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Participation in Community Arts: Lessons from the Inner-City

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Abstract

In this paper we critically reflect, through the lens of liberation psychology, on our experiences of using participative community arts in work with young people and intergenerational groups in inner-city Manchester, UK. We used mixed methods to examine the impact of and engagement with community arts in two projects. One study was quasi experimental in design and used questionnaires developed by the researchers to compare Higher Education aspirations with levels of self-esteem and self-efficacy, as a result of participating in creative music sessions. The other study was a multi-media action research project, using qualitative methods to explore participant experience and the impact of the activities. Our methods included observations, interviews, the creative products and the creative processes. Through our critical reflections, we examine the role of power and powerlessness in participative arts, as well as ways in which participation had the potential to enable 'conscientisation' which in turn had the potential to lead to self-empowerment and motivation for action. Both projects demonstrated the importance of forming 'communities of practice' with a diverse range of stakeholders in order to gain maximum impact from the projects and move towards a position of collaborative governance. We found that this approach was a useful starting point for facilitating 'collaborative governance' for wider social and political change.

Keywords: Liberation Psychology, Community Arts, Communities of Practice, Collaborative Governance, 'conscientisation'.

Introduction

We will give a brief overview of the role of community arts and liberation psychology before presenting two case studies illustrating how they enabled our groups to form 'communities of practice'.

Community arts

The role of participation in arts of different kinds as a tool of community development and community psychological praxis has been growing since the 1990's (Community Development Foundation, 1992; DCMS, 1999), and there is a growing requirement to demonstrate the impact of the arts (Arts Council, 2001), although not everyone agrees this is desirable or even possible (Matarasso, 1997). Considerable evidence now exists demonstrating how participation in the arts enhances wellbeing and relationships with others and this work informs the UK's National Alliance for Arts, Health and Wellbeing, which provides resources and case studies of practice in this area[1]. The importance of this work at policy level is reflected in the formation in January 2014 of a policy group in parliament, the All Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing (APPG, 2014).

Participatory arts move activity from the personal to the collective, and experience away from the personal spheres of hedonic and eudaemonic wellbeing (Swindells et al., 2013) to collective gain, with the potential to contribute to transformative social change (Purcell, 2009; Scher, 2007). Newman, Curtis and Stephens (2001) suggest that change takes place at different levels: personal change (making new friends, being happier, feeling more confident and creative); social change (more cross-cultural understanding, stronger sense of locality, bringing groups together and enhanced organisational skills); economic change (impact on number of new jobs and people finding work, improved image of community, increased sales of art works); and educational change (improved school performance).

At the heart of every change level is a personal experience, and one community psychological challenge is to understand how the move from personal to collective gain comes about. Kilroy, Garner, Parkinson, Kagan and Senior (2007) suggested that transformational change came about through a process of emergence. Emergence was a product of the unique personal journeys undertaken by participants (their raised expectations of life, increased well-being and learning they experienced) and the catalytic role of the arts,

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[1] http://www.artshealthandwellbeing.org.uk/

creating a sense of flow. Flow, itself, is the experience of absorption and enjoyment wherein people experience an altered sense of time (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Emergence came about through the opportunities given to develop new relationships, personal adaptations, personal responsibility and engagement: it was, however, a deeply personal experience. Kagan (2010), drawing on different participatory arts, suggested that key ingredients underpinning social action were not only a sense of wellbeing but also strong self-esteem, strong personal and social identity, and insight into self **and** others; an enhanced understanding of self in the social world and how power operates through institutions and interactions to enable and restrict life opportunities, and the capability to affect change.

Figure 1 about here

Whilst wellbeing is widely understood, aspects of personal and social identity and insight linked to the arts, needs some further expansion. One lens through which personal, social, organisational and societal insight, as well as relevant aspects of personal and social identity, can be understood, is that of liberation psychology.

The Lens of Liberation Psychology

Burton and Kagan (2009) identified a number of key characteristics of a liberation psychology perspective. These included: 'conscientisation'; 'realismo-critico' and 'de-ideologisation'; the social-societal orientation, 'the preferential option for the oppressed majorities' and methodological eclecticism. Here we are mostly concerned with 'conscientisation' and the means through which it is achieved, primarily through problematisation.

