

Promoting Mental Health & Wellbeing through Community & Cultural Development:

A Review of Literature focussing on Community
Festivals & Celebrations

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PROMOTING MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING



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Background

The Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, VicHealth, is an independent statutory body established in 1987. VicHealth works towards the development of innovative responses to the complex social, economic and environmental forces that influence the health of all Victorians. VicHealth has a particular focus on a flexible, responsive and evidence-informed approach to working with partners from across different sectors in the community to create environments which improve population health.

In 1999, VicHealth established a framework for the development of activity relevant to the promotion of mental health and wellbeing. Central to this framework is a focus on three determinants of mental health: social inclusion, valuing diversity and economic participation. As a component of work in this area, VicHealth supports community and cultural development activity through:

- **Community Arts Participation Scheme** designed to increase access to participation in creative activity for specific population groups:
- **Major Arts Partnerships Scheme** designed to increase audience access to arts activity through organisational development within large arts organisations.
- **Local Government Art and Environment Scheme** designed to build the capacity of local government to develop cultural activity through participatory community arts work that enhances the built environment:
- **Communities Together Scheme** designed to strengthen communities through support for the staging of community driven celebrations and festivals.
- **Evidence reviews** which update our knowledge regarding the link between cultural activity and health and inform on-going program development.
- **Research** into individual, organisational and community health impacts of creative and cultural activity.
- **Evaluation, documentation and dissemination** of learnings and models of good practice arising from our work.
- **Workforce and sector development** through support for networks, conferences and learning circles.

VicHealth provides resources for implementation, evaluation, documentation and dissemination of innovative models for using community arts, festivals and celebrations as mechanisms for promoting mental health and wellbeing at the individual and community levels. This work is informed by an emerging evidence base which indicates that communities with high rates of participation by individuals in community activities have better health outcomes than those with low levels of civic engagement. Evidence reviews to inform program development and progress the understanding of the links between community and cultural development and health are an essential component of VicHealth's work in this area.

In 2002, RMIT University's Globalism Institute was commissioned by VicHealth to review and assess the evidence-base of the Arts for Health Program in the light of existing Australian and international studies on similar programs. The resulting evidence review found a broad consensus within existing research that community arts practice results in beneficial health outcomes, but that further research was required to gather additional information about the nature of this connection.

This report extends this research into areas not substantially addressed in the earlier study, to focus on the impact of community celebrations on community development, health and wellbeing. The broad aim is to determine what further evidence or research would build upon present knowledge in these fields so as to provide assistance in developing policy or programs related to community celebrations. The authors were asked to:

- Examine available research and literature on the links between community celebrations and community development;
- Examine the research and literature on the links between community celebrations and indicators of community health or wellbeing;
- Assess the reliability of the outcomes and claims of the research;
- Provide a rationale for a public health / health promotion focus on the role of celebration and community building;
- Focus on arts projects with a community-level health promotion orientation, rather than individual-therapeutic applications of arts in health care;
- Provide advice as to fruitful areas of further research which would support VicHealth's work, particularly in the 'Communities Together Scheme', and inform developments across the organization.

Executive Summary and Recommendations

There is a significant body of research examining the relationship between community celebrations or festivals and community development. The emerging consensus among researchers is that celebrations or festivals can promote community co-operation, bring new talents to a community and develop those within, promote awareness of community issues, reduce the isolation of individuals and groups within community and promote economic and social development. The research literature in this area provides a substantial rationale for funding community celebrations and festivals as a means of promoting community development and wellbeing.

However, the research in this field still has limitations. It has tended to be overly anecdotal and based too heavily on the opinions of participants or organizers of the community activities. There is a need for this body of research supplemented by more rigorous and specifically targeted studies to enable these findings to inform health promotion and community development programs and policy. In our view, future research should do the following:

1. Create connections across related bodies of research, with the emphasis on generating sensitivity to cultural rather than economic impacts.

A large amount of work has been done on community development, and some of this literature does address community arts practice, including festivals in particular. However, the majority of the research being done on festivals and celebrations comes out of tourism studies, and is concerned with economic impacts and ways of making events more successful. Social impacts are considered within this field of work, however, for the most part, this is only to provide information on how to make a festival or celebration acceptable to a community, or to understand how an event is received. Such an approach has the effect of skewing the kind of evidence gathered and narrowing the conclusions reached. Dialogue between tourism studies and health-promotion research needs to be established in order for more extensive and less instrumental information to be gathered and analysed. It is crucial to recognize that community celebrations tend to have a deep contextual component, and understanding this requires a broad cultural and historical engagement.

2. Provide more rigorous demonstrations of the ongoing impacts of festivals and commemorations by developing longitudinal studies.

