting the relationship between organisation and funder and could result in another funding bid being unsuccessful. In contrast to this funder of Asha Hope Bridge and Tunnel F2a explains how they take a hands-off approach to funding in order to try and

'Make our processes as efficient as possible to give people money and give people the opportunity to get in touch if they need information. What we don't want to do is overburden a small organisation which they often are with too much bureaucracy.'

The way that Lankelly Chase (who funded GEM Textiles and Photography) work is that they build up a trust with an arts organisation who they have visited and know can deliver projects which match the ethos of them as a funding organisation. As a result they are not involved in every detail such as choosing the artists. 'We assume that a well-established experienced arts organisation has developed a good pool of capable artists especially in an urban centre like Newcastle.' Another project, where the funder feels part of its success, is based around the relationship they have with the artist is In Perspective. F7 spoke of how the project works because he knows and trusts the artist,

'I know that she's very professional and she's done this thing lots before I was very happy to let her get on with it. I chatted to her to make sure that arrangements in terms of the room and the facilities that she needed were all in place.'

Funder of PVE F8 talks of how sustained funding in this economic climate is very difficult. She talks of how unlikely it is that they would be able to fund the art project to continue and suggested the art project could combine with the other Muslim

women's groups they've started.

The lack of ability to give ongoing funding is acknowledged and explained by some of the funders. F1, who funds the Hubbub, says that they would welcome another bid from The Hubbub but explains TYDFAS's approach to funding. 'We decided early on we were not going to do continual funding because you just don't know how these projects are going to work out and you don't know how forthcoming people are going to be'. She goes on to explain there are projects which have impressed them enough that they have given grants again. However the focus of their funding is changing to encourage excellence. She states that one member of her committee said, 'she thought we had done enough to enable deprived children to enjoy art and that we should be encouraging excellence.' The new focus for their funding would not rule out a bid from The Hubbub as it is, and F1 explained that it could open up opportunities for participants at The Hubbub who showed particular talents and enable them to be funded to take part in a specific holiday course. Furthermore, the funder for GEM Textiles and Photography F4&5 feels, 'You still find arts projects are run by very idealistic people and enthusiastic and committed people working for peanuts making a big impact but the trouble is because they can't get ongoing funding, the impact then stops.'

At Asha Hope Bridge and Tunnel, F2b talks of how funding is changing and is getting scarcer so they are starting to look much more at value for money when considering applications.

'When this was funded there was not much competition for funds so if a project met learning and participation aims then we would pretty much fund it. Whereas now there's a lot more competition so we are increasingly looking at things like value for money, type of experience [and whether] there is any accredited training, that kind of thing and the number of participants.'

There was much confusion over this project at Bridge and Tunnel because what the project had put in their application did not appear to be what had been carried out. However she spoke of how Heritage Lottery assess the capabilities of the

organisation first and then leaves them to get on with it, feeling that their involvement is not usually helpful to the projects and is very labour intensive for them. F3a is well aware of the financial struggles projects such as the one at Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums are likely to face in these difficult economic times. Funding for Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums Asylum Seeker and Refugee Outreach Worker is secured until 2011 but because this year is an election year they cannot plan any further ahead than that,

‘The DCMS are lobbying quite hard and trying to come up with a lot of evidence making a case for culture in difficult economic times. It is part of our job as civil servants and part of the ministers job, to get evidence and to prove and to advocate how important it is. Everything is uncertain but there is a definite drive to defend the position of culture and arts.’

The funder for GEM Textiles and Photography F4&5 when speaking of the current economic climate says of these types of projects ‘I imagine that they will suffer hugely, they will be a very low priority.’ This she feels is a travesty as the arts have more to give than is being realised but is hopeful that when art finds a way to prove itself than it will unlock much more funding.

‘The power of the arts to heal and to change people has huge potential but the arts are repeatedly underestimated and under-valued by Government departments and local authorities. They are seen as a luxury add-on whereas their ability to change people to change the way they think to change the way they behave to heal people physically and mentally is I think one of the big areas that has not been realised and that realisation that understanding should provide a lot more money if it comes about.’

Despite funder F4&5 having a lot of faith in this project and projects like it she says with regret, ‘We would have to look at it again but sadly because of the financial problems of this country our funding has been reduced considerably and because our capital base has shrunk the income has gone down and therefore we have less to spend so it is less likely that we would fund something again now unless it was a

high priority.’ F8 funder for PVE also spoke of the uncertain time in terms of funding at the moment, ‘We aren’t clear about what will happen financially after next year particularly in the light of May next year [Elections in May 2010] who knows what will happen even if things don’t change in terms of central Government there will be cuts?’

Funders from Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums were clear where their funding agenda came from. F3a spoke of the McMaster review and how that was influencing the way funding was being allocated and stated that, ‘It recommended excellence, risk-taking and innovation in museums so we asked the museums to think about that in their areas as well.’ F3b also talked about the effect these economic times are having and how museums agendas are changing. ‘We are heavily involved in that, the agendas around worklessness and skills which were there anyway and have obviously been vastly increased because of the economic downturn so how museums libraries and archives can contribute to skills.’ He still attributes much of the policy base to Chris Smith²⁸¹ who was the first culture secretary and set the agenda on social inclusion, skills, learning and museums as engines of social change.

‘I think they are still fundamental to a lot of the way a lot of us are thinking, even if we have forgotten where they have quite come from, I still say we are in a Smithsonian period. No doubt when the Tories come to power, if they do, we will see what we get from them and whether that replaces [current thinking] or not we will see...’

