What are the implications on the roles, responsibilities and systems of arts organisations when they become community youth work service providers?

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Declaration:

The work presented in this dissertation was carried out in the Department of Film, Media and Cultural Studies, Birkbeck, University of London, and is entirely my own except where other authors have been referred to and acknowledged in the text. It has not previously been submitted for a degree in this or any other university. The views expressed in this dissertation are my own, and not those of the University.

Signed: Date: 13.09.2023

Abstract

Cultural institutions engaging young people in participatory art projects is nothing new, however, as community engagement work has moved from being delivered within specific learning and education departments to being ingrained into the centre of many cultural organisations' operations, these organisations have begun to operate more like youth and community work service providers than ever before. As discussions surrounding the 'civic' role of arts institutions are becoming embedded into mainstream discourse, there are further conversations to be had and research to be undertaken into the implications of this work on arts organisations and the cultural sector.

This research paper aims to discuss the ways in which the roles, responsibilities and internal systems of arts organisations, specifically those with National Portfolio status (NPOs), are impacted by delivering youth work services, using the START theatre programme for 16-25 year olds not in education and employment (NEET) that is delivered by the Lyric theatre in Hammersmith as a case study. It finds that as a result of the Lyric delivering this work, their internal systems and ways of operating have been implicated, including their approach to audience development and engagement, fundraising and potentially even programming. It also explores how, in a wider sense, there have been shifts in how arts organisations' roles and responsibilities are perceived so that they are not simply responsible for delivering 'high quality' art, but have an obligation to deliver services to the community. This is a development that has over-arching implications on what is regarded as the core 'value' of culture. Whilst this can have positive effects for many organisations, as I will illustrate with the Lyric, it also leads to issues and challenges in relation to the cultural sector's relationship to the youth and community sectors and in workforce development.

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Introduction

Research focus, aims and objectives

Arts engagement projects with young people 'will not be successful if the participants feel that they are getting "youth work by the back door"', a report for Creative Scotland argues (BOP Consulting, 2017, p. 3). The research suggests that the projects that they consider to be successful are so because 'young people are there to do and make something creative' and that any other 'benefits' that they might get out of engaging in the work, such as the development of skills like critical thinking, is just a 'bonus' (Ibid; Romer, 2017). Despite this report's argument, youth engagement work delivered by arts institutions have grown in popularity within the UK over the past 20 years, with many of these projects citing the social welfare and skills related benefits of arts participation as some of the primary reasons behind these projects' deliverance (Matarasso, 2019).

This paper is concerned with the way in which organisations are adopting youth work models in their arts participation projects and perhaps even delivering youth work 'by the back door', becoming quasi-community youth work providers. Instead of aiming to illuminate the impact that this has on the young people that engage with it, as has been previously researched, it seeks instead to explore how arts organisations themselves have been impacted and what further implications there are for the arts and youth sectors more widely. It has been argued that this type of work 'has the potential to change the nature of organisations and push practice forward into new, innovative spaces' (Sim, 2019, p.2). It is this notion of organisational and system wide change that drives my line of inquiry. The primary aim of this research paper is thus to illustrate the implications on the roles, responsibilities and systems of arts organisations when they become community youth work service providers.

I use the terms 'roles', 'responsibilities' and 'systems' as broad frameworks to define the areas I am primarily interested in. 'Roles' here can be understood as the part that arts organisations have to play in the wider landscape of service provision and in the lives of communities, also connoting the actual job 'roles' of the workers that undertake this work. 'Responsibilities' is adjacent to 'roles' but more directly seeks to address arts organisation's relationship to their audiences and the public. What is organisations' obligation to the public and to the youth and community sector when they deliver this work? 'Systems' is used to describe the internal infrastructure of an arts organisation and its departments and seeks to uncover how organisational aims, priorities and culture are impacted, and what they understand their core 'purpose' to be as an organisation.

This paper will seek to address this aim through the following objectives:

- To investigate how START, the Lyric Hammersmith's flagship youth programme, has impacted how the theatre operates in terms of its workforce, governance and engagement with audiences and the public;
- To explore the implications of publicly funded National Portfolio Organisations delivering 'youth work-style' projects more widely, particularly as it pertains to notions around value, 'purpose', responsibility and the ramifications of this on the arts and youth sectors;
- To illustrate the ways in which careers in the arts, including work trajectories and training, may be impacted by organisations delivering this work and what the potential future implications of this may be for arts professionals and the cultural sector.

Research background and rationale

As institutions in Britain strive towards recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and reckon with the effects of a progressively unstable financial climate, those that currently hold National Portfolio status are also having to consider how they will ensure that they maintain their funding in light of the investment principles outlined Arts Council England's (ACE) new 10 year strategy, *Let's Create. Let's Create* seemingly places the public and engagement as its driving force with the strategy's three core outcomes defined as 'creative people', 'cultural communities' and 'a creative and cultural country' (Arts Council England, 2020). As Andrew Bartnett, the director of the UK's branch of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation reflects: 'for the first time, the Arts Council has made a clear statement that it exists to serve the public which funds it (with taxpayers' money and lottery money) by placing them at the heart of the Strategy' (2020).

Cultural engagement with children and young people has a crucial part to play in discourse surrounding publicly funded arts organisations' civic responsibilities. Children and young people are also at the forefront of the *Let's Create* strategy, which states that 'over the next 10 years, we will focus a large part of our development role on ensuring that children and young people are able to fulfil their creative potential' (Arts Council England, 2020). The prioritisation that is given to engagement with children and young people in contemporary cultural policy forms a large part of the contextual background to my research. Thus, research into the implications and the *potential* implications of this work on publicly funded cultural institutions is an arguably vital addition to this discourse.

My personal relationship with the field of arts engagement with children and young people dates back to my time as an undergraduate student, where I took part in a work placement at an arts organisation that did an engagement project with children from a primary school next door. Having previously understood the work that arts organisations did with young people as based around formal, curriculum based learning, for example teaching about artists or aspects of art history, it was fascinating to me to see

how art was being utilised primarily as a tool to enhance the soft skills of the children; their confidence, their ability to think critically, and, of course, their creativity. This interest guided me both professionally and academically. In my current job as a Youth Coordinator for a charity, I am expected to follow the key values and principles of youth work, and have undertaken training in this. This professional and academic interest has led to a curiosity in how prolific arts organisations, primarily those with National Portfolio (NPO) status, are seemingly engaging more frequently with children and young people in ways that have departed from more traditional 'learning' programmes and present more as community youth work projects. By this I mean that the primary aims and intended outcomes of these programmes are centred less around formal education and more around social education and empowerment.

Whilst this research falls primarily within the field of arts policy and management and therefore relates mostly to the cultural sector, it is necessary that elements of my writing draw upon the youth work sector. As I will outline in my conclusion, I believe there is more research to be conducted on the potential implications of arts organisations investing more resources into working with young people in the increasingly unstable and underfunded youth and community sector. My research, however, is primarily concerned with the implications that engaging in this work has on the arts organisation itself, specifically those that are publicly funded NPOs.

Layout and structure

This research paper starts with a review of current literature, which will explore contemporary discourse on engagement and participation work with communities and young people, alongside youth work ideology and how the two relate to each other. It will also explore contemporary literature and discourse surrounding notions of cultural value and the civic role of arts organisations. It will then outline the methodology that I have used to conduct my research, explaining how I used my case study to explore my research question.

My analysis will begin with a larger scale 'macro' view, that takes into account how youth work delivered by arts organisations has implications for the wider discourse arts sector and cultural policy, using my case study to illustrate my findings. It will then move to the 'meso', looking more specifically at the Lyric as an organisation to present how this work impacts on the systems of the organisation; that is, its infrastructure and its operations. I will then 'zoom in' closer to the 'micro', highlighting the implications of this work on cultural workers, specifically using my interviewee as an example. My conclusion will attempt to draw these strands together, posing some challenges and considerations for future research and work into this field.

Literature Review

Terminology: how is work with young people in the arts defined and discussed?

Within the UK, there is currently fairly limited research on the specific intersection between the fields of youth work and the projects that cultural institutions undertake with young people. There is, however, a breadth of discussion around what is (sometimes interchangeably) referred to as community engagement, socially engaged practice, education or learning programmes, outreach, involvement, participation and collaboration and co-creation (Mutibwa, 2017). It is valuable to outline the wider discussion on how organisations engage with communities, particularly with young people, and how this work is sub-categorised and further defined.

