Cultural activities for older adults:

An ethnography in an age-friendly city

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Abstract

Increasingly, older adults are being directed towards cultural and leisure activities to support 'ageing in place' where they can remain active citizens, independent and socially engaged within their local communities. This is also indicative of current policy trends towards focusing on strengths and assets of citizens and communities. This study explores the engagement of older adults in cultural activities, and how this supports a sense of self, place, and belonging in an age-friendly city. Research was conducted in two phases. Phase one, was designed to allow a contextual and situated understanding of how cultural activities are framed, structured, and supported within an age-friendly framework. Eight qualitative interviews, informed by appreciative inquiry, were undertaken with those working at an operational or strategic level to provide cultural activities for older adults. Phase two was a multi-site ethnography which enabled a rich and textualised understanding of older adults' participation in cultural activities. Using thematic analysis across both data sets, my findings are generally supportive of the broad value of cultural participation to older adults' sense of self, place, and belonging, but positions this as complex, multifaceted, dynamic, and temporal. Older adults' participation was shown to be agentic, transitioning across roles of participant to volunteer and provider, and dependent on a range of social, historical, geographical, and practical considerations. Successful provision of cultural activities was reliant on the contribution of older adults, however my research established tensions, limitations, and boundaries within this and in relation to the inclusivity of 'successful ageing' and 'citizenship' that the age-friendly framework is based on. Issues of social isolation were another primary theme alongside the value of cultural activities to lessen this. Mason's (2018) work on affinities enabled an insightful understanding of how connections and entanglements form in different ways through embodied practices within the activity spaces, thus highlighting the importance of commonality, solidarity, and materiality, as well as the significance of 'being in the moment' opportunities. Key to policy and practice, these findings suggest broadening definitions of culture to be more inclusive of the everyday and emphasise the significant role of social infrastructure in supporting cultural activity engagement.

Table of Contents

List of Figures, Tables and Pictures

Figures

Tables

Pictures

Overview of the Thesis

The aim of this doctoral study is to explore the value of older adults' participation in cultural activities and how they are connected to a sense of self, place, and belonging. Five research objectives (RO) underpin the aim:

RO1: To examine how older adults experience participation in cultural activities.

RO2: To establish how cultural activities have the potential to contribute to older adults' sense of self, place and belonging.

RO3: To explore the provision of cultural activities for older adults in Manchester through interviews with key informants and mapping of services.

RO4: To develop a new understanding of how cultural activities for older adults contribute to an age friendly environment.

RO5: To inform future directions of the provision of cultural activities for older adults in Manchester.

My thesis is a qualitative study exploring older adults' participation in cultural activities in a city in the North of England. The everyday experiences of older adults' engagement in cultural activities are the central focus of the study, but it is important to explore and understand the systems in which these experiences are formed (Tracy, 2019). This study adopts a phased approach to allow understanding of the infrastructure and delivery of cultural activities for older adults and to facilitate field entry to cultural activity groups and explore the lived experience of participation. In Phase 1, I used qualitative interviews to gain a picture of current cultural activity opportunities within the city. For Phase 2, I undertook multi-sited ethnographic research of community-based groups, in the north and south of the city, to explore how older adults engaged with cultural activities outside the home space and how this influenced on their lives and contributed to a sense of belonging.

Davies (2008) highlights that a connection between researcher and what they research is inevitable which is true for my study. I used a qualitative approach informed by

ethnographic methodology, in which reflexivity is central and woven throughout this research (Etherington, 2004). I begin by positioning myself as I started out on my research journey and how I situate myself within the PhD. I outline how I came to be interested in undertaking this research and why I wanted to contribute to, and extend, existing theoretical knowledge relating to cultural activities and belonging in local communities. Whilst knowing the benefits of reflexivity as a tool to strengthen my research in terms of validity and accountability, I am still conscious of the difficult skill in getting the right balance of this reflexivity (Richardson, 2000) and return to this throughout the thesis.

My interest in, and work with, older adults over the last fifteen plus years, is largely attributable to my late grandfather with whom I spent a lot of time, particularly in his later years. He lived with dementia, supported predominantly by my mother. Whilst treasuring this time, I became increasingly aware that it could be hard for both the person with dementia, and those caring for them, and how health and social care services did not always adequately meet needs. He died seventeen years ago when my first son was less than one year old, which, combined with employment redundancy, allowed me the opportunity to start on a completely new career path working with older adults. Since then, whilst having two further sons and undertaking a Master's in Advanced Care in Dementia, I have worked in a variety of roles with older adults, both in the community and care settings.

I began in a residential care home as a part-time activity co-ordinator working with people living with dementia. Through this role I learned that the biggest successes hinged on serendipitous moments when connections were made, tapping into what was important to an individual, their history, and their skills. This would come through listening and learning about their lives, and through relational work that afforded connections. Activities (cultural or otherwise) played a significant role in facilitating this. From this role I moved to work for a leading dementia charity as a dementia support worker, running dementia cafés and carer groups as well as giving practical and emotional support to people affected by dementia in my locality. Here I saw how community halls and cafés offered crucial spaces where people experiencing similar

challenges could meet, engage in activities, and offer peer support, friendship, and share information of far greater value than I could offer in my professional capacity. During my time with this organisation, I also did project work for the national Personal Choice Team (focused on the Personalisation Agenda and the importance of choice and control for those affected by dementia) and started up a lived-experience group for my locality. Coincidentally, it was at a conference with the Personal Choice Team in Manchester that I became aware of the social aspects of ageing work Manchester Metropolitan University was undertaking. I successfully applied for a Research Doctorate and was awarded a Vice Chancellor funded studentship.

My work with older adults has been in the context of political changes within the United Kingdom (UK), including the austerity measures implemented by the UK coalition government (Levitas, 2012) and the increasing recognition of the Care Act 2014 (Care Act, 2014). During this time, I have witnessed (on both a personal and professional level) the significant difference that meaningful relationships and activities can make to an individual and how cultural activities contribute to this. Simultaneously, I experienced frustration and cynicism as resource cutbacks eroded the Care Act and Personalisation Agenda, leaving older adults who needed support struggling to find viable opportunities to improve their quality of life. In this context I developed my interest in older adults' engagement in cultural activities, and the impact of these on well-being. I was delighted to get the opportunity to undertake this doctoral study but looking back, possibly naïve as to the enormity of task and underprepared for quite how arduous and unpredictable it would be. In so far, I am not different from many other PhD students. However, a global pandemic and its effects could not be foreseen. Fortunately, Covid-19 arrived in the UK after my data had been collected which means that apart from reflections on this in my conclusion chapter, my study is based on pre-COVID data.

I now provide an overview of the thesis chapters:

Chapter One, the introduction to the thesis. Here, I contextualise cultural activities, ageing and locate the study, before exploring age friendly policy and strength-based

approaches to community work. Sense of self, place, and belonging are also introduced as the conceptual basis of my thesis.

In Chapter Two, I draw on inter-disciplinary research and theory to contextualise and situate the central concepts that I explore within the empirical work: cultural activities, ageing in place, and community belonging. I also consider the importance of social capital and of current social prescribing initiatives.

Chapter Three develops my theoretical and methodological approach to exploring older adults and community providers' views on cultural activities. I argue that a two-phase study provides me with a methodology to explore the experiences of representatives of community organisations who provide cultural activities, plus a city-wide ethnographic exploration of older adults' experiences of participating in cultural activities. I further expand on the reflexive nature of the study and anchor it in social constructionism. Appreciative Inquiry is introduced as the methodological basis of Phase 1 and of the ethnography for Phase 2. The Phase 1 design and process are outlined, and the choices of data collection and method of analysis are introduced and justified.

Chapter Four presents Phase 1 findings. A synopsis shows what has been found in terms of the methods, means, and objectives for cultural activity provision across Manchester. Within this, a number of key themes are introduced: 'hybridity of roles' examines fluidity in the roles older adults adopt within the cultural activity ecosystem; 'reflections of the Age-Friendly Agenda' highlights inconsistencies in how this agenda is working both in positive and negative ways for different parties and locales; and 'homogenous provision for individual communities' looks at group norms that encourage or exclude participation. Lastly, this chapter describes how Phase 1 findings inform Phase 2 objectives.

Chapter Five addresses Phase 2 and the methodological considerations of undertaking a multi-site ethnography of community groups in the north and south of Manchester. The entwined process of data collection, analysis, and write-up is then considered,

with reference to the literature. My entry to the field, and a description of the three main field sites are also included in this chapter. Throughout, I illustrate some of my learning as an ethnographer and highlight the importance of reflexivity within my research. The ethnographic data is then analysed in Chapters Six and Seven.

Chapter Six, 'I am the new pensioner', offers perspectives on ageing through participation in cultural activities. This chapter outlines how cultural activities can support the need of older adults to have purpose and be productive, and how this is enacted in a situated, embodied, and historical manner. I also explore the limits and tensions of putting the rhetoric of co-production into practice. In this chapter, I identify the personal and societal barriers to, and boundaries of, participation and how implicit values and latent judgements can effectively marginalise those seemingly less engaged in cultural activities. This chapter also considers the importance of third spaces and social infrastructure.

Chapter Seven comprises five subsections with an overarching theme of how participation with cultural activities become collective, relational, and embodied processes through which attachments are formed. It draws on Mason's (2018) work of affinities developing out of subtle connections that build through participation. The connective powers of music and reminiscence are highlighted, and how the practices of making and creating have cohesive properties. This chapter concludes by considering how cultural activities are acting as a springboard for many older adults to foster further connections.

Chapter Eight draws together the findings of the previous chapters. I explore the framework of 'successful ageing' and how it is supported and strengthened by participating in and volunteering at cultural activities. Furthermore, I consider cultural activities in the context of loneliness and reflect on how my study contributes to a better understanding of how, and for whom, cultural activities can be supportive in reducing loneliness. I highlight findings that support the importance of social infrastructure and the need for cultural activities to be positioned within the realm of the everyday. I also consider the entwined temporal, spatial, material, and relational

nature of engagement in cultural activities, linking it back to a sense of place and belonging.

Chapter Nine is my conclusion. I review the key findings of the study and the contribution of a more nuanced understanding of cultural activity engagement of older adults in an age-friendly city. I return to my research objectives and evaluate whether I have met these. I argue my research is timely given the economic, political, and social changes that are currently taking place in the United Kingdom and make suggestions related to age-friendly cities, cultural activity provision and social prescribing for both practice and policy at a local and national level. I conclude this chapter with critical reflections from a methodological, and a personal perspective. I also consider the impact of COVID, how this has changed activity provision for older adults. This chapter ends with a consideration of the study's limitations and with suggestions for future research.

In this section I have set out my rationale for undertaking this doctoral research, what I aim to explore and how I set about doing so. I have highlighted the fundamental importance of reflexivity and started to position myself within the thesis, stating my personal connection, background experience, and interest in this topic. I have also provided a thesis overview. I will now move to Chapter One setting out the study's policy and conceptual parameters.

Chapter One: An Introduction – Setting the Scene and Theoretical Foundations

1.1 Introduction

In this chapter I explore the conceptual and theoretical foundations of my study. I contextualise cultural activities and ageing, and introduce Manchester, UK, as the setting of my research. The Age Friendly (AF) framework, central to Manchester's strategy for older adults, is situated in a contemporary neoliberal context. Ageing, cultural activities, and AF Manchester are then brought together to consider the central concepts of self, place, and belonging.

1.2 Cultural Activities

This section sets out the context of cultural activities. Firstly, I address the ambiguity of the term 'culture'; then I propose three ways of considering culture as fundamental to my research. Finally, I identify the parameters used to examine cultural activities within this study.

1.2.1 Culture: A Contested Concept

Culture is a complex, contested term with a multitude of different meanings within and outside academia, and is subject to the influence of time, place, and changing political and economic demands (see, for example, Williams, 1981; Jenks, 2005; Baldwin, 2006). I am not anchoring or limiting my study to a specific definition, but to three inherent meanings associated with culture: culture as ethnic, cultural capital, and culture as policy. These three strands weave their way throughout my research. I start with a brief introduction to each.

1.2.1.1 Culture as Ethnic

Culture has been described as 'the acquired cognitive and symbolic aspects of existence' which is then placed in the context of society, a process that involves patterns and powers of social interaction and organisation (Eriksen, 2015:5). Eriksen (2015) states that humans in all societies are equally cultured but in different ways. Individuals comprise a balance of culture and nature whereby we customise our

biological selves through our engagement with the social and cultural world and the shared social conventions that influence our behaviour, such as how we dress, eat, and communicate. In this way culture is both something that is universally shared but also a marker of difference. Ethnicity is an equally complex term; whilst bound up in culture, it is still a separate entity (Eriksen, 1993). Assumptions exist that ethnic groups are resultant of a strong collective identity, founded predominantly around cultural similarities and differences (Moerman, 1988; No et al., 2008). However, of relevance to my study, Hummell (2014) asserts that this is more complex, and that multiple identification is confounded by social interactions, group boundaries, and motivations.

1.2.1.2 Cultural Capital

Bourdieu (1979; 1985; 1986) used an economic metaphor of culture to highlight how the symbolic realms of culture, based around the foundation and accumulation of social life and positioning, can be carried across different social spaces, mediating other forms of capital. Bourdieu included 'culture' as one of the aspects of his theory of capital, the others being economic, social, and symbolic. According to Bourdieu (1985), cultural capital comes in three forms—embodied (such as dialect), objectified (such as personal art collections or books that require a certain level of culture to access) and institutionalised (recognised through titles and educational attainment). Bourdieu (1985) asserts that similar forms of cultural capital shared with others create a sense of collective identity and group positioning. Certain forms of cultural capital are valued over others and can help or hinder one's social mobility, much akin to income or wealth inequality. Bourdieu's theory has been subject to criticism in relation to the context specificity of the cultural capital, and the need for it to be realisable to be converted (Skeggs, 2004). I will review literature in relation to older adults, cultural activities, and the role of cultural capital in Chapter Two.

1.2.1.3 Culture as Policy

Since the 1980s, culture within UK policy has increasingly been used as an 'instrumental tool in the attainment of non-cultural, non-arts goals and objectives' (Gray, 2007:203). Culture was certainly conspicuous in many other programmes and policies such as urban regeneration work (Bailey et al., 2004) and policies to tackle and

reduce social exclusion (Belfiore, 2002; Belfiore, 2004). Similarly, culture has prominently featured within the Civil Society Strategy, that is intended to create 'social value' and 'enriched lives for a fairer society for all' (HM Government, 2018a:12). Cultural activities are also at the forefront of social prescribing initiatives, a pillar of the National Health Services (NHS) ten-year plan (NHS, 2019), as discussed in Section 2.5. Although in part (and not without criticism (Biggs, 1996)), this growing emphasis on 'culture' constitutes a managed shift towards greater competition for funding. It is also indicative of political actors seeking workable solutions to perceived economic, social, and ideological problems. Policies, such as the Civil Society Strategy, have been criticised, as evidence of growing neoliberal influence (Bennett et al., 2019).

When looking specifically at older adults, cultural activities as a contributor to their mental, physical, and social well-being are increasingly being advocated by policy makers and practitioners at a local and national level to reduce social isolation (Dickens et al., 2011; Courtin and Knapp, 2017; Age UK, 2018a) and health inequalities (Public Health England, 2015; del Castillo et al., 2016; All Party Parliamentary Group on Arts Health and Wellbeing, 2017). Cultural activity engagement has also been proposed as the solution to support a growing number of older adults to remain at home and in their communities (HM Government, 2010; Sixsmith et al., 2017); and enabling people to remain active citizens, independent and socially engaged (WHO, 2016). This is especially pertinent in light of increasing pressure on human and financial resources within the NHS (NHS England, 2014) and the social care system (Cylus et al., 2018).

1.2.2 Positioning Cultural Activities

Given the contested and multidimensional nature of the term culture, it is unsurprising that ambiguities persist when looking for a definition of cultural activities; this is discussed in more detail in Chapter Two. As my study is qualitative, I embrace understanding in an inductive fashion, however, I also appreciate the need to set some study parameters (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). Cultural activities in my research are understood to be inclusive of high culture, everyday culture, and leisure. I will now consider these concepts in depth.

Historically, there have been two distinct, and in some ways conflicting, approaches to the concept of high culture (van den Haak, 2018). Bourdieu (1986) understands the notion of high culture as dynamic and socially constructed and defines it in terms of social hierarchy and cultural distinction. High culture, in this regard centres on notions of class and education and serves as a means of legitimising matters of aesthetic and intellectual appreciation for the upper classes, as supported in its institutional uptake (DiMaggio and Mukhtar, 2004; Lizardo, 2006). High culture in this sense, has morality, civilisation, complexity, and more recently innovation as defining distinctions (Weber, 1996; Burke, 2016).

In contrast, Peterson and Simkus (1992) suggest a more rigid approach and create distinct categories of high and popular (or lowbrow) culture. For example, going to the opera equals high culture and watching television equals low culture. Further categories of popular culture include pop music, fashion, and so forth (see, for example, Bennett, 2000). Other work examined cultural participation within and between these groupings. Peterson and Kern (1996) coined the term 'cultural omnivore' to describe individuals who participated in both high and low culture, thereby undermining the normative cultural hierarchy. However, this interpretation is disputed, with some scholars arguing that those of higher status have greater cultural mobility and are therefore able to access a broader range of culture (Warde et al., 2007). In contrast, Elias and Jephcott (1982) take a historical perspective and assert this is indicative of a general social stratification rather than a simple dichotomy between elite and common culture.

1.2.2.2 Everyday Participation

High culture dominates much of the research literature as well as funding opportunities (Stuckey and Nobel, 2010). It has been argued that this presents a narrow definition, that overshadows mundane forms of cultural participation (Miles et al., 2007; Miles, 2013; Miles and Gibson, 2016), that are grounded in the habitual social lives of different communities (Elias, 1998). Sociologists have highlighted it is often in this ordinary everyday sphere that life plays out, relations form, and belonging

occurs (Elias, 1998; Smart, 2007). Analysis of the Department of Culture, Media, and Sport's (DCMS) classifications (almost exclusively high culture) (DCMS, 2016) revealed that fewer than 10% of the population are highly engaged (Taylor, 2016). Moreover, this small proportion of the population is predominantly white, educated, and affluent – and therefore more likely to possess pre-existing cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1979). Despite exhibiting low levels of interest in high culture, Taylor (2016) showed that more than half the population were highly engaged with everyday cultural activities, such as gardening, shopping, eating out, and so on. These findings are not restricted to the UK; Yoon (2020), in a Korean panel analysis on the contribution of leisure activities to successful ageing, concluded that much was missed by not considering what people did at home. Stevenson (2019), exploring non-participation, argued this label is misconstrued, and the attribution of it to certain more disadvantaged groups is skewed by those in power within the cultural professions. Despite a growing number of studies demonstrating the value of everyday participation (Miles, 2013; Bennett, 2015; Edwards and Gibson, 2017), it remains undervalued. Kaszynksa (2018) has suggested that this is because valuing everyday participation presents a challenge to the deficit model of culture which dominates and perpetuates existing inequalities and injustices. The comparative neglect of everyday participation is problematic because it has potential to support broader ethnic diversity and inclusion, and redress the current white dominance (McAndrew et al., 2020). Therefore, it can make positive contributions in the age of globalisation - particularly in areas with high levels of migration and ethnic diversity. To support this a deeper analysis of cultural ecosystems has been called for, alongside a shift away from a paternalistic style of funding policies (Gross and Wilson, 2018; Jeffers and Moriarty, 2018; Wilson et al., 2018).

1.2.2.3 Leisure

Raymond Williams (1958) considered all forms of culture as deserving of merit and the ordinary as worthy of celebration. Williams (1958) understood lived culture as created out of what was available at that time and place for an individual. Oman and Taylor (2018) used this framework to argue that the contribution of leisure activities to well-being is being undervalued and overlooked. Their argument builds on points raised in relation to everyday culture and the narrowness in which cultural participation is both

recorded and funded (Oman and Taylor, 2018). They call for more attention to leisure as lived culture to draw together the areas of high culture and everyday culture and to level the field (Oman and Taylor, 2018). For this reason, leisure is an important inclusion within my work.

The concept of leisure is also disputed, with different levels of conceptualisation and meanings. Leisure is diverse; it can range from hobbies to sports, travel, walking, or religious practice but it is fundamentally how free time is spent and is therefore cultural. Leisure is commonly considered as being ad hoc, immediately rewarding and not requiring specialist skills (Veal, 2017). However, serious leisure has been conceptualised as a separate category of leisure requiring the need for advanced knowledge and commitment (Stebbins, 1992). Serious leisure becomes a systematic pursuit, be that as an amateur, volunteer or even at a professional level, often co-existing with a definitive, if unofficial, group membership (Veal, 2017).

This concludes my introduction to cultural activities, highlighting distinctions and overlaps within these spheres and my argument for a broad inclusion of each. Older adults' engagement in these activities is the focus of my research. In the next section, I put ageing in theoretical context.

1.3 Ageing

Ageing is a complex process and defining ageing is problematic, with no agreed theoretical conceptualisation (Benyon, 2010). Growing old is a biological process, but also a cultural and social process and intertwined with many different social, physical, and cultural assumptions - there is no uniform or singular given meaning to old age (Phillipson, 2013). A myriad of theories attempt to make sense of the issues faced by older adults alongside wider society implications (Phillipson, 2013). The AF Agenda is central to my study (see Section 1.4.2); therefore, I begin with an outline of the origins and principles of 'active ageing' underpinning this agenda. I present the rationale for using this theory, highlight criticisms, and argue its limits in the context of post-modern society. I conclude this section by considering the marginalisation of older adults and the juxtaposition of inequalities and opportunities.

The age at which we become older adults is contested (Phillipson, 2013) and differs within cultures and globally. In this study, I am using the World Health Organisation (WHO) criteria which defines older adults as those aged fifty years and over (WHO, 2016). Demographic figures sometimes have different ageing parameters which I will make explicit.

1.3.1 The Adoption of Active Ageing

The WHO AF framework (WHO, 2002) discussed in greater depth in relation to Manchester, UK (see Section 1.4), adopted 'active ageing' to promote health, independence, and productivity for citizens. The conception of 'active ageing' is attributable to Kalache and Keller (1999), who made the connection between remaining active and healthy in later life and an extended life expectancy. This was not a completely new concept; elements of 'active ageing' date back to the 1960's (Havighurst, 1961). There is an overlap with the concept of 'successful ageing' (Rowe and Kahn, 1997) and others by slightly different names: productive, optimal, and healthy ageing (Fernández-Ballesteros, 2019). Active ageing was originally preferred for its wider boundaries of participation, including social, cultural, and civic domains alongside physical activity and economic contribution that were more pronounced in other theories (WHO, 2002) - although some argue these still take precedence (Boudiny, 2013; Bowling, 2016). More recently, for their 2015-2030 strategy, the WHO changed active ageing to healthy ageing, bringing a greater focus on diversity and inequity (WHO, 2020).

All of these theories are influenced by Laslett (1989) as they follow a life-course approach (Stowe and Cooney, 2015). Laslett (1989) categorised life as four stages: childhood; working life; the third age (a period of early old age straight after working life, when a person has health, financial means, and time to enjoy life) and the fourth age (typified by physical and mental decline, frailty, and dependency). Admittedly, distinct categories of life are now debateable - something I address later in this section. Within these arguments, ageing is neither fixed nor static, suggesting potential

for third age prolongment through lifestyle choices and a means of lessening the years in the fourth age (Green, 2013).

Active ageing offers a shifting focus away from a medicalised model of ageing that has predominated industrialised modern societies, where age was an entry point to entitlements (Featherstone et al., 1991). Instead of a 'cliff edge' of retirement (House of Lords, 2013:9), in which life stops and people fall into an abyss of decline, it offered the imperative to keep active, be that economically or in order to maintain an idea of self, making ageing a liquid modernity concept (Bauman, 2013), discussed more in Section 1.3.2. The active ageing narrative also aimed to shift perceptions, and associated prejudices, towards a more positive, dynamic view of old age (Walker, 2002). Active ageing endures, sitting comfortably with both the renegotiation of ageing that has been witnessed in recent decades and fitting with neoliberal ideals with the shift of responsibility from states to the individual (Walker, 2008; Stenner et al., 2011). I will now explore both of these.

1.3.2 A Shift from Ageing as Biological to a Socially Constructed Category

Early successful ageing work began in the 1960s. Current policy initiatives come at a time when normal natural processes of life (such as ageing) become a choice (Gilleard and Higgs, 2013), and beliefs and behaviours are continually being scripted by hegemonic social conventions and ideologies (see, for example, Butler (2006) in relation to performativity and gender). Laliberte (2006) highlights that this positions nature and culture as binaries; however older adults are frequently exercising agency by prioritising an almost elusive pursuit of the valued aspects of youthful appearance and vitality within society. This is being borne out in the consumeristic manner (older) adults are choosing to live their lives, demonstrated through the growth of the anti-ageing market (Searing and Zeilig, 2017), within fashion (Twigg, 2007), and for products like Viagra (Marshall and Katz, 2002, Wada et al., 2015). Such markets are capitalising on the concept of early retirement when one has 'earned' a period of leisure and travel (Moody, 2001:181, Principi et al., 2016), regardless of a simultaneous and significant onus of having moral responsibility to be contributing to society (van Dyk, 2014).

The consequence of this shift is that successful ageing now implies 'not ageing and not being old' (Calassanti and King, 2005:7) and what has evolved is an ageless early older age. This advancing 'plasticity' of old age (van Dyk, 2014:94), driven by the moral directive to be your best self, has not stopped old age; on the contrary it has made it seem even more negative and 'other' (Hurd, 1999). Whilst there is gerontological commitment (and ambition) to rationalise and ultimately eliminate this, it conflicts with the neoliberal agenda using this to afford older age (Estes et al., 2003).

In addition, neoliberal governance advances '...fusions of power at the top and erosions of solidarity at the bottom...' (Brown, 2016:4). This idea of governmentality within the active ageing concept, was introduced by Foucault (Foucault and Senellart, 2008), who considered that there is an under-estimation of macro-level conditions. Governmentality is embedded in the trilogy of power, knowledge, and subjectivity, but acted out in the behaviour of, in this case, older adults, following ideals of self (Foucault, 1991). For Foucault (1991), neoliberalism is a form of governance by installing, through discourse and practices, the concept of older adults as entrepreneurs of themselves. However, despite a number of visible flaws and limitations neoliberal hegemony persists (Scholl and Freyberg-Inan, 2013).

It could be considered that active ageing has almost become an oxymoron. The very thing the active ageing strategy was trying to combat - negative older adult stereotypes - has opened the forum for an almost unattainable state of being, that defies what should be a natural and inevitable process for all. In this way, it has potentially perpetuated the acceleration of ageism, as well as societal fear in relation to issues like dementia and frailty (Holstein and Minkler, 2007).

1.3.3 Marginalisation of Older Adults

Older adults can be portrayed as pillars of the community offering wisdom (Laceulle, 2017), and respect for older adults is still a deeply engrained cultural phenomenon (Gullette, 2017). However, ageist beliefs and narratives are also present (Swift et al., 2017) consequently, the UN Global Campaign Against Ageism launched in March 2021.

Reflections of ageism are visible in most areas of life in the UK, from workplace discrimination (King and Bryant, 2017), to health care when during the recent pandemic ageism proliferated in the blanket treatment of the over 70's (Scharf, 2020). An ageist discourse permeates most levels of society, political discourse being among the worst (Centre for Ageing Better, 2020), and the persistent use of terms like 'demographic timebomb' (Spijker and MacInnes, 2013:347) in the media supports the portrayal of older adults as frail, dependent, and incompetent as well as a 'homogenous blob' (Cann, 2009:40). Viewed with an intersectional lens, age is just one layer within a wider field of discrimination (Romero, 2017); with women and those from ethnic minorities facing a 'double jeopardy' of discrimination (Centre for Ageing Better, 2020).

These potentially ageist perspectives mask older adults' economic contribution through working, volunteering, and providing informal care (IPSOS Thinks, 2019). The 55-65 age group represents those with highest personal wealth in Britain (Department of Work and Pensions, 2019). Older adults make a considerable economic contribution; it is estimated those over 50 years of age contribute 47% of all UK spending (Department of Work and Pensions, 2019). Despite this, older adults are given very low levels of input into consumer markets or product development and there is an absence of older adult presence in most advertising, particularly in relation to leisure, travel, and technology where much of the grey money is spent (Costello and Acland, 2016). Around four million people over 50 years provide unpaid care (Carers UK, 2019) and in excess of 1.5 million people between 70-85 years volunteer in their communities, many contributing to the arts and culture sector in a variety of roles (Hamblin and Harper, 2015). These important contributions are overlooked by neoliberal preoccupations of assessing worth through financial contribution.

I now turn to introduce the setting of my research, Manchester.

1.4 Manchester

Manchester is a large cosmopolitan city located in the northwest of England, rich in industrial heritage and history (Wolff and Savage, 2013) and home to an eclectic mix of

cultural influences, such as architecture (Parkinson-Bailey, 2000), music, and fashion (Cummins, 2012). Culture and growth in the creative industries are key elements of Manchester's success both in relation to the overall economy and the desirability of the city (Manchester City Council, 2017). Culture is also highlighted as an element of importance for supporting the growth in the ageing population (New Economy, 2017) and a pillar within the Greater Manchester ageing framework (Greater Manchester Combined Authority, 2018a). This, combined with Manchester's status as the first UK city to be awarded AF Accreditation (and latterly the first AF region), devolution, and unique, diverse ageing demographics, are all contributory factors to selecting the city as my research setting. In this section I expand on all these factors but will first locate myself in relation to Manchester.

I am not a resident of Manchester; since the early 2000's I have lived and worked in London and more recently in Hertfordshire. I lived in Manchester as an undergraduate at Manchester Metropolitan University in the early 1990s and stayed on to work for several years thereafter. Living in Manchester has left me with many positive memories and enduring friendships therefore it has been a pleasure returning to the city. I was excited to get to know Manchester all over again after its significant regeneration and have loved the nostalgia it has afforded me when travelling between cultural activity groups. In Chapter Three, I discuss my phased approach and embedding myself in the city and ecosystem of cultural activities.