Very little work has been produced examining the immediate or longer-term health impacts of celebrations and festivals. For instance, Delamere (1997) draws attention to the 'marked lack of research into the understanding of social impacts of community festivals' (p. 311). Seven years later, little has changed. It can be inferred, on the basis of consensus among researchers on the role of the arts, in promoting health, that community celebrations and festivals do have positive health impacts. However, the case for this inference has not yet been sufficiently demonstrated to persuade sceptical assessors and readers who tend to be looking for either conclusive empirically verifiable connections or (more reasonably) qualitative and systematic assessment of long-term patterns and outcomes.

More research needs to be carried out in this area, as part of the process of gaining an understanding of what role festivals and celebrations can play, and whether they are an appropriate vehicle for health promotion. This research needs to be comparative and based on the following further recommendations.

3. Utilise established health determinants in future research, and draw these into a wider framework.

Much of the existing literature has been produced in disciplines outside health promotion and community studies. This means that often the results are not oriented towards considering indicators of community development or health and wellbeing. At the same time, existing work on the nature of community produced in social sciences, politics, anthropology and history could well be drawn upon by those looking for broader frameworks for understanding how community celebrations operate.

4. Develop more solid research methodologies

The existing research tends to rely upon anecdotal evidence, rather than upon information collected through rigorous evaluation processes and in accordance with established indicators within social research. For this reason, results and conclusions are often difficult to generalise beyond the particular cases that they describe. Overuse of anecdotal evidence and a lack of evaluative rigour are noted as problems in this field of research by Shaw (1999), Jermyn (2001) and Coalter (2001). Newman *et al.* (2001) reach a similar conclusion in their review of literature in this area, stating that ‘a broader range of evaluative techniques are necessary to capture the depth, as well as the breadth, of the encounter between communities and the creative arts’. This applies equally to consideration of celebrations and festivals.

Some of the major methodological flaws in this field involve inadequate definitions of key terms (such as ‘the arts’, ‘impact’ and ‘community’), problems of aggregation or sample size, biased case-study selection, lack of appropriate comparisons, ignoring negative effects, failure to understand contexts with sufficient complexity, and a general lack of adequate data. Development of thorough research techniques is particularly important because this is an emerging field of research with significant social implications. This review recommends the use of established social research techniques for measuring impacts.

Introduction

A growing body of research has been developing over the past decade examining the impact of community arts practice on health or wellbeing. Attention is now turning towards the broad social benefits arising from the arts, particularly for tourism, the economy and health. Governments and health agencies are now responding to this information by supporting arts programs and community development projects as a way of achieving a range of social and economic objectives, including health promotion. These issues have moved from the periphery of health research to a position within the mainstream of debate and investigation, as is indicated by the *British Medical Journal* devoting space to the topic in late 2002 and early 2003. The journal's editor, Richard Smith, even went so far as to argue that diverting '0.5% of the healthcare budget to the arts would improve the health of people in Britain' (Smith, 2002, p. 1432). While Smith called for more spending on the 'high' arts as a civilised response to pain and death, rather than pointing to the health benefits of more participatory local, community-based arts involvement, this response does show how much arts have moved within the field of health promotion.²

At the same time that attention has been turning to the potential health benefits of the arts, there has been a major growth in arts and other festivals and community celebrations. Policy makers at all levels of government are now more inclined to believe that community events are beneficial in many ways. These range from the most obvious and immediate economic benefits to more complex and diffuse effects. However, little research has been done into these complex effects of festivals or celebrations. One of the aims of this literature review is to examine the existing research and to make suggestions for future directions of inquiry. This will involve looking at how information about impacts is gathered, how evaluations of community events are carried out, and how this information is made available or used for research purposes.

The current review builds upon the work by McQueen-Thomson and Ziguras (2002), which examined existing research on the link between community arts practice and health outcomes. Since that review was completed, several new studies have been produced on this subject. These includes Guetzkow (2002), Cave and Coutts (2002), and Hamilton, Hinks and Petticrew (2003). However, these new studies do not alter the conclusions of the previous review. Instead, they confirm in general that there is a need for more rigorous and systematic research into the role of the arts and community development in health promotion.

2 This article in the pre-Christmas issue of *BMJ* provoked many responses from medical professionals. This is republished on the *British Medical Journal* website, and is revealing of the divergent attitudes currently held towards use of the arts for health. <http://bmj.bmjournals.com/cgi/eletters/325/7378/1432> Accessed 22 November 2003.

Social Indicators and Community Research

This review supports the conclusions drawn by McQueen-Thomson and Ziguras (2002) about the methodological difficulties contained in previous studies in this field. Much prior research into the impacts of the arts, and community arts practice in particular, has depended upon unreliable or under-developed research methodologies. Many reviews of community projects have depended upon anecdotal evidence of positive outcomes, often produced by those who have a vested interest in the success of the project, such as those who organised it or funded it. Much of the evidence for the health impacts of community events and practice such as festivals and celebrations is drawn from the seemingly self-evident qualities of this impact. For instance, socially isolated individuals who are drawn into a community event that involves creativity and affirmation tend to be very happy with the experience. This seems so obvious that few researchers have tried documenting such impacts, either in the immediate sense or in the longer term.