Socially engaged practice and participatory art

Two key terms that are used to discuss art projects that engage directly with communities in any or all of the processes of devising, making and presenting are 'socially engaged practice' and 'participatory art'. These terms and the practices associated with them arguably form the basis of discourse that surrounds how arts organisations work with communities. Socially engaged practice refers to works that are 'collaborative, often participatory and involves people as the medium or material of the work'; participatory art 'directly engages the audience in the creative process so that they become participants in the event' (Tate, 2017c). Participatory art is more often used to describe works in which the separation between audience and artist are deconstructed in the live 'situation' of the artistic event and are 'designed to provoke, scandalise and agitate the public' (Tate, 2017a). Socially engaged practice, on the other hand, refers to 'any artform which involves people and communities in debate, collaboration or social interaction' (Tate, 2017c). Both involve an effort to somewhat break down, if not completely dissolve, the separation between artist and public, but in different ways. The terms are often used interchangeably, however; as academic Claire Bishop describes, there are a 'variety of names' used to label an 'expanded field of practice' of arts projects involving communities, placing socially engaged practice and participatory art alongside 'community-based art' and 'collaborative arts' within this lexicon of terms (2012, p.1)

Education and learning

As I am specifically exploring arts engagement work with children and young people, it is also useful to make reference to education and learning programmes delivered within cultural institutions. Much of the research related to education and cultural institutions is often centred around museum education, which is perhaps unsurprising considering that, arguably, a museum's primary purpose is to educate. Indeed, it has been argued that 'the emergence of (the) profession is coeval with the birth of the museum itself' (Prottas, 2019, p. 337). Whilst I will not delve deep into the history of museum education here, it is somewhat pertinent to my research to consider Nicholas Prottas' claim that 18th and 19th century museum's 'conceived of education as a mechanism of social control' and that museum educations' relationship to 'power, colonialism, nationalism' should be unpacked (2019, p.338). The notion of education programmes being used to enforce hegemonic concepts of morality and 'control' citizens is somewhat echoed in Bishop's criticism of socially engaged practice and the surrounding discourse (which I will outline further in this literature review) and is important to acknowledge in research into how youth work is delivered in arts organisations.

There is also a rich history of education being delivered by and through the medium of theatre, which is particularly relevant to my research due to my case study. 'Applied theatre' is typically used as an umbrella term for any projects is used to refer to a 'wide range of theatre practices that share an intentionality to provoke or shape social change' (University of Auckland, 2023), including 'Theatre in education' (TIE), for instance, with roots that trace back to the mid-1960s. Unlike the origins of museum education, this movement was aligned more with 'progressive movements in both theatre and education', delivering performances and workshops within schools and community settings with the goal of educating young people primarily around social issues (Jackson, 1993, p. 18). The practice of 'applied theatre' is often associated with BrAilian theatre practitioner Augusto Boal's 'Theatre of the Oppressed' in which a variety of theatrical techniques are utilised to promote social change and political activism (2008). It is important to note, however, that these sorts of explicitly radical 'applied' or TIE projects are not commonly practised within professional theatres in Britain and are more often delivered by collectives or organisations that have been created specifically to deliver this work. Despite this, it is clear that many projects are clearly influenced by these practices and the concept of theatre and arts practise being a 'tool' for mobilisation and social change.

Outreach and inclusion

In what is arguably a shift from previous discourse, many arts organisations, particularly performing arts organisations, now often only use the terms 'learning' or 'education' to refer to specific programmes that

partner with schools or educational institutions. For example, the National Theatre, the Barbican and the Almeida Theatre all have 'young people's' programmes that are distinct from their 'schools' offers, all focused on engaging with and supporting young people's artistic development.[1] Terms such as 'outreach' or 'inclusion' are also more often employed now, as is the case with the Lyric, my case study organisation. It is interesting to consider this shift in discourse and how it is perhaps reflective of a sector-wide desire to depart from those more traditional models of institutional education that arguably reinforce inequality and oppression.

Collaboration, co-creation and cultural democracy

Within recent years, there has been a further development in terminology related to cultural engagement with communities that has grown in popularity, in part due to their adoption by prolific cultural institutions. Terms such as 'collaboration', 'co-production' and 'co-creation' have been used by organisations, practitioners and policy writers in general to describe work with communities in which the power dynamics between the participants and artists/arts organisations are argued to be more equal. The Co-creating Change Network, for instance, was developed in 2018 by David Jubb, then the Artistic Director of the Battersea Arts Centre, and 'explores the role which artists, cultural organisations and communities can play to co-create change together' (Co-Creating Change, 2023a). For the network, 'co-creation' means the shifting of 'power, resource and ownership towards the people the work is intended to benefit, as opposed to the traditional "top down" approach' (Co-Creating Change, 2023b). They argue that with more 'conventional models of "arts participation", power, resource and ownership often remain, largely, with the artist, producer or cultural organisation, rather than being shared more equally' and aim to distinguish this from the concept of 'co-creation' (Co-Creating Change, 2023b).

Indeed, discourse related to cultural engagement with communities now often centres around understanding and attempting to address unequal power dynamics. This has led to a resurgence of the concept of cultural democracy in mainstream discourse. Cultural democracy takes notions of socially engaged, participatory and co-created practice and goes one step further. It argues that communities and publics should not only have the right to decide what happens on stage or what work gets displayed in an exhibition, for example, but what constitutes 'culture' in the first place (64 Million Artists and Arts Council England, 2018). However, as these terms become adopted into the zeitgeist and utilised by funding bodies and policy makers (see Arts Council England's 64 Million Artists report on embedding 'Cultural Democracy in Practice', for example) they have been accused of becoming buzzwords that have lost their true meaning (Heart of Glass and Battersea Arts Centre, 2021). Some critics argue that the

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[1] See https://www.barbican.org.uk/, https://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/ and https://almeida.co.uk/ to note the separation between education/learning programmes and young people's/youth programmes

changing discourse still does not have any real effect on the power dynamics between the artist/organisation and the public, and that the 'hierarchies of cultural value have always been, and always will be, bound up with questions of power and authority' (Romer, 2018).

Why do terms matter?

The ongoing debate around terms, and what term should relate to what practice, is explored by Mutibwa, who raises the question of whether the definitions are really as important as the work itself, and whether it is necessary for there to be widely agreed upon definitions for specific practices (2017). However, these terms, the practices that are associated with them and the discourse that surrounds them provide an important contextual backdrop to my research. Whilst START, my case study, is presented as a 'learning alternative', it also sits under the Young Lyric's 'Inclusion' strand with a contact email that reads 'participation@lyric.co.uk' and recruitment led by an 'Outreach Officer' (The Lyric Hammersmith, 2023d). It is clear that there is still not adequate language to define what this work is; as Nicola Sim argues, it is a 'sensitive area of practice, which is laden with imperfect language and uncomfortable power relations' (2018, p. 13). As publicly funded arts organisations are encouraged to prioritise the delivery of work with young communities and partner with community organisations, it is interesting to consider how new work will be categorised, whether 'youth work' and the associated ideologies will be explicitly mentioned and whether this will have an impact on how the sector's role and responsibility to the public is understood. When considering this, throughout this search paper I will primarily adopt the term 'engagement' as a catch-all term to define the type of practice I am referring to; work that is delivered specifically for children and young people that adopts some or all of the tenets of youth work.

Cultural value

Whilst I have noted that there is not yet extensive research into the ways in which arts and cultural institutions adopt youth work principles in their participatory work with children and young people, much is written about the perceived benefits of children and young people engaging in the arts - benefits which are often cited as the rationale behind youth programmes and projects within these institutions. Engagement in arts education is widely understood to be beneficial for cognitive development in children, with potential to positively impact educational attainment (Foster and Marcus Jenkins, 2017). Research has also been undertaken on the positive implications that engaging in creative and cultural activity can have on a children and young people's emotional wellbeing and resilience (Zarobe and Bungay, 2017; Coholic, Schwabe and Lander, 2020). Furthermore, Foster and Marcus Jenkins identify evidence within the field of developmental psychology that support the hypothesis that providing opportunities for young

people to engage in arts activities can have a positive effect on their ability to 'facilitate social relatedness, form identity, express talents, and achieve positive recognition' which in turn may 'help steer adolescents away from risky behaviours like skipping school and using drugs' (2017, p. 399).

Adjacent to the research undertaken here are the reports that have been published within the field of cultural policy about the social impact of culture and its perceived 'power' to 'change lives' for communities and publics more widely (The British Council and Wilson, 2015, p. 2). In 2006, Bishop used the term the 'social turn' to refer to a 'surge' of projects that have participation or collaboration with publics and communities at their core, which she places within the wider policy context of the New Labour government that came to power within the mid-late 1990s (Tate, 2017b). Bishop argues that New Labour saw culture, specifically socially engaged or participatory practice, as a tool to tackle 'social exclusion' within Britain, making reference to Francois Matarasso's seminal 1998 report *Use or Ornament? The Social Impact of Participation in the Arts* (Bishop, 2012, p. 13). Matarasso's report became the 'cornerstone for New Labour's drive to increase the status of arts and culture in the UK' (Colouring in Culture , 2014) and argues for the benefits of participation in cultural activity. Brook, O'Brien and Taylor (2020) also provide a summary of a variety of more contemporary key reports related to measuring and advocating for the social value of engagement in cultural activity, such as Geoffrey Crossick and Patrycja Kaszynska's *Understanding the Value of Arts and Culture* (2016) and *Changing Lives* (2019). With regards to the most recent Department of Culture Media and Sport's' *Changing Lives* report, they argue that 'cultural organisations have moved beyond debates over whether arts and culture *can* provide social benefits. Now these benefits are one of the core purposes of culture' (Brook, O'Brien and Taylor, 2020, p 35).

Matarasso's writing is an important basis for many contemporary research and investment projects that are concerned with the impact that participation in cultural activity has on people's health and wellbeing. His 2019 book *A Restless Art* is a more contemporary but still critical piece of literature that explores the impact of socially engaged practice on and within the cultural sector. Matarasso continues to argue for the positive effect that participatory art and socially engaged practice can have on people's lives, and also suggests that over the past 20 years this work has become 'normal'; it 'has spread from the marginal urban and rural spaces [...] to the centres of cultural power' (2019, p. 21). His assertion is arguably reflected in the sheer existence of a research centre like the Centre for Cultural Value, formed in 2012 by Geoffery Crossick, which seeks to build a 'shared understanding' of the differences that culture makes to 'peoples lives and society' and seeks to shape policy developments around this (Centre for Cultural Value, 2023).