He is aware and cautions too of the election and interested to see what affect it will have on the funding allocation to this type of project.

Other things which the funders brought up as issues included; demands put on the type of artwork produced, the inconvenience of form filling, how the project could develop if money would allow, how vital being able to offer the projects free of

²⁸¹ DCMS (1998) A new contract: Increased Investment: Greater Efficiency: Structural Reform

charge and issues around the nature of one of the funding streams. On a more project-based level F4&5 comments on the types of artwork that they often see from projects and the requirements they make as funders.

'It's almost always that there is an event now. Whether that's for the benefit of the funders or for the benefit of participants I'm not clear. We certainly don't insist at all on any sort of event, what we want to see is effective working whatever that involves that's what we're interested in.'

The funder of LWA F6a talks about the impact of form filling on group dynamics as it creates a hierarchy where the group is the student and there's someone obviously in charge which makes it harder to create a cohesive unit. He does comment however that this group did not appear to be fazed by form filling in as much as other groups. The arts development team were contemplating the idea of setting up accredited courses so the women could gain an official qualification. F6a explained how the project could develop if money would allow, it would be nice to set up a coffee and crochet morning for the women where the artist could come into do work with them once a month and encourage them to expand their skills and give them advice. He also explains how the area did not have an arts development worker in charge of it at the time and that the future will depend how the appointed worker relates to the group what shape any further work with them might take. The In Perspective funder F7 expressed how vital he felt having the project on offer free of charge was as he points out, 'I think the people who most need it are the people who can least afford it.' It is important to F7 that the project can run without a cost to the artist or participants 'I just want to be able to facilitate it for them to be able to do it without any cost so we've provided the facilities for nothing and some publicity for it for nothing.' The PVE funder F8 explained that although with the women's art group there were not issues around the nature of the funding stream F8 is aware that the PVE money does cause issues for some people, 'With the mosques group because of their concerns with the nature of the funding. They don't want anything to do with the money which has been one of the issues around the whole Prevent (PVE) funding.'

Discussion

The pressures to prove the value of the arts in the current economic climate has led to Social Return On Investment (SROI) being considered at policy level. This level of financial justification and competition for funds can be seen to be having an on the ground effect for funders of arts projects. Heritage Lottery, the funders for Asha Hope Bridge and Tunnel, talked of the extra competition for funding now and how they would be looking for projects which offered the greatest value for money. Within the economic climate the funding for arts projects with asylum seekers has been tightened. 75% of funders interviewed said that there would be no more funding for these project available in the current situation and no funder could guarantee that they would be able to carry on funding the projects into the future. This gives the arts projects a limited amount of time to demonstrate impact and it can be argued that they will not have as profound an impact if the funding is so sporadic that no group can be worked with throughout their journey of integration into the UK. In which case the projects become less strategic and become more hit and miss, seeing who they can impact in a very short amount of time. Many of the projects have adapted to this type of funding by merging with different services and trying to offer the participants they are working with something else after the arts project has finished. The benefits of linking into other services and making social networks adding to participants' social capital was discussed earlier in this research and in current literature²⁸². Many of the arts projects in this research have started to actively encourage not only linking up with other services but have taken time to focus the arts project on the social elements so the participants are not only building up arts skills and having an opportunity to express themselves creatively in the group but are also gaining important social skills vital for any type of personal or collective community cohesion.

There is a demand for long term funding to enable the projects to run on a stable basis and to really make an impact on community cohesion. 75% of the projects indicated that lack of continued funding was an issue for them. This can be seen

²⁸² Newman, A. & McLean, F. (2006) 'The impact of museums upon identity' *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 12 (1): 49-68

through the work the LWA Arts Development Team are able to do staying in touch with the women and enabling them to go on to further different types of projects. Because of this ongoing link which the Arts Development team have been able to establish with LWA they can pass participants on to other council departments and keep in touch with them until additional funding is found to enable them to join another arts project. It is reasonable to suggest that the next project could be more tailored to their needs and take them a step further along the integration scale at their own pace. Planning the next stage is done with the participants, the artist and the funder, and it has been discussed that perhaps the next art project for LWA could be one that includes women from more varied cultures in their group or that a coffee and crochet morning may suit the women and enable them to build up skills to sell their textile crafts at future events. The Hubbub has a different strength but one which is still linked in with stability, by being there every week it offers asylum seekers a safe and reliable place to come week on week where they can build up relationships with the participants. Having a drop-in alongside the arts table also allows for a more holistic approach to each individual to be taken, as there are other members of staff on hand to deal with any issues the asylum seekers maybe facing.