1.4.1 Ageing in Manchester

The ageing demographic of those aged 65 years and over represents 18% of the UK's population and is predicted to rise to more than 25% by 2050 (Office for National Statistics, 2018). Manchester's older adults' population is slightly different, with a predicted increase of only 12% in older adults (Office for National Statistics, 2017). Accounting for this trend, Manchester boasts three universities and the third biggest economy in the UK (World Population Review, 2018); people live in the city to work and study but do not necessarily stay for retirement. This may suggest a lesser need of services for older adults, but when interrelated complexities such as deprivation and

health inequalities are considered that is not in fact the case (Manchester City Council, 2016).

The City of Manchester has 32 electoral wards with different levels of deprivation, wealth, and numbers of older adults (Manchester City Council, 2018). Areas with a higher concentration of older adults are located towards the outskirts of the city, particularly in the north, where deprivation levels are higher (Bullen, 2016). According to the Income Deprivation Affecting Older People Index (IDAOPI), Manchester is the fourth most deprived area in the UK, with 36.3% of older adults being classed as income deprived (Department of Communities and Local Government, 2015). In terms of housing, 47.5% of people over 65 years rent their home with 90% of these in social housing. Almost one third of people over 65 years live alone (Bullen, 2016). Additionally, within the North West region, car ownership is low in Manchester (ONS, 2011), a factor evidenced to increase exclusion from social, cultural, and civic activities (Scharf et al., 2005).

Manchester has the highest levels of migration outside London (Manchester City Council, 2015). The 2011 Census information shows 41% of the population identifying as Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME), double that of all other English local authorities (Manchester City Council, 2015). Accommodating this wide diversity will impact on amenities and make the successful delivery of services more difficult. High immigration and migration figures exacerbate population turnover across Manchester (Manchester City Council, 2015), increasing the risk of social isolation and exclusion which negatively impacts ageing in Manchester (Buffel et al., 2013) and contributes further to health inequalities (Ong et al., 2014; Ong et al., 2016).

Health inequalities continue to challenge policy makers, and health and social care providers, especially in light of funding cuts to social care (Buck et al., 2018). Manchester has the second highest premature mortality rate within the UK's 150 local authorities (Public Health England, 2016) and the highest national premature death rates from cancer, respiratory and cardiovascular disease (Manchester City Council, 2017). Purdam (2016), highlights there is a great discrepancy in life expectancy

between the national average of 73.7 years and 58.3 years in some areas of central Manchester, with men faring significantly worse; interrelated socio-economic, environmental, and lifestyle factors contribute to this. Consequently, people in Manchester are needing more support at an earlier age than in other geographic areas, impacting on services demand and structure (Manchester City Council, 2017).

1.4.2 The Age Friendly Framework

Manchester's vision is that the 'people of Manchester will be living longer, healthier, and more fulfilled lives' (Manchester City Council, 2016:8). The local authority, and partners in Manchester, have a long tradition of being at the forefront of innovative solutions to supporting older adults to age well in their city (McGarry, 2018). When the previous UK Government (2010-2015) scaled back its focus on older adults, Manchester used the WHO AF work as a platform to underpin work around older adults (Age Friendly Manchester, 2016; 2017) to give leverage to their ambition and progress their work with older adults (McGarry, 2018). Manchester became the UK's first AF city in 2010 (Age-Friendly Manchester, 2016) and more recently Greater Manchester (GM) became the UK's first AF region (Greater Manchester Combined Authority, 2018b). All Manchester AF initiatives now fall under the GM Ageing banner.

The WHO developed the AF Cities and Communities model to encourage positive ageing environments for older people in response to global urbanisation and growth in ageing populations (WHO, 2016). Fundamental to the AF framework is the promotion of active ageing endorsing involvement of older adults in line with the citizenship-based model Manchester promotes (Age Friendly Manchester, 2017; Manchester City Council, 2017). This citizenship-based model is a strength or asset-based (the terms are often used interchangeably) approach (Greater Manchester Combined Authority, 2018a). There is no standard definition or standardisation for asset-based approaches (Roy, 2017), but it centres around the consideration of all the positive capabilities inherent to individuals and within their community (from statutory services to voluntary and community sector organisations, private organisations, and buildings and community spaces) (Charles et al., 2018). Asset-based approaches have been adopted into health and social care legislation, for example the Care Act (2014); into

national policy, for example the Personalisation Agenda (NHS, 2019); and into local

polices, for example Altogether Better (2016). Different adoptions of asset-based

approaches in this thesis can be seen in Sections 2.5 and 3.3.

This WHO AF model identifies eight domains to support 'successful' ageing as shown in

the figure below: civic participation and employment; community support and heath;

communication and information; social participation; housing; transport; respect and

social inclusion; and outdoor space and buildings.

Figure 1: Diagram of the Eight Domains of the AF Model (WHO, 2007:9)
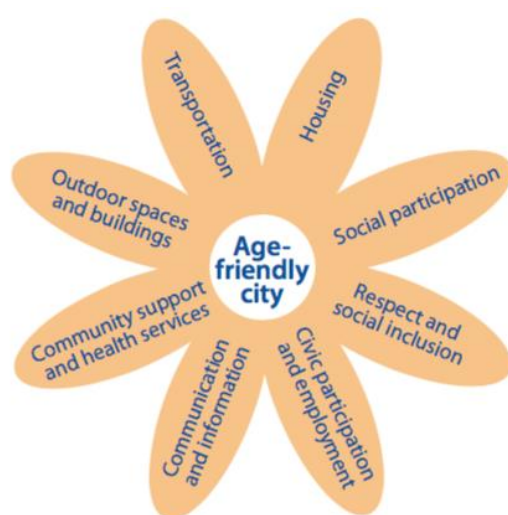
Direct reference is only made to cultural activities within the social participation

domain of the age-friendly model where it states:

> Participating in leisure, social, cultural, and spiritual activities in the community
> …. allows older people to continue to exercise their competence, to enjoy
> respect and esteem, and to maintain or establish supportive and caring
> relationships (WHO, 2007: 38)

However, I argue that cultural engagement is influenced by, contributes to, or is

dependent on many of the other seven pillars within the AF framework, and an

important element of and consideration within Manchester's current work and

strategies (Manchester City Council, 2017; Greater Manchester Local Authority,

2018a). Manchester launched the Cultural Offer Programme in 2007 to improve

accessibility to, and engagement with, the arts and cultural institutions for older adults, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds (Valuing Older People, 2010). The scheme still operates with 150 voluntary 'cultural champions' city-wide. (Ward, 2017a).

Support for cultural activities, and AF work at 12 neighbourhood levels, is central to Manchester's Age-Friendly Strategy (2017) recognising that as people get older, they tend to spend more time in their local community, and local amenities become increasingly important (Buffel et al., 2013; Cramm et al., 2018). Each neighbourhood aims to create places that promote older adults' involvement in delivering and participating in community projects offering local social, cultural and leisure opportunities with the ambition of improving health and reducing social isolation (Handler, 2014; Age Friendly Manchester, 2017).

Alongside Manchester's Age-Friendly work is the GM Devolution Manchester Agreement (The Kings Fund, 2015), under which decision-making power for health and social care budgets has been transferred from national to regional level. The overall aim of the GM Health and Social Care Partnership is to remove barriers to reform, allowing older adults to choose the support they want in their communities (New Economy, 2017). Despite austerity measures, it is hoped that local decisions can prioritise local needs whilst simultaneously allowing more financial sustainability (Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Devolution, 2015).

1.4.3 Age Friendly Framework and Neoliberalism

Age Friendly work has had many positive effects, but critiques also exist which I address in the following section.

Firstly, AF fails to address issues of inequalities, and some would argue has even exacerbated them (van Dyk, 2014; del Barrio et al., 2018). One of the motives for adopting active ageing is that the WHO estimates more than half of the burden of disease among people over 60 years is avoidable through healthier lifestyles (Rizzuto et al., 2012). This neglects the impact of social inequalities which are a product of

complex interactions of many factors accumulative over the life course (Marmot, 2010; Marmot et al., 2020). Despite a governmental shift in policy from individual to population health to help combat this, the UK is falling behind other developed countries (Buck et al., 2018). These inequalities are a factor preventing people from being active or productive in society, either as a result of mental or physical ill health, or from a financial perspective (Bowling, 2006).

Active ageing works best to extend and promote functionality, with a focus on the younger old. This has been widely criticised for presenting a narrow and oppressive framework that alienates at best, and at worst becomes a way to further marginalise older adults should they not be able, or want, to fit this narrative (Clarke and Smith, 2011; Boudiny, 2013; Foster and Walker, 2015). In a systematic review, Martinson and Berridge (2014) highlight issues around ableism, and the lack of space within AF Frameworks for those with disabilities. They also felt the framework was too 'Westernised' and advocated more consideration be given to spirituality, to offer support for issues such as grief and loss to a wider group of individuals, allowing them to age with dignity (Martinson and Berridge, 2014).

A further criticism, raised by del Barrio et al. (2018), harks back to the treatment of older adults as a uniform collective which conversely created some of the initial AF momentum. The fluidity of postmodern society (Bauman, 2013) creates the need for different spaces and platforms from which older adults can embrace a wider notion of being engaged citizens, but as yet this paradigm does not allow the flexibility for this to be achieved.

Final criticisms fit more broadly around the place-based asset approach AF Manchester adopts (Age Friendly Manchester, 2017). Asset-based approaches are a welcome shift away from deficit models that see individuals and communities as problems (Kretzmann and McKnight, 1993; Jupp, 2017) and promise an alternative to fitting people to services (Humphries et al., 2016). Manchester's AF team aims to readjust power hierarchies to allow for more opportunities and development of local assets (McKnight, 2017), but this is dependent on a systemic and significant culture shift in

the way that people and communities work (Finnis et al., 2016). Some academics (see, for example, Tanner et al., 2018) question whether this will come to fruition, arguing that the rendering of neoliberal governance allows a rhetorical standpoint that advocates social justice and empowerment, whilst holding individuals responsible for their realisation. Additionally, success rests on the underlying assumption that communities are a force for good, yet they have been shown to be a cause of social exclusion through marginalising disadvantaged groups (Cox and Pardasani, 2017; Tyler, 2013). MacLeod and Emejulu (2014:432) voice concerns that this is 'neoliberalism with a community face' playing to 'individualism, marketisation and privatisation of public life' and again opens potential to broaden inequality divisions (Friedli, 2013; Tanner et al., 2018). For older adults, considerable disparity already exists, and evidence suggests that asset-based approaches are working better for the productive third age and less so for the fourth age where arguably there is greater need (Daly and Westwood, 2018; Tanner et al., 2018). Nevertheless, there is a growing number of examples where asset-based approaches are having positive effects, but better theorising and more empirical evidence is needed (Ripon and South, 2017; Cottam, 2018). Often success rests on the individual assets and nuances within communities, and therefore widespread replication is difficult (Heimans and Timms, 2018; Cottam 2018).

In conclusion, whilst active ageing can be a useful framework, it is not a perfect solution. It has been adopted in Manchester with the ambition to give the best opportunities to all older adults and support ageing in place, but it was also a timely manoeuvre to combat measures of austerity. Without the right infrastructure and financial resources to facilitate the work needed to create an AF region, difficulties are likely; especially for those already marginalised in part by the very framework that set out to support them (Buffel and Phillipson, 2018).

1.5 Sense of Self, Place and Belonging

In the previous sections I have positioned cultural activities and their importance within the AF framework. I have explained Manchester's community-led, place-based approaches, where older adults are key stakeholders, and its intention to develop local solutions and initiatives to build AF neighbourhoods and support ageing in place.

Research has been conducted by Ambition for Ageing in GM to better understand what makes a neighbourhood age friendly (Thorley, 2018). A primary theme was 'community belonging', explained as a connectedness to the locality and more importantly the people within it through positive social interactions with 'people like me' (Thorley, 2018:6&7). Community belonging here is an 'emotionally loaded' phrase (Bennett, 2013:26), exemplifying difficulties in 'common sense' descriptions of belonging, whilst simultaneously highlighting it as a cultural, embodied, and situated sense of knowing what and how things are done in everyday life (Miller, 2003). It is through this conceptual lens of self, place, and belonging that I set out to explore older adult's engagement in cultural activities within the age friendly city of Manchester. The use of this lens in relation to ageing in place is not new, and links have previously been drawn (Bennett, 2013; Dobner et al., 2014; Reich et al., 2020). Self, place, and belonging are three tightly interwoven, complex, and interdependent concepts. I now introduce each one, starting with belonging, followed by sense of place and of self.

1.5.1 Belonging

In Maslow's (1970) hierarchy of needs, a sense of belonging was identified and this ontological approach to belonging persists in the literature (Miller, 2003). Much of the theory on belonging, refers to acceptance within social groups, a collectiveness, or a sense of solidarity intrinsic to our everyday social worlds (Calhoun, 2003). Sense of belonging is acknowledged as both immutable and changing; recognising that different levels of belonging can occur to different groups, simultaneously, based on many different factors of self (Amin, 2013). This relational aspect of belonging is fundamental to my study as cultural activities are positioned to promote social and civic participation. The literature on belonging is rich and multi-disciplinary. I will consider different theories of belonging, illustrating alternatives that incorporate elements of politics, material culture, memory, emotions, and place. I also consider how globalisation, accompanied by greater mobility, diversity, and growing digital connectedness, has also influenced the nature, experience, and theories of belonging (Phillipson, 2013).

Yuval-Davis (2011) is amongst other academics (see, for example, Butcher, 2010; Wessendorf, 2019) who have drawn on political elements of belonging through exploration of migration stories to study multi-culturalism, national identity, and community cohesion. She distinguishes three interrelated domains of belonging: social spaces (considered here as a hierarchical dynamic that needs viewing through an intersectional lens), the performative notion of emotional attachments, and also the '…ethical and political value systems with which people judge their own and other belonging/s' (Yuval-Davis et al., 2006:197). Within the politics of belonging, Yuval-Davis et al. (2006) references the social, cultural, and geographic boundaries that influence the ability and entitlement of belonging. The tensions within and between all these factors influence the possibilities, and the physical or symbolic boundaries, of being able to belong. Others highlight the possibility of not belonging. For example, Savage et al. (2005:48), looking at areas of Manchester undergoing regeneration, demonstrated how it made locals feel like 'outsiders'. Additionally, location is not always a choice; local belonging is not just about being accepted but also includes local interactions in public spaces (Ahmed and Fortier, 2003).

The performative notion of emotional attachment has been recognised by Yuval-Davis (2011). Fortier (2000), and more recently Lewis and May (2020), studied belonging from a place-based perspective and demonstrated the importance of material culture. Their work is supportive of the notion of 'life world' where people and things are fundamentally entangled (Ingold, 2010). Fortier (2000), utilising Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus' identified language, clothing, and traditions as elements of belonging which Italian women took from one place of belonging, creating another. Her later work has relevance here, because it demonstrated the value of community groups to make connections and foster a sense of belonging, when individuals use and move through these spaces (Fortier, 2000). Home is a central metaphor, inferring emotional security and attachment, used within the literature on belonging (Antonsich, 2010). Savage (2005), also drawing on Bourdieu, considered belonging in relation to place attachment and rootedness and identified that personal histories and nostalgia as crucial elements of what he termed 'elective belonging'.

Lewis and May (2020) found that enmeshed in people's belonging to place were elements of personal biography and the materiality of the buildings. They identified competing elements of belonging in a temporal sense and acknowledged the effect of individual memories (Lewis and May, 2020). Memory is also central to Wright (2015) whose place-based perspectives embraced the multiplexity of belonging and considered it as an emotional attachment. She proposed exploring belonging through attunement to the creation of the 'flow' of interaction between humans, place, and objects (Wright, 2015). Memory has also been seen as an enabler of place attachment which is described in the next section (Lewicka, 2013).

May (2013:3) draws many of these factors together and presents belonging as:

> The process of creating a sense of identification with, or connection to, cultures, people, places and material objects, which entails feeling at ease with one's self and one's social, cultural, relational and material contexts.

She argues belonging is an under-acknowledged, but omnipresent sense, an ordinary element of everyday life and engagement in the social world, perhaps better noticed when one is not belonging (Ahmed 2004; Valentine et al., 2009). May's (2011; 2013) approach is multifaceted and encompasses memory, politics, material embodiment, and place without any of these elements having primacy. This is a strength in exploring cultural activities in Manchester, as it allows for an openness with which to view the dynamic everyday of older adult's engagement. I have consistently presented belonging as situated phenomenon and now look at sense of place.

1.5.2 Sense of Place

Traditionally, place has been perceived as a bounded entity (Relph, 1976) and local places positioned as passive environments that harbour social life (Gieryn, 2000). I disagree and instead consider places as both dynamic and heterogeneous. My position is supported by ageing in place work of Golant (2015a), who considers the 'right places' to age in the context of subjective influences of physical, psychosocial, and cultural factors (Wiles et al., 2012). This aligns with Ingold (2010), who asserts places are assigned meaning through the action of individuals. It also aligns with Massey's

(2005) work, that draws a distinction between the interrelated concepts of place and space. For Massey (2005), places are not simply a point on a map but relational and contingent on the complex intersection of the social, political, and spatial within a temporal framework. This is important when examining where cultural activities take place. Viewing space as a place where knowledge is embodied and acted on is therefore fundamental to ethnographies (Thrift 2008; Pink 2015), including my own. Massey (2005) draws on the embodied nature of space, understanding it as dependent on the flow of activity and the interactions between material objects and physical settings. Her concept is nonlinear - it can have multiple meanings, permeate boundaries, and change over time; as such, it is never complete.

Lefebvre (1991) made similar inferences about the absence of an absolute space. In Lefebvre's theory, space is socially produced and as '…colonised through social activity it becomes relativized and historical' (Hubbard et al., 2004:6). Geographical perspectives are important to gerontology, especially considering ageing communities in an era of increased mobility and cultural diversity (Greenfield et al., 2015). Although some consider individuals to be less connected to places than they once were (Gustafson, 2009). In exploring the spaces of cultural activity for older adults, I look to the embodied practices co-created in them and keep these theories in mind when applying the lens of sense of place.

As with belonging, sense of place is contested and can be about place attachment, place identity, place dependency, and place rootedness (Patterson & Williams, 2005). Place attachment is a phenomenological approach with Tuan's (1977) work one of the earliest. Altman and Low (1992: 5) describe place attachment as '… space that has been given meaning through personal, group or cultural processes', thereby highlighting the embeddedness people associate with place (Raymond et al., 2010). Research in this field explores embodied interactions between people, physical environments, and institutions; but has been criticised for a lack of specificity in relation to its theoretical application (Manzo and Devine-Wright, 2014). It is generally accepted that place attachment endures over time (Giuliani et al., 2003; Lewicka,

2011), but its stability can change according to life stage and by economic, social, and political disruptions (Brown and Perkins, 1992; Devine-Wright, 2013).

Place- identity is a psychological concept linked to 'identity'. The term was introduced by Proshansky et al. (1983), to ensure place was connected to identity. Place identity refers to the values (personal, social, and community) that people ascribe to place, ideas of self, and one's own self-worth. Pretty et al.'s (2003:274) definition of place identity as a 'self-definitional attitude towards a place', reflects its subjectiveness to an individual's life experiences and perspective. A lack of cross-disciplinary dialogue has led to confusion between place attachment and place identity, but fundamentally the two concepts share a strong focus on emotional ties to place (Devine-Wright, 2013). In contrast, place dependency is a goal-driven concept in which individuals evaluate the qualities and facilities an environmental setting provides (White et al., 2008). Place dependence can be characterised by low levels of attachment, and whilst a useful lens to explore communities, it should be considered that agency and choice in location vary (Pretty et al., 2003).

Place rootedness is attributed to sense of place by many theorists (see, for example, Tuan, 1977; Buttimer and Seamon, 1980; Hummon, 1992). Relph (1976:38,37) asserts places are '…a fundamental aspect of man's [sic] existence in the world…' and 'profound ties' with place are an essential part of being that 'roots' us. They are a lifeline, but also a permanence, and one could argue his view aligns with Savage's (2005:207) work on elected belonging which similarly references 'putting down roots', although Savage suggested a stronger biographical element. This focus on roots linked with the concept of place insiderness and how belonging to place can give the sense of being an insider and allow for feelings of security and inclusion (Buttimer and Seamon, 1980). In contrast, placelessness refers to the sense of exclusion and isolation from the local environment (Relph, 1976). Rowles (1983) has adopted this concept to explore how environments shape identities in old age, in particular, integration with neighbourhoods through forms of social participation and civic engagement.

One noted omission from the sense of place literature is the absence of a socio-political context when investigating how people feel about places (Manzo and Perkins, 2006). The phenomenon of place relationships to promote or inhibit older adults' engagement in cultural activities is something that this research sets out to explore. I conclude this section by introducing sense of self, understood to be inherent in sense of place and belonging.

1.5.3 Sense of Self

In this section I introduce relevant approaches to understanding self, in relation to ageing and community engagement.

Sense of self, or identity, is contextual and managed (or performed) in relation to others and serves to offer a personal location in different social, political, and cultural contexts that is realised through positive recognition (Weeks 1990; Burkitt 2008). Sense of self is central to both sense of belonging and also sense of place and older adults will be influenced by the groups they attend and activities they participate in. This has been highlighted as an omission in other work examining links between activity engagement and belonging (Inoue et al., 2019).

As discussed in Section 1.3, older adults, according to neoliberal norms, actively pursue an ideal self; but this self also needs to be considered in the context of identity, self, and personhood. Lawton (2000:5) describes self as 'one's inner subjective being' whereas identity is more externally formed through intertwined and permeable meanings of cultural, groups, and social interaction (Goffman, 1969). The work of Giddens (1991) is influential here, with the introduction of a reflexive self, which allows self to be a project without the traditional anchors of categories such as class and gender. Critics of this theory include Adkins (2004), who highlights the inherent gendered and class limitations when exercising reflexivity, and Smart (2007), who, in relation to the presentation of the self as a disembodied being, draws attention to the important contribution of kinship and the web of relations. A disembodied or monadic approach of self became dominant in the West (Burkitt, 2008), yet this 'ideology of self' (Gergen, 1999:118) is problematic because of presumed separation of self and

society, and self and identity. Alternative approaches, such as Pink's (2006:24) propose a relational, fluid sense of self instead, that is neither a fixed identity, nor considered in isolation:

> [N]ever fully defined in any absolute way, but it is only in specific social interactions that the identity of any individual comes in to being in relation to the negotiations that it undertakes with other individuals.

Arguably, Strathern's (1992) work on partible persons and agency has paved the way for more relational approaches to self. For her, a person possesses agency by 'turning themselves into units' and these different units can then be 'dispatched' to create relationships, or in her phrase 'partial connections' (Strathern, 1992:180). These work in both active and passive dimensions, which contribute to personhood through the enacting, and exchange, of social resources. I believe that this sits best with my research. Personhood has resonance with the agentic stance of neoliberal older age whilst allowing a perspective that can be inclusive of illness and decline that may accompany older age allowing a fuller perspective than focusing on a more 'social self' (Burkitt, 2008).

Here I have detailed theories in relation to self, place, and belonging and positioned them as three complex but interwoven concepts. All concepts are acknowledged as contested and intangible concepts, difficult to articulate, but well situated to explore complex phenomena, such as the experience of ageing and how cultural activity participation impacts, because of its:

> [L]ocation in the everyday realities of people and its dynamic nature, belonging is a concept that allows us to examine the mutual interaction between social change and the self. (May 2011:374).

I am cognisant of the work of Yuval-Davies (2006) and Bennett (2013), and although I did not intend to ask directly about people's sense of self, place or belonging, I use this concept to consider how practices are enacted and talked of throughout my research and analysis.

1.6 Summary and the Research Aims and Objectives

In this chapter I have discussed the conceptualisation of my study and situated it in Manchester. I have given an understanding of the WHO's AF work, and considered this critically in the context of ageing theories and neoliberal politics. I have also outlined my parameters for cultural activities and the importance of the everyday, linking this back to AF agendas, and older adults' remaining active citizens, connected to their communities. In undertaking this study, I contribute to research centred on older adults' participation in cultural activities across AF Manchester, investigating how this interacts with sense of self, place, and belonging. As I explore in Chapter Two, whilst empirically based literature on the benefits of engaging in cultural activities for mental, physical, and social well-being exists, this has not been examined as a cityscape in an AF city. My research is of policy relevance where ageing in place is a goal for older adults, as well as for governments, and where people are being signposted to their local communities for cultural activities to support well-being. It also contributes to our understanding of how AF work can best support cultural engagement.

My research is ethnographic and provides a rich and textualised account of older adults' participation in cultural activities, through the lens of self, place, and belonging. I describe how cultural activities are defined and enabled by older adults and other stakeholders, how they are used in the everyday lives of older adults, and I explore their role in supporting people to remain in their communities. As I argue in Chapter Two, my work counterbalances the predominance of quantitative studies in the field that have used inordinately narrow definitions of culture or have focused interventional outcomes.

Chapter Two: A Review of the Literature

2.1 Introduction

In Chapter One I set the conceptual and theoretical framework for my study. This chapter considers the empirical literature. Firstly, I acknowledge the breadth of the literature, the difficulties this created in carrying out systematic searches and how I addressed this through adopting an iterative approach. My literature review resulted in five themes: the benefits of cultural activities; heterogeneity of participation; 'Project Self'; for fun or with purpose; and fostering social connections. These themes are summarised with key empirical literature identified. Where applicable, I link my findings and observations back to the theoretical frames of Chapter One. I also consider the role of social capital and introduce the concept of social prescribing. In my summary I return to the ageing in place literature, show how my research addresses current gaps in knowledge and uses an original approach to explore a particular cityscape of older adults and cultural activities.

The literature presented here spans a range of disciplines and is almost exclusively from the Global North. This focus is intentional as it offers most relevance to the study's location, the UK. However, I acknowledge that there may be different contexts of ageing and meanings of culture in the Global South which are also of value.

2.2 The Breadth of Cultural Activities: Setting Parameters and Search Methods

In Chapter One I located culture as a complex, contested, multidimensional term - as a 'nebulous thread' (Cohen, 1982:11) - and justified my working parameters of 'cultural activities' to be broad, and inclusive of high culture, leisure activities, and also of everyday culture. This 'nebulousness' was vindicated in my literature review relating to cultural activities for older adults where the parameters within research studies varied significantly and were often vague. However, the lack of a standard definition, whilst making it an interesting and rich field for study, has also presented challenges, as I will explain. Additionally, the sheer breadth of literature around cultural activities has been daunting from the beginning of my PhD, and to an extent remains so still. It is impossible to offer a complete review of literature within the confines of this thesis. I

will begin by offering some examples of the literature's diversity, before outlining my approach.

The parameters within which cultural activities are explored in individual studies varies. Some have looked at a specific activity such as music and singing (see, for example, Schäfer et al., 2013; Perkins and Williamon, 2014; Daykin et al., 2018), while others, such as Toepoel (2013), have taken a broader steer and included aspects such as cabaret, theatre, museums, and concerts, alongside more leisure-based activities such as games, crafts, watching television, and reading in their work. Sometimes no parameters are made explicit (see, for example, Van Groenou and Deeg, 2010; Yamashita et al., 2019; Yoon et al., 2020).

Even within the categorisation of high culture, contentions remain, and the pursuit of the perfect classification continues to create tensions. Windsor (2005) identified 41 forms of cultural engagement, categorising them as creative, social, or physical activity, dividing them further into performing or non-performing sub-categories. Davies et al. (2012), critical of previous classifications, considered 91 different forms of cultural engagement which they narrowed down in to five groups: performing arts; visual arts, design and craft; community/cultural festivals, fairs and events; literature; and online, digital and electronic arts. They also distinguished between 'active' and 'passive' activities and considered the former as requiring higher levels of engagement (Davies et al., 2012). More recent is a distinction between participatory engagement (such as the creation of music, art, drama etc.) and receptive engagement (such as going to museums, concerts etc.), but the literature is currently biased in favour of the participatory arts in the United Kingdom (Tymoszuk et al., 2021).

Given such a messy, ill-defined field of cultural activities, it was clear that a traditional systematic review would not be feasible. Instead, I have found benefits in applying other literature review strategies, such as hand-searching, contacting authors, citation searching, reviewing reference lists, and the inclusion of grey literature as is recommended for diffuse subjects of study (Pappaioannou et al., 2009). I have enjoyed finding articles through unsystematic routes, coming across journal articles, sometimes

in a more serendipitous fashion (for example through Twitter) or following reference paths of what influenced authors in this field, and what in turn they influenced. A 'theoretical sufficiency' approach has been taken, which allows an in-depth understanding, rather than claiming to be completely exhaustive (Dey, 1999:257). I have considered both quantitative and qualitative literature to gain an in-depth picture of the field. In the next section I present my findings in five themes. The first two themes give a more general overview of why there is increasing interest in cultural activities and explore how older adults are engaging; these reflect more of the quantitative literature but are important for context and overview. In the final three themes, my focus is on the qualitative literature, exploring more of the nuanced knowledge regarding older adults' participation in cultural activities.

2.3 Cultural Activities for Older Adults: Five Key Themes

2.3.1 Benefits to Health

The benefits of taking part in cultural activities on health can be evidenced throughout history for, some argue, at least 200,000 years (Camic, 2008). A recent parliamentary group review (All Party Parliamentary Group on Arts Health and Wellbeing, 2017) highlighted that the benefits of cultural activities are just as pertinent in the current day. Wide acceptance of these views is shown through the inclusion of cultural activities within NICE guidelines (NICE, 2015) and the promotion of culture within policy domains (Health and Social Care Act, 2012; Care Act, 2014). Some of their value is attributed to the intrinsic nature of art related activities, which have been proven to have inherent therapeutic benefits for well-being (Stuckey and Nobel, 2010). Unsurprisingly then, the empirical evidence for cultural activities, specifically for older adults, and their health benefits is extensive.