Despite Matarasso's argument that participatory art and socially engaged practice have become embedded into the 'centres of cultural power', the discourse employed by himself and his peers in arguing for the benefits of this work has been criticised by other academics. As Mutibwa suggests, 'the notion that

the sector is associated more with a welfare function rather than arts practice has been hotly debated over the decades' (2017, p. 355). One of Bishop's core arguments is that under the New Labour's definition of participation, engagement work with communities seeks to placate rather than mobilise them: 'for New Labour it effectively referred to the elimination of disruptive individuals' (2012, p. 14). Bishop contends that New Labour backed notions of socially engaged arts practice sought to 'conceal' social inequality rather than working towards actually addressing the 'structural' problems that reinforce social hierarchies (Ibid, p. 13). Bishop's argument is echoed in many other contemporary criticisms of participatory practice; see, for instance, my above outline of critiques of terms like 'cultural democracy' when they are adopted by policy makers.

Bishop also argues that in placing more value in the process of making the participatory work than the actual 'product' of the work that has been created, 'art and the aesthetic are denigrated as merely visual, superfluous, academic – less important than concrete outcomes' (Ibid, p. 22). She furthers this by suggesting that because of the 'urgency' of the 'social task' of addressing social exclusion through arts participation, these projects are perceived as being exempt from criticism: 'socially collaborative practices are all perceived to be equally important artistic gestures of resistance: there can be no failed, unsuccessful, unresolved, or boring works of participatory art, because all are equally essential to the task of repairing the social bond' (Bishop, p. 13). This also relates to contemporary criticism that refers to the 'instrumentalisation' of arts engagement projects which are suggested to be primarily focused on measuring the 'impact' of projects (Howard, 2017). As Brook, O'Brien and Taylor, suggest, such critics 'question justifying funding, or giving social status to culture based on impact. Instead they see the value of culture not in the *consequences* of engagement or participation, but rather in culture itself' (2020, p. 30). Many consider this emphasis on impact to be tied in with neoliberalist influenced agendas of 'outcome' driven work, something I will explore further in this literature review as it also pertains to youth work (Howard, 2017).

The civic role of arts organisations

The discourse surrounding cultural value is strongly tied to the concept of the 'civic role' of arts organisations. This concept is born from the belief that culture has a social value, and that organisations thus have a 'civic duty' to deliver work dedicated to cultivating social benefits and supporting communities, especially if they receive public funding (Doeser and Vona, 2016). *The Inquiry into the Civic Role of Arts Organisations* launched in 2016, following recognition that 'the relationship between the public and arts organisations was changing, and that institutions receiving public investment needed to articulate more clearly the value they bring, including to local communities' (The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 2023). In a literature review published as part of this 'first phase' of the inquiry, it is argued

that the 'civic role of arts organisations' means 'the ways in which arts organisations animate, enhance and enable processes by which people exercise their rights and responsibilities as members of communities' (Doeser and Vona, 2016). The Gulbenkian Foundation's work has now changed from an inquiry into a funding programme with significant financial awards of up to £100,000 for organisations that can demonstrate that they are delivering on their civic responsibilities, including programmes that specifically work with young people.

The prevalence of the concept of the 'civic role' in the mainstream cultural discourse has been somewhat accelerated within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. In March of 2020, the first legally mandated lockdown of the COVID-19 pandemic came into force in the United Kingdom, in which, amongst other restrictions, businesses and organisations that were deemed 'non-essential' by the UK government were forced to close. This included museums, art galleries and theatres and other cultural venues and institutions, the majority of which did not reopen fully until the Summer of 2021. Whilst conversations around the role that art should play in public life and what organisations can and should *do* for the public had already been occurring within the British cultural sector for a number of years, the events of 2020 and its aftermath have arguably made this notion more pertinent and urgent than ever before. Indeed, the Centre for Cultural Value leads on a national research project that investigates the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the cultural sector and the implications for work with communities, arguing that some organisations 'were inspired to rethink the whole nature of their relationships with their communities, looking for fresh ways those relationships could be given real depth beyond the crisply transactional approaches of earlier times.' (Sargent, 2022).

Youth work

Regarding these concepts within the context of engagement work with young people, I argue that many arts organisations have begun, either consciously or unconsciously, to more frequently attempt to adopt the principles and models of youth work practice. In order to analyse this claim further, it is valuable to summarise the key literature that underpins what youth work is as a practice and an academic theory.

Cooper suggests that in Britain, youth work was 'firmly embedded in the post-war welfare state model of service provision' between the 'late 1960s and the late 1990s' (Cooper, 2018, p. 13). Whilst some form of 'youth work' had been being delivered before this period, (for example, in the Scout and Guide groups), Davies and Taylor credit the Minister of Education's 1960 Albermale Report with professionalising the sector and moving youth work from what they argue was a form of 'moral exhortation', to the 'social education' focus that we still see today (2019, p.2,). Indeed, Cooper, Davies and Taylor all suggest that voluntary participation by young people is one of the key tenets to British youth

work; 'engaging young people by choice' as opposed to them being obligated to attend out of fear of retribution (Davies and Taylor, 2019, p.2).

Synthesising literature from across a plethora of youth work literature, Cooper argues that youth work can be regarded as:

1. A focus on young people's lives and their concerns;
2. Attending to the "social connection" [...] and the context of young people's lives;
3. Positive regard and processes for working through supportive and friendly relationships;
4. A holistic approach to young people that includes a commitment to: i. Informal education [...] ii. An ethic of care and concern that young people should flourish [...] iii. Facilitation of youth participation, rights and social justice [...];
5. Acting with integrity (2018).

Indeed, the National Youth Agency, which formed as a response to the 1960 Albermale report define the core principles of youth work today as:

1. Young people voluntarily participating;
2. Utilising young people's view of the world;
3. Treating young people with respect;
4. Seeking to develop young people's skills and attitudes rather than remedy 'problem behaviours';
5. Helping young people develop stronger relationships and collective identities;
6. Respecting and valuing differences;
7. Promoting the voice of young people (2023).

Seeing young people as active, valuable participants in communities who do not need to be 'given' a voice but rather provided with tools and opportunities to have their voice more widely heard is regarded as a core ideology that should drive youth work practice. The role of a youth worker is thus primarily regarded to be centred around, educating, supporting and 'amplifying' young people and their voices; 'youth workers are on young people's sides for the purpose of emancipating their minds and altering the social constraints on them' (Nicholls, 2012, p.11).

Relationship between the youth work sector and the cultural sector

I wish now to portray how contemporary cultural policy literature centred around working with communities sits alongside seminal texts utilised within the youth work field in order to further highlight the recent shift towards youth work models within the cultural sector. Comparative analysis of this literature, I contend, serves as a basis to demonstrate why further exploration of the deliverance of youth work in the arts sector and the connotations of this is necessary.

Roger Hart's 1992 UNICEF published 'Children's Ladder of Participation', adapted from Sherry Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation (1969), is a conceptual framework and tool that is utilised

within youth work as a way for youth workers and services to identify whether a project or programme is truly valuing the voices and participation of the young people it is engaging with (Figure 1).
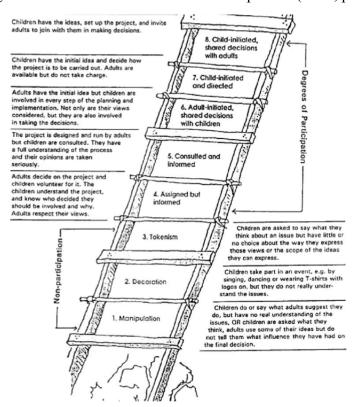
Figure 1: Roger Hart's 'Children's Ladder of Participation' (1992, p.8)

Children have the ideas, set up the project, and invite adults to join with them in making decisions.

8. Child-initiated, shared decisions with adults

Children have the initial idea and decide how the project is to be carried out. Adults are available but do not take charge.

7. Child-initiated and directed

Adults have the initial idea but children are involved in every step of the planning and implementation. Not only are their views considered, but they are also involved in taking the decisions.

6. Adult-initiated, shared decisions with children

The project is designed and run by adults but children are consulted. They have a full understanding of the process and their opinions are taken seriously.

5. Consulted and informed

Adults decide on the project and children volunteer for it. The children understand the project, and know who decided they should be involved and why. Adults respect their views.

4. Assigned but informed

Degrees of Participation

Non-participation

3. Tokenism

Children are asked to say what they think about an issue but have little or no choice about the way they express those views or the scope of the ideas they can express.

2. Decoration

Children take part in an event, e.g. by singing, dancing or wearing T-shirts with logos on, but they do not really understand the issues.

1. Manipulation

Children do or say what adults suggest they do, but have no real understanding of the issues, OR children are asked what they think, adults use some of their ideas but do not tell them what influence they have had on the final decision.