The evidence base for the arts and a universally accepted way of measuring them has not been agreed at Government level and this is born out by the fact that F4&5 the funder for GEM Textile and Photography projects, Lankelly Chase, spoke of needing more research into proving the benefits of the arts and was looking to start funding research to try and enable the arts to prove themselves, hoping this would unlock more money for this type of arts project. It is again interesting to see the funders feeling the pressures that tie in with discontentment amongst academics²⁸³ and professionals²⁸⁴ in the field, namely that there have been assumptions made about the effectiveness of arts projects which in this climate cannot stand up to scrutiny, not necessarily because they are not true, on the contrary perhaps because there is not the significant evidence base of facts, figures and statistics

²⁸³ Selwood, S. (2002) 'Measuring Culture: Collecting statistics to prove the 'use' of the arts has been largely useless' Spiked Culture <http://www.spikedonline.com/index.php/site/article/6851/> [22nd Feb 2009]

²⁸⁴ Coles, A. (2008) 'Instrumental death of a reductionist' *Cultural Trends* 17 (4): 329 -334

required now by The New Labour Government. It would appear such measures are being adopted by other funding initiatives, to be able to justify funding of the arts and prove to the sceptics that they have a value beyond that which can be proved by statistics. It is this element which is one of the fundamental problems projects have in persuading funders of the value of these arts projects. In measuring the arts and their social benefits much anecdotal evidence can be gathered but as there is limited funding for this type of project anecdotal evidence is not sufficient to secure future funding. Limited funding for arts projects of this kind and the social benefits which are trying to be assessed don't fit into neat measurable categories. This is one hurdle which the arts have to overcome in order to press onto the next level of sustainability and have any chance of securing funding in the next five years with the new pressures of the recession and public funding cuts in many places. If the arts can use this inevitable lull in funding to gather data and move the evidence base and research methods for arts projects forward, it would better position them to show the significant role it could play in improving community cohesion when the economic climate improves and more money is available.

It is interesting to see that in one of the latest New Labour Government documents to impact have an impact changes the focus back to looking at excellence²⁸⁵ in the arts. This ties in with F1 who are local level funders of The Hubbub whose representative talked of the attention of their funding moving from 'deprived communities to excellence', showing that Government agendas do have an impact even on smaller local funding initiatives. The shift in thinking which the McMaster report puts forward to see excellence in the arts as having both intrinsic value and secondary instrumental impact fits into notions that art can be both instrumental and intrinsic but does not go so far as to show how this can be done through promoting excellence. If this change in Government agenda influences small local level funding to change from supporting projects such as The Hubbub and move to focusing their attention on giving children who are showing a particular flare for the arts opportunities to access further training it is hard to see how this in itself links in with McMasters belief that diversity should be at the heart of the work in the arts

²⁸⁵ McMaster, B. (2008) 'Supporting Excellence in the Arts, From Measurement to Judgement' Department for Culture Media and Sport

and that from our current diverse society the greatest culture could grow.²⁸⁶

Furthermore it shows how significant the recent change in Government could be on funding for these projects and raises more questions as to what the Coalition Government focus and policies will be.

One interesting point that the projects studied in this research was the fact that funders tend to have very little idea of what actually happens during the projects and how monies are spent. Only 37% of funders had visited the project and only 25% had regular contact with the project. The two funders who make up the 25%, who do have regular contact with the project they fund, were F6 and F7. F7, the funders for IP, were based in the same building as the project, had regular contact with the artist and were informed and knowledgeable as to what was happening. This was also the case for F6, in the LWA project, funded through the NLDC, with the funding delivered by The Arts Development Team in the council. The Arts Development Team was involved in the project and could see what was happening on a weekly basis. An important aspect of the funder being more involved in the project appears to be a clearer vision as to where the project can go in the future and a much better chance of sustained funding for the project. These two projects were the only two where the funders were able to look to funding the projects again and were keen to keep in touch with the group of participants. It is therefore clear that if the funder is on board with the project it is more likely that they will be able to commit more finances because they have invested time to see the benefits.

An interesting example to consider alongside these two is Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums project as they have capped funding for a full time refugee and asylum seeker outreach worker, however the funding came from the DCMS and as positions within The New Labour Government had changed so rapidly and the money had come from within The New Labour Government, no one in the funding organisations knew what impact the project was having. Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums again approached the project differently by inviting members of other services into the arts project. The group of women who attended the arts project

²⁸⁶ McMaster, B. (2008) 'Supporting Excellence in the Arts, From Measurement to Judgement' Department for Culture Media and Sport p.5

were taken under the wing of a Local Education Authority worker who stayed in contact with them and set them up with swimming classes and other events which they decided together the women could benefit from. The source of the funding meant there were more evaluation forms and paper work for The Refugee and Asylum Seeker Outreach Worker to fill in than the other projects had to provide, showing facts such as how many participants had been involved in each project. It may be because of this pressure to make a wide impact and involve as many asylum seekers in the arts as possible that The Refugee and Asylum Seeker Outreach Worker does not have time herself to follow through with one group of participants.

The third suggestion made by McMaster in creating an assessment framework for projects is that more lines of communications have to be built up between funder and arts organisation.²⁸⁷ The research presented here reinforces this point, that where there is better communication between the funder and arts project, the more likely the projects are to secure ongoing support and funding in the future. The lack of funder involvement in the projects in some cases is a strategic decision by the funding organisation. For example, F4&5 Lankelly Chase only work with arts organisations which they know and trust to deliver the project that they fund, so they can step back and trust the delivery of the project to these organisations. There were issues with the funding of the Asha Hope Bridge and Tunnel project mentioned by the project leader in the interviews where it was claimed that only about 10% of the money received by Bridge and Tunnel, the organisation running the project, was ever spent on it. If there was a closer relationship between funders and project delivery team it could eliminate such issues. It could also help the funders to focus their attentions on which project they wanted to support more fully and develop a more sustained approach to the projects which fitted best with their strategic funding ethos. This would inevitably take more time from the funding organisation but in the long term would lead to higher quality delivery and sustainability of projects. This could then in turn tie back into the McMaster report as truly excellent projects that had had enough time and funding to grow from the

²⁸⁷ McMaster, B. (2008) 'Supporting Excellence in the Arts, From Measurement to Judgement' Department for Culture Media and Sport p.23

diverse wealth of talents in society now could emerge and add to continued personal and community cohesion development.