Evidence supports the benefit of engagement in cultural activities across a number of domains. Some scholars simply look at a general enhancement in quality of life (Silverstein and Parker, 2002; Noice et al., 2014; Ho et al., 2019), other studies target specific areas of well-being. Specific examples follow, however, this is only a small selection of the extensive literature. Regarding physical health, cultural activities have been shown: to support functional ability (Cohen et al., 2006; Adams et al., 2011 and

Nilsson et al., 2017); to help chronic pain management (Clements-Cortés, 2017; Fancourt and Steptoe, 2018); to play a role in falls prevention (Merom et al., 2013; Hwang and Braun, 2015); and have also been linked to increased life expectancy (Bygren et al., 1996; Fushiki et al., 2012). They have been shown to have protective qualities for older adults' mental health including the potential to alleviate depression (Hong et al., 2009; Fancourt and Tymoszuk, 2019) and anxiety (Lindsay-Smith; 2019; Sala et al., 2019). There is support that cultural activities may help cognitive function as a person ages (Haslam et al., 2014; Liu et al., 2018; Park et al., 2018). The empirical literature also evidences further health benefits through reduced isolation and improved social cohesion (Toepoel, 2013; Kim et al., 2019), which Section 2.3.5 considers in more depth.

Early research drawing links between cultural activities and health and wellbeing is largely based on Scandinavian longitudinal studies (Brygen et al., 1996; Johansson et al., 2001), although more recent evidence from Japan, France, and England is comparable (Fushiki et al., 2012; Joulain et al., 2019; Tymoszuk et al., 2019). Such longitudinal studies account for outliers, while still treating the cohort largely as a homogenous group. Tomioka et al. (2019) illustrates this; when looking at leisure activities through self-related health measurements, they found insufficient account for differences in gender and educational status. It should also be considered that studies depending on survey data, as previously mentioned in Chapter One, offer a narrow view of cultural participation (Taylor, 2016). Equally, bias will exist within the survey population, for example those who are depressed are less likely to participate, leading to a skewed sample (Fancourt and Tymoszuk, 2019).

Since the early 2000s, and the seminal work of Cohen et al. (2006) that considered the impact of engaging in creative activities on older adults, much of the empirical evidence has been dominated by Random Control Trials (RCTs). These offer an intervention-driven focus on a particular type of activity, for example music (Varvarigou et al., 2013; Noice et al., 2014; Coulton et al., 2015), and often with a specific cohort of individuals such as people with dementia, carers, or people in long-term care. The emphasis is frequently on displaced groups, raising the risk of creating a

need for intervention and maintaining a deficit focus. Such RCTs tend to support these interventions in a celebratory fashion, regardless of suggestions of poor quality and a lack of robustness (Van Malderen et al., 2013). Coulton et al. (2015), for example, in their analysis of community singing initiatives, cited study limitations of bias, in both the dominance of White British samples and the self-selection on which interventions recruit participants. Additionally, health is often self-reported, and therefore subjective, a fact that is further complicated by well-being being a complex multi-dimensional concept from which it is impossible to extract residual variables when exploring cultural engagement as an independent factor. Clark and Harding (2012) in their systematic review of music interventions, found overall support for tangible benefits but recommended larger samples, validated measurement tools and better random group allocation to strengthen the evidence base. Similar suggestions are to be found elsewhere (Bickerdike et al., 2017). Clark and Harding (2012) also advocated for more qualitative studies to understand the nuances of engagement uncapturable by quantitative data. Additionally, there have been calls for a shift in approach towards better understanding the mechanisms, processes, and complexity of factors around participation in cultural activities and how they support ageing well (Liddle et al., 2013; Bernard et al., 2015). All the above limitations have influenced design and methodology of my study, see Chapter Three.

2.3.2 Heterogeneity of the Landscape of Cultural Activities

The diversification of later lifestyles has been highlighted by Scherger et al. (2011), amongst others, who explore the successful transition from work to retirement, especially with regards to how people re-negotiate their day-to-day lives. Admittedly, this focus on retirement is not relevant to all older adults, but empirical evidence generally supports a disparity in cultural activities and highlights heterogeneity in engagement. Older adults today are reportedly more active, healthier, and more independent than in the past (Lee et al., 2018), and consequently may be leading more active and diverse lifestyles. This is a development that runs counter to negative, stereotypical views of older adulthood (Agahi and Parker, 2005). Accompanying a greater interest in maintaining health and well-being, particularly amongst baby boomers, is a shift in participation away from sedentary activities to more active,

diverse, and adventurous ones (Fitzpatrick and McCabe, 2008; Cochran et al., 2009; Ziegler and Scharf, 2014). Additionally, older adults want to take more control and ownership of these choices (Hand, 2020).

The literature suggests that cultural activity participation reflects existing diversity in lifestyles across the population. This is informed by past (and current) work (Lee et al., 2018), recreational activities from the past (Colley et al., 2019), education (Morrow-Howell et al., 2014; Park et al., 2018), age (Janke et al., 2006), gender (Avital, 2017), social network and relational status (Gallagher, 2012; Ihle et al., 2016, Bruggencate et al 2018) as well as health and socio-economic differences. The grey literature confirms these findings and presents cultural activity engagement as dependent on health, wealth, relationship status, transport availability, urban dwelling, caring responsibilities, and friendship networks, suggesting that choice is not always an option (Age UK, 2018b).

The value of cultural activities in transitional spaces, both to and through older age, is generally positioned as a given. There has been increased attention to whether cultural activities at a community level reflect the empirical evidence around heterogeneity of participation, and if so, how and for whom. Wanka (2019), for example, criticises the distinction between pre- and post-retirement analysis, and turns to the work of May and Thrift (2003) around spatio-temporal competencies and ways of being. Wanka's (2019) interest relates to how people, during this transition period of later life, take previous ways of structuring time and place into cultural activity engagement. This is also where the qualitative literature can offer a deeper understanding of older adult's cultural activity engagement. My next three themes address the qualitative literature on cultural activities.

2.3.3 Continuation of Self and Development in Older Age

For many people, although not all, the work we do, or our employment status, significantly contributes to self-identity (Goffman, 1969; Giddens, 1991). It should therefore be unsurprising that the transition to retirement is one that requires some adjustment (Barnes and Parry, 2004; Sargent et al., 2013; Centre for Ageing Better,

2018), albeit the specifics are shaped by class, resources, and circumstance (Dury et al., 2014; Moffatt and Heaven, 2017). Cultural activities in later life have been shown to support adjustments to ageing, and to transitional periods of later life, such as retirement. The themes 'Project Self', 'For fun or with purpose', and 'Fostering social connections', will address this. 'Project Self' is predominantly about the importance of continued learning and self-growth, and the balance between acceptance, growth, and validation influenced by temporal and relational factors. Here, I use a selection of qualitative studies that bring these elements to the fore, but I also identify discrepancies.

Gutheil and Heyman (2016) undertook focus group research with 27 older adults who participated in a range of cultural activities including quilting, singing, and memoir writing. They themed their findings according to personal and interpersonal change - the latter is considered in Section 2.3.5; here I focus on personal change. For one of their participants, the libraries had 'allowed me to reinvent myself', and for another 'it's opened up a whole new side of me' (Gutheil and Heyman, 2016:173). In both situations however, much of the personal growth, or sense of self, for these adults came from a perspective of gaining greater self-confidence. For Gutheil et al (2016), this included those who, for different reasons, had found themselves lacking in confidence, but they also argued that the sessions had therapeutic benefit, although gave limited detail on this. This idea of doing something new is highlighted by some (see, for example, O'Shea & LÉlme, 2012), but not by others. Reynolds, (2015) is one example of research suggesting it is continuity of existing pastimes and interests which supports a sense of self in older age. Similarly, everyday activities, such as gardening (Bhatti et al., 2009), are also linked to sustaining a sense of self.

Growth of confidence was also highlighted by Todd et al., (2017:48), when evaluating museum programmes, as well as a sense of personal, and of neighbourhood discovery: "I've lived in [town] for so long…. I didn't know it existed" was the comment of one group member. This activity programme offered participants a space to reconsider their activity levels, but the study also situated some learning and development within in a relational context and encouraged participants to self-evaluate in comparison to

others. Time at this museum project allowed new social exchanges which enhanced social relations and confidence, according to the authors. Unlike Gutheil and Heyman (2016), this project did not work for everyone, a fact attributed to a combination of declining ability levels, and a lack of relational connection (Todd et al., 2017). Interestingly, a skilful facilitator was credited as crucial to the project's success and other scholars have concurred (Varvarigou et al., 2013; Clements-Cortés, 2017; Thompson et al., 2020).

Rose and Lonsdale (2016) explored relational connectivity alongside reminiscence and how re-imagining landscape painting could affect wellbeing. This study considered reminiscence on group processes as a way of supporting people to connect the past with the present, and to link their older and younger-age selves, positively reaffirming an older age identity. This balance (or the tension) of self-acceptance, of past self, and continued growth in a more immediate sense was also found by Reichstadt et al., (2010) to be a facet of successful ageing. The process of looking back and forward, using a new creative encounter to rejuvenate a sense of self was also the focus of an ethnography of creative writing classes in the UK (Sabeti, 2015). Sabeti (2015) critiqued traditional temporal thinking of old age and creativity in which reminiscence re-invigorates a sense of self through a connection with one's past. Instead, the art of creating something new requires a sense of mastery through individual agency and a forward orientation as proposed by Cohen et al. (2006). For Sabeti (2015), cultural activities are subject to both temporal and relational complexity that exist in different forms. She suggested that people come to them for many different reasons, making cultural activities of interest for further study.

Lastly, I consider how cultural activities can push against ingrained negative perceptions that influence the experience of ageing. Yamamoto (2020) explored the experience of regular drama improvisation classes for a group of older women. For these women learning was playful and positioned more as teaching agility of mind and the ability to be adaptive; participants spoke about defying mental decline - 'not being their age' (Yamamoto, 2020:9), a finding echoed by others for example Marhánková (2019) or Hurd (1999). The women in Yamamoto's research viewed self not as judged

against self-acceptance, or peers, but as a push back against societal expectations; age for them became irrelevant. Yamamoto's (2020) work gave some support to Cohen et al.'s (2006) theorising that creative potential can be thwarted by not allowing positive ageing experiences and that opportunities to push back on negative stereotyping were needed. Her study highlighted attendance because sessions were fun and emphasised the benefits gained from social connections, which relates directly to the proceeding themes (Yamamoto, 2020).

Here I have explored some of the ways cultural activities are presented as contributing to and achieving a positive sense of self. Different assertions have been explored by considering the balance of new tropes of self alongside self-acceptance and a continued sense of self, the influences of memory and historic past, and the desire to defy negative stereotypes within society.

2.3.4 For Fun or with Purpose?

Many qualitative studies highlight cultural activities as enjoyable or fun, which this section unpacks a little (see, for example, Bruggencate et al., 2019). Yamamoto (2020: 10), for example, shares the following quote in her work: 'I often refer to it as adult playtime. That's what it seems like'. Despite being ill-defined, and subjective, this notion of fun united studies of cultural activity participation, although no doubt amplified by participants' agency in attendance and an acknowledgement that views from non-participants were harder to research (Hemingway and Jack, 2013).

Dare et al. (2018: 876) ran focus groups with older adults participating in community activity groups, and found that attendance was incentivised by social enjoyment, 'fun', and the friendships that formed in these groups amongst participants and organisers. Participation for some was a reason to get 'out of the house' (Dare et al., 2018:876), and other studies support this need for structure and routine (Phinney et al., 2014), but participation was also dependent on a personal interest in the activities offered. Dare at al. (2018) considered non, or one-off, attendance, and drew attention to the fact that as groups get established, it becomes harder to incorporate a diverse, heterogeneous older adult population.

The importance of fun was also highlighted in Schneider and McCoy's (2018) ethnography that explored how older adults incorporated dance into their everyday lives. They were critical of empirical literature specific to dance for its interventional bias on ageing and sought a better understanding of why and how older adult's value participation (Schneider and McCoy, 2018). Fun in this study was anchored through supportive friendships, networks, and a 'sense of belonging' (Schneider and McCoy 2018:61) but also through elements of ritual (through dress) and rhythmic embodiment which contributed to feeling part of the dance community.

Others have been more focused on activities with a purpose, for example, Liddle et al. (2013) explored older women's engagement in craft and found activities helped build confidence, self-worth, and joy, all of which are findings that agree with already existing research. They suggested pleasure was also attributed to sharing and passing on skills and products to the wider community which, linking back to Section 2.3.3, contributed to a positive sense of self and continued self-development (Liddle et al., 2013). Purpose was also a significant factor, but with a caveat of ability as those who no longer had abilities, especially ones previously prided, faced negative mental health implications, and left groups (Liddle et al., 2013). Pöllänen (2015) similarly looked at narratives of craft for older women and proposed crafting pastimes allowed a similar purpose in their lives. Significant here was the sensual element of crafting, and how the purposeful act of making required skills enacted through touch, sight and co-ordination of body and mind.

Other authors have studied participation from a gendered perspective. This is not central to my study research, which was concerned with broader inclusion. Much of the literature presented so far considers women's participation, suggesting that women participate more widely in cultural activities, or perhaps being driven more by social aspects. Some evidence also supports a gender disparity of participation (Avital, 2017), whilst others looking specifically at men, suggest that the heterogeneity of older adults is more important than gender (Neville et al., 2018); although within the literature, a constant seems men that need activities to be purposeful. Takashima et al.

(2020) interviewed 15 older men living in urban Japan who engaged in a range of leisure, everyday, high culture, and volunteering activities and found that these activities were beneficial to health (considered in Section 2.3.1) and social interactions (considered in Section 2.3.5). In addition, they also found the following themes: 'Feeling I am still useful' construed older men's employment of activities as an outlet of their skills and abilities (Takashima et al., 2020:online), a finding echoed through other research on men (Milligan et al., 2016; Lefkowich and Richardson, 2018). 'Feeling that something is my responsibility' was about a sense of giving back to society and 'feeling of time well spent' related to now having time to take on new challenges (Takashima et al., 2020:online). They linked elements of contribution, a fulfilling social life, and a relational belonging in their community. Interestingly, Takashima et al.'s (2020:online) research highlighted older adult groups flattened hierarchies, a feature experienced as liberating:

> It feels like you are back to square one where your past job doesn't matter…and everyone is on an equal footing. No titles.' (Takashima et al., 2020:online).

This is not a universal finding, Milligan et al. (2016) found evidence of hierarchical standing in relation to both practice and communication within men-only groups.

Here Erikson's (1963) theories of generativity have relevance. Generativity is the seventh stage within an eight-stage life development mode, a mid-life stage focused on imparting knowledge through nurturing and guidance intended as a legacy for the next generation. Erikson (1997) used the concept in his work on grand-parenting and generativity, which has been criticised for being too unidimensional (Schoklitsch and Baumann, 2012). Multidimensional models have since been developed (see, for example, Kotre, 1995; McAdams and Logan, 2004), which are less restricted by age boundaries and go beyond a focus on passing a legacy to subsequent generations. Theories of generativity are seen as an under-explored avenue in relation to supporting the transition process of retirement (Narushima, 2005). The concept of generativity has also been incorporated into current successful ageing strategies and into approaches where a key component is the ability for adults to realise their

potential and give back or contribute to society, an issue that is especially germane as with increased health and improved education, adults live longer (Fried et al., 1997; WHO, 2016). In exploring generativity in older age, Villar (2012) identifies the need for better understanding as to the different dimensions of generativity but feels there are current gaps in this knowledge.

The need for purposeful engagement for older adults is also pertinent within the literature looking at older adults in relation to volunteerism (Baines et al., 2004; Warburton et al., 2006; Kumar et al., 2012). As with gender, this is not a primary focus of my research, but I acknowledge overlap and some mirroring with my focus on cultural activities. The role of fun or purpose, and the varying contribution of each, has been discussed in this section alongside the introduction of generativity. Purpose and fun are not mutually exclusive, nor do they show the entirety of why people chose to participate and continue with such groups and pastimes; the simplicity of offering something to punctuate daily life and give a routine is certainly another consideration (Grant et al. 2017; Phinney et al., 2014). What consistently threads through all of this and much of the previous theme is the social relations that form as a result of participation and the value that older adults place on this.

2.3.5 Fostering Social Connections

A significant amount of the qualitative literature exploring cultural activity engagement for older adults evidences the importance of social relations and the value of cultural activities in developing and supporting these. Even within solitary leisure occupations, such as knitting, friendships and communities are cherished outcomes (Court, 2020). Linking into this theme is a wider body of literature around loneliness and social network which I now introduce.

Loneliness currently has a high profile in the media and academic literature. It is estimated 1.2 million older adults in the UK experience loneliness (HM Government, 2018b), although loneliness is indiscriminate and affects people of all ages (Griffin, 2010; British Red Cross, 2016). Loneliness and social isolation are terms used interchangeably but there is a difference. Social isolation is:

> [A] state in which the individual lacks a sense of belonging socially, lacks engagement with others, has a minimal number of social contacts and they are deficient in fulfilling and quality relationships. (Nicholson, 2009:1344).

Loneliness, by contrast, can be understood as an individual's personal, subjective sense of lacking these things (Cacioppo and Patrick, 2008). It is possible therefore to be isolated without being lonely and vice versa (Weiss, 1973). Both are subjective terms, open to individual interpretation, making standardisation and measurement difficult (Lager et al., 2015). Evidence shows the importance of quality relationships for mental, physical, and social well-being and improved longevity (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2010; Nyqvist et al., 2013; Holt-Lunstad et al., 2015; Valtorta et al., 2016) all of which underline that social relations are a vital component of health. Less conclusive is which aspects of social relations promote better health. Originally, the focus with older adults was on individual relationships, but there is growing support for the importance of group engagement particularly for cognitive decline (Haslam et al., 2014), psychosocial resilience (Jetten et al., 2012, Levasseur et al., 2020), and community cohesion (Cramm and Nieboer, 2015, Levasseur et al., 2020). Recognising the scale and impact of loneliness within the UK, the first Minister for Loneliness was appointed in 2018, alongside a published Loneliness Strategy (HM Government, 2018b). The NHS Long Term Plan (NHS, 2019) also reinforces broader policy work for societal change to promote stronger social relations: social prescribing is one such example (see Section 2.5). I now consider research positioning cultural activities as a platform to support connections for older adults.

Bernard et al.'s (2015) work explored the place of theatre in the lives of older adults. Some of this was archival research, but they also conducted interviews with 93 older adults who had theatre involvement through attending groups, as volunteers and employees/actors. This research was insightful on a number of levels: supporting a personal construction of ageing; the passive and active role of the theatre in communicating and building local and personal histories; and giving structure to the lives of those involved - much of which has overlapped with and could have been used to illustrate previous themes. It also highlighted how the theatre was a conduit for

building social connections, particularly in more challenging times. Older adults made new connections, alleviating feelings of isolation after a bereavement, and developing a sense of security through continued friendships and involvement with the theatre. The study also highlighted both community spaces and continuity of activities and groups as important. Older adults involved in the theatre talked of the emotional and affective connections the theatre held, how it created a 'homely' feel and provided a sense of belonging (Bernard et al., 2015:1134). In addition, there was a historic component of remembering past experiences and re-making connections with people within the community. Connections in this context were shown to be excellent at fostering intergenerational links and reducing age related stigma which is critical to cohesive local communities. These are all findings that others, such as Hafford-Leichfield et al. (2010), agree with. Within the cultural activity literature, the focus of building relationships is often in relation to new friendships (Toepoel, 2013). However, this study highlights the ability of drama groups to strengthen existing relations (Bernard et al., 2015).

Looking more at the facilitating factors of social connections I draw on an ethnographic study that explored the experiences of older adults who regularly participated in health walks and the connections this afforded (Grant et al., 2017). For these older adults, the physical benefits were secondary to the social relations, and community feel, formed through the activity. The participants talk of 'travelling with the person through their lives', of general 'fleeting' conversations and how these practices and experiences offered support in daily life (Grant et al., 2017). The accessibility of these connections was, in part, attributable to the affective resources of the group - the mood, the emotions, the hugs, and the banter or 'buzz'- offering the sense of a safe place despite not being a physical location (Grant, et al., 2017:1705). I return to this in Chapter Three and look at theoretical conceptualisations and the application of atmospheres and affect within my analysis.

As a final example of this sub theme, Reynolds (2015) reported findings from her doctoral study that explored older adults' engagement in cultural activities and how it contributed to community

connectedness, utilising theories of social capital to explore this (see Section 2.4). Mutual support, of an interdependent nature, within a local singing group, generating a sense of 'family' was highlighted: 'if anybody's bad, everyone mucks in' (Reynolds, 2015:36).

Throughout the cultural activity literature, the term resilience has been applied in regard to older adults coping with companion loss, illness, or disability (see, for example, Goulding et al., 2018). Cohen et al.'s work (2006) was perhaps the first to position creativity activities as promoting emotions and social relations as contributing to resilience. Resilience, another contested term, is seen as a unique mix of individual and environmental factors that can help a person negotiate, overcome, and possibly experience growth through adversity (emotional, physical, or material) (Wild et al., 2013:144). Resilience is prevalent within the neoliberal rhetoric (with an emphasis on individual qualities) and links the contribution of culture within policy, and gerontology generally, as being fundamental to the premise of active/successful ageing as discussed in Chapter One. Underpinning all of this is social capital, a concept I will expand on in the next section.

2.4 The Role of Capital

I considered cultural capital in Chapter One, and I return to this later in this section, but first I focus on social capital. Social capital is another contested term (Fulkerson and Thompson, 2008) and, like asset-based approaches, is a boundary concept that has different interpretations and meanings which can be mobilised in various ways by different communities (Star, 2010). Social capital's intellectual origins lie with Durkheim's (1897) emphasis on group life as an antidote to anomie, although it was Hanifan (1916) who introduced this term referencing social capital in relation to:

> [G]ood-will, fellowship, sympathy and social intercourse among individuals and families who make up a social unit. (Gilchrist, 2009:8)

Since the 1960's, his idea has been resurrected in various forms. Putman is frequently cited for popularising the term and giving it significance to policy and government (Holt, 2008; Morrison, 2017). Putman (1995: 67) described social capital as:

[T]he features of social organisations such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate the coordination and co-operation for mutual benefit.

He considered this concept from the individual (micro), neighbourhood (meso) and society (macro) level (Putman, 1995). His work highlighted social capital as being created and maintained through civic participation, voluntary associations, and community activity, which in turn correlate with social cohesion as well as enhancing economic stability. Putman (2000) highlighted the broader advantages of thriving communities whereby even individuals with poor social connections can benefit from communities rich in resources. Woolcock (2001) has identified three different types of social capital: bonding, bridging, and linking.

Table1: Summary of the Three Different Types of Social Capital (Woolcock, 2001)

Bonding	From multi-faceted relationships between similar people with multiple ties. E.g., close family and friends
Bridging	From relationships between people who may have overlapping interests but do not necessarily share similar social identities. E.g., neighbours, people at community groups
Linking	From the links between people or organisations. This allows reach beyond normal circles of support and therefore has the ability to extend resources available and cut across boundaries of status, wealth, and power

Putman (1995) also acknowledged a darker side of social capital in recognition of the work of Coleman (1988) who identified contradictory tensions of social capital through the group enforcement of norms generating conflict between community solidarity and individual freedom. Despite this, the principles of Putman's work on social capital are deemed by some as limited, as it assumes casual links between civic participation and increased capital but neglects the complexities and power dynamics in people's everyday social networks (Portes, 1998). Bourdieu's (1986) theories offer a more critical understanding of the concept of social capital; the main advantage being that

the recognition of power and conflict makes space for conceptions. Bourdieu's (1986) view is that social capital is a source of privilege and he is concerned with how social inequalities can be perpetuated by social connections. His approach is often favoured in community development as it considers the emotional, practical, and political influences of a local area (Fraser et al., 2003). However, some still find it lacking a focus on the everyday networks and power dynamics for older adults within the time and place orientation of their own neighbourhoods (Naughton, 2014). This is an important critique relevant to my research. Naughton (2014:11) defines social capital as:

> [A] set of relations, processes, practices and subjectivities that affect, and are affected by, the contexts and spaces in which we operate.

The predominance of theorising in relation to older adults and cultural activities is around the notion of social capital; in comparison, there is considerably less work on cultural capital. In the context of older adults, the immutable nature of cultural capital has been refuted, and social dynamics and individual agency have been found to have an influence (Newman et al., 2013). The exploration of class and cultural capital in relation to engagement in different forms of activity for older adults is an on-going area of interest within the literature, particularly in relation to the upward mobility of people engaging in high culture activities (Goulding, 2018; Newman et al., 2013).

2.5 Social Prescribing

My final section in this chapter is on social prescribing. I explore why and how this has come about, the synergy between social prescribing and cultural activities, and the evidence and difficulties within this initiative. Social Prescribing is defined by The Social Prescribing Network, as 'enabling healthcare professionals to refer patients to a link worker and co-design a non-clinical social prescription to improve their health and wellbeing' (Polley et al., 2017:13). In practice, social prescribing is another asset-based initiative, drawing on personalisation principles (Department of Health, 2008), which aims to divert individual demand away from an over-burdened health service, towards other community resources - particularly those with potential to reduce social isolation. Cultural activities have a significant role to play. The rationale is based on evidence that 20% of GP appointments are related to social problems (Husk et al.,

2019). Social prescribing was cited as one of the high-impact elements in the Five Year Forward View (NHS, 2014), and is one of the main pillars within the NHS Long-Term Plan (NHS, 2019). Accompanying this is a pledge of £4.5 million through the Health and Wellbeing Fund, and a further £3.3 million from other government funds (HM Government, 2018b). Current targets are for at least 900,000 people to be referred to social prescribing by 2023/24 (NHS, no date: online).

Early evidence highlights a reduction of around 25% for GP consultations and Accident and Emergency visits (Finnis et al., 2016), but the evidence base around social prescribing has been criticised for its lack of robustness (Bickerdike et al., 2017). Social prescribing is not an entirely new concept; early social prescribing schemes existed in the 1980s, for example in Bromley-by-Bow (Brandling and House, 2009). For people with long-term conditions, particularly where conditions are exacerbated by psycho-social or socioeconomic complexities (NHS, 2011), there has been a history of referrals to non-medical interventions such as art (Bungay and Clift, 2010), horticulture/gardening (Kamioka et al., 2014) and exercise programmes (Williams et al., 2007). Social prescribing's current prominence in policy and accompanying funding streams, has resulted in a raft of evaluations looking at community-based cultural activities. However, there is criticism as to the definition, interpretation, and measurement of social prescribing (Bickerdike et al., 2017; Husk et al., 2019).

Kimberlee (2015) conducted a systematic review highlighting discrepancies around how social prescribing works in practice. Under this banner, Kimberlee (2015) found four levels of support ranging from relatively minimal signposting to community resources, through to holistic support via a link worker who spends time supporting the individual to access broader community resources. Current gold standard forms of social prescribing are inclusive of a link worker but there are different ways for this to work in practice (Polley et al., 2017). The success of programmes has been attributed to the accessibility of groups, a facilitated transit and a skilled activity leader, however, 'inferences about the effectiveness of particular models or approaches' cannot be made from current research (Husk et al., 2020:309). Similarly, there are issues around the lack of standardisation in the measurement of outcomes (Wilson et al., 2017), and

the lack of standardisation of social prescribing programmes generally (Chatterjee et al., 2018). This leads to difficulties in isolating or quantifying the value of these programmes to individuals, and in terms of social return on investment (Kimberlee, 2016).

Turning back to Chapter One and place-based asset work, the success of social prescribing will also be dependent on the range of services commissioned and funded and the availability of local community resources. These factors allow for huge diversity and variation in the schemes (Brown, 2019). There is concern that communities are simply acting as a placebo to justify a lack of pro-active action and insufficient funding by the state (Brown, 2019). Communities are not homogenous and those sharing a community will not have an equal sense of belonging (Young et al, 2004), yet the theoretical base of these approaches sets communities as level - which is optimistic (Gilchrist, 2009). It is often neglected that community assets are dynamic and subject to the, often rapidly, changing needs of communities and funding (Greater Manchester Public Health, 2016). For initiatives to work at an individual level, there is concern that insufficient incentives are being built into social prescribing to stimulate local health economies (Brown, 2019); a short coming that raises the spectre of broadening social inequalities. It has been questioned if social prescribing is the best use of resources, especially with tough financial competition in the community sector to keep groups in operation (Skivington et al., 2018). Matt Hancock (former Health Secretary) has positioned social prescribing as a 'free' or low-cost intervention (The King's Fund, September 2018), but for ambitions to be realised investment, a 'well-stocked community' is needed (McNally, 2018: 362). This study will contribute understanding in this field.

2.6 Summary

In this chapter, I have reviewed the existing literature and presented five themes. The first two have set out the evidence in relation to the health benefits of cultural activities for older adults and the heterogeneity of participation. The other three cross cutting themes have focused on qualitative studies and looked at issues of continued growth, acceptance of ageing, contribution to society, and the importance of social

relations. These have been considered in the context of the neoliberal ageing dialogue and sense of place, self, and belonging that were introduced in Chapter One. This chapter has also incorporated an introduction to concepts of social capital, generativity, and resilience. The contribution of cultural activities to increased social support, meaningful occupation, and contribution all align with key elements of AF environments (Dobner et al., 2014; Levasseur et al., 2017; Sixsmith et al., 2017).

This review has also considered gaps within the empirical literature that my study aimed to address. My study does not look at a particular activity, intervention, or condition but takes a cityscape of cultural activities to explore older adults' cultural activity engagement within an AF city. This review has confirmed claims that within the literature there is a bias of study towards high culture activities. I am also conscious that, regardless of nods to co-production with older adults (Buffel, 2019; Daykin et al, 2018), there is still an omission of allowing older adults to set the parameters of their cultural activities, or to fully understand how older adults have agency in shaping this (Hand et al., 2020).

All of this has influenced my qualitative, ethnographic approach allowing for a bottom-up exploration of how and why older adults engage in cultural activities. Ideas of self, place, and belonging can be found within the cultural activity literature, but often links are developed through the findings, as opposed to being considered as a conceptual framework from the outset. My research aims to strengthen such understandings and give new insights. The next chapter will provide further scaffolding as I situate my research within a theoretical and methodological framework

Chapter 3: Methods and Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I outline the epistemological and ontological assumptions that underpin and position my research under the philosophical umbrella of social constructionism (Burr, 2015). By considering epistemology and ontology, I explain the logical fit between research aims, methodology and practice.

Gubrium and Holstein (1997:13) assert that a qualitative researcher aims to scrutinise 'a world comprised of meanings, interpretations, feelings, talk, and interaction'. Individuals, societies, and cultures are complex, as discussed in Chapter One. Qualitative researchers are interested in the multiple meanings that people attach to their subjective experiences (Mason, 2002). The purpose of my research is to identify, describe, and interpret the social structures, spaces and processes that shape older adults' engagement in cultural activities and how this is related to a sense of self, place, and belonging.