This is often regarded as the desired framework and even ultimate goal of youth work practice. Similarly, 64 Million Artist's 2018 report 'Cultural Democracy in Practice' commissioned by Arts Council England displays its own participation scale, that starts with 'consuming' and ends in 'co-owning', progressing incrementally like Arnstein and Hart's ladder does (p. 8). The report asks for organisations to listen to the perspectives and implement the ideas of the communities they are working with throughout the whole artistic process: 'programming, the delivery and the reflection' (64 Million Artists and Arts Council England, 2018, p.10) . It provides examples of how organisations can move from the democratisation of culture to cultural democracy by progressing from 'convening a youth board who give feedback but don't hold decision making power' to 'supporting young people to play an active role in governance and decision-making' (Ibid, p. 4). Indeed, as Sim suggests 'The principles of cultural democracy—associated with everyday grassroots culture, anti-elitist practice and a distrust of the institution—align closely with traditional youth work values' (2019, p. 91).

This notion underpins Sim's 2019 book *Youth Work, Galleries and the Politics of Partnership.* Sim's book is one of the few pieces of research I've found that specifically considers cultural organisations and youth work. Sim believes it to be vital to explore the potential impact of such partnerships, stating that one of the primary aims of her research is to 'lay bare (in ethnographic detail) the fundamental inequalities

and power imbalances underpinning partnership work between galleries, youth organisations and young people' (Sim, 2019, p.3). She argues that whilst the 'cultures and policies of neoliberalism and the effects of austerity have led to widespread changes and cuts across the public sector', 'participatory work' within cultural institutions have 'in many cases moved from being confused to specific departments to being at the centre of cultural institutions work' (Ibid, p. 3).

Indeed, it is widely argued across the youth work sector and in youth work academia that the introduction of neoliberalist values in the UK has significantly negatively impacted the state led youth work sector. Davies and Taylor trace the shift from how the youth sector used to operate to the sector that we know today to the 1991 Conservative government under Prime Minister John Major: 'The Tories hoped to persuade the disparate elements within youth work to agree a core curriculum, against which performance could be measured' (2019, p.11). Whilst this was severely criticised and resisted at the time, this 'outcome' based approach to delivering youth work was subsequently reinforced with the introduction of New Labour policies in the mid-late 1990s and early 2000s (Davies and Taylor, 2019). During this time, state funding became harder to access without assigning 'predetermined targets' to projects and programmes (Ibid, 2019). We can see similarities here between the criticisms placed on 'outcome' or 'impact' based approach that many argue has plagued youth work practice and the emphasis on the quantification of 'value' in relation to cultural engagement. Frances Howard argues that we must be critical of these claims of 'impact' and 'measurable outcomes' in both arts and youth work, and suggests that when it comes to youth work arts projects, a prioritisation of young people's 'journeys rather than outcomes' is necessary for future policy (2017).

The implementation of austerity measures in conjunction with the already changing youth work landscape are often attributed to creating a culture in which youth work as a profession has become undervalued, underfunded and threatened (Bright and Pugh, 2019; Davies and Taylor, 2019; Sim, 2019). This is important to understand in relation to my research, especially when looking at the 'macro' view that takes into consideration policy implications, wider sector practice and how the youth and arts sectors relate to each other.

Workforces in the youth and cultural sectors

This notion of 'inequalities' between the youth and arts work sectors is not solely centred on issues of funding. Sim employs sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus' in order to underpin her exploration of the relationship between youth and arts work, arguing that there is a difference in habitus that leads to arts workers holding 'symbolic power' over youth workers (Sim, 2019). Habitus refers to, in Bourdieu's terms, the:

> Subjective but not individual system of internalised structures, schemes of perception, conception, and action common to all members of the same group or class and constituting the precondition for all objectification and apperception (Bourdieu, 1977, p.86).

Sim applies this to the exploration of youth workers and those who work in arts institutions by suggesting that there is a particular habitus associated with being a cultural worker, and a specific habitus associated with being a youth worker (2019). She found that this meant that many youth workers working on partnership projects with galleries felt out of place in arts institutions partly because 'the proclivity for visiting art galleries is linked to a middle-or-upper class social positioning and high levels of academic education' and youth workers are more likely to be from working class backgrounds (Sim, 2019, p. 91). Indeed, Brook, O'Brien and Taylor argue in their seminal text on class and cultural labour that 'culture has a class problem'; there is a proliferation of people from middle-class backgrounds that work in the industry (2019). They argue that particular practices that are commonplace in the arts, such as unpaid internships in which people with socio-economic privilege are more likely to be able to afford to take up, reinforce this class inequality (Brook, O'Brien and Taylor, 2019). As I will explore in my analysis, it is important to recognise the way in which differing habitus and differing work practices affects the relationship between these youth and arts workers, and the issues that arise when arts organisations work with youth workers. This lends itself to a discussion of the changing roles of arts workers more widely, and the experience and training they are expected to have when they undertake youth engagement.

My research

As arts organisations that receive public funding are being encouraged to consider their 'civic duty' more seriously and conceptualise new ways to engage with communities to ensure they secure their NPO status, it is clear that the youth and arts sectors are not as disparate as they perhaps once were. Whether deliberately and through partnerships with youth organisations, or fortuitously, many cultural organisations adopt the approaches of youth work in delivering their young people's programmes. This narrowing gap between the cultural sector and community services will arguably have a plethora of implications for both sectors. Indeed, there are already organisations who have been delivering this work under the umbrella of participatory art, socially engaged practice, education programmes or outreach and inclusion projects. My research seeks to explore the implications that this work has already had on the organisations themselves and their workforce, as well as the sector more widely.

Methodology

Paradigm and methodology

I will now outline the methodology that I utilised to undertake my research, exploring its benefits and its limitations.

As I have previously stated, the intersection between the youth and arts works sector is an area of practice which has not yet been specifically extensively researched, and thus my research is exploratory in nature. This research understands that there is no objective 'truth' and operates within an interpretivist paradigm, recognising that there are 'multiple perspectives of reality' in relation to this work (Chowdhury, 2014, p. 433). It does not seek to test or prove a singular theory or hypothesis. Primarily with my research, I am seeking to explore how youth work within arts organisations impacts an organisation and its culture, infrastructure, workers and what this can tell us about the sector more widely. As a cultural organisation is made up of a collection of individuals, each with their own subjectivity and beliefs, an interpretivist paradigm is the most appropriate as it is concerned with the 'dynamic, constructed and evolving nature of social reality and rejects the positivist notion of knowledge being grounded in the objective and tangible' (Chowdury, 2014, p. 434). Adopting an interpretivist paradigm thus lends itself to providing rich and multi-faceted data that can create foundation for further research and discourse, well suited for under researched areas of practice.

Qualitative research methods are most commonly used within the interpretivist paradigm, as qualitative methods are sometimes argued to be 'better ways of getting at how humans interpret the world around them', in contrast to quantitative methods (Willis, 2007, p. 29). A singular exploratory case study, as is employed in this research, is therefore an appropriate methodology for this paradigm. Robert K Yin describes a case study as an 'empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context' (2003, p.13). According to Yin, case studies 'can provide both descriptive richness and analytic insight into people, events, and passions as played out in real-life environments' (2005, p.xiv). In this paper, I employ an exploratory case study which is regarded as a 'preliminary step or a prudent prerequisite to more focused investigations', and is 'employed to inductively generate, rather than deductively confirm, insights regarding the phenomenon of interest' (Ogawa and Malen, 1991, p. 271). This is often a 'sound and sensible first step' when the topic in question has not been extensively researched (Ibid). Thus my case study is utilised here in order to draw out the 'major themes and patterns' that are associated with youth work being delivered by arts institutions, offering 'conceptual perspectives' for future research into this phenomena (Ibid).

Case study

After initial research into the field of youth work delivered in arts settings, I discovered the START programme which is delivered by the Lyric Hammersmith, a theatre in Hammersmith, West London (see Appendix C). START is presented as a 'learning alternative' for young people aged 16-25 years old who are not in education, employment or training, otherwise known as 'NEET' young people (Lyric Hammersmith, 2023e). The content of the programme, as my interviewee explained to me, consists of the young people attending whatever performance the Lyric is showing at the time and then creating a 'response' piece; a devised performance inspired by the themes of the show they have seen.

My initial selection criteria when choosing this case study was my assertion that the organisation should be a National Portfolio Organisation (NPO): a cultural institution that receives regular funding from Arts Council England. This is because I was interested in this notion of responsibility that I highlight in my research question as it especially pertains to institutions that receive public funding. The Lyric is currently a Band 3 NPO, meaning it receives funding that sits within the maximum funding bracket that can be granted by ACE for NPOs. According to ACE, 'these organisations are required to contribute to all five of (their) goals and play a key role in supporting the wider sector' (Arts Council England, 2022). It also has a highly prolific programme of 'professional' theatre that they balance alongside their engagement work. Whilst I am aware that many smaller community arts based or solely arts participation based organisations deliver youth work services, it feels important to explore how this work impacts a large scale, highly prolific institution regarded as being influential in order to begin to explore implications for the wider sector.

My selection criteria was also based around this idea that I have already explored in my literature review; that there has been a 'pivot to civic' in relation to arts organisations undertaking more of a civic role partly as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (Walmsley, 2021). Whilst I believe this phenomena is an important context that underpins my research, I wanted to investigate a programme that has been running for a long time prior to this movement partly in order to explore how developments within the wider cultural landscape may have affected the programme and the organisation. Furthermore, a programme that has been running for many years arguably provides richer and more easily accessible data than a programme in its infancy, and is thus more useful in providing answers to my research question about the implications of this work on the organisation that undertakes it.