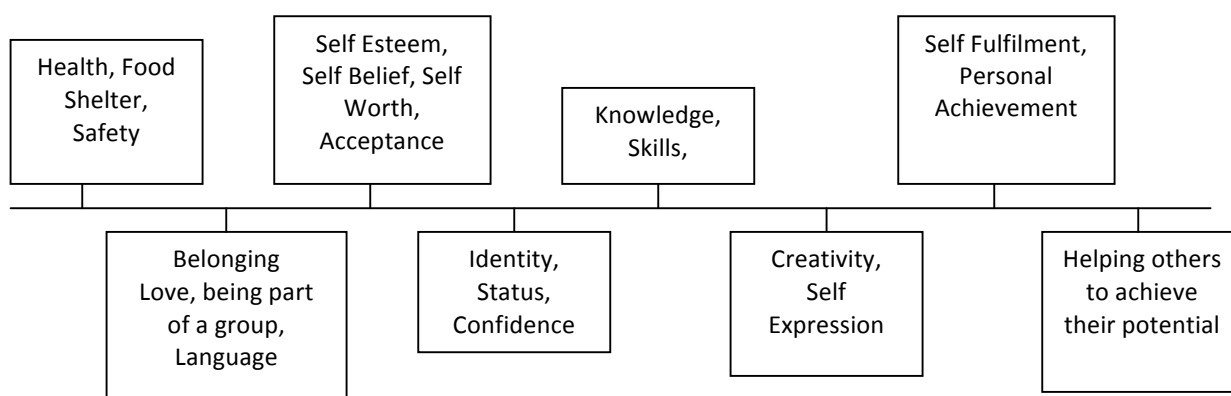
7.v Arts Projects Impact on Community Cohesion

An understanding that has been established during the research is of community cohesion as a dual strand linear process, where art projects can fit into both lines at different stages depending on the development of the groups. This scale has been developed by combining comments from the interviews, observations made during the research and the various views of community cohesion within the literature, that community cohesion has both a locally focused element²⁸⁸ and a personal development component²⁸⁹. The linear scale evolves from an asylum seeker first arriving in the UK, getting used to their situation, learning the language, creating their new identity in the UK, right up to a person feeling fully comfortable in their environment, being involved in community events and having the social and cultural capital to enable them to feel supported.

Dual Strand Community Cohesion Scale: developed during this research

Personal Community Cohesion

Personal stages individuals go through to be in the best place for contributing to community cohesion

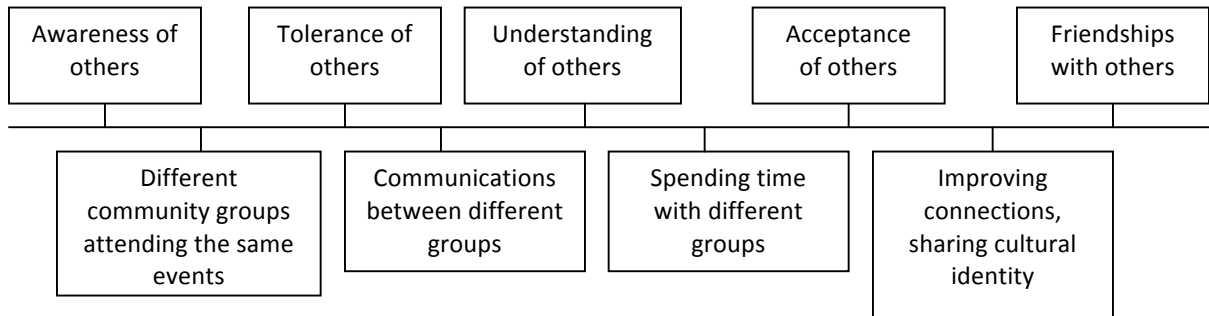


²⁸⁸ <http://www.neighbourhood.gov.uk/page.asp?id=1197> [3rd March 2010]

²⁸⁹ Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council (2007) *Meet Your Neighbours A lesson in community cohesion* Communities and Local Government, unison, and I&DeA

Collective Community Cohesion

Collective stages different members within a community go through to be in the best place for that community to be cohesive



Each of the art projects researched had a role to play and fits into different points along this scale, depending on a number of things including how they are run and who is participating in them. Each art project offered participants the opportunity to be part of a group, feel a sense of belonging and build a skills base. Each artist approached the projects sensitively to enable participants to build up self-esteem and self-worth. The artist at The Hubhub and PVE (referred to both as A1 & A8) was particularly successful at this and this was reflected in comments made by participants who valued her as a friend, someone they could talk to about problems within their art work and seek encouragement from. Asha Hope Bridge and Tunnel Project had participants who had been in the UK on average for the longest time and this was reflected in the confidence shown by a number of participants and the enthusiasm which they had for sharing their art with others outside the group. In contrast Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums project attracted asylum seekers that were newer to the UK than other projects. These women were quiet and focused on their individual pieces of art work. The understanding nature of the artist, who had had experience working with asylum seekers before appeared to help the women gain confidence as the group developed and became supportive with participants feeling settled enough to bring work in from home to share with the group. Although the different arts projects can impact both lines of the scale, personal community cohesion that includes identity construction and social capital

is where arts projects can be seen to have the most impact on building personal confidence and social connections.