My decision to conduct this study in a phased fashion and position myself as a 'bricoleur' (Broussine, 2008:9), which refers to taking different qualitative approaches, is outlined in this chapter. Ethnography and Appreciative Inquiry are introduced as the methodologies of the two phases of my research, and I explain why these are best suited to my research aims. I also outline how each method will allow maximum opportunity for sense-making (Warne and McAndrew, 2009) whilst considering the overlap and fit between these methodologies. The importance of reflexivity as a constant is revisited. The remainder of this chapter focuses on the practicalities of undertaking Phase 1 research, the ethical considerations and analysis methods.

3.2 Theoretical Approach: Social Constructionism

Social constructionism is the umbrella theoretical approach for my research. Here, I consider the ontological and epistemological assumptions of this study, knowing that

these will shape the research process and product (Crotty, 1998), as well as help strengthen the credibility of my research (Fetterman, 2010).

Throughout Chapters One and Two, I explored the literature that sets the context for this study and identifies gaps in the existing knowledge. The concept of ageing, culture, activity, engagement, theories of belonging, place, and self are all understood as involving social relations constructed by people, place, and society. Berger and Luckmann (1991) outline how social constructionism is founded on postmodernist ideas and draws on work of early sociologists such as George Herbert Mead (1934). Social constructionism stands in opposition to positivist approaches in that it does not look for a definitive answer or single truth and cautions the researcher about assumptions and categorisation (Burr, 2015). Burr (1998:13) heralds social constructionism for allowing a stance in which:

> It becomes possible to think not only of individuals re-constructing aspects of themselves but of re-thinking whole social categories.

The implication being, for Burr (1998), that consideration of gender, sexuality, race, disability, and illness as social rather than biological categories become possible. I argue that ageing is equally relevant because it is a heterogenous concept at the intersection of all the above factors. Indeed, ageing has already been positioned as a social construction alongside biological aspects and embodied lived experience (Hockey and James, 2003). Social constructionism allows for an approach that welcomes new exploration of phenomena, whereby knowledge is acquired through a better understanding of the social interactions that comprise daily life (Burr, 2015). Social constructionists believe that social categories such as age, class, and disability are socially constructed according to time and space (Valentine, 2001) and therefore can be challenged, contested, and renegotiated. Chapters One and Two have shown social relations are fundamental to the value of cultural participation and a sense of self, place, and belonging, but that each phenomenon will be grounded in its own unique temporal, material, historical, and cultural relevance (May 2013). Therefore, my theoretical positioning fits with a research question that explores the spaces of

cultural activities within an AF city and their contribution to sense of self, place, and belonging.

Ontologically, I position myself as a realist, holding the belief that 'things exist in the (social) world that are independent of thought or our perception of them' (O'Reilly, 2009: online). My study is influenced by the work of critical realist Bhaskar (2013) who views social reality as stratified. Here, there are two distinct layers of society and individual (structure and agency), but these are transcendental, interconnecting and can transform or exert force on one another (Davies, 2008). According to Davies (2008:10) such an approach understands older adults as:

> [N]either passive products of social structures nor entirely their creators but placed in an iterative and naturally reflexive feedback relationship to them.

This recognition of different ontological layers allows a way of interpreting reality that enables me to consider the underlying reality of older adults' experiences of cultural activities, whilst separately yet simultaneously, exploring the role of the structures that are in place to support older adults' sense of self, place, and belonging. The ontological independence of structure and agency in critical realism enables the examination of the reflexive interplay between individual agents and the structure and culture within which they are operating (Archer, 2000). Also inherent in a critical realist perspective is the fundamental role of reflexivity in forming knowledge through recognising the researcher as 'part of their own field of inquiry' Bhaskar (2013:236). I return to the matter of reflexivity in Section 3.3.4.

3.3 Methodological Approach: Ethnography, Appreciative Inquiry, and the Adoption of a Phased Approach

The lived experience of older adults' participation in cultural activities is at the forefront of my research goals, and Section 3.3.1 sets out how this will be done through ethnography.

In order to gain a better understanding of cultural activities within an AF City, I adopt a phased approach, where Phase 1 allows consideration of micro, meso, and macro factors that are the scaffolding of cultural activities in Manchester, see Section 3.3.2. Phase 1 uses Appreciative Inquiry (AI) methodology to guide semi-structured interviews of those who locally support cultural activities at the meso and macro level. Phase 2 is a multi-site ethnography of different cultural activity groups in Manchester. Section 3.3.3 outlines the principles of AI, drawing out its symbiotic fit with my research aims and more widely with ethnography. I conclude this section by returning to the importance of reflexivity.

3.3.1 An Ethnography to Explore Older Adults' Participation in Cultural Activities

In Chapter Two I explored the literature, highlighting a lack of nuanced information concerning older adults' participation in cultural activities at a community level. To address this shortfall, the primary focus of my doctoral research is an ethnographic study of cultural activities groups. As a qualitative methodology, ethnographies lend themselves to studying small societies' beliefs, social interactions, and behaviours (Brewer, 2000). This section briefly introduces ethnography, although exact definitions are varied and contested (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007).

The roots of ethnography are in cultural anthropology, with Malinowski (1922) one of its pioneers. Traditionally, anthropology used participant observation as a method where researchers lived and fully immersed themselves in patterns and rituals of the lifeworld of others and offered rich description of the culture, people, and places they were studying (Clifford and Marcus, 1986). Ethnography is the scholarly outcome of the immersion that participant observation requires. The ethnographic lens has also been turned inwards (Deegan, 2001), exploring the formalisation of social life and social ecology (O'Reilly, 2009). Through this, ethnography has been popularised as offering a qualitative methodology that values experiential knowledge of the post-modern world and its ever-changing nature (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007).

Since the 1960s, ethnography has proliferated beyond anthropology and arguably is 'still as relevant a way to understand the human condition as it ever was' (Madden, 2017:191). Many different disciplines have adopted ethnography such as psychology,

geography, sociology, and health and social care research, which is also why it fits with my own study's interdisciplinary location. The resulting outcome is that ethnography is now a 'broad church' (Hobbs, 2011:1), saturated with a plethora of meaning (Gobo, 2008) and opportunity opened for criticism. Ingold (2014) has challenged the over-use of the term ethnographic stating that ethnography is often used to refer to any form of qualitative research, which resulted in a dilution and discrediting of sound practice. He claims that the word ethnographic is being made synonymous with fieldwork, especially participant observation. However, taken in isolation this does not amount to ethnography but is simply one of the tools or methods to conduct one (Ingold, 2014). The argument of ethnography as more than participant observation is also supported by Hockey and Forsey (2012), who conducted a study where interviews were the primary tool. They argue that for a study to be ethnographic, it is not the tools applied but the depth of participant engagement that matters, and stress the fundamental importance of listening, being actively engaged, and for allowing space for mutual understanding and the articulation of issues.

These criteria need to be considered throughout the whole ethnographic process: from data collection, to analysis, and writing (Mason, 2002; Hamersley and Atkinson, 2007; Davies, 2008). Scholars like Coffey (1999:56) concur that ethnography is 'by its very nature interpersonal and intimate', and this quality adds value and insight to the research process. Ethnography has at its heart the concept of immersion, whether at an individual or community level. Ingold and Vergunst (2008:1) capture this notion through their walking analogies:

> Life itself is as much a long walk as it is a long conversation, and the ways along which we walk are those along which we live.

As stated at the outset of this chapter, there is not one uniform definition or approach to ethnography, but for my research I adopt that of Hobbs (2006:101), who focuses on the features of an ethnographic approach as:

> [T]he product of a cocktail of methodologies that social engagement with the subject is key to understanding a particular culture or social setting…

Madden (2017) states that it is the intellectual and philosophical justifications of the choices of tools of ethnography that allows for research rigour. I, in the following sections, introduce Institutional Ethnography (IE) (Smith, 1987) and Sensory Ethnography (SE) (Pink, 2015) as formative to my research.

3.3.1.1 Institutional Ethnography (IE)

IE is a form of critical ethnography that allows for exploration and discovery of experiences positioned within the wider society and political landscape (Devault, 2006). It is interested in how institutional practices (i.e., the rules, processes, politics etc.) extend and influence local activities (Devault and McCoy, 2006). Smith (1987) is the founder of IE, and, as a feminist, developed it to redress the underrepresentation in written knowledge of marginalised groups, initially single mothers. However, marginalisation of older adults was highlighted in Section 1.3.3, and I argue IE fits equally well with older adults. Her approach draws on elements of Marx's material method and on Garfinkel's ethnomethodology (Smith, 1987).

The following fundamental ontological principles underpin IE. A key element is the social organisation of knowledge, in which people lead an embodied existence enacting what they know and the world they inhabit in concert with other people and systems (Smith, 2006). By attending to the everyday, the ethnographer examines the way things are done or, in Smith's terms 'the ruling practices', and the connections between power and knowledge. Smith (1990) believes these 'ruling practices' are inherent systems that become an almost unconscious mode of operation which control and often disempower people. She writes of a 'textual reality' where power within social relations is made visible through language, processes, and architecture of operations (Smith, 1987:140). Crucial to IE, and the practice of, is the unpacking or mapping of these dynamics, or tensions, from a standpoint perspective (Smith, 1987). This standpoint perspective means that instead of looking across a whole system, there is the need to look at the everyday from the perspective of a specific group of people within the system and 'look up' from their viewpoint. This viewpoint leads to progressive discovery and identifies the problematics within the phenomena that are being studied (Campbell and Gregor, 2008). This form of ethnography aligns with a

critical realist stance and will complement an exploration of the interconnecting layers of structure and agency within cultural activity provision, and how these are transcended and enacted through older adults' participation.

3.3.1.2 Sensory Ethnography (SE)

It has been argued that classic ethnography privileges observational approaches (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007) at the cost of many other forms of unspoken knowledge that are unobtainable through observation or interview (Bloch, 1998). In response, Pink (2015) proposed SE as an approach that pays attention to the multisensory interactions between researcher and participants. No prescriptive formula accompanies SE, leaving it open to new ways of knowing; however, there are a few fundamental underpinnings. Firstly, there is no need to prioritise one form of sensory knowing over another as the senses are interrelated and interconnected (Pink, 2015) and do not operate in isolation (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2000). The importance of embodied, participatory practice and knowing is also key. Learning is not passive but happens through the entire bodily experience of sharing the space and experience with those we are learning from (Coffey, 1999). SE takes Howes's (2005) extension of the paradigm of embodiment beyond the integration of mind-body and proposes that an emplaced researcher gives additional focus to the material and sensory aspects of environment.

Several factors have influenced my decision to use SE. Cultural activities rely on multiple sensory modalities: visual; tactile; auditory; olfactory; and taste sensations are all crucial to engagement in and pleasure from participation. I have been drawn to articles in which the sensory nature of participation was emphasised (see for example, Liddle et al., 2013; Grant et al., 2017: McCoy and Schneider, 2018). As a sensory ethnographer, it is my role to attend to the sensorality and materiality of others, and through attuning my ways of taste, seeing, and rhythm, I will become involved in making places similar to them and therefore relate to them in similar ways (Pink 2015). The theoretical basis of SE draws on the relationship between space and place and on varying ideas of fluidity of place (Casey, 1996; Massey, 2005; Ingold, 2010). SE offers access to this sense of place by exploring the 'entanglement of persons, things and

trajectories, sensations, discourses and more' Pink (2015:48), which will help realise my research objectives.

3.3.1.3 Atmosphere, Affinities, and Affect

During my exploration of the literature on SE, I became interested in atmosphere and affect. Atmosphere is an ambiguous entity that has received considerable academic attention (Anderson, 2009). Early philosophers, such as Böhme (1993), described it as the aura of a place, an artefact, or situation, but generally, it has been described as concerning the 'intersection between materiality and affectivity, embodiment and culture, and perception and sense' (Trigg, 2016:763). This posits atmosphere as a shifting liminal tension, which whilst existing independently in time is completely dependent on the relations out of which it is constituted. Kanyeredzi et al.'s, (2019:444) definition positions atmosphere as:

> [A] quasi thing that is 'in-between' person and space as a spatially extended quality of feeling.

In-betweenness is also what Mason (2018) focused on in her work on affect and affinities. Mason (2018) used the concept of affinities to consider the social world where affinities are 'connective charges and energies' which come alive in 'sensations' (Mason, 2018:2). She states that affinities have an indisputable potency, regardless of affect, which can be roused through slightly ethereal forces – a magical element. By this, she means that affinities are inclusive of the usual senses of smell, touch, etc., and that they develop through the dynamic way we sense these by drawing on imagination and memory (Mason, 2018).

Wetherell's (2012) writing concerning affective practice is also pertinent. Her view is that there is much to be gained through the exploration of atmospheres and affect, and how emotions and embodied practice of the everyday hold meaning (Wetherell, 2012). She believes that this platform of affective practice be can used to help unravel and track the complex narratives, context, and conceptual unfolding (Thrift, 2008) between mind, body, and meaning making. Wetherell (2012) is, however, critical of the elusive (magical) elements of affect that Mason includes. For her, it is grounded in

the body, which is a tool of communication, judgement and perception imbued with personal history, culture, and socio-political influences. I am influenced by both of their works and look to explore sensory kinaesthetic factors that create these 'ecological connections', 'socio-atmospherics' and 'ineffable kinships' and which form through the dynamic, embodied, and multi-dimensional participation of the cultural activity groups I study (Mason, 2018:3). I return to these aspects throughout my findings, particularly in Chapter Seven.

The cross-disciplinary research method of SE will facilitate attunement to matters of atmosphere and affect within older adult cultural activities. SE, alongside IE and attention to atmospheres and affect, will allow an approach that can explore the collective experience and configuration of the everyday and enable a deeper understanding of the power dynamics within this (Sumartojo and Pink, 2018).

This concludes my theoretical introduction to ethnography, I return to this in Chapter 5 where I outline how my ethnography, Phase 2, was undertaken. Next, I give the rationale for a Phased Approach before detailing the methodological framework for Phase 1 and how it was undertaken.

3.3.2 The Rationale for a Phased Approach

Starting my research, I needed to quickly get up to speed with cultural activity provision for older adults in Manchester: how this was framed, funded, supported, and fits with AF frameworks both strategically and at neighbourhood level. I could, and did, use strategy documentation, websites, grey literature, and some of the academic literature related to Age Friendly Manchester, but this was not sufficient to embed myself within the city and to start 'crafting' the necessary relationships to enable entry to the ethnographic field (Coffey, 1999:48). Part of my decision to conduct research in a phased fashion was a pragmatic one, but there was also an academic foundation.

Tracy (2019:6) advocates 'phronetic research' which offers 'contextualised knowledge that is iteratively constructed, action orientated and imbued with certain values.' Whilst prioritising a reflexive approach that positions the researcher within the

research (see Section 3.3.4), it recognises a dynamic social and historical context, and an awareness of contextual background as fundamental to on-going sensemaking. This fits with a conceptual understanding of community gerontology, which advocates the consideration of micro, meso and macro factors when exploring how older adults engage with community level initiatives, in this case cultural activity (Greenfield et al., 2018).

Figure 2 below, sets out Greenfield et al.'s (2018) ecological model in which older adults are positioned at the micro level, which includes their private homes and personal life. The meso level is the social realm of community, beyond homes and immediate family, where life is played out. This, in my study, is where cultural activities would sit. The macro level context which can be regional and/or national, is constituted of institutions, policies, and wider social norms. As the pathway arrows in Figure 2 highlight, the meso level, or the community, is a central connecting continuum between the micro and the macro levels. The meso level is both a product of, and contributor to, what occurs within macro and micro contexts. This notion of contribution fits cohesively with ideas developed in Chapter One about AF initiatives being positioned at a neighbourhood level and older adults as active participants of place-making.

Figure 2: Ecological Framework for Community Gerontology (Greenfield et al.,2018:3)
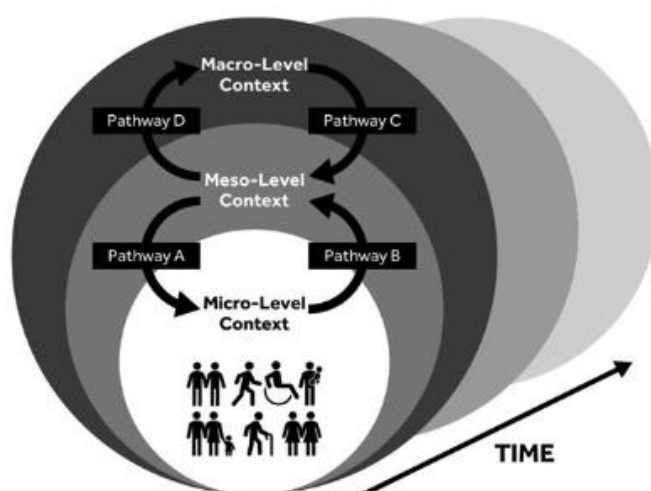
Taking both a pragmatic and a theoretical viewpoint, the aim of Phase 1 was to map cultural activity provision in Manchester, gather an understanding of the AF ecosystems surrounding and supporting this, and facilitate access to cultural activity groups for older adults. Section 3.4 details how Phase 1 was conducted and sets out the methods used to meet this aim. First, I introduce Appreciative Inquiry, outlining how and why this approach has informed my Phase 2.

3.3.3 Appreciative Inquiry (AI)

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is a relational approach, centred around the ability to 'value or recognise the best in people or the world around us' and to be 'open to seeing new potentials and possibilities' (Whitney and Trosten-Bloom, 2003:140). In this section, I provide a brief theoretical context for AI and some of its critiques, I justify it as an appropriate methodology for my Phase 1 and highlight how AI informs and aligns with my Phase 2.

AI was originally proposed as a philosophy, not a process, and intended to provide general guidance for appreciating the potential within a social system through collaboration and positive discussion (Cooperrider and Srivasta, 1987). According to Cooperrider and Srivasta (1987), five key principles underpin the philosophy of AI as shown in the table below:

Table 2: The Five Principles of AI Philosophy (Cooperrider and Srivasta, 1987)

The Five Principles	The foundation and meaning of the principle
The Constructionist Principle	Fundamental to this principle is that there are many different ways of viewing social reality and many truths. The seminal work of Gergen (1982) was timely and influenced this principle, as it highlighted the importance of co-constructing ideas and interpretations. Generative properties of formulating new alternatives through co-construction are also part of this principle.

The Principle of Simultaneity	This principle focuses on the belief that inquiry and change go hand in hand and that the seeds of change are embedded at the inception of the inquiry and continue through the process.
The Poetic Principle	Storytelling is at the heart of AI, with an analogy of books as collections of stories that are continually reauthored and are open to endless interpretations. AI believes in the transformational element of storytelling, that micro-narratives can influence the macro-narrative (Ludema et al., 2001) and act as a catalyst for change (Barrett and Fry, 2005). Here Morgan's (1980) work on metaphors is influential.
The Anticipatory Principle	Originally called the 'heliocentric hypothesis', this biological metaphor illustrates how social systems will be drawn to affirmative images. This principle supports the idea that creating a collection of positive images, and projections of what could be, has powerful mobilising agency.
The Positive Principle	This principle focuses on positive questions, holding the belief that people will naturally turn towards ideas that provide energy and nourishment. It proposes that people's interest and participation in change will be done via an invitation to explore positive questions (Reed, 2007; Watkins et al, 2011)

AI was originally introduced within the field of organisational psychology, as an alternative to the deficit style model of change management (Reason and Bradbury, 2008). By contrast, AI offered a relational approach with a strengths-based focus that recognises and privileges the human, social, and physical capital within organisations. In Chapters One and Two, I highlighted that strength-based approaches, whilst a boundary concept (Star, 2010), are popular and topical within health and social care policy, and in the application thereof (Daly and Westwood, 2018). AI, takes its unique interpretation of asset-based work, but parallels can be drawn to health and social care (del Castillo et al., 2016) and community work (Ward, 2017b), and a growing trend in AI research, both in the UK and globally, was anticipated (Dick, 2004). AI has been recommended for research with older adults (Reed, 2010) and examples of its use can be see within hospitals and care settings (see, for example, Dewar and MacBride,

2017; Hung et al., 2018; Scerri et al., 2019) and, more broadly at a community level (Browne, 2004), to explore cultural activities and well-being, (Kilroy et al, 2007). Recently AI has also been used in the context of AF initiatives (van de berg et al., 2015). This development has influenced my own use of AI theory and its methods.

AI is frequently used as a model, and as a method for facilitating change. Cooperrider and Whitney's (2005) 4D model (shown below in Figure 3) is arguably the best recognised (Reed, 2010).

Figure 3: The Appreciative Inquiry 4-D Cycle (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005:16)

DISCOVERY
"What gives life?
(the best of what is)
Appreciating

DREAM
"What might be?
(imagine what the world
is calling for)
Envisioning

AFFIRMATIVE
TOPIC CHOICE

DESIGN
"How can it be?
(determining the ideal)
Co-constructing

DESTINY
"What will be?
(how to empower, learn
and adjust/improvise)
Sustaining
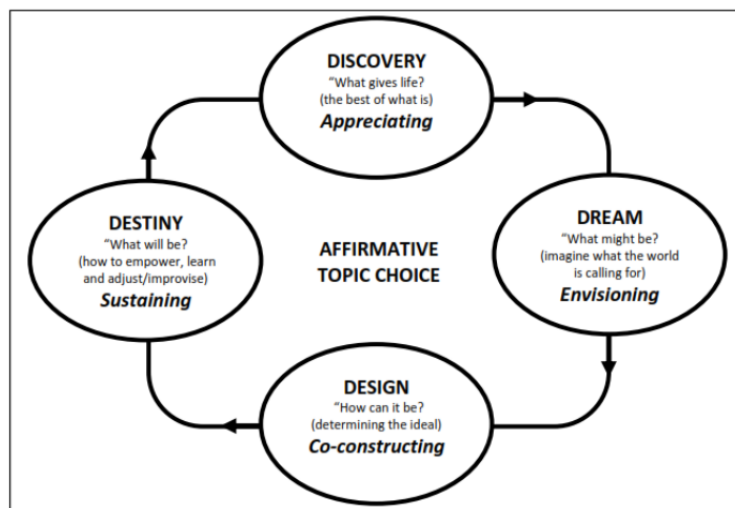
This 4D model offers a cyclical process, based on four stages of inquiry (Discovery, Dream, Design and Destiny) that support collaborative discussions, continuous monitoring, feedback, and adapting as the exploratory process unfolds (Hammond, 2013). There are criticisms that AI is too frequently considered simply in terms of the 4D model, neglecting the overarching philosophy which allows capacity to enable and restrict possibilities in equal measures (van der Haar and Hosking, 2004). Pratt (2002) cautions practitioners against falling into a trap of valuing the process over the people involved. I am not looking to instigate change through the use of this philosophy but see value in making my inquiries appreciative and valuing the aspirational, and generative notion of what could be possible within the offering of cultural activities in Manchester. Positive conversations should help open doors and support the crafting of positive relations. In Section 3.4, I outline how this 4D AI process informed Phase 1

data collection, in order to learn first-hand about the rationale for cultural activities in relation to older adults, and how cultural activities contributed to AF Manchester.

There are a number of criticisms of AI, which I now address before positioning the fundamentals of AI as a relational approach that will cohesively lead on to my ethnographic study. Bight and Cameron (2009) argue that the force for bad is stronger than good, and positivity must be sufficiently persuasive to overcome this natural tendency of people and organisations, something that is not overt in the affirmative principle. Some argue that this element is taken too literally without regard for the deeper considerations of the social construction of realities and the difficulties of sustaining change (Bushe, 2011; Ridley-Duff and Duncan, 2015). Much of this criticism is directed at the weighted focus on the positivity principle (Rogers and Fraser, 2003; Bushe, 2011; Trajkovski et al., 2013), which contributes to a perception of AI as lacking in strength and credibility, and as generating findings that can be unrealistic, partial, and distorted (Patton, 2003). Whilst leading AI researchers offer only a weak counter argument that any researcher positioning can distort findings (Cooperrider and Fry, 2012), there are frustrations that these criticisms view AI in over-simplistic terms (Bushe and Paranjpey, 2015). A deeper criticism, mirroring the embedded use of metaphors and polarities within the AI philosophy, is founded in Jung's (1968) notion of 'shadow' (Bushe, 2010; Fitzgerald et al., 2010; Duncan and Ridley-Duff, 2014). Here shadow refers to the elements a subject may choose not to acknowledge about themselves; these are generally, but not exclusively, negative traits (Fitzgerald et al., 2010; Johnson, 2011; Pratt, 2002). This notion of shadow, and its value to understanding within AI practice, returns to the ontological approach of social constructionism. Van de Haar and Hoskings (2004) take a relational stance, arguing there is space for multiple social local realities, identities, and relations, and concurrent power dynamics. This inclusion of power, particularly the political dimensions and deployment of power, should be a factor within AI, but was not at the forefront of Gergen's (1982) work which formed the basis of AI (Morgan, 1996). Grant and Humphries (2006), amongst others, see benefit in this amalgamation of seemingly paradoxical approaches of AI and Critical Theory, and advocate for 'Critical Appreciative Process'. They, amongst others, position this as best to offer an

emancipatory design but with complementary ways to gain a deeper understanding of concepts and relationships within a social system (Grant and Humphries, 2006; Ridley-Duff and Duncan, 2015; Stierand et al., 2017).

In my research I set out to be mindful of the notion of shadow; and it is something I reflect on further in Chapter Four (Section 4.4) where I consider my Phase 1 findings. Related to the shadow of AI, Johnson (2011) explores how negative experiences can arise from appreciative explorations but asserts this does not exclude them from generating positive outcomes. The belief here is that it is the tensions between such polarities which gives life to things. AI allows for multiple perspectives which can provide a platform for more marginalised voices (Scerri et al., 2019). It is important that those who use AI do not ignore power relations (both within research and within systems) as this will always impact research and outcomes (Reed, 2007). The positive principles fundamental to how AI is conducted are integral to the success of this research method, including attention to the style of discourse and relationship building (Hillon and Boje, 2017). Clouder and King (2015) propose that rigour and attention to detail, particularly around the focus and framing of questions, as well as first class data-management and analytical capability, are essential. Others have asserted that reflexivity is a crucial and neglected element of effective AI (Reason and Bradbury, 2008; Bushe and Kassam, 2005). Reflexivity is similarly a fundamental component of ethnography and the focus of my next Section, 3.3.4.

In Phase 2, whilst remaining informed by the generative and positive elements of AI philosophy and the findings of Phase 1, my focus is ethnography (see Chapter Five). AI and ethnography both 'straddle the philosophical and practical domains' (Clouder and King, 2015:3), and Rogers and Fraser (2003) align AI and ethnography in relation to the immersion each allows the researcher to delve into the complexities of the research domain. With regard to theory, each method is underpinned by social constructionist beliefs, acknowledging multiple realities of any situation, and assert better understanding of multiple perspectives that will allow for deeper and new knowledge (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). Narratives and storytelling are fundamental to the data collection process and analysis of both AI and ethnography; for each, relational

working with participants is the foundation of the quality of research and the final product (Hillon and Boje, 2017). In this, I am influenced by feminist scholars who highlight the need for a focus on relationship building through appreciation, allowing elements of self into the research process (Skeggs, 2001), whilst simultaneously understanding the potential power dynamics of researcher and researched. As I highlight in my findings' sections, and on-going reflexivity, this is consistent through both phases and supports further connections across the different methodological approaches of my research.

3.3.4 Returning to Reflexivity

At the outset I positioned myself within the research, beginning to thread reflexivity through my thesis as opposed to giving it a distinct or bracketed section (Donnelly et al., 2013). Reflexivity, it can be argued, is present at all stages of the research journey. Tracy (2019:2) highlighted this through the work of Carter and Little (2007) who stated:

> A reflexive researcher actively adopts a theory of knowledge, where as a less reflexive researcher implicitly adopts a theory of knowledge.

My aim has been to attend to this throughout this chapter. Reflexivity is consistently highlighted as a key, or even a defining, component of qualitative research (Banister, 2011). In addition to methodological and theoretical openness, good practice suggests considerations of the influences of the researcher and the wider social context (Green and Thorogood, 2018). Research is not a neutral activity, and a reflexive approach understands and recognises the researcher's emotions and social location within the study (Madden, 2017). Coffey (1999:57), in agreement, argues:

> Time, space and emotions are all invested in ethnographic fieldwork – connecting the personal, the political and the professional. It is impossible to differentiate the subjective, embodied self from the socio-political and the researcher professional.

My work as a researcher in this ethnographic study is largely to collect, analyse and re-present people's stories (Etherington, 2004), in this case with the social constructionist premise of inevitable co-construction between myself and participants (Etherington,

2004). Reflexivity can be used as a way to navigate the realm between researcher and researched (Etherington, 2004). I therefore appreciate the need to balance my interpretation alongside representation of the recollections, attitudes, and beliefs of the participants (Morse, 2009:579).

Within the wide literature on reflexivity there is however 'muddy ambiguity' as to the reach of reflexivity and a necessary warning of the 'swamp of interminable deconstructions, self analysis and self disclosure' (Finlay, 2002:209). The need for restraint is imperative here, so that the primary voice is that of the participants, and not overshadowed by my interpretations or the expectations that I convey in my questioning (Etherington, 2004). What Donnelly et al. (2013) adds is an understanding that we are bound by our own consciousness and therefore what is presented will inherently be imperfect and partial. Mindful of this, I present fieldnote extracts in my findings to highlight the reflexive journey of this PhD, and myself as a researcher.

3.4 Phase 1 Methods

I now outline how Phase 1 was undertaken: the recruitment of participants; the process of data collection; ethical considerations; and data analysis.

3.4.1 Participants and Process

Desk-based internet searches started the process of mapping cultural activities across the Manchester wards. This highlighted in excess of ninety potential groups/activities city-wide, but also showed the time-consuming and difficult nature of collating reliable, up-to-date information. From my work with older adults, which included signposting people to activity groups and community resources, I am conscious that many older adults would not use the internet to find out about such opportunities, leaving them unaware of the wealth of activities. The Centre for Ageing Better (2021) reports a digital divide, highlighting that many over 55 years of age do not have the resources (material and personal) to access online materials. Manchester being a more deprived area (as shown in Chapter One) would suggest a higher proportion of digital exclusion.