Finally, I also chose START because it is a programme specifically for NEET young people, rather than just one that is open to all young people. Community youth work services and social services are often targeted towards supporting young people who are NEET, with British youth policy placing 'a good deal of emphasis on the "NEET and EET" status of young people' and integrating them into education and employment (Yates and Payne, 2006, p. 330). As I will explore further in my analysis, delivering this

programme for this specific cohort of young people places the Lyric in an interesting position in relation to other community service providers.

Data collection methods

As part of my case study research, I conducted a semi-structured interview with A, an employee at the Lyric Hammersmith. A works under the 'Young Lyric' department and is responsible for recruiting and supporting participants of the START programme. One of my key lines of inquiry when I formulated my research question was to explore how youth work being delivered by arts organisations particularly has an impact on the workforce, particularly on the types of experience and skills that are valued by staff members. Thus, being able to speak at length with a staff member who is on the ground doing face-to-face engagement work with young people and a full-time member of staff for the Lyric was incredibly useful. I also conducted desk research into the Lyric's written communications concerning the START programme and their work with young people in general, as well as a wider analysis into discourse relating to youth work delivered within arts organisations.

My interview with A was conducted online over Microsoft Teams, in June 2023. I had prepared my questions prior to meeting her based around my research question. I kept to most of my written questions, however in the natural flow of conversation some questions were moved around and particular lines of inquiry were prompted and expanded upon.

Data analysis

A discourse analysis understands 'language as action and affiliation', and seeks to unpick how 'speakers and writers use resources of grammar to *design* their sentences and texts in ways that communicate their perspectives on reality, carry out various social activities [...] and allow them to enact different social identities' (Gee, 2014, p. 5). This was an appropriate form of analysis to employ on this transcript and my desk research, particularly because, as outlined in my literature review in relation to terminologies, language matters when it comes to community engagement. Discourse builds social realities (Labutina, 2019). This is particularly true in relation to arts engagement with communities, whereby projects can differ widely depending on the language that is used to describe their aims and intended outcomes. It is also especially pertinent to explore how changing discourse associated with arts engagement work impacts on the roles and responsibilities of arts institutions.

I have employed Florian Schneider's step-by-step guide 'How to do a Discourse Analysis' in order to structure my process of analysis (2013) (see Appendix D). I also utilised Gee's 'building tasks' as a tool to analyse the language and its function. Gee designates seven '"building tasks" of language' and includes discourse analysis questions that he has formulated in association with these building tasks (2014, p, 10). As I have demonstrated in my appendix, such questions were remarkably helpful prompts.

Limitations

It has been argued that one of the limitations of a singular case study in research is that it can not be representative of all other cases, or generalisable to reflect wider practice and thus is not regarded to be as 'rigorous' as other methodologies (Hyett, Kenny and Dickson-Swift, 2014, p. 3). This is why I emphasise that this research is exploratory. This study does not claim that the implications of delivering START on the Lyric will apply to all other organisations that deliver youth work, but rather aims to highlight what has already occurred as a result of its deliverance and recommends that further research is conducted into other youth work focused cultural engagement projects.

There was a significant limitation in relation to data sourcing. I sought to interview two staff members at the Lyric; A, who is an 'on-the-ground' worker directly engaging with young people, and the Outreach and Inclusion Producer who has more oversight on operations and budgeting. However, this member of staff did not respond to my request to interview. In only being able to interview one staff member, I have not been able to go as in depth with particular areas of inquest as I had initially wanted to. Whilst it was useful to interview a staff member that is on the ground, I believe that especially in considering how the delivery of youth work may have implications for the funding and audience engagement and the 'systems' of the organisation more widely, it would have been useful to have this insight from a staff member who had more responsibility for some of these areas.

More widely, it is argued that there are challenges in relation to the evaluation of youth work based arts engagement projects and thus there is not a huge amount of previous research or data to draw from that can articulate the impact of this work on participants. As Doesner argues:

> Methodological difficulties that dog all evaluations seeking to understand the impact of these interventions: the impacts can be diffuse, the means to collect data can be intrusive or inappropriate, and the resource [...] to do it properly can be prohibitive (2016, p. 22)

There is even less research or literature to draw from that has explored the impact of this work on the arts organisations themselves. A wider range of previous research into the relationship between arts and youth work, particularly in specific relation to those delivered within arts organisations, may have been helpful in developing my research further.

Findings and analysis

The Macro: What are the sector wide and policy implications of arts organisations delivering youth work?

As previously stated, I will begin presenting my findings and analysis by taking in the wider context of engagement work with young people by arts organisations, through the lens of my case study. This will regard the 'bigger picture' conversations about this work and how my case study relates to this discourse. I set out to explore what the implications of undertaking youth work are for the roles and responsibilities of cultural organisations and discovered in this that there were also wider ramifications on how the sector itself understands and represents these roles and responsibilities, specifically in its relationship to the public.

'The civic duty is everything, it's everything': responsibility to the public

START is 'posed', in A's words, as a learning alternative (Interviewee A, 2023, 11:14-22:40). The language used to describe the programme, and the language that A herself uses, however, signifies that the programme is more holistic, welfare and wellbeing focussed as opposed to a straightforward education and training course. Indeed, A herself refers to it as a 'behaviour intervention' (Ibid, 0:41-8:53). The website describes how the programme seeks to 'identify, explore and address the underlying causes of their disengagement' through the use of drama rather than simply to encourage participants to engage in the activity at hand (Lyric Hammersmith, 2023e). This 'development of soft skills', she states, is the 'real' aim of START:

> A lot of the young people that go into START usually, for example, may struggle with time management, maybe struggle with punctuality, struggle with communication, struggle with teamwork, struggle with conflict, struggle with performance anxiety, and the real sort of 'blue-sky' aim is by the end of it (they) would have developed in like those soft skills and able to stand up to perform on stage (Interviewee A, 2023, 11:14-22:40).

The notion that the programme seeks to address the 'struggles' perceived to be behind the participants' inability to access mainstream education and employment demonstrates that the Lyric believes START has the ability to create tangible, life-changing social outcomes for young people. The language draws similarities to certain aspects of definitions of community youth work. If youth work is a kind of 'informal education' that is at least partly centred around 'attending to the social connection' of young people and fostering a 'positive regard and processes for working through supportive and friendly relationships', then START's programme aims align comfortably (Cooper, 2018, p. 11).

A made reference in our interview to the Lyric's 'obligation' as an organisation to the young people that they engage with (Interviewee A, 2023, 0:41-8:53). For example, towards the beginning of our conversation, after having given a wide-ranging and general overview of her roles and responsibilities as the Outreach Officer, she described what she believes is the 'next phase' of her work:

> This next phase we were thinking is now when you hit 26, what happens because I can't sort of spend so much time in you and supporting you [...] So that sort of the next strategic step for me is like what happens when you hit 26? [...] What obligation does the Lyric have to you? (Ibid)

Here, A is referring to the fact that the Young Lyric, the department that encompasses all of the theatre's work with young people, only allows young people up to the age of 25 to become members and participate in their projects. The connotation behind A's statement is that the organisation has a clearly defined responsibility and commitment to those under 25s who are Young Lyric members. This notion of obligation and duty is reflected in wider discourse about arts institutions' roles and responsibilities to communities and the general public. For instance, Doeser draws on what he calls the 'inherent argument' as to why arts organisations should be taking on a civic role; an argument with basis in human rights:

> Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights establishes 'a right to participate in the cultural life of the community' and that it is in the duty of every arts organisation to reach out and be an active part of their communities, especially if they receive public funding or protection. (2016, p. 15)

Rather than civic work being the responsibility of particular institutions or even of particular projects, Doeser puts forward the argument that *every* organisation should be expected to deliver it, paying particular heed to those who receive public funding. This is reflected in A's language; at one point in our interview she declared that the 'civic duty is everything, it's everything' (Interviewee A, 2023,1:07:44-1:07:54).

In delivering work in which the primary concern is to tackle the social 'struggles' of young people within the community, the Lyric's START programme demonstrates this shift in expectation; publicly funded organisations are no longer simply required to deliver an artistic programme for people who chose to engage with it, they are providing services for the community. Despite START not being delivered within a typical local authority run youth work setting, the Lyric can arguably be regarded as a community youth work provider; a key player in the landscape of provision on offer for young people in Hammersmith and the surrounding areas. If cultural institutions, especially NPOS, are regarded to have an obligation, and, indeed, believe themselves to be obligated to deliver youth and community services, this signifies a perhaps unprecedented level of accountability to the public from both the NPOs and the ACE as funders.

Process, product or both?: The 'value' of culture

As I have discussed in my literature review, the discourse surrounding arts organisations' 'obligation' to deliver community services to the public is not one that has gone uncontested within the field of cultural policy. This is partially because some critics of this work argue that there becomes a prioritisation of the process of making art and the perceived benefit of this process for participants over the 'product' or artistic quality of the work that is made (Mutibwa, 2017). It is clear from the webpage that the outcomes of START, what young people 'get' out of it, are clearly regarded as the project's value, citing a variety of statistics about the young people that have participated in the programme such as '100% cited improved soft skills' (Lyric Hammersmith, 2023b). This was reflected in my interview with A, who suggests that the performance at the end of the six-week programme is regarded mostly as a representation of the young people's progress in relation to these soft skills, rather than a polished performance 'product' that aligns with their Main House 'professional' programming (Ibid).