Martín-Baró (1985, 40) explained '*conscientisation*' as follows, "the human being is transformed through changing his or her reality, by means of an active process of dialogue in which there is a gradual decoding of the world, as people grasp the mechanisms of oppression and 'dehumanisation'". This opens up new possibilities for action where new knowledge of the surrounding reality leads to new self-understanding about the roots of what people are at present and what they could become. This process is core to enhancing personal and social identity, embracing self-understanding, self-esteem and confidence. 'Conscientisation' is sometimes referred to as the development of a critical consciousness: it comes about through critical dialogue and reflection between people. Not all exchanges, however, bring about

'conscientisation'. Freire (1972) suggested that the key to liberatory education was a form of dialogue that encouraged critical reflection, a process called 'problematisation'.

Participative arts, infused as it is by exchanges between all those involved (artists and other participants) can create the conditions for problematisation. Through the activities of art we learn to question what we see and do on an everyday basis. Problematisation leads to understanding and insight about self, the organisations we are embedded in and the world in which we live. To look for evidence of 'conscientisation' is to look for growing self-awareness and self-esteem, and most importantly, critical reflection. Liberation psychology perspectives are not precious about method: indeed, plurality of method is encouraged (Burton & Kagan, 2009). Thus we have deliberately set out to explore the links between arts and social change via two projects; one, a qualitative, action research study and the other, a quasi-experimental study. We suggest that social change occurs when people become equal stakeholders in a jointly held vision or initiative for change. The holding concept for this process of coming together as equal stakeholders is called a "community of practice" (Wenger, 2011). In our analysis, 'communities of practice' are the bedrock of participative and socially empowering relationships between people, communities and local authorities (macro power holders). From such empowering relationships, a situation of 'collaborative governance' is reached. Although our projects did not achieve collaborative governance, liberation psychology perspectives help us see that they did form 'communities of practice' where the beginnings of joint visions and strategies were formed, forming the foundations for collaborative governance.

The aim of this paper is to draw on our experiences as researchers on the projects to explore the ways in which community arts engagement practice facilitates social transformation via 'conscientisation' and problematisation of everyday life. We will reflect on the processes of *power and powerlessness*; *conscientisation*, *problematisation* and *motivation for action* and their roles in building 'communities of practice'. In particular, we will explore ways in which music and poetry workshops facilitated change in those participating in two very different projects taking place in marginalised urban areas, within different policy contexts but sharing an emphasis on the community regeneration (or renewal) with its potential for 'collaborative governance'. We will now go on to describe each project as a case study outlining policy background, intervention and methodology. We will then reflect on how both projects began to establish 'communities of practice'.

Case Study 1 Creating Intergenerational Evaluation Teams: The Role of Poetry in the Awareness of Place (CIETS).

Policy Background

The Creating Intergenerational Evaluation Teams (CIETs) project was one of 13 connected projects forming the Manchester Generations Together Programme. The City authority had successfully bid for the projects that were funded as part of the Government's pioneering intergenerational programme in 2009/10, which aimed to break down barriers between younger and older people and the wider community through the development of intergenerational practice, as part of processes of regeneration and renewal. The project was delivered by the Research Institute for Health and Social Change (RIHSC) at Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) and was overseen by the Valuing Older People (VOP) team within Manchester City Council (MCC). The projects contributed to Manchester's status as one of the World Health Organisation's network of Age Friendly Cities (Manchester City Council, 2014) and were therefore important for local policy as well as national policy development. The commissioning of the projects was a top down process, although in the development of our project we did some preliminary consultation with community groups.

The specific aims of the CIETs project were to enable intergenerational groups to gain a greater understanding of their communities and the skills to evaluate community projects using different creative methods. We built on our previous experience in intergenerational research (e.g. Kagan et al., 2013); creative methods in research on community arts (Lawthom, Sixsmith & Kagan, 2007); participatory evaluation (Suárez -Herrera, Springett & Kagan, 2009); and work with people living in areas of urban regeneration (Kagan & Duggan, 2011).