The view of community cohesion that has emerged through this research is that of a linear scale from first arriving in the UK through to getting used to their situation learning the language, creating their new identity in the UK, right up to a person feeling fully comfortable in their environment, being involved in community events and having the social and cultural capital to enable them to feel supported. Each of the arts projects has a role to play and fits different points along this scale, depending on a number of things including how they are run and who is participating in them. Personal community cohesion made up of identity construction and social capital is where arts projects can have the most impact on building personal confidence and social connections.

The main points which have emerged during the research are:

- That arts projects can address issues specific to asylum seekers, such as isolation and language barriers.
- The impact art projects can have on identity construction and the different ways various projects have facilitated this.
- The benefits art projects can bring to participants through social capital and the increasing links within society that can be made through the projects.
- The current struggle art projects are facing as funding becomes more scarce.
- Understanding community cohesion as a dual strand linear process, where the projects studied fit into this and the specific benefits arts can provide for asylum seekers whatever level of cohesion each participant is at.

Chapter 8. Conclusion

This research has explored the impact community arts projects with asylum seekers can have on community cohesion. Having looked at current question on the debate of the arts intrinsic and instrumental worth and considered these alongside debates on measurement of the arts a general consensus can be seen to be emerging from the literature review that there needs to be a change in the way the arts are viewed and a new push to gather more reliable data on their social impact. However a consensus has not been reached on how this can be achieved which makes progress in this area uncertain. There are still critics of the idea that art should be used as an instrumental tool to aid community cohesion though others feel that the instrumental value of the arts is inextricably linked to the core values of art. Whilst examining the current policy on the arts it was uncovered that there is a stronger evidence base to show that the arts benefit those with mental health needs, which is often an issue asylum seekers face. This more solid evidence for the arts impact on mental health needs can be seen to be having an impact on projects in the North East as one project was run through Tyneside Women's Health which focuses on supporting women and enabling them to improve their mental health.²⁹⁰ Having investigated issues specifically surrounding asylum seekers this research has identified specific stumbling blocks to community cohesion for asylum seekers, such as isolation, mental health needs, language barriers, negative stereotypes, cultural isolation, lack of self esteem, lack of social contact and issues around identity. Having identified that personal issues which participants are facing are one of the factors that influence their enjoyment of the art projects it can be seen through this research that the different arts projects have been used to help the individual asylum seekers progress to overcome these.

This research showed that one reason why participants attended the arts projects was to overcome language barriers which naturally restrict community cohesion. It has been identified that in the projects studied in this research asylum seekers felt the arts projects helped them conquer this and learn more conversational English

²⁹⁰ <http://www.tyneside-womens-health.org.uk/> [5th July 2009]

which they could use outside the art groups. It was seen though, that when learning English becomes a priority it can overshadow the art itself and as a result project outcomes can be compromised in terms of both learning English and delivering an art project. It also has to be noted that asylum seekers are not a single cohesive group. They have to be treated as individuals and an understanding given to the different cultures from which they come and any tensions which these may bring. Views were often shared between the artists and participants at each project, who frequently suggested similar strengths and improvements for the projects ranging from the need for a bigger space to expanding the skills already being taught. The funders were further removed from the project so generally had a slightly different perspective on the projects based more on aspirations.

Project leaders must identify and work to dispel any tensions which may arise during the project to ensure projects can have a positive effect on community cohesion within groups of asylum seekers. Stigma and misunderstanding affect the way some of the asylum seekers attending the projects felt about themselves and their situations in England. Arts projects which put asylum seekers on an equal level with people from the host community can help to redress this imbalance as can art projects which give asylum seekers the opportunity to use the art to tell their story or express their culture. One of the main topics brought up by asylum seekers during the research was the fact that the art groups gave them a break from the isolation they suffer on a daily basis and provide an opportunity to get together and learn something creative. Having something creative, expressive, friendly and informal to do can reduce the risk of asylum seekers developing mental health problems and help those who do gain social confidence and self-esteem which can aid recovery.

A model for a community cohesion as a thread with two different strands has been developed during this research. The arts projects can be seen to have a particularly profound impact on personal community cohesion which on some level is necessary to have before collective community cohesion can be achieved. This ties into New Labours Communities and Local Government document which states that, 'everyone should have an equal chance to participate in the local community and

no one should be excluded or feel less valued.²⁹¹ Two important elements of personal community cohesion which have been identified and studied in this research are identity construction and social capital. Identity construction can be seen as a means of uniting the intrinsic and instrumental qualities in arts which have been debated for so long. Effects which the arts projects have been seen to have on improving identity construction range from improving confidence and helping participants identify with others who are from the same country as them to giving participants opportunities to explore ideas and emotions through the arts which they may not yet be able to express in words. Artists and project workers treating each participant as an individual and being able to understand the impact of the art being created on those individuals was clearly identified as a mechanism to enhance the creation of identity construction through the arts. This enabled participants to explore their new identities in many different ways.

By working in partnership with other services some of the arts projects brought another element to the projects enabling participants to build up more networks and extra funding to be drawn from other sources. The LWA project accessed funding through the neighbourhood learning in deprived communities fund, whereas Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums teamed up with representatives from the LEA and NHS expanding the ease with which participants can gain social capital.