However, it was also clear that A was aware of discourse around artistic value with participation work and the seeming prioritisation of process over product in relation to work with communities. In two instances she made reference to the negative 'reputation' that participation work with communities has in terms of artistic quality, for example: 'I think the reputation is always that like participation work is a little shoddy' (Interviewee A, 2023, 45:14-49:02). In her perspective, however, it is not that the artistic quality of the work does not matter, it is that widely held definitions of what constitutes 'good art' should be challenged: 'I don't think it's like…what is good art anyway? And what is bad art? Like I think good art is all the young people are there and they're really excited' (Ibid). Her language reflects the discourse that argues for the widespread adoption of socially engaged practice into the cultural sector, and the advocacy of cultural democracy, as demonstrated in Matarasso argument: 'At the heart of community art's dissent is the refusal of a universal, objective idea of quality, especially one determined exclusively by a dominant social group' (2019, p. 98).

However, at another point during our interview, she discusses some shifts in thinking led by the employment of the newest director of the Young Lyric:

> The Lyric is known for the art. Like we are a theatre. So how do we get the young people feeling confident to, like, show up, excited to show up, excited to get up on stage and then actually what they're saying and how they're saying it feels like a development of artistic skill. He was like, it needs to be of a like, the art needs to be good. That is just the core of it. (Interviewee A, 2023, 22:30-24:33)

It is perhaps clear here that even with a project like START that has been running for a number of years and is well-respected across the sector and by funders, there is still a debate around what the *artistic* value of this work is, or what it should be, and whether 'process' should really be equal to, or above, 'product'.

Whilst A told me, as I will explore further in my next section of analysis, that their work with young people is at the 'core' of their operations, she also explains here that the quality of the art is at the 'core' (Ibid). The programme seems to be making changes in order to make sure it delivers on both of these elements at the same time; START will aim to value artistry and the 'development of artistic skill' at the same extent as it values the social outcomes.

To refer back to my previous finding that engagement work with young people highlights the question of cultural organisations' 'duty' or 'obligation' to the public, my findings also show that this work contributes to furthering the discourse around the value and even the purpose of arts institutions. Are arts organisations' 'core' responsibilities to deliver 'good' art, or do they exist to provide services to communities and better people's lives? Are the two mutually exclusive? Who gets to decide what 'good art' is? These are all questions that are born from arts organisations' work with communities, especially with regards to youth work programmes like START.

Implications for the youth and community sector

I wish to turn briefly to the potential implications of this work for the youth sector, and the relationship between the sectors. Whilst START does not officially label itself as a 'youth work service', its targeted area of focus (supporting NEET young people to get into education or employment), relationship with public sector services (referrals from social workers and job centres) and the language that is used to describe the work would suggest that this is what it is, or what it aims to be. Indeed, as I have outlined in my literature review, whilst ACE's *Let's Create* strategy does not explicitly state that organisations are expected to deliver youth work, the discourse employed throughout draws striking similarities to discourse employed in youth work theory and practice.

There is much discussion within youth work about when particular types of youth activity count as youth work and when they do not. For example, Cooper argues that there are 'various forms of dubious practice publicly labelled as youth work to the detriment of genuine practice' (2018, p.3). She elaborates that the blurring of boundaries between what youth work is and what it isn't means that other professions 'colonise youth work and redefine (it) to reflect (their own) purposes and interests' (Ibid). The values that underpin youth work practice state explicitly that participation from young people in youth work services should be completely voluntary, and that it should 'start from where young people are in relation to their own feelings, values, views and principles' (National Youth Agency, 2023). However, when participatory youth projects are practised within an arts organisation that has its own specific priorities, parameters, 'purposes and interests', it can be argued that this cannot truly align with the practice of youth work (Cooper, 2018, p.3). In highlighting the differences in practice between the sectors, Sim found in her

research that a youth work focus was 'characterised as starting where young people are at, adapting to their needs and engagement patterns' whilst arts organisations focus involves 'processes that required regular commitment, with a view to developing a creative output' (Ibid, p. 96). These differences and conflicting priorities create difficulties in the relationship between the youth and cultural organisations, an important consideration for the cultural sector more widely. If there is a policy driven push to deliver services for young people, where should this work be placed and how should it define itself in relation to the youth work services already being delivered?

Furthermore, in our interview, A made reference more than once to the difficulties facing the public sector, including in youth and social work. She discussed the high turnover of staff in social services, claiming that 'if your email is @brent.gov.uk, like I've gone through 10 of you in a year', referring to the email address domains of social workers in the borough of Brent (Interviewee A, 2023, 51:33-51:33). She also explained how the programme sometimes ends up taking on cohorts of young people from other community projects that get their funding pulled:

> Literally last week, got a call from my contact who did like NEET mental health services and employability sessions for Kensington and Chelsea and she was made redundant so she was ringing everyone being like 'I'm done'. And she was like 'ohh like the young people in my like craft class have nowhere to go, can I refer them to you' [...] when another place, yeah, unfortunately has to close, we end up like absorbing all of their young people. (Interviewee A, 2023, 1:04:51-1:05:46)

Whilst youth provisions that are delivered within the public sector are being defunded, arts institutions are not only encouraged by the Arts Council to deliver work with young people but are expected to make it a core element of their offer (Sim, 2019). Bishop's argument that the discourse surrounding 'participation' work and the 'social inclusion agenda' masks real structural inequalities and places responsibility on individuals and organisations to 'pick up where the government cuts back' is also interesting to consider here (2012, p.14). As austerity measures continue to be enforced and there is a systematic defunding of the social support system, seemingly youth services are being picked up by the other sectors, the cultural sector included. This proposes challenges for both sectors if it goes unrecognised.

The Meso: what are the implications on the systems within the Lyric Hammersmith when they become community youth work service providers?

I now wish to look closer into the Lyric Hammersmith and the impact that delivering START has had on the systems and infrastructure of the organisation. As previously outlined in my methodology section, I was only able to interview one member of staff at the Lyric who is involved with the Young Lyric projects and START at an operational level. Despite this, I believe in part due to the Young Lyric team and the Lyric more widely having a relatively small and tight-knit workforce, I found that A had a strong

understanding of the organisation's strategic priorities. Primarily, I discovered in my research that the work had an impact on who in the public they primarily engaged with and aimed to engage with their work, and also what the organisation regarded as the 'core' of their operations; their primary purpose as an organisation. Finally, I scratched the surface of what I thought was a potential future implication of this work for the Lyric, or perhaps a current implication that is not yet fully recognised: the effect that this work has on the programming of their Main House performances.

'We are the Lyric Hammersmith and we are only in West London': audience engagement, fundraising and development at the Lyric

Whilst I have been discussing arts and youth programme participants and not necessarily audience members, my research found that there were aligned strategic priorities in relation to the engagement of both audiences and participants. I found that the Lyric have now made it a priority to engage primarily with people that live in Hammersmith and the surrounding areas of West London within their young people's projects, but also in their wider engagement work and audience communications. As A explained:

> [The Young Lyric's new director] changed the catchment area entirely and that took a huge strategic shift for everybody. But what that means now is like that, we are directly serving the local community that we are known as...We are the Lyric Hammersmith and we are only in West London. We only serve West London young people (Interviewee A, 2023, 59:09-1:04:33).

This emphasis on the hyperlocal is reflected in the Lyric's communications, with the theatre describing itself as 'the civic and creative heart of West London', their tagline on the homepage of their website reading 'producing world class theatre from the heart of Hammersmith' (Lyric Hammersmith, 2023c). Not only does the word 'civic' directly compare to the concepts of 'civic duty' that I have explored previously, but this repeated use of the word 'heart' also has significant connotations that align with this notion of service and community. In using Gee's building tasks, specifically the question 'What sort of relationship or relationships is this piece of language seeking to enact with others?', I suggest that this metaphor is employed to connect with readers at an emotional level and foster a sense of familiarity and warmth with their audience, specifically those who are local to Hammersmith (2014). A heart signifies love and connection, and thus the Lyric seems to suggest that they are providers of care and support. It also connotes life and livelihood, therefore that there would be no 'creative' or 'civic' life in Hammersmith without the Lyric (just as there is no life without a heart), a notion that significantly reinforces the idea that the Lyric can now be perceived as a fundamental service provider to their local community. Indeed, this hyperlocal focus is also reflective of how most local authority based youth provisions or community

services run, operating within catchment areas that only allow young people who live in particular boroughs access their services (National Youth Agency, 2020).

According to A, this 'strategic shift' in making their operations hyperlocal was formed after the relaxing of COVID-19 restrictions and the recruitment of the new Director of the Young Lyric. As she explained:

> He (the current Young Lyric Director) told me the story like the first day he went to a load of like youth company shows and he went to the Almeida one, saw that cohort, he went to like another one saw the exact same young people, then went to the Lyric Young Company one and they were the exact same young people [...] He was like this just does not feel right because um, you know, if you grew up in Hillingdon and Hounslow and Ealing like your nearest local producing house is the Lyric Hammersmith (Interviewee A, 2023, 59:09-1:04:33).

It is clear from A's words that this narrative of discovering that the same young people were benefiting from multiple youth projects is posited as having made an impact on who the organisation is seeking to engage with more widely. Whilst the Lyric has apparently been focussing on local impact in its service provision and communications for a number of years, the theatre is seemingly more concerned with the hyperlocal than ever before.