Intervention

The intervention was a three month capacity building programme for teams made up of people under 25 and those who were retired, from areas in Manchester that experienced some of the highest levels of multiple deprivation in the UK (as assessed by the UK Government's Indices of Multiple Deprivation[2]). The programme was developed through an extensive consultation process involving community groups for younger and older people. Once

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[2] All neighbourhoods were classified on different social dimensions to create an index of multiple deprivation. For the 2010 Indices used here, see http://data.gov.uk/dataset/index-of-multiple-deprivation/resource/7537209d-aea6-47d6-88db-ba0dcf1d58d4

participants had been recruited (see below) they were invited to a fun day in order to get to know each other prior to project intervention. The fun day involved the whole group of participants and researchers going ten pin bowling and then sharing a meal together. Creative methods workshops were delivered by skilled experts from local community projects and enterprises. These included: journalism; video diaries; community film making; photography; and poetry workshops. In addition, participants were invited to consider how the collection of material via creative methods during the project had or had not made a difference to themselves and the areas in which they lived. It is the poetry workshop that we will focus on here as it was the one that participants of all ages were most skeptical about from the start.

The poetry workshop was facilitated by a local poet. It included hands-on exploration of different poetry techniques; the telling of stories through poetry; the freedom of poetic license; and the development of participants' own poetic styles. Several poems about participants' lives and the places they lived were produced during and following the workshop. The poems were exhibited as part of a wider project exhibition showcasing the outputs from all the workshops. The exhibition was designed and organised by participants with support from the research team and from the local Housing Trust whose regeneration officers were fully supportive of the project, and which provided funding for the exhibition.

Methodology

CIET was conceived as an action research project, developing a framework for participatory evaluation (Suarez, Springett & Kagan, 2009), utilising qualitative methods to explore participant experience and the impact of the activities. The research team consisted of three researchers, all of whom were experienced in working with local communities and in using qualitative and creative methods for project evaluation. One researcher coordinated the specialist facilitators, the participant reflections and follow up support after workshops; another was responsible for participant support (including providing transport to training workshops and other activities); and the third for overall supervision and project management. Each team member kept a field diary and the whole team met regularly to share observations and discuss progress of the project.

Recruitment. We sought participation using a variety of methods. From the outset we had problems with recruitment, training and uptake was very low. As a result of this, upon reflection, we decided to run a further small consultation exercise with local leaders of community organisations across the districts in order to understand what would be the most

appropriate way to deliver the training that would encourage participation. Following this consultation the intervention was refined. Furthermore, we were contacted by a young people's volunteer project and a community regeneration partnership, headed by a Housing Trust, both wishing to be involved and wanting to encourage their members to be involved. Participants were finally drawn from these organisations with three additional older people from a different area of Manchester who had responded to the flyers. Twelve participants aged between 16 and 82 years took part in the poetry workshop, and seven exhibited poems at the exhibition at the end of the project.

Data collection. Qualitative data were collected from different sources using a range of methods. Sources included researchers, project participants, workshop facilitators and those attending the exhibition. Data were captured through observations and field diaries, interviews with participants and those attending the exhibition; films and photographs of creative workshops, preparation for and implementation of the exhibition; and the creative outputs. Data analyses were undertaken at different points in the action research process, through a process of collating different forms of data and looking for emergent patterns and trends, theoretically informed. Some analytic stages took place during the project implementation, and half of the participants worked with the research team to make sense of the emergent themes. Both researchers and participants examined the different data, keeping notes about data informing the perception of neighbourhoods, of intergenerational working and of engagement with the creative processes as they went. They then shared their interpretations and discussed emerging themes and issues. Final data analysis continued well after the end of the project and all participants declined invitations to be involved in this.

*Postscript.*Officers of the Housing Trust (which had supported the project) were dismayed by the poems exhibited in their local community centre, through which participants had expressed their feelings about the areas in which they lived. They said they gave the wrong impression of the area. To the disappointment of participants, they retracted permission for the exhibition to be mounted in other places in the City, as had originally planned by participants and discussed with officers from the Trust.

Case Study 2 All Change for Crewe Research Project (ACC).

Policy Background

This research was commissioned as part of Cheshire East Council's (a local authority) attempt at examining its strategic educational aims in its 20 year strategy document, All Change for Crewe (Cheshire East Council, 2014). A small mixed research team consisting of undergraduate students and an experienced staff researcher from Manchester Metropolitan University Cheshire's (MMUC) Contemporary Arts Department was assembled to carry out the research. The Council has set out an ambitious plan for the economic regeneration of Crewe, which is a small (mostly) economically deprived town with some of the highest levels of multiple deprivation in the UK (as assessed by the UK Government's Indices of Multiple Deprivation[3]), which sits within an economically advantaged county in North West England. The Council has recognised that education plays an important part of its regeneration plans and has named it as one of its five strategic areas. The Council has also linked the raising of educational attainment in its schools with the development of the town's knowledge economy.