Commonalities and differences between projects have been distinguished from the PVE project which brought a group of Muslim women together to explore what it meant to be a Muslim woman in contemporary Britain to the GEM Photography project which enabled the participants to go out and explore some of their new surroundings and relate to them in a comfortable environment. Another important element of identity construction was shown through the projects which encouraged participants to develop confidence and an opportunity to develop identities independent from their children.

²⁹¹ Cohesion Delivery Framework (2008) *Our national understanding of community cohesion: A local understanding of community cohesion: Deciding on a local set of actions* Communities and Local Government p.3

The social elements which the arts projects enabled participants to develop were seen to be the most important elements of the arts projects overall by this research. Social interaction and having a place that people can come and a group that they can identify with are extremely important constituents of community cohesion. This too fits with The New Labour Government's view that everybody deserves to live in a strong community.²⁹² Creating the artwork and participants being able to express themselves through this was another very important element of the projects studied. Indeed, this research goes some way towards showing causality between the importance that participants put on the arts activity on offer and the resulting social benefits. Furthermore, this ties the two ideas together in an inextricable way suggesting that the projects would not have delivered the same social benefits if they had not at the same time allowed the participants to explore and express on an equal setting personal creativity, giving freedom and creating a relaxed environment for these positive social interactions to take place. Learning creative skills was the third most important element of the projects to participants, again adding weight to the notion that participants, being able to feel they are achieving something on a personal level through the project is again paramount to the other ways in which the arts projects can impact on community cohesion.

This research looked into the different funding structures within the arts and found that most of the arts projects in the North East with asylum seekers were funded by small organisations rather than funding streams through the New Labour Government. There were some complex funding issues, the lack of communication between funders and projects, the lack of longevity of funding and some of the conditions attached to the funding, which were uncovered in this research as restraints on the projects. Projects that had the closest interactions with their funders were seen to have the greatest potential to secure ongoing funding. Thus although superficially it may seem attractive to artists and project leaders to have a funder with a 'hands-off' approach this may not be in the best long-term interests of the project. It can be seen as most beneficial when arts projects are funded to take

²⁹² Cohesion Delivery Framework (2008) *Our national understanding of community cohesion: A local understanding of community cohesion: Deciding on a local set of actions* Communities and Local Government p.3

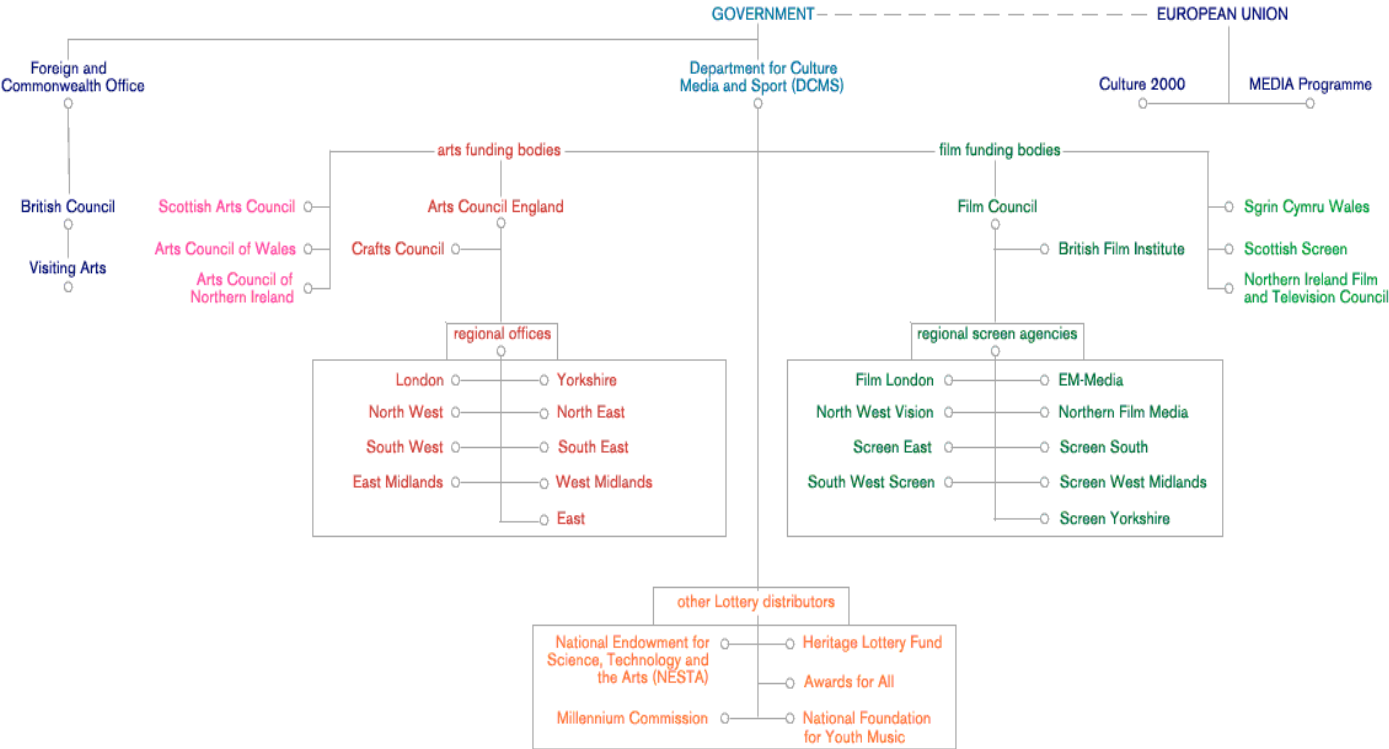
a group of asylum seekers from whichever stage of the community cohesion scale they are at and work with them until they had reached a stage where they may be able to team up with or create other community groups which could then be an asset to the collective community cohesion for that area.