It is also evident from the way the organisation presents itself on their website that they wish for their work with communities and, in particular, their work with young people to be perceived as central to their operations. For instance, their 'About us' section reads: 'We remove barriers to engagement and ensure young people have the opportunity to discover the power of their creativity, shaping the future of British theatre' (Lyric Hammersmith, 2023a). This was reinforced in my interview with A. When I asked about the effects that START has had on the organisation and the way it operates, she told me:

> I think it's really, really grounded the organisation and I think the Lyric feels very proud that like everything it leads up to is it's young people work, we're, you know the biggest department like we're such a core part of the Lyric and START is our core (Interviewee A, 2023, 59:09-1:04:33).

A's language also reflects wider discourse across the cultural sector relating to what is argued to be best practice when arts organisations undertake community engagement work. The ACE supported 'Cultural Democracy in Practice' report, for example, suggests that organisations could move away from having 'community outreach, engagement and participation "departments"' to placing 'communities and engagement at the heart of arts and cultural organisations' and from 'a learning and community team leading on engaging people' to 'making engagement a core organisational value' (64 Million Artists and Arts Council England, 2018, p. 4).

Indeed, whilst many cultural organisations that deliver youth engagement projects may operate under restricted and fixed term funding packages, the funding for START, A explains to me, is written into

the Lyric's core budget: 'fundraising departments have quite an easy time about it because again, it's like funding a Main House show like there's always, there's always money for it' (Interviewee A, 2023, 43:02-44:34). When I ask whether there is any likelihood of the organisation not being able to continue with START, she tells me: 'START is like a mammoth [...] it's not gonna go anywhere' (Ibid, 1:11:48-1:12:15). The metaphor of the 'mammoth' is used to signify that suggesting the programme takes up a large amount of space in the organisation and is hugely important, but also perhaps that it is a part of the history and legacy of the Lyric. The longevity of START and the commitment to continue to fund the work is thus regarded to have a positive impact on fundraising and development: 'We have a hugely positive relationship with people who fund us [...] START is in every funding application, in every NPO report like, it's really rooted. Yeah. It's really grounded us' (Interviewee A, 2023, 59:09-1:04:33). In running a programme in the style of a community youth work provider, and demonstrating to the public and funders that this work is embedded into their operations and a central part of their organisational offer, A argues that a number of other aspects of their operations have been impacted. This appears to have been overwhelmingly positive for the organisation, perhaps even contributing to their continued status within the National Portfolio.

Does START affect the Lyric's Main House programming?

However, despite explaining the effects that START has on community engagement and fundraising, A asserted that she did not believe that the programme has an impact on the Lyric's Main House programming: 'START does not affect programming [...] think programming just happens and then START happens in response to that' (Interviewee A, 2023, 59:09-1:04:33). In her opinion, the success of START somewhat relies on how popular and well-liked the Main House show is at that time:

> When the programming is good, the work is good. That is just the key of it. And when the programming is like not bad, but just not popular, then no one wants to be involved with young people's work and then the morale of the young people is low because the Lyric's, like not, you know the place to be (Interviewee A, 2023, 27:40-40:11)

At the time of interviewing, the Lyric's Main House was showing a play called *School Girls or the African Mean Girls Play.* Written by Ghanaian-American playwright Jocelyn Bioh, the play had been performed in New York and had received critical acclaim. The play is about (as the title suggests) a group of school girls in Ghana in the 1980s grappling with friendship dynamics and body image issues, and explores themes of racism and colourism (Gillinson, 2023). The UK's production was also executive produced by the famous television and film actor, Idris Elba. A attributed some of the success in recruiting for the current cohort of START to the success of the play and its association with Elba: 'like when the show is good, outreach is

easy. I got a lot of young people as well being like "I love Idris Elba! I wanna do START!"' (Interviewee A, 2023, 57:47-57:55). It is also perhaps pertinent that the show is about teenagers and explores themes that are important to teenage life, performed by young actors.

Whilst A was sure that this influence only went one way, I argue that it is probable that a reciprocity in the relationship between programming and engagement work will likely occur in the future, if it is not already. Indeed, the Lyric's 2022-2023 aims discuss specifically how their inclusion work will 'provide greater access to our work on stage by making incisive connections to our projects and activity with young people; utilising the impact of excellence to inspire creativity and empower future audiences and theatre makers' (Lyric Hammersmith, 2022). If the Lyric is already aware of the potential that their work with communities can have on audience development, it seems logical that this would also affect the kinds of work that they decide to programme. Furthermore, in including 'theatre makers' in this statement, the organisation seemingly makes explicit reference to an intended outcome whereby a young person that participates in an outreach programme becomes a professional artist that they work with, demonstrating a clear desire for programming to be directly impacted by the youth work that they deliver.

'Inclusivity and relevance' are one of ACE's core investment principles in their delivery of *Let's Create*, described as wanting organisations to 'mean more, to more people' and will ask organisations to 'demonstrate how they are listening to the voices of the public, including children and young people, artists, and creative practitioners' (2020, p. 53). A continued commitment to youth work arguably cultivates an environment where an organisation can have continued 'relevance' to its community, nurturing young people to become both current and future audience members as well as theatre makers. The Lyric are arguably already aware of this; its programming of *School Girls* is perhaps another way that it demonstrates its relevance to the young. As NPOs are being encouraged to embed engagement work with children and young people into the core of their operations rather than confining them to specific departments and stay 'relevant' to communities, it is perhaps inevitable that this work will have implications for all other aspects of the work that they deliver.

The Micro: What are the implications for the roles and responsibilities of arts professionals when youth work is delivered within arts organisations?

For the final section of my findings and analysis, I will explore how delivering a youth work programme like START has more direct implications for arts organisations' workforces. Utilising A and the other staff members that work at the Lyric on START that she discusses as examples, I present what is either a challenge or an opportunity (or both) for arts organisations when they deliver youth work: appropriate staffing.

Youth worker or arts worker?

As well as explaining the larger scale strategic shift that the Lyric has undergone in terms of the development of a catchment area, A explained that there has also been a shift in the way in which START is staffed. This was implemented ahead of the most recent delivery of the programme to the writing of this research paper, the summer of 2023:

> This cohort is trying the completely different model and before what we had was a director and an assistant director and then a [...] support like a pastoral support worker and that was fine, but then what happened was that it became really difficult for that pastoral worker because it became about, like, behaviour management. (Interviewee A, 2023, 11:14-22:40)

The pastoral worker, she described to me 'wasn't a theatre person', she was a youth worker that worked 'in a youth centre and a hostel' (Interviewee A, 2023 22:30-24:33). Using Gee's recommended steps in discourse analysis and considering 'How does this piece of language connect or disconnect things; how does it make one thing relevant or irrelevant to another', in claiming that this worker was not a 'theatre person', A's language highlights a disconnect between those who are considered to be in the 'world' of theatre work and those who are not, and that this has connotations for the type of 'person' that one is (2014, p. 130).

Under START's previous model, A explained that the youth worker had primary responsibility for both the behaviour management and, seemingly, the welfare of the young people:

> What was difficult, having one pastoral person was [...] when that person left to like deal with a young person outside of the room, there was almost no one to take care of who was left in the room because the directors were just directors and then that would lead to them taking all like that, like labour, pastoral labour. So we've caught that now. That's completely different (Interviewee A, 2023, 11:14-22:40).

The claim that directors on these projects were 'just directors' evokes similar connotations to the use of the term 'theatre people'. These terms that are used highlight that in the previous model of delivering the START programme, there was a clear distinction between the 'artists', who seemingly had a history of professional theatre-making and were there to focus on the artistic product being created, and the youth 'pastoral workers', those who had a history of supporting young people and were there to prioritise the emotional and behavioural welfare of the young people participating.

Indeed, as outlined in my literature review, Sim's book highlights the apparent distinction between these roles, the relationship between the arts and youth sector and the people who work within them. She describes how, when working within projects led by arts institutions, many youth workers she spoke to would 'retreat behind their feelings of inexperience in relation to the arts' and felt alienated from the

institution and those who worked there, mainly due to class differences (Sim, 2019, p. 90). Her discussion of habitus and how it plays out in these roles and relationships is interesting to consider in the case of START and their previous model. The clearly defined roles of 'director' and 'youth worker', whereby the director was purely responsible for the artistry and youth worker for behavioural management, arguably points to a distinction in the habitus of these workers and perhaps a 'symbolic power' dynamic between them (Sim, 2019, p. 91) As Howard, Brocken and Sim pose in relation to a case study of an arts worker delivering a project within a youth work setting: 'Is the role of the arts worker purely to deliver the arts project and therefore abdicate responsibility from "youth work-y" things like behaviour management out on the club floor?' and onto youth workers (2018, p. 277). I posit a follow-up to this question: is this designation of responsibility fair and appropriate, or does this reinforce symbolic class-based power dynamics? Working under a youth work model and employing youth workers arguably represents a challenge for arts institutions, not only of whose responsibility it is to take on the welfare and behavioural management role of young people, but of how they navigate the differentiation in habitus between arts workers and youth workers and resist reinforcing these class-based inequalities.