Our pilot study set out to measure the change in young people's attitudes towards Higher Education, as a result of participating in creative music workshops. In the study, we were particularly interested in tracking the children's views of their 'Likelihood to attend university' as well as their academic self-concept, as part of our Widening Participation agenda (HEFCE , 2013)[4]. We understood that within the complex matrices of measuring multiple indicators of deprivation, a measurement of this 'likelihood' would not by itself guarantee any actual gains in this area (in terms of future numbers of university entrants). However, registering changes in attitudes towards Higher Education and measuring the efficacy of the means that could effect such changes, we thought, would give a good indication of what the Council's strategic priority areas could be in terms of council spending on Education within its All Change for Crewe vision, as will be illustrated later.

Intervention
Extensive meetings with council officials, teachers from the participating schools, and staff from the participating residential care settings preceded the intervention. The nature of the research and workshops was widely discussed in order to allow full planning input from all of

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[3] All neighbourhoods were classified on different social dimensions to create an index of multiple deprivation. For the 2010 Indices used here, see http://data.gov.uk/dataset/index-of-multiple-deprivation/resource/7537209d-aea6-47d6-88db-ba0dcf1d58d4
[4] Statutory requirement of universities to demonstrate that they are providing 'fair access' to potential students from economically deprived backgrounds.

the stakeholders. This included the distribution of a written description of the research and a consent form. This preparation through meetings with stakeholders meant that introductory partnerships were already established by the staff researcher before the intervention started. This was a crucial phase of preparation as the four student researchers from MMU tasked with leading the music workshops, had to find ways of establishing collaborative partnerships with the teachers and care staff with whom they worked.

Over five weeks, the team of four student researchers supervised by the staff community researcher, ran five music workshops that lasted fifty minutes (Wilson, 2014). Cheshire East Council was keen to theme the workshops around their ongoing WW1 commemorative activities across the borough. The aim of the workshops was for the children to create new WW1 inspired song compositions. The students also worked with elderly residents from two local care homes who contributed their childhood memories of the war to the music sessions. These memories along with a selection of WW1 poetry were used as starting points for the young people's compositions of the new songs. The songs were showcased on campus at the university in front of an invited audience.

Methodology

The design was quasi-experimental using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods and used both a non-random and a randomised sample of children attending two primary schools in the Crewe area between the ages of eight and 10 years (N=94). Data from the elderly participants was not collected, as they were not included in the study.

We administered the 'Attitudes to HE Questionnaire' (AHEQ) (Maras, 2007; Maras & Carmichael, 2006) to all the young people participating in the study, over the same period, before and after the intervention. Participants were given consent forms for their carers/parents to sign before they participated in the study. The questionnaire was administered verbally on an individual basis and questions were rephrased in an age-appropriate manner when necessary. AHEQ is a self-reporting measure that comprises 62 statements about attitudes towards Higher Education and academic self-concept. Participants respond to each statement on a five point 'likert' scale indicating whether they strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree or strongly disagree. Maras (2007) developed the questionnaire through extensive piloting because she wanted to explore the following factors (pp. 73 – 74):

Own attitudes and perceptions of peer and family attitudes toward Higher Education; Academic self-concept in relation to: the importance of school work; and, self-competence in school work; the degree of effort expended in school-work; and, identification with others: school, peer and family.

We also used the 'Map of Me' graffiti chart (Clennon, 2013) before and after the intervention in order to gain an insight into the current life issues of the respondents. The graffiti chart provided a contextual background for the responses to the AHEQ. The chart consists of four empty quadrants that the interviewees were encouraged to name, each quadrant indicating an issue that was of most importance to them in the interview.