In particular, research in this field has suffered from the lack of use of established social indicators for measuring outcomes, such as social connectedness, supportive relationships and environments, freedom from discrimination and violence, and economic participation. It is recommended that future research in this field should aim to produce comparable results by using these types of indicators, rather than relying on anecdotal reports of positive experiences. Such research requires a rigorous methodological framework for recording and interpreting a range of possible impacts. To do this, it is necessary to collect information from those who are involved in arts and community development projects but do not have a vested interest in the results. In other words, information needs to be collected more from audience or community members and less from event organisers. Research also needs to be connected with a longer view and wider time scale than evaluating just single events. For instance, it would be useful for a community to be profiled over a ten-year period during which a community celebration is active in order to understand the durability of impacts and the more nuanced aspects of transformations that might take place.

Guetzkow (2002) presents an excellent summary of some of the major methodological flaws in this field as involving inadequate definitions of terms (such as 'the arts', 'impact' and 'community'), problems of aggregation or sample size, biased case-study selection, lack of appropriate comparisons, ignoring negative effects, failure to understand contexts with sufficient complexity, and a general lack of adequate data. Development of thorough research techniques is particularly important because this is an emerging field of research with significant social implications. This review also recommends the utilisation of well-developed evaluation methods, as presented by Keating (2002) and Matarasso (2000).

Community Arts

The field of 'community arts' has been understood in various ways. It generally involves a local focus with an emphasis on creativity and process, rather than an end result. It is valued not primarily for the art it produces, but for the benefits produced for a community. One useful working definition of 'community arts' is that provided by the Ontario Arts Council (2002):

Community Arts is an art process that involves professional artists and community members in a collaborative creative process resulting in collective experience and public expression. It provides a way for communities to express themselves; enables artists, through financial or other supports, to engage in creative activity with communities; and is collaborative – the creative process is equally important as the artistic outcome (cited in Guetzkow, 2002, p. 6).

Community arts are sometimes defined as those arts activities in which an ethical orientation to social improvement takes precedence. This definition is forwarded by Hamilton, Hinks and Petticrew (2003). They state that supporting community arts is equivalent to 'delivering projects to excluded individuals and groups' and 'arts plus social concern' (p. 4).

This literature review is not focussed upon community arts practice in general, but upon a specific field involving community celebrations and festivals, and community development practices, as they relate to health. This review will not be looking at large commercial festivals that do not reflect a substantial community involvement. It will not be examining events that do not involve any kind of arts practice, as conventionally understood, so it will not be examining trade fairs or sporting festivals, large commercial music festivals, or other gatherings that do not involve community arts in the sense described above.

In her book *From Nimbin to Mardi Gras: Constructing Community Arts*, Gay Hawkins examines the emergence of official discourse on community arts in Australia, and particularly traces this to the founding of the Community Arts Program by the Whitlam government in the early 1970s. This development involved a synthesising of welfare interests and arts initiatives, and produces new categories of interpretation and practice (Hawkins, 1993).³ This is an important analysis that examines the way that the category of community arts is constructed, and considers the relationship between ideology, government policy and social practice. While this book can inform analysis about the impacts of community arts, it does not specifically address health-related impacts or local community development.

A useful complement to Hawkins' book is the volume edited by Vivienne Binns entitled *Community and the Arts: History, Theory and Practice* (1991). This book contains chapters written by community arts workers in Australia about their specific field, and looks at the history and future of each field, mainly with a view towards the

3 A useful critical review of this book is by Rachel Fensham (1994). '(Post) community arts', *Continuum: The Australian Journal of Media & Culture* 8:2.

government policy. Judith L. Kapferer in 'The Dream of Community: Folk Festivals and Ideology in Australia' (1994) also discusses the conceptual underpinnings of festivals and their relationships to communities, and looks at the Australian Folk Festival, the Australian Grand Prix and the Melbourne Cup. However, she is more interested in nationalism and community than the impacts of festivals.

More recently, some work has been done on art movements and their capacity to create communities. For example, the volume edited by David E. James entitled *The Sons and Daughters of Los: Culture and Community in L.A.* (2003) examines a series of art movements in Los Angeles, and the way they articulate independent culture and express community for otherwise marginalised people. However, this volume does not address either development or health impacts, though it is indicative of new ways of examining local community arts formations. Another similar volume is Augaitis *et al.*'s *Questions of Community: Artists, Audiences, Coalitions* (1995), which considers the arts in relation to communities, but does not examine community development, public policy or health impacts.