The lack of funding at present and the economic situation has put many of these groups in danger of disappearing. With Coalition Government having replaced The New Labour Government since this research was conducted even more questions are raised about potential funding for these projects. We have already seen the dissolving of the MLA and implications for this and its impact on projects such as the ones within this study remain unclear. This research is framed by a very specific political climate but there are still many vital findings that are not specific to any one Government. The need to gather evidence that considers benefits the arts may have for asylum seekers is outside any specific Government, if anything the need for a solid evidence base of these arts projects is highlighted by the changing nature of politics and the unstable economic climate. This economic down turn and reduction in project funding could be utilised by researchers as time to gather evidence which will stand up to scrutiny and make a compelling case for longer term funding for arts projects such as these.

It has been seen from this research that artist-led projects with asylum seekers can be used a means of strengthening community cohesion. This appears to be most effective when there is long-term project funding, participants are treated as individuals whose needs are considered and the project is approached at a comfortable level with artists aware what stage participants are along the community cohesion scale. By working alone or in partnership with other services the arts now have the opportunity to firmly position themselves to access future funds for projects with asylum seekers and refugees as well as other vulnerable people.

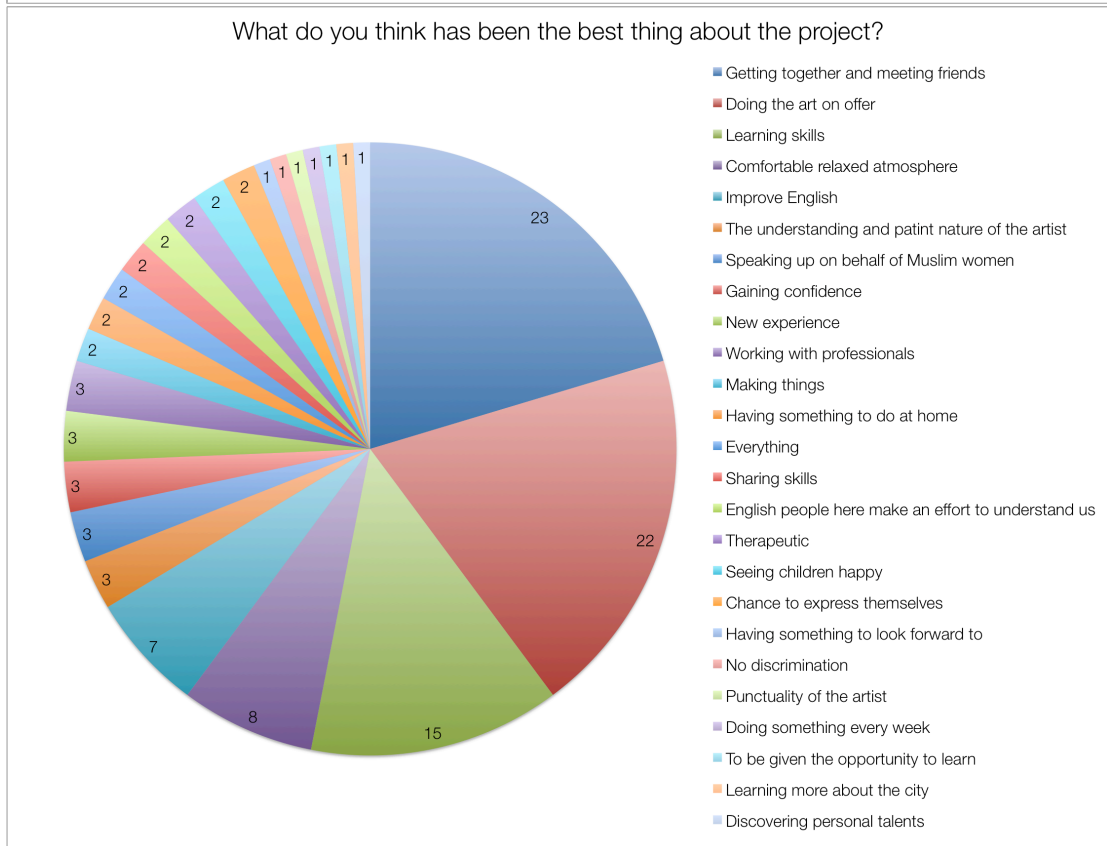
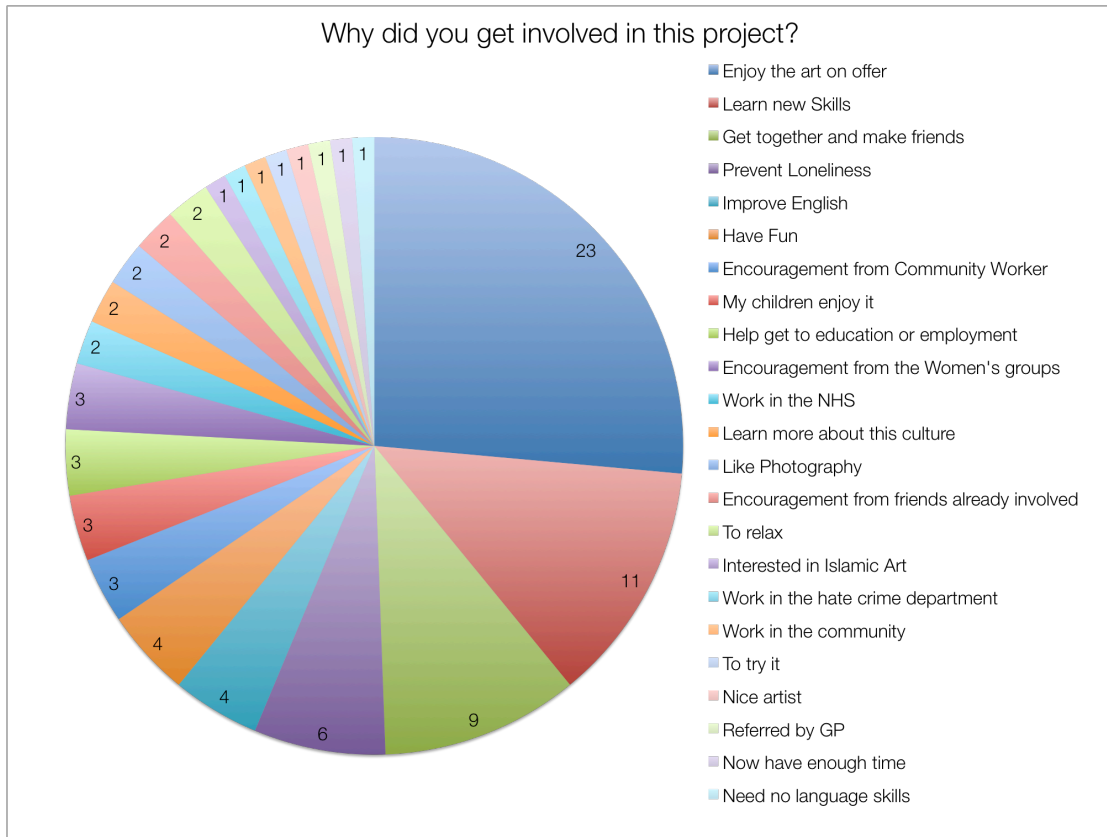
9. Appendices