The data from this exercise informed my potential participant list. I used purposeful, snowball sampling (Patton, 2002) to ensure that the eight participants selected were reflective of the demographics of Manchester, and I allowed for different organisational perspectives: housing; cultural institutions; health and social care; and those working at a strategic and community level. From eight introductory emails I recruited six participants. I then used snowball sampling, asking these six for recommendations, to recruit my full sample. Table 3 outlines the participants' role, geographic areas, and type of organisation. A more detailed description of the participants can be found in Appendix 1. Names have been replaced with pseudonyms; in each name I have carried across cultural and other information such as age, ethnicity, gender, and class.

Table 3: Table providing participant detail for Phase 1

Participant	Role	Type of organisation	Geographical remit
P1 (Paul)	Group Cultural Leader	Housing Association	Central Manchester
P2 (Ushi)	Health and Social Care Leader	Charity / Community-based Group	Central Manchester
P3 (Fiona)	Co-ordinator	Community-based Group	South Manchester
P4 (Sarah)	Strategic Manager / Cultural Leader	Local Authority	City wide
P5 (Jane)	Owner / Director	Community Enterprise Group	South Manchester
P6 (Susan)	Age Friendly Co-ordinator	Cultural Institution	South and Central Manchester
P7 (Bill)	Centre Manager	Community-based Group	North Manchester
P8 (Bal)	Manager & Volunteer	Charity / Community-based Group	North Manchester

3.4.2 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval for Phase 1 was sought and granted via Manchester Metropolitan University's (MMU) Faculty of Health, Psychology and Social Care ethical process (Ref: 0313) (see Appendix 2). Key ethical issues were anonymity, confidentiality, lone working, and data protection (The British Psychological Society, 2017). The primary purpose is to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of those we research (O'Reilly, 2009), and whilst throughout this thesis I omit the names of community centres, I am aware that complete anonymity of these cannot be guaranteed (I return to this in Chapter Five). To protect anonymity, all personal information of an identifiable nature has been removed from interview notes and fieldnotes (Mason, 2002). In relation to lone working, all interviews were carried out in public places or in community centres, and I operated an open-diary system so that my supervisors were aware of where and when the interviews were conducted. I also attended online courses at MMU to support ethical research. These included best practice for confidentiality, data protection and storage, and lone-working protocol.

3.4.3 Data Collection

Participant information sheets (Appendix 3) were handed out and consent forms (Appendix 4) were signed prior to interviews. This ensured that the participants were familiar with the rationale of the project, the involvement expected from them, as well as understanding, and being able to consent to, the way their data would be used and stored. Interviews were undertaken at the participants' work venues between 17th April and 12th June 2018 and ranged in length from 42 minutes to 1 hour 27 minutes.

I used semi-structured interviews and adapted a topic guide (Appendix 5) as a modifiable checklist to promote consistency between interviews whilst allowing for a natural conversational flow and for additional questions to follow up on information given (Robson and McCartan, 2016). The interview topic guide design was informed by the AI 4D model described in Section 3.3.3. Table 4 outlines how the interview topic guide was informed by the 4Ds within the AI approach.

Table 4: Interview topic guide inspired by AI methodology

Appreciative Inquiry Stage	Importance of this stage	Example of interview questions reflecting this stage
Discovery	Discovering what is happening and what is working well	Tell me about your role in relation to cultural activities?
Dream	Envisioning the future – positive aims and ambitions	How do cultural activities contribute to Age Friendly Manchester and how could they contribute more?
Design	Probing as to what needs to be done	What have been the main facilitators of your work? How could this be improved upon?
Destiny	Gaining clarity around goals and aspirations	What are the specific projects that stand out as exemplary and why?

Several participants invited me to see the facilities at their organisation and one participant invited me to watch 15 minutes of a drama group. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim as soon as possible after the interviews (Flick et al., 2004). Fieldnotes were made to create nuanced information (Ritchie et al., 2014), and I used a diary to collect my personal thoughts and reflections (Coffey, 1999).

3.4.4 Data analysis

Reflexive Thematic Analysis was used to guide my analysis of the data (Braun et al., 2018). Reflexive Thematic Analysis is an umbrella term that incorporates a range of flexible and iterative approaches to create themes across qualitative data sets; a theme being understood as 'reflecting a pattern of shared meaning, organized around a core concept or idea' (Braun et al., 2018: 844). Reflexive thematic analysis uses a six-stage process (as outlined below) in which the active role of the researcher is fundamental to knowledge production. This model gives space for the organic and iterative analytic work of the researcher to explore and develop an understanding of

patterned meaning across the dataset (Braun and Clark, 2021). Braun and Clarke (2006; 2019) caution that a lack of explicit detail about the process, method, and practice of analysis can weaken the robustness of analysis which I now address. To fit with the social constructionist framework, I conducted analysis at a latent level, aiming to use the data to explore the underlying 'ideas, assumptions, and conceptualisations - and ideologies' (Braun and Clarke, 2006:13). Analysis was primarily undertaken in an inductive fashion to allow the data to determine the themes (Patton, 2002). I now describe and illustrate how I used the six stages of this process. It is important to note this is not a sequential process, but a reflexive and recursive one, and arguably an embodied experience too.

Familiarisation: The familiarisation process started with transcribing the interviews, listening several times to ensure that I had done this verbatim. I then read, and re-read, the transcripts to become immersed and fully familiar with the content of each interview. This process was aided by referring back to my fieldnotes, facilitating orientation to context and non-verbal aspects of the interview.

Coding: This stage is the process of generating labels to identify key features in the data. I did this in a variety of ways. Firstly, I made notes in the margins of transcript printouts highlighting key points and initial ideas (see Section a of Picture 1). I then used NVivo to manage the volume of data and to formally code each interview. This software, whilst useful from a data-management perspective, did not, and was not expected to, lend itself to working through the data and to developing codes. Instead, I transferred the data manually from NVivo to an Excel spreadsheet, grouping sections of transcripts under different labels.
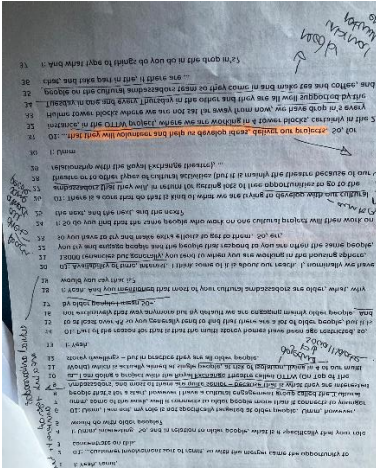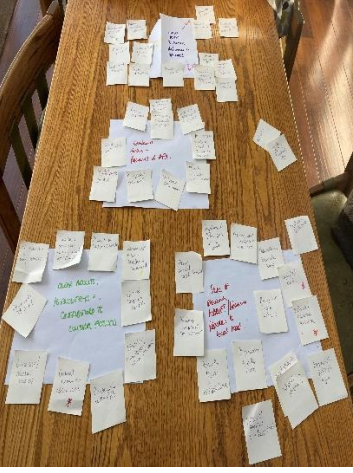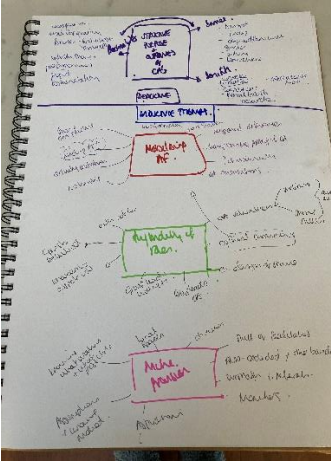
Generating initial themes: Sticky notes were employed to help me with this stage of the process (see Section b of Picture 1). Using a separate sticky note for each code, I started to work through a variety of different ways of grouping the codes, starting to consider broader patterns of meaning or themes.

Reviewing themes: Organising and reviewing the themes was not a one-off job; it required a process of going back to the data, and the research question, and numerous attempts at restructuring the codes before settling on overarching themes that encompassed the patterns of meaning within the data. This did mean omitting a few of the codes, which is to be expected. I also bracketed off some of the more descriptive findings that answered the more deductive questions posed by Phase 1 aims relating to the way cultural activities are delivered in Manchester. At this stage I transferred the codes to an A3 piece of paper to give me something easier to work from in the final two stages (see Section c of Picture 1).

Defining and naming themes: As I settled on themes that best represented the data, through the previous process and a discussion with my supervisory team, I started to develop the scope and focus of each theme, adding details as I went along. My analysis involved a process of going back to the spreadsheet and at times the original transcripts to tell the story of each theme. I was mindful to show differences as well as similarities of viewpoint within the themes. On deciding a title for each theme, I used the participants' words. The co-constructive nature of qualitative research is such that although this was my analysis, predominantly conducted as an individual process, I was cognisant that I was telling the participants' narratives through the analysis and wanted their voice and emphasis in this and how I framed the final themes.

Writing up: Much of this stage overlaps with the earlier defining stage, but the final stage is the production of the written themes. This stage helped me clarify my thinking and also raised questions with regards to some of the decisions taken at previous stages. One example was in relation to information about cultural champions as here findings were pertinent to all themes (see Section 4.3), so as I was writing I needed to make decisions as to where divisions sat between each theme to ensure clarity of findings and best representation of the data – which again took me back to previous stages of the process. Writing allowed an ongoing process of reviewing and defining themes, weaving my analysis alongside existing literature to give it academic context.

Picture 1: Documenting embodied reflexive thematic analysis

Stage 1 & 2: Familiarising and coding	Stage 3 & 4: Generating and reviewing themes	Stage 4 and 5: Reviewing and defining themes

3.5 Summary

This chapter has considered the research methodological and theoretical scaffolding of my thesis. I have discussed the use of both Ethnography and Appreciative Inquiry within a phased approach and considered the theoretical standpoints in which this study is situated. Reflexivity and the reflexive nature of the research has been explored. I have set out the method of data collection and analysis for Phase 1. Chapter Four presents the findings of Phase 1 and looks at how this informed Phase 2.

Chapter 4: Phase 1 Findings – Understanding Cultural Activity Provision in Manchester

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present the findings of Phase 1 and discuss how I found cultural activity provision to be organised, structured, funded, and supported at the time of my research. Cultural activities in Manchester are a broad church and vary, but in the main are valuable experiences for older adults, as evidenced by the literature. I identify the three key themes: the hybridity of roles for older adults within cultural activities; how the AF agenda is being mobilised; and homogeneity within the groups. In line with my reflexive approach, I consider Phase 1 and the use of Appreciate Inquiry (AI), and then continue to discuss their implications for Phase 2.

4.2 An Overview of Cultural Activity Provision in Manchester

In this section, I start by considering the deductive finding of my Phase 1 interviews. These include an understanding of what is classed as a cultural activity and also of how this was term was defined by the participants. I appreciate that this is a more prescriptive approach than would be expected from this type of inductive inquiry but, having found definitions of cultural activities elusive and varied in the literature, I was keen to see whether there was a uniform take on this in the field. As this was not an easy question, I left it to the end of the interview. This section describes the infrastructure of cultural activities considering how they are run and funded. Lastly, this section outlines the rationale for providing cultural activities for older adults. Table 1, in Section 3.4.1, gives brief participant details and Appendix 1 provides a more detailed version.

4.2.1 What Counts as a Cultural Activity

I found that the range of cultural activities on offer to older adults across Manchester was diverse. This included the three categories of culture as outlined in Section 1.2.2: high culture (for example, painting, theatre trips, exhibition attendance); leisure (for

example, gardening, Tai Chi[1], snooker, and jewellery making); and everyday cultural participation (for, example day trips, reminiscing sessions, 'bric-à-brac'[2] sales, having lunch together).

In Chapter One I highlighted the amorphous, contested nature of culture and definitions of cultural activities, and this was also my conclusion from Phase 1. No uniform definitions of cultural activities were offered by the participants. When I asked how they would define cultural activities, participants were unable to provide a definitive answer and often hesitated and were tentative. This excerpt from my fieldnotes, following my final interview with Bal who runs a north Manchester activity group, highlighted this additional knowing through more than purely the semantics of speech (Davies, 2008). In addition, the discussion with Bal also shows how my confidence grew as I learned to take a step back and not feel awkward when there were pauses in the flow of conversation.

> Again, there was a real pause for thought when I asked her to define cultural activities, like she did not know where to begin, but I seem to be getting better at not needing to fill the pauses in conversation! (Fieldnotes, 12th June, 2018)

The concept of cultural activities highlighted elements of arts and creativity, individual expression, individual history, heritage, and ethnicity. Each participant had a sense of autonomy and agency in creating their own definitions. The balance between these elements varied according to individuals' viewpoints, the group of older adults they worked with, and to an extent, the activity provision that they oversee or provide. For example:

> We have a definition of culture, broadly in line with the Arts Councils definition, but we would probably include film within that. So, it is sort of that spread of art forms. But in, you know, in parallel, and indivisible from that (or whatever the word is), it is also the cultures and diversity in Manchester and Manchester's communities and individuals. And, culture is a vehicle for expressions, and cultural expression, so to an extent it is about not dividing that too much and I think that is maybe about how you look at what you, I don't

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[1] Tai Chi is a gentle form of exercise and meditation of Chinese origin.
[2] Bric-à-brac refers to miscellaneous objects, generally of little of no financial worth

know what the word is really, what you accept or validate as a cultural experience. (Sarah: page 13, line 37)

Sarah's definition highlighted her emphasis on high culture and ethnicity. However, it is worth noting this was from a strategic vantage point, where supporting diversity across the city and working with the cultural institutions would be fundamental. In working definitions at the community level, where hands-on provision of activities was at the fore, the everyday, lived nature of culture was more pronounced:

> So, I think it is something that represents your life, your experiences, your lived life, what is of interest to you. And, but also wider than that, things that you aren't part of, so that you have a wider knowledge of the world that you live in. That can be books, film, it can be classical readings and it can be visiting physical places, … and I guess we sort of see our lunches as cultural activities, and everything we do is around food because food is like the basis of people being able to talk to each other and reminisce. (Jane: page 26, line 1)

Bal supported the broadest mix of ethnicities in her group, and Ushi predominantly supported one ethnic minority group, both focused on culture and heritage. Food was important and something that was seen as a means of inclusion, identity maintenance, and community belonging by many of the participants; similar findings are supported in the academic literature (Plastow et al., 2015; Saeed et al., 2019):

> Cultural activity, well, it is anything about that culture or religion I suppose, [pause] yeah, maybe poetry, music, dance, and always about food, food is always important. (Bal: page 30, line 27)

These definitions reflected and were informed by the cultural activities they offered or supported.

4.2.2 The Infrastructure of Cultural Activities

One of my primary goals of Phase 1 was to better understand the scaffolding of activity provision, and it was evident that Manchester's cultural activities are complex, messy, irregular, and intricate.

My desk-based research indicated varied provision across the city. Participant interviews confirmed that citywide cultural activities are being offered in a variety of ways by different sources, with different budgets, audiences, and strategic remits. For example, cultural institutions and local libraries had bespoke programmes for older adults. Neighbourhood community groups offered cultural activities alongside general welfare support and companionship for older adults. Housing schemes were running cultural activity programmes, as were faith-based and other independent groups, and ad hoc AF initiatives or stand-alone projects were working with, across, and alongside all of this. There was no obvious consistency of funding across these groups. Cultural institutions and housing schemes had some internal funding provision for organisers and activity sessions. The other groups, to varying degrees, were dependent on different funding sources, including Manchester City Council, AF Manchester, Buzz[3], and ad hoc grants or donations from local businesses or individuals. The funding rarely covered the entire cost of cultural activity provision, and most asked for nominal contributions to support the running of the groups. However, notions of nominal varied from 'maybe even £50 for those who could afford it' (Susan, cultural institution) to an 'occasional donation of a bag of rice' (Bal, north Manchester group). For many, a lack of consistent and adequate funding was a source of worry; I discuss this further in Section 4.3.2.

There was an overall strategic aim from Manchester City Council for place-based provision, as local communities are best placed to know local needs and this fits with the asset-based nature of policy frameworks discussed in Chapter One. There were pockets of partnership work, links between groups, and a continual stream of new initiatives. Much of this was working in a 'pop up' fashion, because funding was often allocated through small grants. These grants worked against a general desire for sustainability of provision, and it was questioned if this was the best means of support:

> … make people think less about projects and more about provision I guess really … (Sarah: page 2, line 27)

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[3] Buzz is an NHS-funded service supporting health and well-being across Manchester

Alongside all of this, there are about 150 cultural champions volunteer roles, created as part of the AF work, to gather and share information with their peers about different cultural initiatives open to older adults across the city.

Figure 4: 'Messy' illustration of my analytical process to understand the scaffolding and connections of cultural activity (CA) provision for older adults (OA) in Manchester
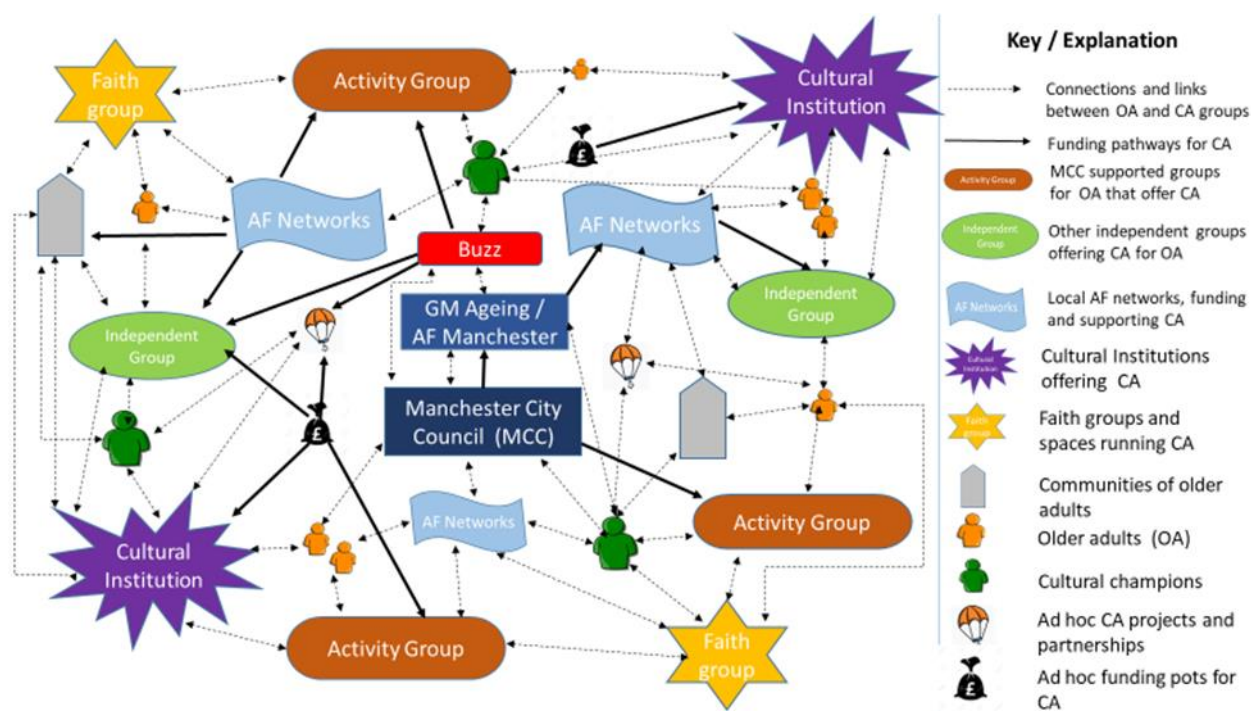
Figure 4 is an illustration of Manchester's ecosystem of cultural activities for older adults, which helped me to make sense of my data. I use the term ecosystem in the lively, mixed-up urban context offered by Hinchliffe and Whatmore (2006:127), who propose cities are inhabited 'with and against the grain of expert design'. I recognise my illustration is to some extent a raw and simplified version of a fluid and changing picture of cultural activity provision across Manchester, but I am aware of the cautionary advice to 'resist models which over-simplify the complexity of everyday life' (Denzin, 1971:168, as cited in Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007:9). For this reason, the diagram remains confusing and messy, as on the ground cultural activity provision can be incomprehensible for practitioners, academics, and also older adults. The following section outlines key themes, showing the nuances, layers, frictions, and anomalies

within the ecosystem. These themes highlight some of the complexities of provision and operationalisation not represented in this illustration.

4.2.3 The Rationale for Cultural Activities

Overlaps and points of distance can be drawn between the literature in Chapter Two and the consensus of the Phase 1 participants that cultural activities contribute to the lives and well-being of older adults. This perception reflects the value of cultural participation as being inclusive of improving social connections to reduce isolation and supporting positive self-identities and bound with general health and well-being. I will now provide a few examples.

Social isolation was expressed as 'a real biggy' (Sarah), who shared knowledge of its citywide prevalence and how it impacted on the well-being of older adults. Every participant referenced social isolation alongside a view that their cultural activities had a role to play in mediating it. Paul made this point when talking about the drop-in craft-based sessions in a housing scheme:

> They [drop-in sessions] were originally quite artistic because they were used as the way to connect to people. (Paul: page 4, line 1)

As my conversation continued with Paul, he explained how crafting, and other cultural activities, had been successful in connecting people. He recounts with pride what one older adult in his housing scheme said about a fellow tenant, now a friend:

> I didn't know him, I'd never met him, I'd never spoken to him until we done this, and now we are here every week chatting. (Paul: page 7, line 32)

The benefits of making these connections, reached into the older adult's lives beyond the hour spent with the group, something I will return to in later chapters and also identified through previous literature (see, for example, Grant et al., 2017; Reynolds 2015). Fiona gives an example of how relationships grew with volunteers as well as fellow members, and how this sometimes culminated in practical assistance:

When you speak to the volunteer drivers, they always tell us that the coffee morning starts when they [the older adults] get in the car because they are already telling them things … and they will say if they need a lightbulb changing so the volunteers might then go in and do it. So, they are building up those friendships. (Fiona: page 16, line 26)

Participants positioned their groups as having protective qualities, looking out for each other, and offering support through difficult times, and thereby exemplifying the welfare support offered in addition to cultural activities. In this next quote, Jane speaks of a recently bereaved group member:

One of the members' husbands has just died this week, so we will scoop her up now … we will do a little more for her and just look after her a little until she is ready to sort of meet a new world. (Jane: page 8, line 29)

Throughout my conversations with participants, and when transcribing the interviews, I became aware of the language the interviewees used when talking about their groups, such as Jane talking of this recently bereaved 'member'. The use of the word 'member' symbolised that older adults attending these groups are not seen as participants but as part of a 'micro-community'; a term Fiona used to highlight being amongst people that care and would help each other through difficult times. This again aligns with the wider literature in relation to social capital and resilience (see, for example, Toepoel, 2013; Bernard et al., 2015), and was consistent through the interviews where participants referenced the groups being an integral part of 'their life' (Ushi; Fiona; Jane; Bill) and groups becoming like 'family' (Ushi; Jane; Bal). Bal's use of the term 'Auntie' throughout the interview ('they're all aunties') was not referencing a blood relative but denoting both a level of affection that one would give a relative and simultaneously showing respect for an older adult in South Asian communities. Throughout this chapter, I adopt the term 'members' to reference the older adults attending cultural activities; this is something I carry through my ethnography too.

From an individual basis, there was the sense that cultural activities were creating positive change too. Sarah talked of a 90-year-old woman from south Manchester who had reconsidered what she could, and wanted, to do with her life following attendance

at a Central Library event, which marked the first time she had left her house for a number of years. Likewise, Ushi saw trust develop through participation and witnessed a change in what people felt they could do:

> We support and enhance them. Then they feel like they can do whatever here or at home. (Ushi: page 11, line 22)

In this conservation, Ushi explained how participation in group cultural activities had led to changes in confidence and consequently older adult's broader engagement with society. This was echoed by all participants. Paul told me how, after taking part in a stage production, one of his tenants, a man who had reportedly 'struggled with depression and mental health problems', had shown himself 'who he wanted to be'. By this he was referencing the improved confidence for this individual, who was reassessing his own abilities to take on things he previously felt were beyond him. These examples support research that has recognised the power of cultural activities to help with mental health (Coulton et al., 2015; Tymoszuk et al., 2019) and that positions cultural activities as enabling older adults to contribute and lead active lives; a theme I return to in Section 4.3. Chapter Two highlights research with similar findings (see, for example, Sabeti, 2015; Guthiel and Heyman, 2016; Todd et al., 2017), where cultural engagement had improved a desire to keep learning, growing, and reassessing. Likewise, when chatting about a recent jewellery-making taster session, Jane said:

> They loved that they could twist a bit of wire there, and put a stone here, and come out with something for their granddaughter. So, I think it is a sense of self-worth and value and the sense that they have not come to the end of something but that they are starting something new. (Jane: page 20, line 10)

As in the work of Liddle et al. (2013), there is the notion of generativity bound up with the sense of worth alongside the ability to not be bound by perceptions and stereotypes that exist at a societal level, but exercise choice and agency.

In this section, I highlighted a number of the broad benefits of cultural activities as perceived by those organising and supporting them and I have drawn links that support the literature in Chapter Two. However, participants also shared views on

some of what they felt were barriers to cultural engagement. Their remarks also resonated with existing knowledge, such as gender disparity (Avital, 2017), transport and access issues related to physical impairment and the environment (Age UK, 2018b; Woolrych et al., 2019), as well as a lack of publicity (Goll et al., 2015), and wealth (Age UK, 2018). The notion of an activity as being 'cultural' was also voiced as a barrier. This observation has been explored at a theoretical level in regard to the fixed nature of cultural capital and high culture (Newman et al., 2013; Goulding, 2018), but it is less explored at a community level in the context of leisure and everyday activities. Tensions were also expressed in relation to the enabling and preventative aspects of funding and partnership; this is threaded through the three main themes that follow.

4.3 Developing a Nuanced Understanding of Cultural Activity Provision

In this section, I outline the three main themes from the thematic analysis of Phase 1 data.

4.3.1 Hybridity of Roles: 'it's quite a blurred line'

This theme is about the fluidity with which older adults take on different roles within the provision and participation of cultural activity. It shows the tenuous division between older adults, volunteers, and those running the groups, highlighting how essential volunteer roles were for cultural activity provision - and beyond.

Little uniformity and over-lapping boundaries exist between the roles of service provider, volunteer, and older adult participant. It was evident that older adults were active in all domains not just as group members. The array of job titles of Phase 1 participants (see Table 3 or Appendix 1) exemplifies this lack of uniformity by way of different roles and job descriptions. Two participants had dual roles, Susan was running the cultural champion network and also a programme of cultural activities at a cultural institution, and Bill ran a community centre and a separate charity organising day trips for older adults in north Manchester. Almost all participants, particularly those from charity-based organisations, were working outside their paid remit and contracted hours to ensure their initiatives met the needs of their older adults. Jane had established her own business to better meet identified local needs. Others, such

as Bal, put in extra hours to ensure success with insufficient funding. It was evident the participants were under pressure to deliver initiatives within ambiguous roles and that they needed a variety of skills:

> But mainly I am a volunteer. [Smiles and laughs] My role, I usually call it dogsbody. [Both laugh] ... Everything, yep, yep, from strategic, to direction, to managing, to managing staff and volunteers, applying for funding - which seems to be forever. (Bal: page 2, line 12)

Asking Bal if the role was full-time, she answered, 'No, but I usually do 50-60 hours a week', showing that the position was clearly understaffed and reflecting the current reality of stretched funds and resources within Manchester (Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Devolution, 2015). Five of the eight participants interviewed identified as older adults. This was a key factor in realising the need for activities in their own neighbourhoods, and this motivated their desire to make cultural activities happen.

There was appreciation from all of the interviewees that the volunteer role was complex. A distinction was made between volunteering roles of setting up rooms and making tea, for example, and volunteering roles that looked after wider welfare issues of more vulnerable older adults. Overlap was experienced between those who set up rooms and made refreshments yet also took part in the activities:

> Well, it depends what sort of volunteering you mean because I think they do in a strange sort of way because some of them might come to the exercise class but end up taking the register because I can't if I'm too busy or they'll go and make the tea ... or equally the other way around. You have older volunteers who then start accessing the activities, so they come to an exercise class, they go on the trips. So, it is quite a blurred line in some ways, but I think that works, as long as you are not strict about it. (Fiona: page 7, line 27)

Participants viewed the role of volunteers as essential to every organisation given the facilitative nature of work within activity provision. However, concerns were raised about the sustainability of services when relying on volunteers, given that issues affecting older people (such as mental health issues and bereavement) demanded specialist support.

> We can't keep doing things on a voluntary basis. I mean the government would like us to do that, bring all the volunteers in, but you need specialist people. You need people who can work with mental health issues, with loneliness, isolation, and that type of thing. Bereavement. (Bill: page 4, line 7)

Cultural activities were often one part of a service offered by charity groups and sat alongside more crucial, wider welfare work for older adults. This work was highlighted as complex, difficult, and at times unpleasant, requiring a skilled workforce:

> Yes, and we have quite a lot [volunteers] because it is hard work. It is really like a proper job; it is a commitment and I think that the media sometimes makes it look like 'oh lavender-haired nanas' who knit and are lovely and fragrant individuals. But they don't know that I may knock on a door and a guy might answer the door with his willy hanging out because he has just got his pyjamas on and they don't see anything wrong with answering the door like that. (Jane: page 7, line 14)

Older adult participants, in addition to taking on volunteering roles as mentioned above, were also actively contributing to cultural sessions through facilitating sessions and co-designing services. Ushi spoke of one of her group members who was now volunteering as a Tai Chi Master. Likewise, Paul had volunteers running knitting sessions. Initial exploration into cultural activity provision and groups on offer across Manchester may have suggested they were running as service delivery models in which older adults are positioned as passive recipients of care (Needham and Carr, 2009), but this view was not supported by my research. On learning about how the activities are chosen, supported, and delivered it became apparent that older adults are showing agency in the contribution of knowledge, skills, and expertise to the benefit of these activity programmes. This way of working has the additional advantage of attracting groups of individuals who do not self-identify as either volunteers or as being older adults. This was certainly Jane's take when talking about the men who were volunteer drivers and then joined them for their pub lunch. Here she explains how it took them some time to accept themselves as part of the group, not just volunteers:

> It took a while for it to be an okay place to go for the men. We used to have this little group of guys that used to come and sit at the side of the room, and mess about and have their own banter. (Jane: page 11, line 12)

Linking back to culture as policy, this ambiguity between participants and volunteer also came through from the interview at strategic level. Sarah explains why culture is being seen as an essential element of the AF work and more broadly within the Manchester.