Celebrations and Festivals

Community celebrations and festivals have not been a major focus of research into the outcomes of community development practices. A number of studies of community arts impacts and outcomes develop findings that can be generalised to included festivals and celebrations without mentioning them as such (including Jermyn, 2001). However, this review will not be examining such studies as they have already been analysed in McQueen-Thomson and Ziguras (2002).

While community festivals and celebrations have long historical roots, they are a relatively new area of research enquiry. Literature on this subject comes from several different directions. Most of what has been published on community festivals and celebrations is oriented towards arts management. This literature has increased over recent years as arts management courses have multiplied within higher educational institutions. Examples of these studies include Catherwood and Kirk (1992), Dreeszen and Korza (1994), Goldblatt (1997), McDonnell *et al.* (1999), Salter and Langford Wood (1999), Tonge (2002), and Hoyle (2002). However, such literature does not generally address the impact of these community events, and instead is more concerned with issues of organisation and management.

There is a considerable body of tourism literature dealing with festivals, including Getz (1991), Richards (1992), and journals such as *Event Management* (formerly *Festival Management and Event Tourism*) and the *Journal of Applied Recreation Research*. In this context, festivals and celebrations are defined in terms of their ability to generate tourism and economic development. Getz, for example, defines festival tourism as, 'the systematic planning, development and marketing of festivals (and special events) as tourist attractions, development catalysts, and image builders for destination areas' (p. xii). These studies do not have an orientation towards community (except as defined as a tourism precinct) and are not concerned with health impacts. A related body of studies into festivals is concerned primarily with the economic impact of festivals and events, such as Allan and Shaw (2000) and Arts Victoria (n.d.). There is the potential for research into tourism and economic impacts of festivals to broaden their scope to also collect data on social and health impacts.

Heather Rolphe's book *Arts Festivals in the UK* (1992) provides a useful overview of the range of activities in that country, examining what kinds of festivals exist and who manages and funds them. She notes the economic significance of festivals, and has a small section on evaluation, but is not really interested in wider or more complex impacts. Rolphe also notes the role of festivals in promoting rejuvenation of communities (p. 13), though does not explore this idea in any detail.

Future research into the social and health impacts of community celebrations can build on the work undertaken in these related fields.

Some writers have examined the implications of festivals for local environments and residents, though with a view particularly to issues of tourism management and economic outcomes rather than community or health impacts (e.g. Delamere and Hinch, 1994). When measures of local impact are considered, this is usually in order to help make festivals more effective for the organisers. However, some research

within this area has included investigations of social impacts as well as economic impacts. In a paper that presents an outline of scale for measuring the social impact of community festivals, Thomas A. Delamere (1997) presents an overview of the impacts of festivals that have been documented by previous researchers:

enhancing community spirit and pride; meeting an educational goal; promoting tourism by serving as a major attraction; broadening the cultural and recreational resources of the locality; providing opportunities for community residents to experience or display new activities in music, art, drama, craft, and sports; encouraging local leadership; self-esteem; identity; organizational expertise and community development; and, more generally, improving the quality of life of local residents (p. 295).

While impacts upon self-esteem and community development are of interest to this literature review, Delamere does not expand upon what precise evidence is available in these fields. The main source for most of these is an unpublished conference paper given by Delamere, so these assertions stand as little more than personal opinions, even if they do seem plausible. His main interest is in developing a form of cost-benefit analysis that can be used to inform festival planning. Measures of the social impact of festivals have been developed (such as in Fredline *et al.*, 2003), though these do not look at either community development or health impacts, and are thus of limited value for health promotion.

Another body of literature exists within the disciplines of social history and intellectual history that examines large international festivals as a site for the articulation of national identities and cultural value. These tend to emphasise the growth in festivals immediately after World War Two, and a later expansion of community festivals through the 1980s. The most acclaimed work of this variety is Michael P. Steinberg's history of the Salzburg Festival, *Austria as Theater and Ideology: The Meaning of the Salzburg Festival* (2000). This book examines the tension between resurgent Austrian nationalism in the wake of the collapse of the Habsburg Empire, and the tension with universalist aspirations in the arts in mid twentieth-century Europe. Research into community arts practice would benefit substantially from engagement with wider questions of ideology and culture, particularly in develop nuanced accounts of the meaning of community and the forces that act upon and operate within communities. Research in history and cultural studies is yet to pay sufficient attention to community arts in general, and particularly the interaction between state and local community around cultural practice. Other works of this kind include Eileen Miller's history of the Edinburgh International Festival (1996), Weingartner on the Ravinia Festival (1985), and Gallup on the Salzburg Festival (1987). However, these works are generally not interested in immediate, local impacts, and do not examine the health implications of festivals or celebrations.