Data Analysis

We used a mixed mode of data analysis. The quantitative data was entered into the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) and checked by an independent observer. We carried out the analysis by using Pearson's *r*-correlation (*r*) and Spearman's rank correlation (rho). Our main measurement of pre- and post-intervention correlation between the mean and standard deviation scores for AHEQ was Pearson's *r*-correlation with a *p* measurement for statistical significance. In order to analyse the 'Map of Me' qualitative data, the interviewees were encouraged to write or draw sub-issues under the title of their quadrants which explained the significance of the issue in further detail. The interviewees were also asked if they could find links between the issues they had identified by drawing arrows that described the relationship (Clennon, 2013: p. 113):

> The end result was a map of the interviewees' current issues of importance in the session. The chart generates ranks according to the number of times an issue is mentioned pre- and post-intervention. The more times an issue has been mentioned post-intervention, the more important it is deemed to the participant, the higher it is ranked. The converse is also true.

In order to judge whether 'Map of Me' comparisons between pre- and post-intervention control and test rankings were reliable, we found it useful to test the distribution of the data and its statistical significance (*p*) with Spearman's rank (rho).

Discussion

We will now go on to reflect on the different processes involved, drawing on our own, researchers' experiences and those of the participants, in order to try and understand how projects like these build the potential for transformative change via the development of 'communities of practice'. We will use our results only as illustrations of the some of the processes involved rather than as critical, comprehensive analyses of the data.

Power and Powerlessness

Whilst both projects were designed to be participative, there were limitations to the full participation and empowerment of participants.

Both projects were embedded in institutional agendas. CIETS was developed opportunistically in response to a call for local intergenerational projects. This is similar to many research projects rooted in the academy, albeit one strong on engagement with communities. The work was commissioned by a local authority whose agenda was to showcase and provide evidence for the effectiveness of intergenerational work. This in turn was embedded in an agenda to promote intergenerational work as a route to community cohesion, pursued by a government, soon to be voted out of office. The timescales for the commissioning reduced the possibilities for designing the project in a fully participative way. We were able to consult with some community groups over the design of the project, and again conduct a second consultation over the delivery of the project. Furthermore, we were an experienced research team, working closely with community groups in the area and in constant discussion with the group leaders and members about their needs and priorities. However, these consultations did not include the actual people who would ultimately participate in the project. Once we had recruited, we were able to work with participants over the final shape of the project and its dissemination but this was within the already established parameters.

The poetry workshop was one that would not have taken place if the entire project had been designed through a bottom up process. Only one of the participants was keen on the idea of a poetry workshop from the start. However, without exception participants both enjoyed and were stimulated by it. One of younger women said:

> I didn't think I'd like the poem session, but I did. I met people I wouldn't have met before and thought about things I wouldn't have thought before. I have thought about why we think about others in the way we do.

An older man said:

> I thought 'poetry, that's naff'. I think that now, if I can write a poem, I can do anything!

As the project progressed participants did indeed influence its direction. It became more about exploring generational differences in experience of place, than of developing skills for the evaluation of the community projects. The commissioning body (to whom we regularly reported) did not interfere with the change of direction. However, one of the key partners did try to wield power over the process, particularly in the dissemination phase of the project. Although it had been agreed with the Housing Trust that the exhibition would be taken to other venues around the City, this agreement was withdrawn. Furthermore, officers tried to prevent poems being shared widely. The research team stressed that poems were the property of their creators: as many of them had been made into postcards for participants to own and distribute, it was not possible to veto dissemination anyway! Coming up against this attempt by the agency to exert control over what residents did with their own poems, enabled residents to get further insight into both the powerlessness and powerfulness of their everyday lives.

In our ACC project, despite our best efforts at collaborative planning with all of the stakeholders, the Council still set the agenda for the research in terms of its desire to examine its strategic development policy for the town. This meant that the council took the lead in determining the theme of the school workshops, as it wanted to maximise its contribution to the national WW1 commemorative activities. Given the limitations of our starting point caused by the relatively powerful position of the Council's institutional agenda, we had to work as flexibly as we could within the given brief. This meant for example, that in our preparatory meetings with the school teachers we had to negotiate and establish how our student workshop leaders (researchers) were going to work in partnership with the teachers[5].

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[5] The intervention largely used the models 'Arts for participation and citizenship' (Hughes, 2005) and 'Arts a Cultural Right' (Stevenson, 2003; Chaney, 2002; Meredyth & Minsion, 2000), where our participants explored positive community roles by using social collaborative learning processes. The workshops encouraged the development of the social skills of both the children and the elderly

We co-planned the sessions in such a way as to complement the existing curriculum provision, in addition to delineating classroom roles. Constant negotiation and renegotiation occurred between the researchers and the teachers with regards to the, sometimes, challenging aspects of the pedagogic partnership[6].