Youth worker and *arts worker?*

The new model of START, however, marks a departure from this separation between arts and youth workers in the programme staffing:

> What we have now is a director, assistant director who are like youth facilitators. So for example, maybe they direct shows for other youth companies. So instead of like director directors or like facilitator facilitators, you're getting someone in the middle who is like curating the art because they have the space to do that. And then there are two creative enablers now [...] we're now in week five of six of the first new model and and it's working really, really, really well. (Interviewee A, 2023, 11:14-22:40)

In highlighting its success so far, A is seemingly emphasising that the most appropriate staffing for this project are people who operate within the middle ground between youth and arts work; those who understand the theatre 'world' and how it operates but who also have experience a of working with young people and an ability to support their welfare. This is also somewhat true of A's professional background. A professed a long-term passion of theatre that dated back to her teenage years and described her path to being recruited at her role now as beginning when she studied Drama at the University of Kent and worked as an usher in a local theatre. She also described her volunteer work with Kent Refugee Action Network who 'support displaced young people 18 and over to integrate them into education' as being an important part of her journey (Interviewee A, 2023, 1:12:31-1:20:11). This background in both youth engagement and cultural work has been referred to as a form of 'hybrid' professional identity, occupying a

'Thirdspace' where both youth and arts work are combined as joint practices (Howard, Brocken and Sim, 2018, p. 282). This type of cultural worker is clearly sought after by the Lyric; A describes to me how one of the new 'creative enablers' on START is also a Youth Worker at the Roundhouse, a music and performance venue in Camden, London, that runs similar youth programmes. In changing the model of START to reflect a prioritisation in employing cultural workers who are skilled in engaging with young people, or youth workers with arts backgrounds who are able to support with the artistry of the work being delivered, the Lyric's work arguably illuminates an important development for institutions and the cultural sector more widely.

This concept of a 'hybrid' or 'Thirdspace' worker, however, has been said to offer opportunities but also challenges for practice (Howard, Brocken and Sim, 2018). One such challenge could be the lack of practice standards or minimum training requirements with regards to arts engagement workers. Youth workers in local authorities, on the other hand, have to complete courses and be certified by a specific board in order to call themselves youth workers. The National Youth Work Agency also outlines youth work practice standards as the following:

> All practitioners working with young people should have achieved a minimum basic level of training that equips them to understand:
>
> - the purpose and role of youth work (including the underpinning skills, knowledge, qualities and values required)
> - how to safeguard young people and adults at risk within youth work (2023)

They list a variety of training that all workers and volunteers should possess as a minimum which includes safeguarding, managing risk and building relationships with young people. The Lyric does have a robust safeguarding policy that is readable on their website and states that 'all members of the Young Lyric Team and Senior Management Team are required to attend an "Introduction to Safeguarding" course which is delivered at regular intervals or undertake another suitable accredited course' (2021). It is unclear, however, whether every staff member who works on START, such as, for instance, those who are there on temporary contracts are considered to be members of the Young Lyric team.

Applying the NYA's minimum practice standards within the context of youth projects that are undertaken within arts organisations, I believe illuminates some complex issues with this work. These standards are designed specifically for local authority youth work provisions and therefore arts organisations are not required or even necessarily recommended to follow them. As arts organisations undertake work with young people that align to youth work based models and practices, and thus recruit staff to support with this work, it raises questions as to whether standards should also be imposed onto these kinds of provisions so that young participants are appropriately supported and safeguarded by staff who are qualified to do so. This is especially pertinent to consider in a sector that is composed of a culture

whereby working for free, freelancing, or working temporary, short-term contracts is commonplace (Brook, O'Brien, Taylor, 2020). Indeed, A's background experience included volunteering, and she also describes how she had to put herself forward to take on extra responsibilities within previous work places in order to gain adequate experience in arts engagement work, seemingly for no extra pay (Interviewee A, 2023, 1:12:31-1:20:11). How can cultural professionals be expected to be adequately trained and experienced both in cultivating high quality artistry and protecting and supporting the welfare of young people without forging a self-led path built on free labour and self-funded training (such as doing a course or degree in youth work)?

Conclusion

Cultural organisations such as the Lyric and youth projects such as START do not exist in vacuum. When publicly funded arts organisations deliver this sort of youth provision, there must be consequences for both the wider cultural sector and other sectors that are concerned with the support and development of communities. I have identified that by delivering youth programmes like START, the Lyric Hammersmith has become an organisation that perceives itself as having a duty of service to their local community; they are service deliverers perhaps just as much as a local authority led youth provision is. Whilst this has arguably had an extremely positive impact on the organisation itself, as outlined in section two of my analysis, the juxtaposition between a project that is seemingly well-supported and well-funded against a struggling youth and community sector whereby funding is pulled and jobs lost poses complex issues about the ethics of this practice.

There are also questions that must be asked about whether cultural organisations and cultural workers are equipped to deliver this sort of provision at all, especially when it comes to perceived 'vulnerable' groups. Research into young people taking part in creative activities argues that youth arts engagement is a 'highly professional practice' delivered by 'authentic, highly skilled and emotionally intelligent staff' (BOP Consulting, 2017, p.3). Whilst there are guidelines that can be accessed, there are currently no practice standards that arts organisations and their workers are required to follow when it comes to taking on this work. As NPOs are expected by ACE to prioritise and embed work with communities into their practice as part of the *Let's Create* strategy, the kinds of skills and experience that are desirable or, perhaps, necessary to deliver this work are called into question. In drawing on Sim's exploration of habitus between youth and arts workers, as well as the issue of so-called 'hybrid' youth-arts workers being self-trained and often self-funded, the question of how this work can be delivered without furthering class inequality in the cultural industry is imperative to consider.

This is also pertinent when considering the complex and controversial history that engagement work with communities that is led by cultural institutions has. Whilst education programmes led by such

institutions have been linked to colonial and patriarchal 'top-down' approaches that are more about 'civilising' people into hegemonic cultural norms, there has also been a rich history of radical, counter-cultural work that has sought to mobilise communities, especially as it pertains to groups that are perceived to be 'vulnerable' or oppressed by society (Mutibwa, 2017). What has been argued by many is that when this work is promoted at policy level and thus public funding is influenced, there is a real danger of this work becoming solely about addressing 'social exclusion' as it is defined by governments and not about challenging systems of oppression (Bishop, 2012). This work and the associated discourse can arguably also work to shift the responsibility from governments to fund public services (such as youth and community work) onto the third and even private sectors, as has been argued by Bishop (2012) and is referred to as a possible counter argument as to why arts organisations shouldn't take on a civic role in Doeser's literature review: 'asking arts organisations to take on a civic role may in fact be an abrogation of local or central government's responsibilities to communities and should therefore be resisted' (2016, p. 14).

Despite these challenges, there are clearly benefits of this work being delivered for the cultural sector. Maintaining relevance is one such benefit. Engagement work with communities and particularly young people is arguably an incredibly powerful tool in ensuring that organisations stay relevant. Institutions can cultivate a dialogic relationship with their local communities that feeds into all aspects of their work, as I outlined in relation to the Lyric. This is arguably imperative to ensuring that more diverse programming that is reflective of the population occurs and maintained in the long term. Furthermore, as Doeser (2016) has argued, it is arguably 'inherently' right for organisations that receive public funding to deliver work specifically targeted towards engaging and supporting communities that are not currently accessing culture and its benefits in the same way that others are. Doeser also suggests that this in turn can help to address inequality and 'mobilise and animate citizens in democratic process' (2016, p. 4). Indeed, as Britain deals with the impact of the current cost-of-living crisis, widely reported to be 'deepening inequalities across the country' (Centre for Cities, 2022), it is perhaps more important than ever for arts institutions to take on more responsibility and support communities who are the most vulnerable to its impacts.

My research illuminates a range of themes and patterns that can be further researched. I believe, as I have highlighted above, that the relationship between engagement work being delivered by cultural institutions and the defunding of the public sector is perhaps the most pertinent for both the cultural and youth and community sectors. This, however, can be fairly difficult to research unless a person perhaps takes an ethnographic approach and is able gain further in-depth access into the organisation and the details of its partnerships with the public sector, perhaps. A larger scale research study may also seek to engage with a larger pool of interviewees from both the youth sector and the cultural sector to compare outlooks and perspective, perhaps even combining this with a quantitative approach to data collection that

compares funding patterns and/or any statistics on participants between a cultural organisation and the local youth provision. Whilst my methodology was suitable for the exploratory nature of my research question, an interview with just one person involved in delivering this work has its limitations.

My findings also show that youth work as a practice, its associated ideologies and the sector should be considered at the forefront of the research into, and the practice of, cultural engagement work with children and young people. More explicit reference to the youth work sector as a whole in policy discourse can arguably amplify good practice and illuminate and support the work that the youth and community sector and its workers do to support young people. Sim's work highlights the potential for positive outcomes for both the youth and arts sectors to occur through partnership and shared funding opportunities (2019). She argues that in highlighting the challenges and tensions between galleries and youth work and their workers that the desire is not to discourage this work from happening, but that it is rooted in 'optimism' about the potential for the sector to 'work together in meaningful inclusive ways' (2019, p. 5). I argue the same for my research; my desire to represent these challenges is born from a belief that they can and should be addressed and more research to be undertaken in order for positive progress to be made. As Arts Council England embarks on partnerships with other public sector services such as NHS England, an appropriate recommendation for policy could perhaps be forming a similar partnership with the National Youth Agency. A joint commitment to explore how ethical and supportive partnerships and joint working across the sectors can be cultivated is one such way to ensure that the deliverance of this work is beneficial for the youth, cultural sectors and, crucially, for the young people that they engage with.

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