Research has been done examining the cultural meanings of festivals and celebrations within anthropology. This work tends to focus upon ideas of carnival and ritual, or the formal elements of celebrations that help to structure a society. In fact these books indicate that festivals are foundational to tribal and traditional societies, and continue to carry a weighty integrational role in modern societies. A good example of such research is the volume edited by Victor Turner entitled *Celebration: Studies in Festivity and Ritual* (1982). This includes information on the material bases of

celebration (such as pottery, costume, and religious effects), the social rituals often involved (such as in a rite of passage or an initiation), and the broad political ramifications of such public events. Another book of this type is Richard M. Swiderski's *Voices: An Anthropologist's Dialogue with an Italian-American Festival* (1987). This book examines a four-day Italian-American festival held in Massachusetts, looking at its mixing of religious ritual with tourism, sport, food and politics, all as a way of forming and expressing identity. This work is certainly concerned with communities and how they are constituted. However, this does not connect easily with the field of community development. The questions asked within such anthropological literature usually involves the continuities within societies, or what holds societies together, rather than transformations or developments. Likewise, there are obvious health implications of the kinds of celebrations examined in this anthropological literature. For instance, being a fully integrated member of society requires a process of acceptance and initiation in some societies, and this acceptance is necessary for maintaining social connections, and consequently, health. However, such literature is not concerned with health impacts as such, and therefore as it presently stands does not provide further evidence of the health impacts of community arts practices and celebrations.

Studies have been conducted examining festivals and celebrations while using interdisciplinary approaches drawn mainly from history and sociology. These include volumes such as Frank E. Manning's *The Celebration of Society: Perspectives on Contemporary Cultural Performance* (1983) and Browne and Marsden's *The Cultures of Celebrations* (1994), though again these only provide insight into the context of celebrations and cultural and political issues involved in them. Important as this research is as circumstantial evidence for the ongoing importance of festivals and celebrations as part of the human condition, it does not help us directly with documenting immediate outcomes.

One major festival or celebration where health concerns and arts coincide is the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras. Begun in 1978 as a celebration of gay and lesbian identity and rights, this event has become the largest of its kind in the world, with around a million people often estimated to watch the parade. With the rise of AIDS in the 1980s, gay and lesbian community organisations became closely involved with health promotion. The Mardi Gras has become a major focus for education in safe sex practices and reducing the risks of drug taking. Thus, it would be an exemplary subject of interest for those considering the health impacts of festivals. However, most literature that examines safe sex campaigns and responses to AIDS in Australia has not focussed upon the Mardi Gras exclusively, or upon festivals. Instead, health promotion literature in this field has examined gay, lesbian and queer communities more generally (such as Smith, 1999; Murnane *et al.*, 2000). The Mardi Gras has received some critical attention, such as Graham Carbery's *A History of the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras* (1995) and a number of photographic books and reminiscences (such as Soldatow and Tsiolkas, 1996; Templin, 1996; and Swieca *et al.*, 1997). Other more substantial works include a Masters thesis by Gerber-Jones (1996) and Elizabeth Ashburn's examination of the diversity and challenge of lesbian art around the Mardi Gras (1995).

Clearly the Mardi Gras has been crucial for building community, forming identity, providing social support, and changing prejudicial public attitudes, and therefore has a

major health impact upon those who participate and those who are touched by it in some way. The Mardi Gras provides a powerful example of a community-based festival helping to bring people together in a way that makes an obvious point of reference for responding to a subsequent public health crisis. However, the precise nature of this health benefit in relation to the Mardi Gras has not been examined either by those writing on gay and lesbian communities, by those interested in AIDS and public health, or those writing on the impacts of community arts practice. It is recommended that further research be conducted into the Mardi Gras and related events for their health and community development implications.

Another event, or group of events, that can be considered a community celebration are the Olympic Games. These are a complex example because they include local initiative with volunteers and community-level responses together with the most global, commercial and media-driven forms of organisation. They have been analysed at great length by many researchers from many different perspectives, so the volume of available published material on the Olympics is enormous. Two useful sources are a scholarly general history of the games by John McAloon (1981) and a more recent academic history by Allen Guttmann (1992) that focuses upon the social movement underlying the Olympics.⁴ While this literature review has not been able to locate any material looking at the Olympics as a community-based celebration with a view to either community regeneration or health impacts (except a very short study of housing and social impacts before the Sydney Olympics by Hall and Hodges, 1996), it would be useful to have such material. A lot of analysis on economic development in response to the Olympics has been produced, along with material on the health of athletes, crowd management, security issues, and other areas of public health and safety concern. However, there is room for further investigation of the local impacts of the Olympics and similar large-scale sporting/cultural events upon communities and health. One study does examine what it describes as an Olympic-style event called the Corporate Challenge and the impact participation has upon rating of satisfaction with community life (Gorney and Busser, 1996). It concludes that participation does have a positive impact upon perceptions of community, and recommends that business-managers encourage such activities. This study uses rigorous social-research techniques that would be a useful reference point for other studies.