> In another respect, I suppose culture can be very much part of an active older age, for all sorts of different reasons. (Sarah: page 11, line 27)

Here, as well as participation, cultural activities are referenced as an opportunity for volunteering which links back to the concept of active ageing. The 'different reasons' were referencing the contribution that volunteers make, extending what is possible in Manchester. The use of volunteers, whilst fitting with David Cameron's 'Big Society' (Cabinet Office, 2010), is an indication of the current strain on health and social care services (Levitas, 2012), filling gaps in paid support. The impact on service providers in relation to recruitment, training, and support of volunteers for this level of work is largely unrecognised (Warren and Garthwaite, 2015).

Bruggencate et al. (2018) found older adults participated in activities for social reasons but that they also wanted a role in the community and therefore looked to volunteering within activities because this type of reciprocity was important to well-being. They made recommendations to promote active participation that considers the skills and talents of older adults. My findings broadly support this, particularly in relation to drawing on older adult's skills, expertise, and experience in designing and delivering programmes and activities at the neighbourhood level. What my research highlights is the value of fluidity within these different layers of more active and passive means of participation as well as some of the complexities and wider influences within it.

4.3.2 Mobilisation of Age Friendly Agenda: 'this is where the bee in my bonnet is'

Throughout the interviews, participants spoke of a sense of pride in Manchester, their work, and being an older adult. Manchester and the AF agenda were viewed positively by participants. There were many examples as to how the AF initiative had facilitated work through additional funding and more events for, as well as positive profiling of, older adults. Susan told of an image-rebranding exercise to combat ageing stereotypes. The coach trips run by Bill, considered a success by many of the participants, were a prime example of an activity funded and initiated through the AF team. Paul gave an example of how he finds the AF initiatives, and the people supporting these, essential to his role:

> I couldn't do it without those AF institutions being there and having things to offer, it's a no-brainer … you can talk to someone and tell them you have a group of older people coming in, they will be 'yes we'll do that'. (Paul: page 21, line 29)

Paul acknowledges that reciprocity is supporting both parties - his organisation and AF - to meet 'engagement targets', and that despite there being 'lots to keep up with' in relation to AF work, the partnership work was, for him, an asset. Although, as Sarah commented, at times ownership and power play impinged on the success and opportunities of partnership work. She expanded, telling me of recently received feedback (not specific to the AF work):

> It can be frustrating … if you are a smaller partner with a bigger organisation quite often you are generating the idea and participants, but you need the bigger partner to run it, and then they get the impact and dah, dah, dah … (Sarah: page 6, line 30)

The AF Agenda was perceived to have leverage for some service providers and exert a constructive influence for older adults generally, but it was evident that there are also frictions. Barriers within the AF agenda were notably around geographical areas and who was benefiting.

Sarah outlined that part of the strategy across Manchester is to work towards 'place-based' provision so that individual neighbourhoods and local communities can

maximise the benefit of new initiatives (Manchester City Council, 2016). However, several participants raised the issue that most AF initiatives are city-centre based, making them prohibitive for many older adults due to cost, logistics, mobility issues, and fear of crime or coming to harm.

> [T]here is definitely a corridor into the city that probably accesses more cultural events than we do. Because, if we wanted to go to the city, it's hiring the coach and the theatre ticket and the coach ticket ... And then now it's prohibitive, too expensive; we can't do it. So, anything that is not local, culturally local is hard for people to access, I think. (Jane: page 21, line 17)

It also seemed that the AF engagement and mobilisation of networks varied greatly across Manchester; while working well for south and central Manchester, the north Manchester AF network was not successfully engaging with its community:

> Right, there is AF Manchester, but we haven't met for a long time and there is another bee in my bonnet about it! (Bal: page 23, line 10)

Bal explained that, historically, northern Manchester has been a harder demographic to engage in the AF Agenda and work; particularly the wards of Crumpsall and Cheetham where lack of support from councillors and no voice from the diverse community of older adults had halted progress. Other areas in the north (such as Harpurhey and Moston) had managed successful organic AF networks engaging many older adults. Bal elaborated that new funding and 'management' of these networks had led to a need to amalgamate all the north AF initiatives, which resulted in a loss of momentum where things were working. Participants clearly knew their local neighbourhoods and the needs within these communities. Successes and strengths of cultural activity provision seemed to rest within the autonomy participants had to pitch what would work for their older adults, which they did through engagement with older adults. It was viewed as important not to lose this within the mobilisation of the AF agenda through 'over-management' or centralisation.

The cultural champion scheme, which as outlined in Section 1.4.2 comprises of 150 older adult volunteers, has been highlighted and heralded as a means to connect with

a larger and more diverse audience, and there are examples where this is working. However, it is biased towards more elite forms of culture, and through connection to the cultural institutions. When Susan spoke of her regular group members she mentioned:

> Some of the regulars have become cultural champions, so it all kind of feeds into each other. And some of them have actually turned out to be the most active. (Susan: page 7, line 17)

In hindsight, I wish I had continued this conversation in more detail. Susan attributed the recruitment of these cultural champions to relational aspects of seeing people weekly, I suspect an overlap in interests of 'high culture' would have played a part too, and there seemed a preference of these over the more everyday forms of cultural activities. Later in this interview I was told that most of the cultural champion information and networking activities are online, despite an admission that only around 80 of the 150 cultural champions were online. This further narrows the reach of inclusion and further privileges the more privileged, or at least those already connected.

Concerns were also raised around who the AF agenda was supporting and what it was prioritising. This participant felt that they were on the outskirts of the work and questioned the allocation of resources:

> The theory is always good because you have to have a strategy about making it age friendly. And there are age friendly teams, networks, but I think they are just talking shops. And they seem to get much more emphasis than a group like us that is actually doing stuff for people … There is a question around who it is helping the most and where all the funds are directed and who this is supporting. (Fiona: page 25, line 10)

Those working on the front line of support for older adults are acutely aware of the lack of resources for fundamental basic care needs (such as consistency with care to get people up and dressed daily) and often have volunteers deal with crisis-safeguarding situations. In this context, justifying spending on research and brochures

is hard to rationalise. This prioritisation of needs was questioned by the participants and has potential to alienate support for the AF agenda.

4.3.3 A Lack of Heterogeneity: 'How a place organises, sees itself, and identifies with itself'

This final subtheme looks at homogeneity within the groups included in Phase 1 and the boundaries of diversity within these. The range of different historical backgrounds, different rationales, remits for operation and funding mentioned earlier resulted in cultural activities being offered in different ways, that used the participants' skill, autonomy, and tenacity to meet the needs of their local community. My findings suggest that the outcome, despite inclusion and diversity being central to all group values and objectives, resulted in homogeneity within the regular attendees of each group as I now highlight through some examples.

Bill's centre, until recently, worked under the directive of supporting youth groups but as Bill has got older, (he was in his late 60's at the time of the interview), he has become aware of the unmet needs of older adults in his local community.

> They can be left out of a lot of things, and if I can fill that little gap by doing something then I am happy. (Bill: page 31, line 18)

With no official funding, he has set up a luncheon club, a gardening group, and other ad hoc events for older adults. In telling me of his lunch club, he talks of what is cooked and highlights catering for a relatively narrow demographic:

> You can't put hot curries and stuff like that, its gammon and steak, you know, it's hotpots. (Bill: page 2, line 11)

Bal's group in north Manchester catered for a more multi-ethnic community, representative of the demographics of that geographical area; she spoke of donations of 'bags of rice' and the need for women-only groups. Ushi's community centre was in central Manchester, but its provision was predominantly for the Chinese community.

As she explains, she wouldn't call it a 'mixed group but we do have a few non-Chinese'. All groups were cultural in their own way.

Even at the cultural institution, supporting a city-wide attendance, Susan talked of her 'regulars' who comprised a large proportion of her weekly attendance and a tight booking scheme for her sessions, meaning you probably had to be in the know and online to access the sessions.

The existence of cliques and norms within each group became clear through indirect reference. Food choices, as mentioned above, are one example. Fiona gives another example of making decisions about what play her group might like to see. She voices worries about what is or isn't suitable:

> I did give some feedback around the swearing in it, … they can start to feel really uncomfortable if the 'f word' and all that comes out, or any sexual reference. (Fiona: page 11, line 21)

Her concerns relate to a play that she would consider a bit risky, in that it contains sexual references. This shielding of group members could signify a depth of knowing of the groups, but these assumptions can be perceived as patronising and marginalising. Paul also commented on looking for more 'family-friendly shows.'. These comments jarred next to conversations where cultural activities are positioned as a platform from which it was possible to challenge negative stereotypes of older adults through both campaigns within the community (Paul, Jane, and Bal) and through intergenerational working (Fiona, Bill, and Jane). Here, the competitive nature of provision and concerns of alienating group members reaffirms the pressures on managers to have good attendance and positive feedback to ensure funding. This sense of provision for regulars is not a new consideration. Dare et al. (2018:877) talked of a 'changing of the guard' and how, in light of the heterogeneity of the older adult population, satisfying everyone would not be possible, nor feasible.

My findings suggest that this homogeneity is compounded by both evaluation with members and the way members are recruited. Each group lead was keen to tell me

their activities were in part decided on by their members, showing ownership and co-design of their service offerings through informal and formal consultations to move the service forward and 'continually evolve'. Formal methods of evaluation were adopted throughout all groups, often a necessity for funding, but equally, as Ushi states, 'informally we chat to them … all that stuff, just ask their opinions'. Within conversations and consultations, group leaders had to make decisions of what would work and be feasible, but there was pressure for the organisers to get this right. Jane explains, people will go elsewhere if there are better things on offer so 'we have to up our game a bit'. Knowledge of their audience was a key a factor in group success, but with this came assumptions that indirectly may have stopped opportunities for engagement and excluded certain groups.

Aside from small numbers of referrals from GPs and social workers, most groups recruited participants through word of mouth, and community reputation. As Bill commented, 'it all costs money', therefore, in the absence of budgets for publicity there was a reliance on others spreading the word:

> You can put up posters, but people don't often see them, so its word of mouth that is the best way. (Bill: page 33, line 1)

Bill made the connection about publicity being harder for him because potential members 'aren't on the internet'. Reliance on word of mouth is likely to bring similar people to the groups. This was not a local issue, but something thought of as a citywide issue, acknowledged at strategic level by Sarah who talked of the difficulties of knowing what is on offer across the city:

> … to make what is available visible, because so much goes on and actually, unless you know about it you won't know about it. (Sarah: page 9, line 10)

Goll et al. (2015) make this point in their research, highlighting a primary barrier in participation is not knowing what opportunities exist within local communities. There is a need for groups to have enough commonality for them to be cohesive, but equally this lends potential to overlook segments of the community. This suggests some

pockets of older adults are very are well catered for, while simultaneously gaps exist in the provision for others.

My final point within this section relates to a more explicit boundary for people living with dementia. Dementia came up in more than half the interviews and, in the main, having a dementia diagnosis would exclude people from joining groups. The rationale, according to Fiona, was that those with dementia 'needed more specialist support', and there were concerns of where 'responsibility lies' for people with dementia. Boundaries were less rigid if an existing member of the group developed dementia. It seemed that when the person was known, some of the fear attributed to the condition disbanded. This supports previous research which highlights the misconceptions and marginalisation that can be experienced, and feeds into the stigma and fear of dementia (Alzheimer's Society, 2016). Bal, more engaged with and part of the South Asian community, had a slightly different perspective and actively encouraged people with dementia to attend both groups. She had tried running dementia-specific groups, but these had not worked because there was a greater denial of the condition and of being associated with the condition within this community.

> [W]e did have a standalone [dementia] group but it didn't work. There is still a lot of stigma attached to dementia, so what we done, we sort of merged the services, and made all our services dementia friendly. (Bal: page 5, line 11)

Biggs et al., (2019) argue that people living with dementia face social disadvantage and exclusion, and these interviews give some support at a systemic level. However, this research illuminated complexity and difference around exclusion and lends support to Pinkert et al., (2021) who suggest that relationships and previous integration in social networks can promote social inclusion of people with dementia.

4.4 Reflections on Appreciative Inquiry and Experiencing the AI Shadow

I make two key observations in relation to the adoption of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) methodology for Phase 1. The first is in support of the power of the five principles on which AI is founded, particularly the simultaneity, anticipatory, and positive principle. Prior to the 'dream' style questions within my interview topic guide, several of the

participants were already engaging in aspirations, talking of what they would like to offer more of in relation to cultural activities; some of which is now coming to fruition. I also embrace the story-telling elements of AI, which I have used in my analysis to help interpret my data, appreciating that this is not in search of truth but offering context bound meaning and interpretation (Braun and Clarke, 2019). The second observation is around my initial comprehension of AI and an expectation of the outcome of positivity. Yet, issues of tension, power distribution, and systemic frustrations were raised through the interviews. Initially, this sat uneasily with me:

> Being back in the community and seeing some groups in action, was great, it feels like it has breathed life back into my PhD. … A niggle sits with me though, which is the way the interview digressed from what is good within the system to a slight unravelling of the wider issues around and inhibiting this. Does it all sit comfortably under the umbrella of AI? (Fieldnotes: 18th April 2018)

This shows my concerns over my application of this method. As novice researcher this no doubt holds an element of truth, but my worry was I had failed in adopting the AI philosophy (described in Chapter Three) successfully. As my reading widened and understanding progressed, I began appreciating the shadow side of AI (Grant and Humphries, 2006; Bushe, 2010; Ridley-Duff and Duncan, 2015), and felt my data was richer for allowing a more complete picture of the systems within cultural activity provision. Supporting the wider literature, I believe that the AI appreciative approach allowed a platform on which participants were at ease to voice concern, air negative aspects of their role, and challenges from within the system. I now reflect that appreciation was shown throughout: appreciation of the value of cultural activities; the purpose of the participants roles; and all that works alongside this to make the provision happen. Importantly, I believe I was able to show appreciation because of my background. As posited by feminist scholar Oakley (1981), the sharing of one's background was a facilitating factor in Phase 1:

> [S]o, it is sometimes, like, people who don't understand what we do, think that we can work smarter, quicker, better, and offer more value for money, but the variables attached to being human are, well, huge. (Jane: Page 11, line 2)

This ease of understanding, a relatability, and shared enthusiasm for the work of Phase 1 participants, I believe, influenced the rapport I built and in turn supported my access to the field for my ethnography (see Chapter Five). My previous practice as a dementia support worker was an influence, I could feel my instinct shift towards unpicking some of what was not working and was aware this drew my focus to the issues of provision for people with dementia and shaped my analysis.

A final reflection is more generally about the amazing people I interviewed in Phase 1, collectively claiming in excess of 150 years of service to both local communities and older adults, and shared their knowledge, understanding, and expertise of my research topic. I have endeavoured to evidence throughout this chapter a range of exceptional projects and general dedication to offering quality cultural actives. Much of this is attributable to the relentless energy and devotion of the individuals I interviewed. This is something that remains one of the standout factors of this research for me, and threads through the different themes of Phase 1 and 2. Much of this came from the satisfaction of making a difference to the lives of older adults, which was how the group leaders validated the worthiness of their roles:

> We enjoy it as well, we do enjoy our work. It's rewarding and sometimes a real privilege to share their stories and experience … it's a very, very, special status. (Ushi: page 8, line 11)

Likewise, Susan told me of the benefits members said they gained from participating in her cultural activities, and their gratitude for having this in their lives:

> So, it's little snippets like that that just makes my job seem so worthwhile (Susan: page 13, line 23)

Returning to methodological reflections, I did consider if I just struck lucky with my Phase 1. Informed choices and recommendations in the field supported recruitment of people involved in successful projects and groups. As my research progressed, the passion and commitment of all involved continued to inspire me, as did the older adults I went on to meet. This has stayed with me beyond data collection, through the analysis, and given me strength in the challenging task of writing this thesis.

4.5 Discussion and Moving onto Phase 2

The findings of Phase 1 highlighted that there is a diverse range of cultural activities available to older adults. Organisations have a rationale for providing the activities while being autonomous, although activity provision is constricted by funding availability. Local provision is generally the way cultural activities operate, which whilst well positioned to meet local community needs, has an accompanying risk of becoming niche which could exacerbate some social exclusion. In Theme 1 (Hybridity of Roles) I presented a clear view amongst organisations of older adults as having agency. This finding sits comfortably within the ecological model for community gerontology (Greenfield et al., 2018), in which older adults used their agency to cross these boundaries and fulfil any, or all, of these roles and community groups were the medium of multidirectional pathways between the micro, meso, and macro levels. This agency and the asset-based contributions of older adults, while a key part of local authority and central government policy, is not without criticism (Daly and Westwood, 2018), and is becoming a necessity to support cultural activity provision in Manchester in the absence of adequate funding resources (Humphries et al., 2016). Success of cultural activity provision was predominantly due to the invaluable role of volunteers, and the extra time and dedication given by service providers. However, the coordination and management of volunteers proved a demanding and difficult aspect of the participants' role within their organisations. My study supports research highlighting issues around boundaries for volunteers (both in terms of setting and acceptability) (Hoad, 2002; Manthorpe et al., 2003; South et al., 2011) and the need for additional support to mobilise this 'citizen-based' approach (Warren and Garthwaite, 2015; Glimmerveen et al., 2018). Except for the cultural champion work, where there is a potential bias towards high culture and those who have greater capital, limited attention was given to the value of volunteers. This absence of significant recognition of the work, and skill, involved in supporting the volunteers raises concern over the long-term sustainability of capitalising on this unpaid workforce. This will in turn impact provision.

My findings highlighted that there are frictions and tensions within the AF agenda and its mobilisation within Manchester. Generally, the participants were in favour of the AF agenda and were working within the framework; with the ultimate focus of benefitting older adults, despite funding concerns. A combination of reduction in resources and distance from the AF Agenda can potentially narrow the parameters of AF work. This has potential to impact the work needed to realise AF ambitions and cultural activity provision. This study has evidenced that small scale organisations are in a key position to provide cultural activities that focus on older adults' needs.

I take these insights into my Phase 2, where I learn more from the perspectives of older adults within the groups. Findings from Phase 1 highlighted participation in cultural activities through the community has potential to offer a sense of place, self, and belonging. Phase 2 will allow a deeper understanding as to how, or if, this is happening for the older adults involved. I am keen to explore how and why older adults move between different roles of volunteer and participant, and how cultural participation of older adults fits with their views of the AF agenda and perceptions of positive ageing. Given the homogeneity of provision, I am also keen to explore through further observations and discussions around who is and who is not attending. Whilst this is my starting point, I proffer these amended research objectives with understanding that ethnography is an iterative process and research design is a continual process (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007).

4.6 Summary

In this section I have looked at the findings from my Phase 1 data. In doing so I have provided an overview of cultural activity provision and outlined the three key themes. Consideration has been given as to how cultural activities are positioned, structured, and delivered within Manchester, and the value of cultural activities has been evidenced. Exploring provision through interviews with those fundamental to delivery, I have highlighted older adults as volunteers and providers are a key facilitator - but this is not without ambiguity and some tensions. My study shows AF work does much to enable cultural activity provision, and the AF ambitions are welcomed by all, but this is working better for some than for others, and frictions exist. The richness of cultural

activity provision comes from many unique offerings that marry different activities to local populations, through dedicated professionals, but this Phase has highlighted there is scope for gaps within this provision. In this chapter I have also explained how I am taking these findings and using them to inform Phase 2 in which I explore participation in cultural activities from the perspective of older adult members. This is the focus of Chapter Five where I return to my ethnographic work that comprised Phase 2.

Chapter 5: Ethnographic Fieldwork - Learning whilst Doing

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I set out how I undertook Phase 2 ethnographic research. I outline the different stages of my ethnographic process to allow for transparency and credibility of data collection and analysis (Yin, 2016), before presenting the findings in Chapters Six and Seven. I begin with ethical considerations and the competing tensions of ethics committee work versus the essence of ethnography (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). I explain the selection of my field sites, the rationale for this, I describe my entry to the field and provide descriptions of my field sites. Next, I set out my data collection methods: participation; observations; and interviews. The interplay of analysis and writing is the focus of the final section. This chapter is organised into discreet subsections that run in a linear fashion and is not a true representation of the evolving, interdependent, and overlapping nature of ethnography (Madden, 2017). Davies (2008:45) argues:

> Good ethnographic research encourages a continual interplay and tension between theory and on the ground method and experiences.

Throughout this chapter, I try to illustrate these entanglements, demonstrating researcher reflexivity as a factor transcending all the processes, and how some of my less-textbook experiences have retrospectively enhanced my learning of how to be ethnographic.

5.2 Ethics: The Frustrations of Making Ethnography Fit

My data collection was in two stages, which meant two separate ethics submissions. I gained ethical approval in April 2019 from Manchester Metropolitan University Health, Psychology and Social Care Research, Ethics and Governance Committee (Ref:3244), (see Appendix 6). Anonymity and informed consent were integral to gaining approval as outlined below.

5.2.1 Anonymity

As with Phase 1 ethical considerations (see Chapter Three), confidentiality and anonymity were primary concerns and addressed in a similar fashion. To protect anonymity, in addition to the use of pseudonyms, at times I have changed or withheld personal details that may identify people (Ritchie et al, 2014). This does not affect the representation of individual stories, and I appreciate someone familiar with Manchester may be able to identify groups through descriptive sections. During the research, and with hindsight, I learned anonymity concerns according to ethics processes may have been contrary to the wishes of some participants who embraced ownership of their story and part in the research (Grinyer, 2002). This became clear when I brought in and shared photographs taken to help document the sessions. The photographs were always taken with a check of ongoing consent; written consent for all used in this and other publications. Towards the end of the drama sessions, I set up a table displaying the pictures, offering to print copies for group members, as a thank you and a memento. I put post-it notes on the back of each picture so group members could scribble their name, for printed copies to be forwarded through Fiona (group co-ordinator). I reiterated at this point that no faces would be included and offered to delete any people were unhappy with. I re-explained the consent procedure and my ethical commitments, leaving information sheets and consent forms with the pictures for reference. The group loved seeing these, asking for more copies than I anticipated, and told me to use them as they were. Ultimately, they were proud of their participation and happy for this to be visible.

> Oh , that's daft [not showing faces], we are doing drama it's not that we are shy and you documenting us is like a bit of history and keeps it all alive. I don't mind people knowing this was me, in fact the more people that know the better! (Iris, 17th July 2019)

It raised a pertinent issue highlighting a gap between the ethics committee interpretation of protecting participants and participants' wishes.

5.2.2 Informed Consent

Informed consent is ensuring a participant has all the information they need to decide whether to participate in a study. This usually includes the aims of the research, process of participation, implications (positive or negative) of participation, and awareness that participation is voluntary and retractable (Gobo, 2008). The preference for ethics committees is documentation in a 'traceable' way, most commonly in written format (Gobo, 2008:143). Hammersley and Atkinson (2007:42) argues against this, stating informed consent is 'neither possible nor desirable in ethnographic (or for that matter, other) research'. He argues the practicalities of implementing a research design are contra to the very nature of ethnographic fieldwork, which should be fluid and evolving, making it more important that consent is assessed throughout the entire process as opposed to something obtained at the outset (Hammersley, 2018). In my initial reading and understanding of ethnography, I had embraced the idea of ethnography as 'hanging around' (Hammersley, 2018:2).

My first application referenced verbally informing the groups of the reason for my participation and the purpose of my research, making participant information sheets available. Written informed consent, I argued, would be unviable for large groups; interrupting and detracting from informal conversations and observations that are typical of ethnographic research, and my intended method of data collection. Individuals would be asked to inform me if they did not wish to be observed. I set out intentions to give out participant information sheets explaining how their data would be used and stored, and to gain verbal consent for any audio recording and photography. The reviewers deemed this insufficiently robust.

I made amendments, adding participant information sheets for all and written consent when audio recording or photographing, unless specific reasons prohibited a signature, then verbal consent would be recorded. I defended the lack of an interview schedule, as this would be iterative, ad hoc, and dependent on observations and conversations at a group or individual level. However, I stated all questions would be linked to participants' cultural activity engagement. This was agreed, subject to an extra sentence outlining the safeguarding process in more detail, should I need to breach

confidentiality, and an additional line on the consent form getting agreement as to using quotes from informal conversations in publications (which seemed strange as I would not get this from those not recorded). Ethics approval was granted on my third submission attempt. See Appendices 7 and 8 for the final Phase 2 Participant Sheet and Consent Forms respectively.

This form of academic rejection always feels harsh. I accept there was a need to make some amendments and expand my initial application. In retrospect, it helped me think through processes in more detail and better articulate and ground my study in sound ethnographic practice and theory. However, it highlighted how issues of consent, and to an extent anonymity, when considered as an audit process become a matter of ideology over ontology, can undermine some of the essential relational elements central to ethnographic working (Langer, 2005).

5.3 Selecting the Field Sites

Research questions were developed through Phase 1 (see Chapter Three and Four) and a multi-site ethnography was chosen for Phase 2 to further explore older adults' participation in cultural activities. My next step was to identify suitable field sites. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) advise consideration of a number of strategic and pragmatic decisions on selection of field sites, which I address in this section.

Strategic considerations relate back to my research aims and the generation and testing of theory around cultural activities engagement supporting older adults' sense of self, place, and belonging. There are different strategic methods for case sampling; my influence was 'theoretical sampling' (Glaser and Straus, 1967) which maximises the number of categories, and properties of categories, as the first stage of theory generation. I had already established variation in demographics and provision across Manchester geographically, so conducting the ethnography with groups in the north and south of the city was fundamental. Phase 1 highlighted a diversity of cultural activities across the city, and I wanted to incorporate high culture, leisure, and the everyday. My last strategic consideration links back to a point raised in Phase 1 by Sarah (25th April 2018), urging for 'less projects and more provision', referring to a

predominance in funding for short time limited cultural projects. Here, in addition to joining on-going groups, I was interested to see a cultural activity project through from conception to completion, joining weekly group sessions from start to finish.

Accompanying strategic objectives is the balance of pragmatic factors (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). For me, these included: what cultural activities were running during the window of my fieldwork; the logistics of scheduling fieldwork with only a limited number of days in Manchester each week; where I might gain permission to conduct fieldwork; the evolving nature of opportunity and cultural activity provision within the city; and the balance of breadth versus depth for my investigation (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). In making these choices, I considered debates of generalisability of ethnography work. I looked to explore older adults' engagement in cultural activity from the stance of adding to the theoretical debates around sense of self, place, and belonging rather than extending knowledge to a larger collective. As Davies (2008) highlights epistemologically, from a critical realist's perspective, I will not be looking to make causal predictions through a multi-sited ethnography but will be interested in differences and variations, showing the complexities of individuals and their interaction with social systems as support for developing explanations (Bhaskar, 1998).

Hammersley and Atkinson (2007:29) reference 'casing the joint' as a fallible means of assessing group suitability to answer research questions. Phase 1 afforded me a head start and provided warm leads to contact for Phase 2, see Section 5.4. I had kept in touch with the participants of Phase 1 research, thanking each one for their time after the initial interview and following this up with a poster presentation of Phase 1 findings entered for an internal and external conference in September 2018 (see Appendix 9). Through this, several participants had already invited me back.

Applying these considerations, three initial possible target sites for Phase 2 research were identified. Firstly, Bill, who ran a social eating club in the north of Manchester and co-ordinated an AF Coach Trip initiative. I was signposted to this group through Phase 1, a number of people highlighting it as a successful venture. This

leisure/everyday cultural activity group spanned the whole of north Manchester which I hoped would allow access to older adults, representative of the broad and diverse population of this wide geographic area. To contrast this, I contacted the two south Manchester group facilitators of Phase 1, Fiona, and Jane. These groups operated within a tighter geographical remit, offering a varied range of cultural activities to their members. Initial contact was made via email on 24th April 2019. The next section details negotiations with the gatekeepers and entry to the field.

5.4 Gaining Access and Entering the Field

Access to the field 'shapes the inquiry process from beginning to end' (Freeman, 2000:359). This section outlines the process of my access, initially through the gatekeepers of the groups and then into the field.

5.4.1 Gaining Access

My access to the groups was relatively straightforward, I emailed the three aforementioned contacts, asking for a second meeting, reiterating my research objectives and hopes of spending more time with their activity groups to achieve this. The north Manchester and one of the south Manchester groups replied to my email within a couple of days, and meetings were set up to ascertain what activities they planned for the next six months and how I might be able to engage. The other south Manchester group did not reply to my email.

Gaining access is not a neutral process, but one that is both transactional and political (Feldman, 2003). Phase 1 participants, on and off the transcripts, highlighted that participation interest was not unidirectional, but had reciprocal benefits - work with researchers was viewed 'positively with funders' (Ushi, 17th April 2018) and had agency. This made my access easier but raised a consciousness of expectations. Whilst offering myself as a volunteer, I clearly set out my intention in attending was to observe, participate, and chat to the members exploring how this related to older adults' sense of self, place, and belonging. I clarified data collection methods, ensuring collaboration on practicalities and how best to get informed consent, although these processes, and adaptations also evolved in the field (see Section 5.5).

Both meetings were a success; you could say they chose me (Feldman, 2003). The north Manchester group invited me to their AGM, scheduled for 8th May 2019, to inform the trustees, board, and members of my research and to answer questions. Subject to no objections, I would then join their planned coach trip to Llandudno on the 13th June and possibly a second to Southport on 3rd September 2019.