Conscientisation, problematisation and motivation for action

Participation in the projects afforded opportunities for participants to question (problematise) their everyday experiences and share perceptions of the world; gain in self-esteem, become aware of the opportunities available to them (conscientisation); and be motivated to take action.

The poetry workshop enabled people to ask questions about their lives, compare them with others' and appreciate what was good about them but also what should change. Researcher field notes recorded observations about the growing confidence of both young and old, and willingness to experiment with new ideas and skills. Participants in CIETS reported not only new ways about thinking about where they lived, but also a sense of shared understanding and empathy for one another that were gained through the poetry writing sessions. One older participant captured her growing awareness of her world:

I hadn't really thought about it before. Well, I knew what I thought about the place but didn't realise I feel so strongly--both good and bad.

A younger participant summed up what it was that made her want to do more:

It has been a great insight into [what is possible] which I feel is beneficial to any community. The people I have met and worked with are an inspiration in a world which can be very cynical towards either the young or those who are older. It has made me want to do more…

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visitors, as they were characterised by Process directed education (Bolhuis & Kluvers, 2000) where the year 6 participants (aged 10 yrs) negotiated their own ground rules for the group, which also included their own initial self-assessment of ability. The workshops were also guided by the use of Situated Learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991), where the learning was distributed by assigning individual roles for certain workshop processes.

[6] The researchers registered spontaneous teacher interventions as being the most challenging aspects of the partnership because they felt that they sometimes confused the boundaries of the partnership and as a result, the children's motivation.

Whilst CIETS provided participants with personal motivation for action[7], ACC had a wider impact in terms of problematising the pedagogic process with its implications for future Council education expenditure.

In ACC, the 'Map of Me' indicated that the boys' seemed to prefer gaming as a social learning process. This was an unexpected revelation from the data that required us to critically reflect on our findings in order to discover its wider implications on Council policy. Even though their AHEQ scores around peer interaction and academic self-concept were low, their 'Maps of Me' identified "friendship" and "gaming" as high priorities. As a research team, we took the view that the challenges around the boys' engagement/attainment levels were not focussed on peer interaction or academic self-concept, as implied by their AHEQ scores and much of the literature (e.g. Bornholt, Maras, & Robinson , 2009; Frosh, Phoenix, & Pattman, 2002) but perhaps around the pedagogic processes they encountered in-session. In our sessions we noticed that:

> The boys on African drums seemed to perform more when they were shown how to sit properly with the instrument... [this made] them feel like a real life musician. This set the tone of what a musician is from the very beginning and that if they wanted to be successful they would have to listen and take instruction to benefit themselves. *Session Journal: Session 3 (Student researchers)*

We found this to be an interesting observation because Maras (2007) also reports that in her study, boys tended to respond better to direct mentoring activities that included small group/one to one work around study activities (such as homework clubs) than did the girls. In terms of gaming and its educational potential, this echoes McClarty, et al., (2012) who observe that educational gaming can provide personalised learning opportunities. In our sessions, these more personalised interactions with the boys also imitated the advantageous simulated environments of gaming (Ke, 2009; Gee, 2004), that afforded them the

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[7] Further examples include; one long term unemployed older man got a job during the course of the project and another soon after it ended. A younger participant, who had dropped out of school, applied for and got a training place for a child care course. All of them said that it was the confidence and skills they had gained through working on the project that had enabled them to take the next steps towards employment or education. The research team had not expected the project to be life changing, but for some it clearly was, strengthening their motivation for action.

opportunties to "think, understand, prepare and execute actions" (McClarty, et al., 2012, p. 8). The researchers in our sessions encouraged the children to feel like or simulate "real life musicians" who "would have to listen and take instruction to benefit themselves". When our researchers adopted these specific pedagogic processes they did notice an improvement in the boys' performance. However, this approach was not consistently adopted by either the researchers or the teachers with whom they were partnering (due to the process of harmonising pedagogical visions, outlined earlier). The fact that this teaching style was seen to better encourage the personal motivation of the boys and that it shared its ethos with the pedagogy behind educational gaming (which was self identified as a high priority for the boys), led us to make recommendations to Cheshire East Council suggesting that they should provide greater funding for the educational use of gaming in the classroom, especially the educational coding game, Minecraft (which some of the boys had identified as being popular). We recognised that this would have a knock-on effect on teacher training in Crewe (MMU Cheshire also delivers teacher training programmes), as the UK's National Curriculum now requires primary school teachers to teach computer coding in their ICT classes. It is hoped that this would also act as a motivating factor for the Council to grow their local creative economy with the cross curricula integration of gaming across all of Crewe's local education sectors.