Some research into the social impact of the arts has addressed festivals and celebrations in passing. François Matarasso has touched on these events in his research, noting for example the importance of Gaelic community festivals in promoting community empowerment and self-determination and the positive community development role of festivals in Portsmouth (1996; 1997, pp. vii, 8-9).

While most research on festivals and celebrations is concerned with positive impacts, some research examines the negative consequences of these events for communities. Delamere (1991) notes that negative impacts can include:

amenity loss due to noise, litter and crowds; decreased access to public recreation and leisure facilities; changes in community social and leisure

4 A large, up-to-date bibliography of material on the Olympics is available online at <http://pandora.nla.gov.au/pan/10929/20020703/www.business.uts.edu.au/leisure/research/olympic.html>

habits (e.g. people leaving the community to escape the impact of the festival); vandalism and hooliganism; and intergroup divisiveness arising from inequitable distribution of benefits and disadvantages (pp. 295-296).

Cave and Coutts describe festivals as complex events to assess, because they have such a range of impacts, some positive and some negative (2002, p. 24). Matarasso (1997) also notes the potential of community arts projects to have detrimental, such as damaging personal confidence and promoting community conflicts. Others who examine these negative impacts include Longson (1989), McCool and Martin (1994) and Soutar and McLeod (1993).

Community Development

The use of the cultural development to promote community development has a long history. For instance, Stanziola (1999) mentions as an instance of this Charles III's initiative in the eighteenth century to revitalise the southern side of Madrid with a Museum of Science, Botanical Garden and Planetarium. However, thorough examination of the social impacts of the arts is a relatively new research enterprise. Some work in this field was carried out in the 1960s and 1970s (work such as Baumol and Bowen, 1966; Blaug, 1976; and, in Australia, Throsby and Withers, 1979), but research into the multiple benefits of arts activities for community development gained momentum during the 1980s. In a context of increased pressure on funding, various researchers worked at quantifying the economic gains of the arts. In particular, John Myerscough's 1988 study entitled *The Economic Importance of the Arts in Britain* was very influential, and was followed by a many others on economic impacts (such as O'Brien and Feist, 1995; Casey, Dunlop and Selwood, 1996; and Stern and Seifert, 2002). The literature on economic impacts has been well surveyed by Michelle Reeves (2002), and will not be covered further in this review. However, it is worth noting that while approaches to evaluating the arts have become much broader than in the early days of 'cultural economics', there is still considerable pressure for the arts to demonstrate a quantifiable economic benefit, and studies focussing upon this question continue to be produced (such as McGuire *et al.*, 2003).

The field of community development has produced a substantial body of research looking at how communities can be fostered and strengthened. This research has become important in the formation of planning policy and in promoting forms of social support. Only recently has the issue of direct health outcomes been considered within community development, and community arts within this is an even smaller category of research. Research on neighbourhood renewal, community development and urban regeneration has developed in a number of areas, including architecture and town planning, and social policy. While direct links to health impacts are difficult to establish in this area, research has been done into the links between healthy communities and individual wellbeing. Cave and Coutts (2002) provide an excellent overview of the state of current research into the link between community and health.

Increasing amounts of research have been done in the last few years into the ways in which the arts can promote community development. However, this research tends to be diffuse, coming from different directions and disciplinary backgrounds, and often lacks awareness of other related research projects. Much work remains to be done in synthesising the research conducted to date and building future research upon this base. In particular, this information needs to become revised and repackaged in ways useful to governments and those creating policy. Alan Kay asserts in 'Art and Community Development' (2000) that, 'the significance and role that the arts can play in regeneration has to be valued by policy makers and practitioners in community development and regeneration'. The value placed on arts projects will only be recognized when it is adequately developed through appropriate and relevant evaluation' (p. 10). Newman *et al.* (2001) reach a similar conclusion when they note the importance of the arts in community development, but also the problems in existing research into this link.

The most active researcher in this field in the past decade has been François Matarasso. He has published a number of studies examining community arts practice, looking especially at the impacts they produce and ways of evaluating these. His 1997 study *Use or Ornament? The Social Impact of Participation in the Arts* is significant for providing an overview of existing research in this field up to this time, and making suggestions for increasing the rigour of future research. *Use or Ornament?*, as with most of Matarasso's work, utilises surveys of participants and case study profiles as its primary form of evidence, and aims to build a multi-dimensional understanding of arts impacts. This study describes a number of specific varieties of community development of community arts practice, including reducing isolation and building connections, developing sociability, developing co-operation and tolerance, supporting diversity and empowering communities.