At the south Manchester meeting on 7th May, Fiona ran through upcoming activity plans, offering me access to all, or any, of the groups that sat within their umbrella. Serendipitously, a ten-week drama session was starting imminently; this became my second group, and I was invited to a planning meeting on 22nd May 2019. The drama group was scheduled for Wednesday mornings, and a craft group ran on those afternoons. Maximising my time in Manchester, this would enable insights into high culture as well as a more leisure-based activity. I noted less enthusiasm for this - having hailed a previous drama group project as a triumph, Fiona was more apologetic about the craft group:

> Fiona appeared delighted for me to work with the drama group, clearly one of their current headline activities. I am not as sure the craft group would have been her first choice; she gave a lengthy historic explanation suggesting it is not 'representative' of what they generally offer. In some ways this intrigued me more!' (Fieldnote diary, 7th May)

Again, research logistics and consent procedures were negotiated. I set out my intention to experience the group with them, as well as observe the sessions. Fiona (7th May) suspected this 'would be liked by the group'. I also agreed to offer a hand setting up, helping with refreshments, or any other tasks she thought would be beneficial to the group. This helped immersion as a 'sensory apprentice' through inserting myself as a participant and allowed me to experience the role of volunteer (Stevenson, 2017:550). It also helped me feel less conspicuous and more part of the group, although the difficulties of balancing these different roles is discussed further in Section 5.5.1. The iterative nature of ethnographic work (Madden, 2017) played out, as involvement with this drama group took me to community festivals, the group's coffee mornings and introduced me to Zoe, who was setting up a new

storytelling/reminiscence group. These additional sites, whilst not the primary focus, added to my ethnographic findings and are woven into my analysis.

### 5.4.2 Introduction to the Groups

5.4.2.1 The Day Trippers

The Day Trippers are an informal group of people who go on organised trips to places in North West England. The trips are arranged by a recently founded charity group based in north Manchester, available for anyone over the age of 50 who lives in north Manchester (over 30,000 people fit this criteria (Manchester City Council, 2018)). This group does not meet on a weekly basis but comes together four times a year for a shared purpose. Three of these outings are coach trips, mainly to seaside or historic towns situated up to two hours' drive from Manchester, the fourth is usually a Christmas meal. Generally, around 200 people participate in each outing. There is a £5 membership cost per annum, then four visits are offered at a reduced cost of about £12 per trip. The group was set up in 2017, originally funded and supported by Manchester City Council as an AF initiative. It is now run as a charity by fifteen volunteers, with small donations from local sources for postage costs, minimal ad hoc administrative assistance, and advice from some of the Manchester AF team. Generally, it is a self-sufficient operation requiring no external funding, which made it a project many in Phase 1 admired.

For every trip, five coaches are booked to accommodate a large number of older adults. Each coach has between five and seven pick-up points in a specific geographical region of north Manchester, depending on who has signed up for the trip. Tickets with the pick-up point and sequential departure times are sent out prior to the event. At the designated stop, a volunteer checks on and welcomes all passengers, until every member is collected. At the destination, a departure time is given and drop off's work in reverse on the way home. During the outward journey, information of new initiatives and groups related to older adults' health and well-being are handed out (see Appendix 10), money is collected for the driver, and raffle tickets sold to raise funds for their group to keep costs low. On the return trip, there is music and the raffle.

This drama group is one of many activities run through a community group based in a suburb of south Manchester, approximately 3 miles from the city centre. The hub of this group is attached to a local church. The group occupies an office, has a storeroom, and the use of two large halls and one smaller room, with access to the kitchen area and a garden area, as my rough sketch below shows. The drama group meets in one of the large halls, which has community notices on the walls, functional community centre stacking chairs and tables to the sides, and some older, floral covered pew style seating around the edge. The room has numerous high windows, white walls, and light wood parquet, making it a bright space.

Figure 5: Rough Fieldnote Sketch of the South Manchester Group Room Layout
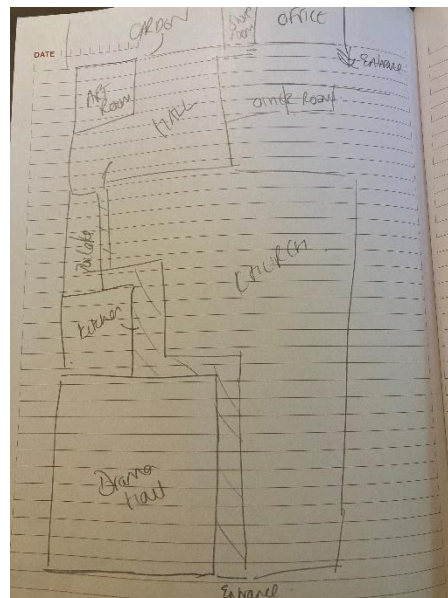
I joined the fourth round of drama sessions. The drama cycle comprises ten-weekly two-hour sessions, during which members work with a facilitator to co-construct a play. The play is performed at their coffee mornings, and usually at an external venue. Coffee is available from just before 10.00am, the sessions start promptly at 10.15am, with one 15-minute break midway before finishing at 12.00 noon. Each session starts with warm-up exercises to focus on techniques (such as, breathing or improvisation), and discussions and exercises to generate ideas for play sketches. This is done as a whole group. The remainder of the sessions is in subgroups, working on different sketches - performing these to the group concludes the morning. Funding for the

facilitator has been secured through a small grant independent of the groups'
Manchester City Council funding, consequently there is no cost for attendance.

5.4.2.3 The Craft Group

This group is also supported by the south Manchester Community Group. It occupies
the smaller room (as shown in Figure 5) which, with a fireplace and slightly threadbare
carpet, feels more like a lounge. This group runs weekly on a Wednesday from 1.30pm
till 3.30 pm, stopping for summer, Easter, and Christmas breaks. This group ran
independently for about eight years, settling here about two years ago after problems
with other venues. Participant numbers have dwindled, and this group currently
operates with up to five attendees. The facilitator (Vicky) brings craft ideas and
materials for the craft session and each attendee contributes £1.50 to cover costs,
which includes tea and biscuits. All members congregate around one large table for the
whole session. The activity is demonstrated, then everyone has a go; support is given
by the facilitator and other group members where needed. The activities require
minimal skill and are accessible. The group usually finishes with a quiz.

5.4.3 Entry to the Field

This is a brief, descriptive section in which I outline my entry to the field, negotiating
ground level micro-politics, and building relationships and acceptance - all of which are
central to an ethnography (Coffey, 1999). I was fortunate to get the opportunity to
learn and meet members of the drama group and day trippers before joining their
activities. This section tells of the day trippers AGM and a planning meeting with the
drama group.

5.4.3.1 An AGM

On 8th May, 2019, I went by bus back to the north Manchester community centre
where I had interviewed Bill. Arriving twenty minutes early, Bill greeted me and took
me through to the café area, introducing me to Pamela and Angela (volunteers), who
were behind the counter serving tea. The team had been informed of my research
intentions, so introductions and conversation were easy. The room was busy but not
full. Spread out on the table were envelopes, letters, and piles of papers; these were

the letters and tickets to be sent out for the next coach trip. Pat and Lynn (also volunteers) were stuffing the letters, deep in discussion about how to reduce postage spend. We moved through to the meeting hall, a big, graffiti-decorated room with basketball hoops on the walls, reminiscent of a school gym. A few tables were lined up at the front of the room for speakers and the chair with four rows of seats in front. Bill expressed disappointment at the low turnout (18 in total). We waited for ten more minutes before starting, but no one else arrived. The meeting started with formalities of accounts and re-electing officials before discussions of current issues, including a drop in memberships numbers, a pin badge for members, Christmas events, and recruitment of a volunteer to sort out their database and regular newsletter. This was the first AGM since the group had become a limited charity and there were discussions about logistics, teething problems, as well as praise for all who had helped the group get mobilised.

I explained my research, outlining my research aims, consciously making this accessible and jargon free (Kara et al., 2015), and explaining how I hoped to join to observe what was happening and talk with older adults. I made clear how I would introduce myself on the coach, so people knew why I was there, and offer participant information sheets (I also left some on the table for anyone to take). I stressed my aim was to be unobtrusive and to respect the wishes of those not wanting my attention. I explained information collected would be used to write my thesis, with findings shared at a policy and local level. The group seemed interested in my research and saw it as beneficial to their group and to promote cultural activities for older adults more widely.

After the meeting, I stayed a while longer talking with Bill and the volunteers. I offered to fill some envelopes, but the volunteers were coming back the following day to finish this. Through conversations, I learned of imminent holidays to Spain for a group of volunteers, and connections between a few going back to school days. After paying for my membership and coach ticket, and promising to bring a few raffle prizes, Pam dropped me at a busier bus stop to speed up my journey home. This was in keeping with the warmth of welcome and a pleasing sign that some rapport was developing.

On 22nd May, I attended the drama session planning meeting. This meeting had been requested by the group members, to look at lessons learned from three previous drama projects and collaborate on the best way forward. Fiona introduced me to the group. We sat around some trestle tables put together in a square formation. There was a flipchart for notetaking to one side and a tea trolley from which to help ourselves to the other.

Figure 6: Sketch of the Floor Plan at the Drama Planning Meeting [Fieldnotes 22nd May 2019]
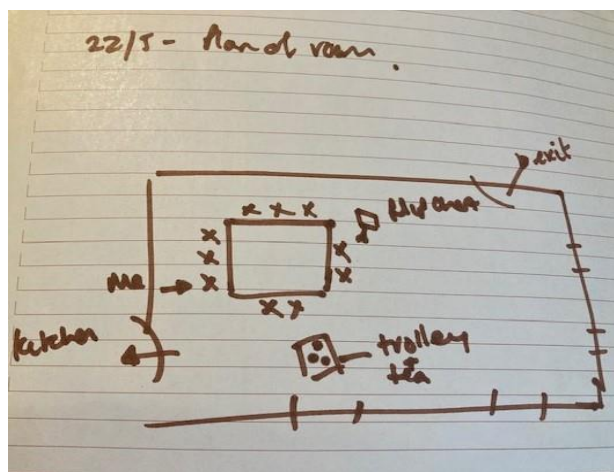
Ten people were at the meeting - eight older adults, Anil an actor and drama facilitator, and me. Fiona went back to her office, the meeting started, and I introduced myself and my research plans. There were no questions or objections, I handed out my participant information sheets, and we moved on to the meeting. I had a pad and a pen with my information sheets so Ron (drama member, meeting chair, and trustee) asked if I would take notes. This was great; it gave me a purpose and meant there was no problem with me scribbling down comments and observations. During the meeting they discussed and debated group successes, challenges, and possible solutions. This was an invaluable insight:

> Like being parachuted into a ready-made focus group to debate the value of cultural activity engagement and how to make this better. (Fieldnotes, 22nd May 2019)

Table 5 is a summary of their comments, much of which I picked up through conversations and observations in the early sessions; some of which threads through the findings in Chapters Six and Seven.

Table 5: Successes, Challenges, and Ambitions of the Drama Group

Successes	• pride - group and individual achievements
	• better integration and community links
	• building/learning skills and techniques
	• facilitation of the group worked well
	• the use of music and dance
	• laughing and sharing and friendships
Challenges	• balance of improvising and scripted work
	• keeping people in the group and finding new people (group dropped from 20 to 12 attendees last series)
	• creating a role for everyone and using their skills
	• too many changes to the play and hard to keep up
	• not enough discipline – everyone talking at once
Solutions	• target some key people to come back or start the group
	• 'Love bomb' those that come and make them feel welcome
	• try and even out the parts and use skills (singing etc.)
	• make time for breakout groups, more discipline and turn taking when working as a group
	• make space for non-performance roles: costume, props etc.

It was decided the group would run from 5th June for 10 weeks, culminating in an internal performance to the coffee morning, and hopefully a couple of external performances at art events and festivals. Everyone would like an intergenerational element, although logistics of this may be difficult. Possible topics for the play were considered, including 'I am not invisible', referencing how older people can be overlooked – a topic that returned in a later session.

This meeting afforded me much information about the group and the dynamics and personalities within it. Unlike the AGM meeting, where all had been calm and help was

extensive but under the radar, here, amongst positivity and energy, was a jostling for attention. I observed this through individuals banging the table for attention, talking over one another, and being blunt or dismissive:

> I'll go with that but if it goes wrong, well I told you! (Ron, 22nd May 2019)

There was also much humour within the group, including my name being teased:

> Dr Tingle, I like that, we can all have a Tingle at the group! [Laughter] (Sally, 22nd May 2019)

I took this banter as a positive, my status already shifting from observer to participant (O'Reilly, 2009). The tensions of this shift are discussed more in Section 5.5. Some of the group stayed to chat with me after the session and Fiona wanted to know how it went. I already observed lot of micro-politics; reflexivity would be key in my navigation of this over the next four months (Coffey, 1999). Ron emailed me the following morning wanting me to add anything he had missed to the meeting notes. There was little to contribute but I thanked him for the group's welcome.

I was fortunate to have introductions to the people and set-up of these groups. This eased my entry to the field, opening up 'ethnographic-analytical-theoretical dialogue' (Pink and Morgan, 2013:3530). Older adults had started framing relevant questions to explore in the field, showing me the way things were done and easing me into being with the people and practices at each setting. The next section outlines my time in the field focusing on my methods of data collection.

5.5 The Field Work

My field work took place over six months, from early May to late October 2019. During this time, I went on two separate day trips with the north Manchester group, where I spent 18 hours observing, speaking with in excess of 40 older adults with one follow-up interview. I attended seven drama sessions and joined them on two play performances. This comprised over 25 hours of observation, multiple conversations with 19 older adults, five-follow up individual interviews and a couple of coffee shop

chats, akin to focus groups. I attended six craft sessions (although two got cancelled), observing for around six hours and interacting with four older adults, with one follow up interview. Additionally, I attended one story telling session and two coffee mornings in south Manchester. Spreading fieldwork over numerous sessions and spending short periods of time in situ has been referred to as 'excursions' into participants lives (Pink and Morgan, 2013:352) and is what Madden (2017:78) describes as 'step-in-step-out ethnography'. This does not, he argues, detract from closeness and insight into lifeworlds, fundamental to ethnography, and has the advantage of allowing time to write notes and maintain a 'critical ethnographic position' (Madden, 2017:78).

In this section, I reflect on the sensory nature of 'being there' (Pink, 2015), the art of balancing participation and observation in situ, and the use of fieldnotes as a method of documenting my time in the field. My intention was to have informal, 'naturally occurring' conversations (Davies, 2008); however, the nature of the groups did not always support this, so I also undertook a range of ethnographic interviews. Pink and Morgan (2013) note that in short, intense bursts of fieldwork, each visit must be methodologically and theoretically considered to maximise the time in field. Throughout, my ethnography is constantly grounded in critical reflection, considering (and at times amending) relational and practical aspects of what was suitable and working in the field (Davies, 2008).

5.5.1 'Being there': Managing both Participation and Observation

The influence of sensory and institutional ethnography was outlined in Chapter Three, and the importance of embodied and participatory practice is fundamental to ethnographic learning and lends itself to the exploration of cultural activities. Learning is not done in a passive sense but through the entire bodily experience of sharing the space and experience with those we are learning from (Coffey, 1999), giving focus to the material, temporal, and sensory aspects of environment (Howes, 2005). Through participating in the practices of those we are researching, a richer understanding follows. Consequently, I set out to experience as much of the cultural activities as

possible with, and in the manner of, the older adults attending. Here, I set out how this worked in practice.

In the drama groups I would join the circle with the members, involving myself in the warm-up exercises and the activities, although I kept silent and just observed through the discussions or as they developed the play. Davies (2008: 254) states in ethnography we 'attain insight into social reality and alter it through our presence', this was an attempt to minimise my effect. I was unable to attend all the sessions and did not want to be part of the final production, so in the latter sessions I would stand in for others - positioning myself as a float. This worked well, allowing me to alternate my involvement with the three different sub-groups whilst working their separate sketches, or to stand back as more of an observer (see Section 5.5.1). Mason (2002) argues through participation and sharing space, experiences, and emotions the researcher gets to know. Others have cautioned ethnography should not be assessed for quality or validity on the 'degree of participation', but on the critical reflections of participation, observation, and the relations in the field (Davies, 2008:84). Participation for me supported knowing through an increased awareness of micro-level feelings, interactions, and relationships in the field. Although this could be interpreted as conjecture, I noted a progressive ease with which group members talked, peeling back their guard, as my involvement in the everyday activities of their groups increased over time. This is a fieldnote extract after a session with circus skill objects (diabolo, spinning plate, etc.) taking turns to pick out one object and carry out a mime:

> I can't say I enjoyed the pressure of having to think of something creative, worrying someone may have the same idea or they wouldn't get what I was doing! But I see first-hand how this works as a bonding exercise; it got Connie and I chatting and laughing – she felt equally as nervous, but I question if she would have divulged this without us sharing the experience in the same way.'
> [Fieldnotes, 5th June 2019]

For the coach trip, I met members and shared the space, atmosphere, and activities on the coach, but it was harder to immerse myself throughout the day. This group did not operate as one but was formed of many sub-groups. Nor were they learning skills or techniques, but sharing a journey to a destination and back, choosing their own

activities once there. The co-constructive element of this group was more of nostalgia and experience than physically doing together; I return to this in my findings. Once at the location the group dissipated:

> By the time I had collected my pad and pens, popped on my coat, and left the coach, there was not much to see but a few distant umbrellas. (Fieldnotes, 13th June 2019)

Unforeseen and unplanned for events, like this, are the nature of fieldwork and why researchers need to be reflexive and responsive to people, time, and space (Parr et al., 2001). On reflection, I had perhaps made assumptions about this day superimposing previous experiences of small mini-bus trips from care settings where we would work the trip as a group. It forced a decision to start my day with two volunteers and two other members who had not yet set off but, on spotting other members through the day, I would engage with them and what they were doing, be it shopping, walking, or stopping for a drink. I return to this and the use of walking interviews (Carpiano, 2009) in Section 5.5.2. I pre-planned for my second visit, getting more information on the coach to Southport about what people were doing, as well as permission to join them.

Alongside participation was continual observation. Observation allows the researcher to view what is happening all around, giving a multi-dimensional depth reaching beyond experiences not able to be articulated, nor constructed through dialogue, allowing visibility of build-up and impact of situations and conversations (Mason, 2002). The work of observation is not a separate entity but an integral, omnipresent part of being in the field. The notion of 'ethnographic gaze' (Madden, 2017: 98) refers to the shaping of observation data, and the inevitability that fieldnotes will be selective (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Choices, whether conscious or unconscious, are informed by a researcher's perspectives and orientations (Kearns, 2010). As with my above example, these groups were completely new to me, but my background in activity and community work brings familiarity and anticipation which can lead to omissions and assumptions. One of the challenges of an observer is to make the familiar unfamiliar (Goodley and Smailes, 2012); reflexivity is again a key component to account for this co-construction of knowledge. Particularly with ethnographic or

anthropological work in familiar locations, it can also be easy to confuse analysis with description (Gupta and Ferguson, 1997). My observations generally attended what was happening in the group: the people; the practices; and the sensory environment. This was recorded with a few pictures and sketches, but predominantly through fieldnotes as outlined in Section 5.5.3.

5.5.2 Conversations and Interviews

Conversations were also central to my ethnography (Davies, 2008), and much of my fieldnote scribblings (see Section 5.5.3) relate to my informal conversations with, and between, participants. These 'unsolicited' conversations, whilst not always directly answering my ethnographic questions, were a useful source of information about the setting, discursive practices, and concerns of the participants, which all contribute to understanding and help with the ongoing framing of research questions (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007:950). As my confidence in the field grew and relationships developed, I started asking direct questions to individuals and small groups as a means of clarifying both verbal points made or situations I observed. I used this as a reflexive tool to gain fuller understanding and allow balanced interpretations (Fetterman, 2010).

Situational parameters meant there was not always enough time, opportunity, or privacy to ask all I wanted for a better understanding of older adults' participation in cultural activities (Parr, 2001). For example, at a craft group one of the members mentioned activities helping at a difficult time, but the group dynamics were tense, and it was not the right time to probe in detail. At the drama sessions, the structure left little time for informal conversation, which started being problematic and inhibiting to theory development with the members. For this reason, I set up interviews with group members. As with group selection, Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) state the need for a strategy and advocate consideration of willingness to partake alongside who is best placed to develop understanding and judgements. They also highlight this as a subjective process which 'draws on assumptions about the social distribution of knowledge'. Generally, I followed up comments, trying to explore a range of perspectives including those that were outliers or under-represented to broaden my understanding, but I do not attempt to make generalisations (Lofland,

2006). I let interviewees chose the location of their interview - café, group venue or their house - to ensure their comfort and negate some of the potential researcher influence (Green and Thorogood, 2018). Observations attending to the context and dynamics were interpreted with the analysis of the interviews (Sin, 2003). All interviews were semi-structured, including general questions and more specific ones related to theory development from things I had heard or observed. Throughout, I tried to allow a conversational style, actively listening, and following their flow (Hockey and Forsey, 2012). Aiming to make this an empowering experience regarding interviewees as 'knowledgeable, capable and reflective participants in the research process' (Wiles et al., 2005:90).

A couple of group interviews occurred spontaneously after a drama group (19th June 2019) and the coffee morning show (15th August 2019), when I was invited to join a number of the members for a coffee in a local café. In these situations, I was mindful of my 'insider' privilege (O'Reilly, 2009:online). Here, I purposefully re-instigated verbal consent and asked permission to record and take notes of the discussions, consciously making members aware of my researcher role. This will have inevitably impacted on the conversations, but it was an ethical judgement and highlighted the ongoing nature of ethical decision making in the field and throughout the entire research process (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007).

Similarly, I adapted when out with the day trippers. The coach journey was conducive to short interviews and discussions with different people. I worked opportunistically where there were spare seats for 1-1 conversations, and also joined in with small groups, often hovering in the aisles. Casual conversations with this group were of a walk or go-along nature (Carpiano, 2009), as members participated in their chosen activities in Llandudno and Southport. This sensory method has been previously employed for both research with older adults (Lawthom et al, 2018) and in the leisure research (Burns et al, 2020). This style of interview has been credited for allowing an equitable, participant-led exploration of how they use spaces, negotiate activities, and make meaning (Fang et al., 2016; Clark, 2017; Stevenson, 2017). These interviews shared physicality and rhythm which allowed a sociability to develop in a short space

of time (Lee and Ingold, 2006; Moles, 2008) and illuminated some of the important but perhaps more mundane elements of joy and stress. For example, Lou found a card that was perfect for a friend's birthday but worried she was not quick enough crossing a road - none of which may have been verbalised in an interview (Carpiano, 2009). I did not record these go-along interviews as they were spontaneous; it would have felt intrusive to the flow of a very informal interaction. These interviews happened in shops, cafés, on the high street, at a flea market, in a gallery, and on walks along the sea front. Immediately after, I would find a café or a bench and write up the notes, concentrating on the sounds, physical observations, smells, as well as what had been said (see Section 5.5.3).

I conclude this section with a brief reflection on the relational nature of field work and the nature of trust (Mason, 2002) as something that needs to be continually worked on and negotiated. The boundaries of positioning oneself as a participant observer, but primarily a researcher, are vague, tenuous, open to different interpretation, and can therefore be overstepped (Brewer, 2000). Generally, I have positioned the rapport I built as a positive element of my research, allowing me access to groups and participants beyond my initial expectations. However, there were moments in the research (thankfully only a few) where I did not manage this as successfully. On 12th June, drinking tea before the session I was chatting with one woman about her experiences with drama and how she came across this group. Her story was interesting so I asked if she would mind me taking notes. 'Why would you do that?' she questioned abruptly, 'I thought you were just making friends!'. I was mortified to cause offence. I had switched too suddenly from participant to researcher and in the process reduced her to feeling like data. Having been present at all previous groups and the planning session, she knew of my researcher capacity and had signed a consent form. I was not trying to gather information covertly, but clearly, I had not negotiated these boundaries transparently enough as we were building a rapport. I apologised immediately and again at the end of the group, explaining my questions were borne out of genuine interest and data collection. She did not want to withdraw consent and by the end of the session bridges were built; but it was a valuable lesson in blurring the lines of participant observer and the impact of this on research (Lawton, 2000).

5.5.3 Fieldnotes

Fieldnotes are the 'rich information packed notes that form the basis of any successful ethnographic project' (Madden, 2017:9). Reference to the use of fieldnotes has been plentiful throughout this chapter, and a selection of my fieldnotes can be found in Appendix 11.

Kearns (2010:257) asserts a sensory approach supports 'more than simply seeing; rather, it requires cognizance of the full sensory experience of being in place', therefore my observations and fieldnotes also referenced environmental factors such as sounds, smells, atmospheres, or mood within the group (see Chapter Three) and my feelings of being part of the group (Coffey, 1999). Initially these were of a highly descriptive nature as I was trying to absorb information about the group and work through my understanding of the groups (O'Reilly, 2009). As time progressed, I realised - whilst still rich in description - my notes were becoming more analytical. I was picking up on different details, using my fieldnotes more strategically and highlighting things that I wanted to pick up on or explore in more depth. As such, they were showing 'my internal dialogue' and the reflexive nature of ethnography work (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007:151). I had considered having separate notebooks for these reflexive and analytical thoughts through the ethnography but found that one notebook was easier to manage and transport with all the groups in chronological order. The vast majority of my fieldnotes were handwritten. There were some occasions, especially on train journeys home from Manchester that it was easier to make notes on my laptop. These I have used alongside my written notes.

Through this chapter I reference the difficulties of making fieldnotes in real time, where my focus was on spending time with the older adults, and my attempts to attend to these as soon as possible after the event whilst events were fresh in mind. Sometimes I would scribble a few key points in the kitchen or bathroom, but usually I would take myself to a café after each activity session or make notes on the train home.

My fieldnotes were not used as an end data product but as a tool for on-going fieldwork that I referred back to regularly (Mason, 2002), fieldwork and analysis working in a recursive and reflexive way (Davies, 2008). I would read through fieldnotes and jot down further thoughts a few days after being in the field, or when I read something that I could relate to my observations. I always reread them the day before going back into the field, prompting what and who I wanted to question.

It is impossible to record or observe everything in the field, therefore fieldnotes are always partial and subjective (Emerson et al., 2011). Additionally, my observations were influenced by my work background and academic reading, both of which are again partial and selective (Goodley and Smailes, 2012). There is also a dependence on memory, and I found that on occasion I was adding to my fieldnotes at later stages of analysis and writing, as different memories and things not noted at the time were evoked (Haripriya, 2020).

Through Section 5.5, I have discussed my main sources of data collection, and highlighted fieldwork as a continual process of role modification and techniques to gathering knowledge and using different accounts in conjunction with one another to make meaning. In this way, learning is done on many interrelated levels. Making sense is through giving attention how to participation in cultural activities is negotiated and through my experience of participation alongside members' accounts of their experience of participation (Davies, 2008). This also worked in reverse. As Pink and Morgan (2013) explain, there will always be a gap between experience and the reconstruction of experience; both will have conscious and unconscious omissions and elaborations. My experiential participation and my observations will help support, or question, the subjective accounts given by participants. This employment of multiple methods, allowing three different but interrelated forms of qualitative data to illuminate and give credibility to the findings, is known as methodological triangulation (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). This leads onto the matter of analysis and writing which is the final section of this chapter.

5.6 Analysis and Writing Up

Analysis of ethnography is not a final and discrete part of the research but intrinsic to the entire process (Davies, 2008). From the very outset, the literature review and Phase 1 informed research questions. 'Hunches' are then developed through observations and participation which are further informed and made sense of by literature and theory, and so this develops through more fieldwork (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007:158). To some extent, this funnelling of information supports an element of knowing what the data is saying as fieldwork draws to an end (O'Reilly, 2009). However, alongside this, there is a significant amount of data in different formats to manage and I confess to feeling quite swamped and overwhelmed through post-fieldwork stages where the data was further analysed and put into written ethnographic form.

I drew parallels between the iterative analysis that is described as a fundamental component of the ethnographic process (see, for example, Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Pink, 2015) and recursive approach of reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2021). I adopted their six-stage process and spent time going back through all the fieldnotes and transcripts familiarising, coding, and building themes to give structure and meaning to the data set. This process was applied to all fieldnotes and interview transcripts. As outlined in Chapter Three, I used a variety of methods, spreadsheets and post-it notes to work through the different ways of representing the themes until there was a semblance of themes that I believed to work together as a fair representation of the data. Then I started to write up the themes.

Writing is another layer of the sense-making, as well as the production of the final ethnography (Madden, 2017). I gained a deeper appreciation of the amount of analysis involved in and through the writing process and can see how the writing - constantly drafting, redrafting, and editing - developed my themes significantly. Similarly, conversations about the themes and invaluable feedback on written drafts from my supervisory team were also hugely beneficial. I found the writing to be an unexpectedly difficult part of process. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007:194) describe this as 'finding your way through or creating a path that leads to a worthwhile

destination' that needs consideration from both a philosophical and literary perspective. I argue that there is also an ethical perspective, all of which I now address.

Philosophical issues relate to reflexivity and underlying ontological assumptions of critical realism. Throughout this and previous chapters, it has been acknowledged that ethnography is a process through which we can know social reality because we are, or become, part of it, but through this insight we also change it with our presence (Davies, 2008). This, Davies (2008:225) states, continues through the writing and analysis stages as:

> Ethnographers move between their interpretations of others' constructions of reality, their own creation of new constructions and their expression of these evolving understandings in yet another, usually written, form.

Indeed, writing is often viewed as a personal and self-conscious part of the process (Coffey, 1999). All writing is a construction of the author, subject to different ways of being constructed (Richardson, 2000), with tensions between duty to facts, validity, and rich persuasive description (Madden, 2017). In presenting the themes, I am acutely aware that my knowledge has come from the stories of real people's life experience which I have been privileged to get to know. As such, I am conscious of the way that I represent this (Smith, 1987). Coffey (1999:137) states one has to see writing as a craft and an emotional activity. I present my findings predominantly as a collection of rich descriptive narratives. My aim is to give new insight of older adults' participation in cultural activities telling the narrative of others through their words and insights, framed by my meta-narrative and interpretive commentary (Davies, 2008). Polyvocality was a key tool, to highlight the partial and contingent knowledge of social reality that is gained through ethnographic work (Coffey, 1999).

5.7 Summary

In this chapter, I have provided a discussion of how I explored, ethnographically, cultural activity participation for older adults in different locations across Manchester. I have described the research settings, how I gained access and my entry to the field. I have also considered the ethical issues, my role within the field, and the different

approaches I have taken to manage, analyse, and present my findings. The next two chapters present the findings, navigating these themes through the stories of the older adults I met during my time in the field.