Both case studies illustrate how participants underwent a process of 'conscientisation', brought about by opportunities to problematise their everyday experiences through interaction with others via a creative process. Motivation for action was enhanced, itself constructed from gains in self-esteem and participants' abilities to work out the best course of action for them.

Building a Community of Practice

However, there was a third element of motivation for action that more prominently arose from ACC, where there emerged an important process of critical reflection by the researchers during the project's 'problematisation' phase. Crucially, this critical reflection brought both the researchers, the participants and the stakeholders into a joint space of self-actualisation (insight) or 'community of practice' that Wenger (2011, para 4) usefully defines as, "groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly". In ACC, the data led the researchers to propose to the stakeholders another tool of empowerment (educational gaming) that was derived directly from the collected data *after* the intervention had taken place. This form of critical reflection

(recognising what the post intervention data was indicating, leading to a further review of literature, in this case, gaming, and as a consequence suggesting a course of action) by the researchers formed part of what became an iterative process in an emerging action research cycle, where Riel (2010, para 9) identifies "a commitment to cycles of collective inquiry with shared reflections on the outcomes leading to new ideas." As researchers, we were reminded of this significant part of working together for social change that incorporated the values of liberation psychology wherein:

> To be a professional is not to have all the answers. Rather, a professional is someone who can reflect on tentative solutions, collaborate with others on the possible avenues available, and risk making mistakes because mistakes are an inevitable part of building new roads (Lester & Mayher, 1987, p. 209)

Both case studies, illustrated the importance of building a 'community of practice' that included all the stakeholders where these transformative 'insights' could occur. This was illustrated by the specific time that was allocated to building relationships with the stakeholders before their respective interventions. CIETS also demonstrated the importance of critical reflection in its iterative process of an emerging action research cycle, where one of the stakeholders, The Housing Trust came to a post-intervention conclusion that the project's outputs gave the wrong impression of their efforts, and deemed the exhibition as sitting outside of their strategic agendas. With more time, further iterative cycles of enquiry might have been able to have resolved or at least to have mediated this difference of perspective. A first step had been to build the 'community of practice' that enabled different perspectives to be explored.

Collaborative Governance towards Social transformation

Both case studies incorporated liberation psychology and used participative arts methodologies to bring people into a 'community of practice'. Ansell and Gash (2007, p. 550) would, perhaps characterise the establishment of a 'community of practice' as a positive "starting condition" for the development of collaborative governance. Ansell and Gash (2007, p. 544) define collaborative governance as:

> A governing arrangement where one or more public agencies directly engage non-
> state stakeholders in a collective decision-making process that is formal, consensus-

oriented, and deliberative and that aims to make or implement public policy or manage public programs or assets.

This is an important model of working for both case studies because they involved stakeholders from various public agencies and their outcomes had policy implications at their heart. We see collaborative governance as the last link in the chain of social transformation that includes the personal, social, organisational and societal types of insights that we discussed earlier.

<div align="center">Figure 2 about here</div>

Ansell and Gash (2007) give a full account of the theoretical and practical challenges of collaborative governance. However, the main point they raise is that non-public agency stakeholders must have a say in how the policies that will affect them are shaped and that they should not be merely consulted. Ansell and Gash (2007, p. 551-553) go on to outline the challenging aspects of such collaboration, which include: "power/resource imbalances; incentives to participate; prehistory of antagonism and cooperation".