Matarasso's study *Vital Signs: Mapping Community Arts in Belfast* (1998a) examines the participants' assessments of impacts of arts projects in Belfast. This survey combines quantitative data (on budgets, attendance numbers and the like) with qualitative investigation of impacts. He concludes that community arts in Belfast are 'a significant force in community development, urban regeneration and personal change' (p. ii). One of the main impacts recorded was in raising awareness of community issues, with 81 per cent of respondents noting this effect. 75 per cent of those involved felt that the community arts projects facilitated community co-operation (p. 26). Other positive impacts for communities documented by Matarasso include developing new skills, bring new skills to a community, increasing organisational capacity and attracting new resources. This study does note that some participants were reluctant to suggest that their project had a wider impact on their community, as illustrated by one respondent who commented, 'I don't think that making clay stuff has got anything to do with the future of Belfast' (p. 21).

Another study by Matarasso investigates community arts impacts in Portsmouth, UK (1998b). This study provides an overview of arts activities receiving government support in Portsmouth. It considers the community development implications of arts projects in Portsmouth, and concludes that these projects helped to promote social inclusion, empower the community and alleviate poverty. Matarasso summarises the survey findings on community development by noting that community arts contribute by:

helping to strengthen cohesion and inclusion while valuing the distinct contributions of all members of society, building community organisational capacity, self-reliance and empowerment. They also contribute to local images and identity, and encourage groups to take greater responsibility for community affairs (1998, p. 48).

While Matarasso's work provides very useful information on the impact of individual arts projects, it is limited by the lack of longitudinal analysis, its narrow case selection, and the variation of indicators (such as social cohesion or local identity) used between different studies. His studies also rely heavily on reports from those involved in projects, rather than other community sources, and upon anecdotal evidence of positive impacts. Nevertheless, his studies do provide support for the hypothesis that community arts practice and celebrations help to promote community development and health.

Seana Lowe (2000) provides a useful examination of the community development role of arts projects. Her study examines two community arts projects in Denver, Colorado, with one based in a public library and the other in a school. The first project produced a mural while the second created a play dramatising Latina culture and life. This study provides a useful demographic profile of participants, and used an evaluation team of nine people to gather key information. Other techniques used were participant observation, interviewing individual participants, and conducting focus groups. Lowe concludes that these projects had a range of significant beneficial effects, including, building neighbourhood community and solidarity, providing community support, facilitating communication, developing identities, enhancing creativity and improving self-esteem. The study therefore recommends 'the continued investment in and use of community art for community development' (p. 382). Lowe does finally note the transience of communities, and suggests that her own study would benefit from follow-up longitudinal research across multiple sites.

Javier Stanziola (1999) examines the role of the arts in regenerating urban precincts. In particular, he looks at the revival of Florida Beach through a combination of arts initiatives, heritage listings, tourism strategies and media representations. Stanziola is especially interested in the complex relationship between government and business activities, and local, counter-cultural, community-based activities. He suggests that the latter are of special significance. Stanziola presents a survey of forms of funding for the non-profit arts sector, and describes various explanations of its benefits. He concludes with a largely historical account of the revitalisation of Florida Beach, and by stating that a better model is required for understanding the complex cultural interactions involved in community development.

In their report entitled *The Art of Regeneration*, Landry *et al.* (1996) discuss the role of festivals in promoting urban renewal and positive social effects. They conclude that festivals in particular can contribute to social cohesion: 'Festivals, community plays and other events have shown how cultural activities can bring people together' (p. x). They also note the role of festivals in helping to promote people to imagine future possibilities for their communities, and to draw attention to the possibility of change and transformation. They note that community festivals can be much cheaper ways of making a tangible impact upon a community than initiatives that involves buildings and greater infrastructure costs (p. 7). Landry *et al.* also observe that festivals can create skills and provide an organisational hub that can facilitate other community arts initiatives. For instance, they state: 'The Craigmillar Festival Society, founded in 1964 on an Edinburgh housing estate, has become a model of community empowerment for many other initiatives from Easterhouse and Cranhill Arts to the Pilton Video Project in Glasgow' (p. 39).