Appendix a

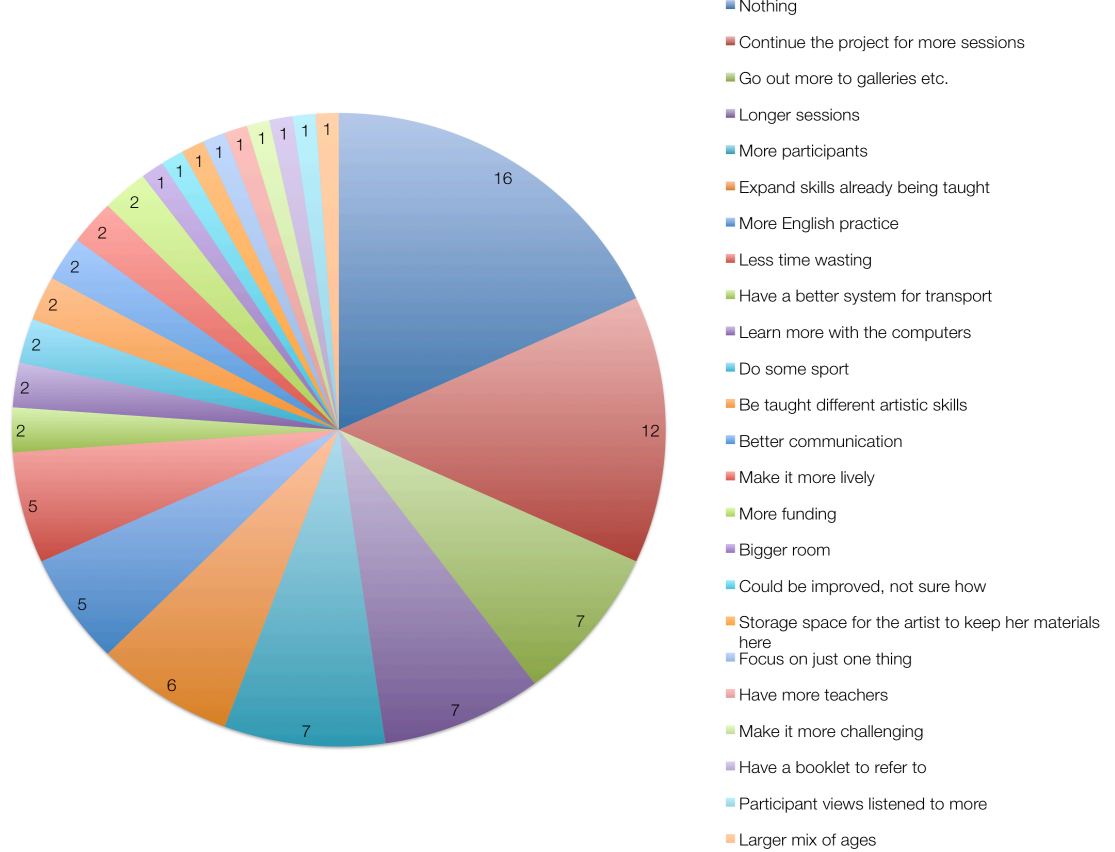


Appendix b

Expanded Results



What might you change about the project to improve it?



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