Conclusion

Our case studies have demonstrated how we used liberation psychology, participative arts methodologies and action research to bring people together who share a concern or a passion for something they do so that they can learn how to do it better as they interact regularly. It is the second part of this description of 'communities of practice' that we have found to be a vital element for social transformation. If our 'communities of practice' can first find common ground, method and vision for social transformation then a transition to collaborative governance where policies are made/negotiated and implemented will have much higher rates of success than perhaps the more usual examples top-down administrations of civic power (Carter, et al., 2003). We would agree with Vangen and Huxham (2003) who suggest that public agencies all too regularly underestimate the value of building trust and its potential impact on inter-agency collaboration. We would go further and suggest that initially allocating resources to build 'communities of practice' would constitute a structured and accountable way of building trust and relationships, which would lay the foundations for more effective collaborative governance further on in the process of social transformation.

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Figure 1: Insight as the bridge from personal to collective gain (Kagan, 2010)

Social change

⇧

Inclusion of the 'other'

Enhanced social capital

insight

Personal and
social identity

personal,

Different facets
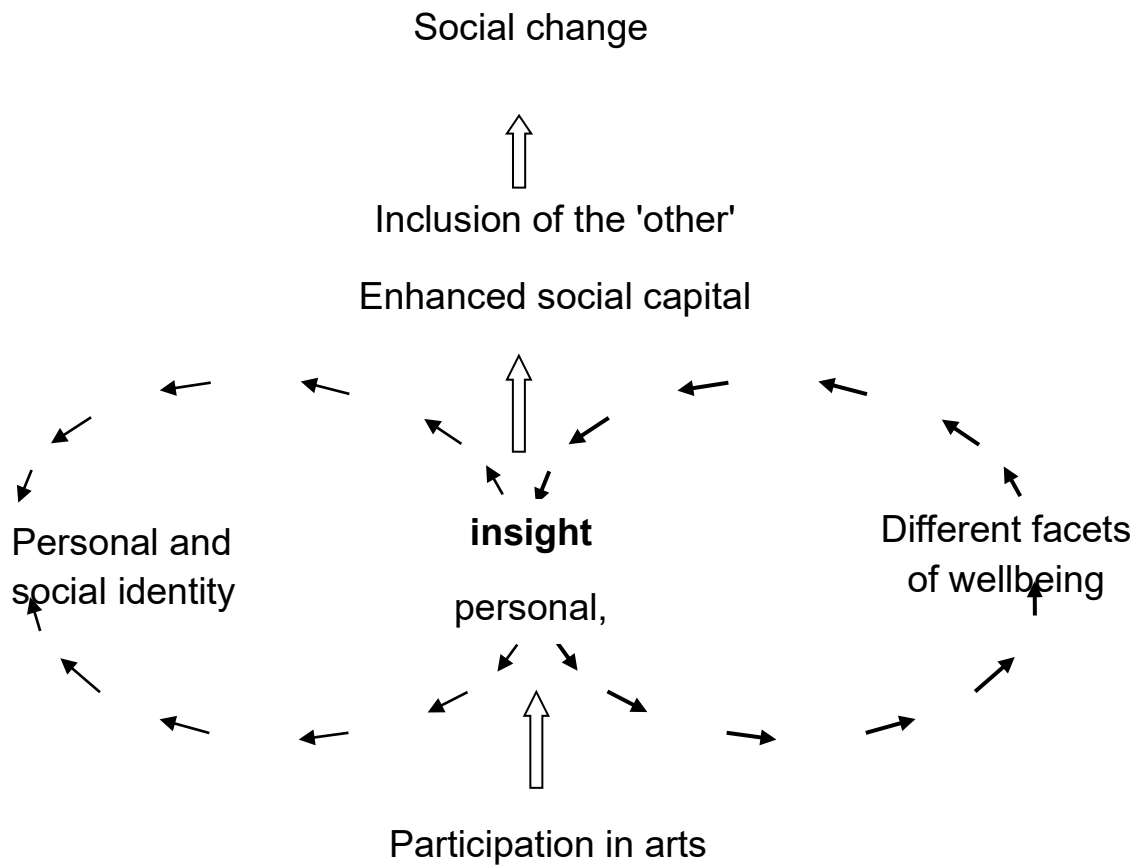of wellbeing

⇧

Participation in arts

Figure 2: Communities of Practice as the bridge between personal experience and collaborative governance for change

Social change

Collaborative

Governance

Communities

Of

Practice

Power and
Participation

Conscientisation

Problematisation

Motivation for
action

Liberation Psychology

Participation in Arts