Landry *et al.* (1996) also provide an extended analysis of a Bradford Festival and Mela, including some useful background on the origins of the festival and the context in which it initially operated. They describe the success of the festival and Mela in promoting social inclusion: 'the greatest value [of the event] is the fact that it has succeeded in involving the local Asian community to the extent that it has become the city's Notting Hill Carnival' (p. 50). They also give evidence of happy festival participants, with a festival organiser remembering: 'Asian community leaders crying with joy and hugging him repeatedly saying how much the Mela had "made us feel

that we are proud to be here” (p. 50). While such an interpretation seems highly plausible, Landry *et al.* do not provide substantial empirical evidence to support their view. No evaluations seem to have been conducted, and most evidence is drawn (presumably) from interviews with festival organisers. Landry *et al.* also describe the revitalisation of Hull, which included an arts festival component, and a celebration of pirates at Penzance, with analysis working there as above. Landry *et al.* also examine a number of other arts-related sites or developments, though none of these other examples is really a festival or celebration. Instead, they are either precincts or museums or heritage initiatives. They also observe that the ‘bizarre’ or ‘grotesque’ can serve as a regenerator for communities, citing examples from Tuscany of ‘an annual festival of ugly people (Festival dei Brutti)’ and ‘the Long Noses in a little town near Bergamo, and the Liars which takes place each summer near Bordeaux’, along with cockroach races in Darwin (pp. 41-42). While these festivals undoubtedly provide a focus of some sort, Landry *et al.* fail to provide substantial information about what specific impact these events have. Consequently, such stories serve as little more than amusing anecdotes, and do not provide a basis for future research in this field.

Alan Kay (2000) is interested in the arts as a means of building community and strengthening bonds between people that are under pressure from globalisation. His study examines four specific arts projects, being a well-established project on a housing estate in Central Scotland, a project for training young people on a housing estate, a music and dance summer school in the Western Isles of Scotland, and a city-wide arts and regeneration strategy. These sites were selected because of the ready availability of detailed information about each, and the connection between the arts and local communities displayed in each. These are considered in terms of the regeneration effects they produce within four main areas: economic, social, environmental and cultural. His method involved multifactorial analysis, gaining information from as many stakeholder sources as possible and building information that can be used comparatively over time. He concludes that the arts, ‘have an important role to play in the regeneration of areas whose residents are disadvantaged economically, socially, culturally, and environmentally’ (p. 10).

The Social Impact of the Arts Project in the University of Pennsylvania School of Social Work (Stern 1999) has examined urban disadvantage and underdevelopment in Philadelphia. However, this research is interested mainly in indicators of poverty, rather than indicators of community health or wellbeing. Stern does conclude that the presence of arts leads to neighbourhood revitalization. This research is interested in correlations rather than causality. It is difficult to show that the arts directly caused the alleviation of poverty, or if they accompanied changes that were driving a neighbourhood revival. Guetzkow (2002) presents an excellent account of the problems of determining causes in arts research, or a frequent lack of adequate and independent data to extrapolate clear causal connections. Shaw (1999) also examines the methodological flaws in research carried out into neighbourhood renewal and the arts. She notes that evaluation needs to be more rigorous, long-term impacts need to be examined, and research must be well co-ordinated in order to compare findings. This recurrent theme accords with our findings.

Jones (1998) investigated the role of a community artist as a facilitator of positive social transformations within a community. This study concluded that positive effects

were felt by all those involved in the project examined, from the artist to the organisers and local community. Policy Action Team 10 (1999) drew similar conclusions, stating that, 'Arts, sport, cultural and recreational activity, can contribute to neighbourhood renewal and make a real difference to health, crime, employment and education in deprived communities' (p. 8). However, both these studies assert these conclusions without providing sufficient evidence to make them persuasive.

Another aspect of community development that has been investigated involves the recovery of communities after environmental damage. Helen Wositzsky (1997) studied the impact of arts programs after fires devastated communities in the Dandenong Ranges, and concluded that the arts can play a positive role in rebuilding community in these situations. Her study is, however, quite short and largely anecdotal. Deidre Williams (1996) describes the Collingwood Children's farm as a place for environmental education, often incorporating arts practice, which contributes to community development.

Blake Stevenson Ltd (2000) examined four community arts projects in order to assess their long-term impact on regeneration and sustainability. They looked at arts projects in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dundee and South Uist, and concluded that the arts can play a crucial role in promoting community development in areas experiencing social stresses and deprivation. In particular, they singled out the Ceolas Gaelic community arts festival as promoting regeneration by helping local tourism, creating jobs, promoting long-term community initiatives, and enhancing personal and group identity. The method used by Blake Stevenson combines qualitative assessment with empirical information on job numbers and tourist revenue, and thus makes a persuasive case for the impacts it describes. The findings of this report are currently being used to inform national cultural policy in Scotland.

Some useful work has been done by the Centre for Popular Education (2002) at the University of Technology, Sydney, in outlining some of the projects that are either underway or anticipated in the field of community cultural development. The centre's projects indicate how much interest currently exists in Australia to investigate the complex interactions involved in community development, especially as related to health and the arts. This literature review recommends that research projects in this field be co-ordinated so that comparable findings can be developed, and so that a new field of knowledge can be build around this area. Discussions conducted with Greg Gow at the University of Western Sydney confirm that work being done on community development in New South Wales needs to co-ordinated with other research being conducted in specific sites around Australia to draw out comparative conclusions.

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