Chapter 6: 'I am the new pensioner' - Cultural Activity Engagement and Becoming Older

6.1 Introduction

This is the first of two findings' chapters. In this chapter, I consider how cultural activities, in various and varying ways, support individuals to accomplish a valued narrative of self in the context of ageing. Firstly, I consider how my findings highlight that joining and attending accessible and supportive cultural and social activities can boost social connectedness. Then, I consider the importance of accessing the cultural activities in different ways, highlighting how cultural activities can be more than getting together with others and how they can support people to contribute and develop a feeling of purpose. The third section explores the co-production of activities with older adults, highlighting some boundaries and tensions within this. The spaces where the cultural activities took place were important to the members and I discuss this using the concept of social infrastructure. Finally, I consider the findings which show that there are different ways of ageing with continuations and disruptions in the context of active ageing and the importance of ongoing family care commitments.

6.2 'Time to Stop Maudlin' – Cultural Activities Can Boost Social Connectedness

My study findings highlighted the value of attending cultural activities in strengthening social networks for older adults. This subtheme highlights a few of the many stories of isolation, which was often the reasons for attending cultural activity groups. It highlighted how groups met this need for social connections alongside the need for activities to be fluid, accessible, and varied. I also highlight the growing awareness and consideration of social connections as a life-course health need.

I start with a few, of many possible, examples, that highlight how and why people have turned to activities to access and build a social network. Maureen was new to the area, she recently moved to 'have family on the doorstep'. She had overseen befriending schemes through her job with a local authority and saw being part of cultural activities as a good fit to continuing the work she loved whilst 'getting to know people my own age'. Through this she had joined the drama group where I met her. Likewise, Ava had

recently moved back from America to be closer to her son (and 'because the pension is way better!'). She was persuaded by a neighbour to join the coach trip and told me it was 'fantastic, I've met so many new people'. In my study I met people caring for a partner, a known factor related to loneliness (Victor et al., 2012); Ray, for example, used the day trip as respite from caring and to 'keep up with friends'. A commonality between individuals that triggered participation was a diminishing of social networks. As Lynn told me at a drama session:

> Well, my husband died, and after a while, I realised that I had to do something. We were a very close couple; we did everything together to the point where I guess that I didn't even have that many friends. I suppose I never felt I needed them, I had him, that was all I wanted. But I missed company when I was without him and realised that this was making me extra sad, miserable… I took that leap and threw myself into a few different activities… it has been a blessing. I still miss him daily, but I am nowhere near as lonely or sad as I was. (Lynn, 12th June 2019)

Enid had experienced anxiety and depression for many years and then joined an activity group. She spoke about finding many other people at the groups who told her they were lonely, giving a feel for the prevalence of this issue:

> It's amazing the number of people they get to a Sunday tea once a month, the people you talk to and meet. I have never realised there are so many lonely people. (Enid, 19th June 2019)

As discussed in Chapter Two, there is evidence to support a link between cultural activity engagement and enhanced social support (see, for example, Cohen et al., 2006; Holt, 2008; Reynolds, 2015). This was the case in my study. People actively joined groups as one strategy to help move forward and improve connections, often after a close bereavement or other significant life change.

Participation in cultural activities facilitated a shared understanding with others in similar situations. In September 2019, I chatted with Brenda and Hannah, who were friends, at the back of the bus returning from Southport. Brenda lived on her own and Hannah with her husband who lives with dementia. She joined Brenda on these trips to 'recharge her batteries and gather up some needed patience!'. Brenda appeared to

be very well-connected, telling me of lots of different groups. I referenced her in my fieldnotes as a 'community-connector' after watching her promote different groups and spread local intel to those perhaps less connected. Brenda explained that it started gradually, 'one thing leads to the next', and recalled how for her it started with someone suggesting she popped into a 'knit and natter' session round the corner, in a church in north Manchester.

> I won't say I wasn't really nervous about going to start, it's over 8 years ago for me now [that her husband died] but I still remember I nearly didn't go, but you are with people who get it, they have been there, you think it's just you but that's daft. (Brenda, 3rd September 2019)

She was thankful for that first invitation, explaining 'life would be very different for me … and not in a good way!'. Jackie, sitting behind, laughed at the thought of Brenda being nervous, seeing this as out of character:

> No matter why you come, for me I was bored having stopped working, there is someone in the same boat. You can chat and put the world to rights, and you go home not feeling so alone. You see it going on all the time, people finding comfort in sharing, having a moan, sometimes a weep, but before you know it you have moved on and are laughing again. (Jackie, 3rd September 2019)

The sense of solidarity was important for participants, knowing that even if you went on your own you were not alone but with people who were, or would be, experiencing similar life events. Cultural activity groups allowed a space for these things to be spoken about, but importantly, helped people look forward, eased by having this comfort of being connected to similar others, making it worth the difficult first steps.

Being the same age or sharing similar rationale for joining a group that connected people, was not however always sufficient. Through conversations in the field, it became apparent that people also had to enjoy the activity and they had to know what was available to them. Annette had grown up in France, moving to England as she had 'foolishly fallen in love with an Englishman'. She laughed and said this 'is mean', they had been happy and 'blessed' with three boys who were now busy 'leading their own exciting lives'. When I asked why she had come to the drama group, she simply stated

that she 'knew it was time to stop maudlin'. Annette only came to three drama sessions, then stopped coming. I met her by chance on the 24th July 2019, as I left the craft group, and she stopped to chat. I asked about her reasons and what she was doing now. The drama group was not for her, but she was keen to make the point 'the people were lovely'; this encouraged her to try more activity groups, and she had joined a community choir. Annette enjoyed the choir and was finding out about many more opportunities for activity. She was right. The more time I spent in the field, the more cultural activities I became aware of; but it was only by venturing into one group that all these other options became visible or viable. As mentioned in Chapter Four, Phase 1 interviews also suggested that there was a heavy reliance on word of mouth to promote activities and I return to this in my discussion and recommendations (see Chapters Eight and Nine).

Annette shows groups also had to work in terms of interest and enjoyment. Whilst these are subjective notions, active decisions were being made by older adults as to which groups worked for them be this because of social connections or because the actual activity was something they wanted to try or had previous links to. Sylvia was another example of this. She loved drama as acting was something she had done as a child 'anything creative, we'd be there, my sister and I'. For Sylvia, drama provided a 'freedom' allowing 'expression and relaxation'. She talked of feeling 'invisible', trapped within a regimented work role and this helped her balance general life satisfaction. The actual activity for Sylvia, whilst still filling a void, is very important. Sylvia was due to retire in a few weeks and was attending her first meeting as a cultural champion later that week. She told me that she would need more than just the drama and singing groups to keep her satisfied, 'I have always been a person that likes to do lots of things'. For her, there was immense value in learning more about what was going on in the city for her personal use, and she wanted to promote culture to other people and to help places 'include more people'. Sylvia wanted to share culture as it was something that had enhanced her entire life. This links to the 'fluidity of roles' theme in Chapter Four, and the different ways that older adults relate to and contribute to the cultural offering around Manchester for older adults. It also links into the next subtheme.

My final point in this section comes from a conversation with a couple of women who I think were the youngest on the trip to Llandudno. I asked who they were travelling with, expecting them to say an older family member, but they laughed, 'just with each other!' Paula had heard about the trip from a colleague at work, and when she mentioned it to her life-long friend Gemma, they thought:

> What a lovely idea and brilliant that so many people were going. We are both over 55, why not let's give it a go! (Gemma, 13th June 2019)

They were now on their fifth trip, booking a day's annual leave for each day out and amazed at unexpected connections they made, but there was a more serious reason for participation. They were looking ahead to their older age and recognising the importance of connections and social networks. Paula spoke of her gran:

> I go off what my gran did, me dad's mum, she did everything with my grandad and then when he passed away, she tried to go on certain things, but she felt like, that she was on her own, that people already had their cliques, she always said she should've done it earlier. That also makes me want to do it. Just so you know you can go out and that you have that little bit of connection. (Paula, 13th June 2019)

Research highlights that social connections hold different meanings at different stages of older age, and bridging capital means more to the younger old than the older old (Litwin & Stoeckel, 2013). Speaking to a range of adults from their mid-50s to early 90s during my fieldwork, I found social connections to be equally meaningful for at any age. Perhaps this better indicates is the impact of campaigning and policy work and the rhetoric inherent within, looking beyond physical health and morbidity and better considering the psycho-social elements of good health. My research suggests narratives of the value of connecting people and connected communities are starting to be enacted.

6.3 The Importance of Accessing Cultural Activities in Different Ways

In this subtheme, I explore how group members, like Sylvia, becoming a cultural champion, used cultural activities to keep busy and be productive. I return to the

literature about generativity introduced in Chapter Two. Villar (2012) identifies the need to better understand the different dimensions of generativity and these findings contribute to this knowledge gap. I consider this throughout this subtheme, giving three different perspectives.

I met Ron at the drama group; an assertive, authoritative presence, with clear ideas of the direction he wanted to steer this group, and interests in many other groups. He showed immediate interest in my research and was keen to offer an interview. I learned Ron's community engagement was not exclusive to this community group but extended across a range of new and established groups. Ron consistently considered his angle of engagement as a provider rather than participant; even when questioning him directly about his experience as a group participant the conversation turned to benefits to others and how he was contributing to different community projects for older adults. Ron had enjoyed a successful career in which community work was a key interest, which clearly informed his continuing focus in retirement and offered a coherent narrative of self. This could be seen in what he was offering as he was keen to tell me of all the new projects he had, or was in the process of, setting up and the skills he was bringing to different groups:

> I am pretty good at evaluations, so I do a lot of the work on evaluating and funding – putting in bids and getting all the user feedback ... I like to start things up, then move on to new projects. (Ron, 2nd July 2019)

Ron expressed a keenness to keep life 'hyper local' now, by which he was referring to a desire for his life to be centred, in tight proximity to his geographic location in south Manchester. Ron had previously enjoyed travel, and a number of the older adults I spoke with were enjoying the opportunity to travel in later life, but declining mobility and energy levels were making him re-evaluate. Ron's notion of 'hyper local' was an ideal held by several others, and also prevails in academic literature, suggesting that older people reinvent or reconfigure their activities to remain active, changing levels and types of participation to mirror decreasing physical and mental health (Gunnarsson, 2009).

Ron constructed a strong continuity between his working life and his post-retirement life, but volunteering has evolved differently for Alan and Lydia, who were 'co-coordinators' for the day trips. Each coach had two coordinators who Alan explained would 'help people on and off the coach and make sure they are having a good time'. I observed it was a busier role than he gave credit as I watched him support people getting on the bus, sort out seating or other problems and make sure everyone was there who should be, organise raffles, and announced things going on locally. Most importantly, he checked in on people, made introductions, and created a welcoming environment. Alan told me that a friend, who had been instrumental in starting up the trips, had 'roped him into this' volunteering role. This word of mouth to recruit volunteers was a common thread in my research and in previous studies (Baines et al., 2004). Alan started volunteering simply to support his friend as coach coordinator, but as numbers increased, he took on his own coach and recruited another friend, Lydia, to support him. They were perfect in this role, and I have them to thank for many laughs, insights, and introductions during my fieldwork. Additionally, this role only required three or four days of commitment a year, which fitted well with Alan and Lydia's other interests.

Alan had just received a small funding grant from Buzz and was in the early stages of setting up a writing group for older adults. He had a passion for writing, having hosted similar successful schemes in the past. Alan proudly told me of 'tea with the Queen' as recognition for this previous work and that he had published poetry but 'just to raise money for charities'. Since leaving Scotland in the 1990s, Alan had been employed in a diverse number of roles including landscape gardening, working machines for garment cutting, and time in an abattoir. He started creative writing many years ago and found this helped with addiction issues. Having benefitted from community support himself, it was important for him to contribute:

> It makes me feel good that I have done something, I call it, I call it giving to the community because I have got things from them. (Alan, 3rd September 2019)

Alan was aware of the skills and contributions he can make, but he also embraces being a participant talking of connections to choirs, radio stations, art groups,

Manchester Cares[4], and more. Lydia was quite similar in this regard. I learned of the many groups in which she participated (craft groups, outing, exercise classes) and of her contribution to different projects. As a former community nurse, she had a strong ethos around doing what you can to help and told me how her 'inner voice' helped direct what she chooses. Currently, she was running mindfulness classes and involved in various AF projects with a passion for supporting digital inclusion for older adults, plus more besides. When asked why she volunteered, she explained:

> Well, we have enough life experience to be able to help people, so as long as it feels right, and it fits, then I am happy to get involved. We need to pass it on before we lose it! (Lydia, 3rd September 2019)

There was little difference between Alan, Lydia, and Ron, all volunteering in different capacities, doing a lot within their communities and involved in projects from the ground up. However, there was a subtlety in the way they viewed and spoke of their contributions. All of them wanted to help leave a legacy and use their skills. Ron seemed to be more bound in status and self (Damman et al., 2015), whereas Lydia and Alan had a stronger desire to help others. These personal but interwoven, complementary dimensions of volunteering have been termed 'egotistic' and 'altruistic' (McAdams and Logan, 2004; Narushima, 2005, Martin et al., 2015).

Alan and Lydia both mentioned 'the fit' of volunteering, referring to the selectiveness around what they got involved in. An interest in the activities was important, but commitment and time and location were influential. Volunteering outside of his neighbourhood had not worked for Alan and his interest was in the local, just his immediate community. Here, I make links with Smith et al. (2010), who explored the meaningful everyday experience of volunteering and how this relates to the social and geographical. They argue that better understanding of volunteering is gained from adopting a situated and relational stance that considers life histories and embodied placeness rather than from a political perspective of active citizenship (Smith et al., 2010), and I concur.

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[4] Manchester Cares is a charity that supports community networks bringing people of all ages together, reducing isolation and making everyone feel part of the city.

On the bus to Llandudno, I met Molly and her friends who live near each other in north Manchester and considered themselves 'well-connected in our community'. Molly explained that 'most of us are retired, although a few are still working' but her social group had been much narrower before retirement.

> I was out the house at 6.00 in the morning and not back till 6.00, you don't go out because it's just work, init.' (Molly, 13th June 2019)

Being retired had made it easier for them to connect with others through the different social groups. They had really got to know one another and were taking active leadership roles in community activities. Strong bonds were evident through their 'banter' and their ability to finish one another's sentences. They told me of mutual support for one another through various testing times and that they 'know that I could call any of these, at any time, if I needed too'. Over the two days I spent time with these women, stories unfolded of illness, bereavement, and other difficult times and how they had been there to 'scoop each other up', generally through sharing BBQ's, laughs and 'plenty of wine' (Molly's friend Clare, 13th 2019). They described themselves as independent, but their conversations and actions showed a relational-based interdependence (Beeber, 2008). Volunteering had been instrumental in building both neighbourhood networks and interdependent relationships between them through the cornerstones of 'relationships, social connectedness, respect and reciprocity' (Gardner 2011: 269).

Molly explained how retirement was quite a shock initially; unstructured time was at first quite a stressful experience and filling that time was important to her:

> [W]hen you are used to working you have to have something to do. You'd be climbing the walls otherwise. (Molly, 13th June 2019)

There was no lack of opportunities to support the women keeping busy; collectively these seven friends were engaged in numerous local initiatives. The ones I learned of included: engagement in AF work; running local community centres offering activities

for all generations; fundraising; applying for grants; active involvement in Manchester Cares and being on the board of Buzz to assist with funding allocations. Clare highlighted most of the opportunities were due to a 'lack of paid work going on'. In Carlson et al.'s (2000) study, the importance for older women to be generative was identified along with insufficient opportunities within society. With the last decade of austerity measures (Stuckler et al., 2017), have come increasing opportunities for volunteering, but as highlighted in Chapter Four there is the potential of alienating people by overburdening them with need in the community.

The 'fit' of volunteering that Alan mentioned as tricky, was a presence for Molly and friends, but for them it was the fit of many different roles:

> Well, it's work but it's not work and sometimes you have so many plates spinning you are not quite sure how you are going to get through it. But we do, together we do.' (Clare, 13th June 2019)

There was a sense of doing things together, volunteering to support one another with different things. A Belgian study found that complicit in getting people involved and continuing to volunteer is the factor of friendships and close networks working together (Dury et al., 2014), and this was the case here.

Through drawing on the experiences of Ron, Alan, Lydia, and Molly, I have highlighted how older adults want to stay busy, and activities need to be focused and situated in a way that makes them feel that they are contributing to their community and society. Volunteering opportunities through cultural activities strengthened individual life histories, a sense of community belonging, and the ability to age in place.

6.4 Tensions of Contribution within Cultural Activities

The findings from Phase 1 highlighted older adults' invaluable contributions to developing, delivering, and reviewing cultural activities, and the previous subtheme highlights the importance of this on an individual level. Collaborative work with older adults to ensure that the activities were meeting the needs and interests of the groups was championed throughout Phase 1 (see Chapter Four). However, the time I spent

with older adults highlighted that there were sometimes tensions arising from power dynamics, aversion to risk, and a lack of agreement regarding wanted levels of co-production. This is the focus of this subtheme.

At the third meeting of the drama group (12th June 2019), the group was focused, as I noted in my fieldnotes, 'everyone seems to know what they are doing, relaxed and jokey but a familiar rhythm and shared purpose'. There was a group discussion around negative assumptions of ageing, including views about being offered a seat on the tram which became one of the scenes in the play. The group worked in three smaller groups of six on a sketch about transport, initially with loose links to ageism. Carla, who had experience of professional singing joined the group discussing the seat on the tram. She had returned this season having missed the last play. Initially attributing her leaving to poor health, but she confided at a later session she had felt overlooked not getting much of a part in the last play, 'I was kind of on the outskirts of it, so I stopped coming'. Retention was an issue raised at the original planning meeting (see Chapter Five) and I watched the group ensure there was a song in the sketch for Carla. Yellow Submarine was chosen, with words modified to make it relevant to their local neighbourhood.

The following week (19th June 2019), Carla's group performed their sketch. This sketch aimed to disrupt and tease the extent to which people avoid interaction on public transport, culminating in the group standing and singing Yellow Submarine. 'Like a flash-mob, I love it!', Laraine said, which triggered some excitement within the group. Once everyone understood the notion of a flash mob, momentum gained for them to do a real flash-mob on a tram. Usually, they all rushed off, but the group stayed on scheming and planning in a flurry of excitement: the best time not to hit rush hour but still a busy tram; which direction should they head in; perhaps I could come and record reactions; and so on. I missed the following week but caught up with the plans during an interview with Ron on 2nd July:

> I am still not sure that all this madness will come off, but we now have a date, we are thinking 24th July at 10am. You can come and fend off the tram police

[laughs], I'm joking, but it would be good if you came along. (Ron, 2nd July, 2019)

On 3rd July, there was a different mood in the group. Several people were chatting about the flash-mob, enthusiasm was a presence in the room, but the atmosphere felt a little more formal. I initially put this down to a whiteboard at the front, balancing a straw hat on the corner, which I noted 'seemed strange, out of place'. Anil started the meeting saying that he was planning on being stricter, having 'been to a management workshop', and was going to use this hat so that everyone 'could take turns in having their say'. (This was something that didn't always happen but had never really seemed a problem; minor dyadic conversations did spark sometimes but never lasted long.) Then Fiona (group coordinator) joined the session, again a change from the norm. I could sense that there was some tension. Anil gave Fiona the hat, and she came to the point quickly; the flash mob was vetoed.

The governors of the group didn't agree with the flash mob idea and argued that it was beyond the organisation's public liability insurance and possibly against the law (although I have struggled to find clarity on this latter point). She did suggest that maybe something local could be organised, perhaps they could organise a timeslot at a local supermarket, but it was quickly (and sharply) pointed out this was not in the spontaneous nature of flash mobs. For a group that had started out in such a collaborative fashion, this seemed completely in contrast to the outwardly presented ethos of the group. A coffee break was suggested, which was a relief to all, 'I think we all needed this!' Rosie muttered to me as we went for coffee. For some, this was a chance to let off steam. Ron in particular was furious. The fact that he had been an 'un-consulted governor' on this matter infuriated him and put to question the transparency of this decision-making, a factor often highlighted as problematic in relation to power and citizen engagement (Tønnessen et al., 2017). Added to this, he spoke of the irony of this overruling:

> This was designed as a political statement saying, 'look older people can surprise you, make you smile, do things that you don't expect and be daring'. (Ron, 3rd July 2019)

The reality from my perspective was that politics and governance of an older adult group was getting in the way of older adults making political statements to challenge negative stereotyping and marginalisation. Although on this day, Ron said that he was 'annoyed but would get over it and move on', he did not come back to the group. Instead, he told me at a later meeting he 'channelled his energies' into other things.

Emphasis within policy documents and strategies is placed on co-production and meaningful user input into services for older adults to ensure that they are meeting the needs of those using them, as well as maximising the strengths and assets of individuals and the community (Manchester City Council, 2017; NHS, 2019). Regardless, empirical evidence suggests issues of power distribution and risk aversion continue to hamper and dilute ambitions to make this work in practice (De Weger et al., 2018; Tønnessen et al., 2017). This incident confirms what De Weger et al. (2018:13) state:

> Organisational structures and hierarchies are tipped towards professionals rather than citizens leading interventions ……professionals continue to hold key decision-making and governance positions.

De Wenger et al. (2018) highlight difficulties for the professionals, insofar as they have to make these decisions based not just on the individuals, but their judgements need to reflect the 'values and expectations of their professional obligations'. This is relevant to the quote below from Fiona:

> I don't like to [bring a halt to things] but there is always the element of risk and when something starts ringing alarm bells, you have to do something. At the end of the day, they are older adults, and some have mobility issues, and there is the reputation of the group and the opinion of all the trustees and governors too. (Fiona, 3rd July 2019)

Only Ron left the group for good after this. I was surprised that after the coffee break, the session did manage to resume relatively unaffected. The bonds within the group, and the collective desire to bring back the happy atmosphere seemed to help overcome this adverse situation. There was also relief expressed by some members who had not wanted to do the flash mob and they drew on support from the

professionals to keep their participation within a safe boundary for them. Flo told me that she, and others, felt this was 'for the best'. Fiona confirmed that a number of the group members had approached her with concern. Throughout my time in the field, I respected Fiona's efforts to support the older adult community and ensure the success of her group and suspect that a number of conflicting factors influenced her decision to stop the flash mob.

The literature suggests over-representation of educated, white, and middle-class backgrounds in relation to active participation in piloting new ventures (Barnes et al., 2012; Carey, 2019), certainly this was playing out in this group. I found little in the literature of older adults who are perhaps not wanting the ownership and redistribution of power, or the ambiguity of a wider representation of ideals not completely in line with the rhetoric of active ageing. Power dynamics were visible both at a meso to micro level, but also within the micro level of older adult participants. Through the deployment of a Foucauldian approach, the universal notion of an older adult is being played out by bureaucratic procedures (Powell and Biggs, 2003; Katz 1996). The reality is more complex than this categorisation of ageing, as reflected in the heterogeneity of lived experience.

Other systemic difficulties of securing funding, managing budgets, accessing venues and groups, and writing bids arose during my time in the field when talking to older adults who were wanting to get new ventures operational. Two people were trying to set up a music night but were having difficulties before they got some assistance from the AF team. They were not confident managing budgets or handling money and looking to put on a city-wide event made it difficult to secure funding normally allocated on a neighbourhood level. Alan struggled to publicise and attract new members to his writing group but needed people for continued funding. Likewise, the reminiscence group, run for but not by older adults, could not get up and running without the leverage of the larger community group, which in turn influenced the direction it took. In each of the above situations, the variables and barriers were different, as were the risks and boundaries that older adults, funders, and partner organisations would entertain. My research suggests co-production ideals are not

always reached. The neoliberal rhetoric dominates, but potential achievements for cultural diversification and meaningful engagement are hindered in practice (Brown, 2016; Carey, 2018). My research adds to a call for further learning to understand a broader and more heterogeneous perspective of what older adults want to do and contribute, and how to best support this (Buffel, 2019; Hafford-Letchfield, 2019).

6.5 Cultural Activities Need Social Infrastructure

This subtheme explores the importance of social infrastructure. Throughout my research I became aware of the importance of different spaces and the wider social infrastructure as being a crucial and important facilitator of cultural activities. I start by looking at the importance of using spaces in a flexible fashion at the south Manchester group, before considering the coach as a makeshift third place and the importance of third places generally within cultural activity provision.

'Rhythmanalysis' was proposed as way to consider everyday life through the interrelatedness of time and space; the rhythm of bodies moving through space as the basis of urban life, inseparable from time (Lefebvre, 2004). Not infrequently when with the south Manchester group, had I been cognisant of Lefebvre's (2004) notion of 'rhythmanalysis', as I watched the daily and weekly patterns of groups and people coming and going through them in an embodied way, seamlessly knowing the space and how to be in it. Three or four rooms were transformed on a daily, sometimes hourly basis, changing the way the space was used to accommodate groups. The drama group, a messy space, started with chairs in an oval but this would be pushed aside as the groups filled the space to practise their sketches, allowing movement and fluidity within the room. As this session wrapped up, the noise would dissipate into quiet and I often stayed on chatting to Fiona, helping to organising rows of evenly spaced chairs each draped with a band ready for the exercise group to fill the room in the afternoon. Come Thursday morning, another very different use of the same space, as the hall hosted a popular coffee morning for up to 80 people. This is how I describe the contrast in my fieldnotes:

> [A] loud, almost squashed, but very sedentary group. Tables filling the room, I could tell that everyone had their own set places, as they entered, maybe physically slow but never dithering each individual a clear focus on which table they were heading to. Teacups, and walking frames clanking, there was the smell of coffee and bodies. (Fieldnotes, coffee morning, 14th August 2019)

Some of the success of this community group was doubtlessly the space available for these transformations. I enjoyed watching individual agency converting this community space to meet their needs; an example was the male volunteers, who did not join the official coffee morning, but took over the office and created their own one.

The day trippers where not anchored to a set venue like community groups in the south. However, my observations support an argument for the coach to be viewed as a convivial third place for those who went on the trip. Oldenburg (1999) states third places are typically an in-between place within a local community, such as a café or public house that are neither home (first place) nor work (second places). Crucially, he argues these third places promote social connections and are consequently a major component of a healthy community and healthy individuals (Oldenburg, 1999). Third places can be defined by eight key characteristics: accessible; lots of conversation; neutral; levelling; have regulars; low profile; playful; and homelike (Oldenburg, 1999:20-42). I now give some examples from my fieldwork to support this.

On a drizzly 13th June 2019, amidst some extensive flooding for many parts of England, I set out to meet the day trippers, anxious not to be late. Turning off the main road, I knew I was at the right place, thankful to see several groups of older adults (mainly women) all 'huddled' under the trees and umbrellas, and a 'general hubbub of conversation and laughter'. My fieldnotes mention 'the smell of tobacco' as some were relishing their last cigarette for a few hours and an air of 'giddy excitement' as the members chatted about this and that: who had what for their snacks on the bus; what had people been up to; who else was coming. Practicalities amid a layer of banter, that continued throughout the day, bobbing back and forth between groups.

So, ladies, I think the first stop will be at [name of outdoor shops] to buy ourselves a pair of welly boots! [Alan, co-ordinator, 13th June 2019)

I did not note anyone on their own (at this point). There was a sense of this being an established group, which I noted in my fieldnotes as 'a relaxed familiarity of people that were comfortable in one another's company'. A 'collective cheer erupted' as the empty coach turned the corner and the older adults surged forwards to get on, which I scribbled was reminiscent of a school trip, with the 'liveliest group heading on first and straight for the back'. About 20 people got on at this stop, and the coach then weaved its way around north Manchester making several other pick-ups before heading out of the city.

Picture 2: The Coach Filling Up with Day Trippers

As I learned through conversations on the coach, people usually attended with a few friends or in extended family groups (nieces, daughters, siblings etc.), but it was also accessible for those who came on their own. Some travelled independently, for example, Cynthia simply travelled on her most local coach but would meet up with friends from other areas of north Manchester at the final location. Others, like Andy,

were happy to come alone, finding the group accessible and welcoming to a single person, he told me:

> Most of the others [friends from housing group] signed up to another trip run by the wardens, but that was to [name of gardens] and to be honest I much prefer Llandudno … and I always know there will be people I can chat to here; most this lot won't stop nattering! (Andy, 13th June 2019)

People were getting to know each other, sharing food, and eating together. Molly and friends were at the back of the bus, and I noted that they were detailing everything that they had brought to eat and encouraging one another to try different things. This sharing, I also noted, was not just within their immediate group; it was wider, to everyone around them, and I was encouraged to try a few things: 'Sure you don't want a cake, go on, don't miss out, they're delicious?'. Information was also being swapped such as a new initiative for early lung cancer screening and a music event at the library (see Appendix 10). I overheard a conversation recommending reliable fencing repair people and swapping local intel. When the driver thought he had made a wrong turn for a housing pick-up, Valerie 'darted down' the bus and stood next to him giving directions, although in fairness, from the 'sideways glances' that I noticed suggest several felt she had over-stepped the mark. Valerie seemingly enjoyed the ribbing she got, giving some back and lapping up the attention. This all exemplified the dynamics on the coach, mirroring the third place characteristics set out by Oldenburg (1999:20-42) as levelling, accessible, with regulars, homely, and full of playful conversations.

The volunteers contributed significantly to this atmosphere of fun, ensuring that it was accessible and homely, and as the 'continual hum of laughter' dispersed through the space and bodies on the coach, I reflected that it was something that everyone worked hard to contribute to and achieve. Lefebvre (2004) argues that space is produced through social and material practices. This aligns with the manner in which the empty vessel of the coach was transformed through the way in which this space was perceived (through rhythms and activities of the older adults), conceived (through their knowledge and codes), and lived in by the older adult day trippers.

The sharing of this communal space on the coach trip allowed for human connections, and sense of spatial, temporal belonging to this micro-community that almost superseded the designated purpose of the coach which was to transport people to a day at the seaside. My research is not unique in considering buses as a third place for older adults. Hagan (2019) draws on this concept to position the value of bus travel as a key informal space for older adults in rural Ireland and instrumental in supporting ageing in place by encouraging autonomy, social connections, and as a means to access local news and activities; others concur (Musselwhite et al., 2015). I return to and give some critique of Oldenburg's third place theory in my conclusion, but this highlights the need to look beyond the actual cultural activity, or the activity destination, when exploring the mechanisms and impact of these activities on older adults' community belonging.

I also became aware of the need for other third places and the importance of social infrastructure within my field work. As discussed in Chapter Five, I missed the opportunity to engage with many on my first day trip, so having learned the pub was the most popular venue, on my second trip I headed to the local branch of Wetherspoons and found many older adults to chat with. Kate, Lena, and Stuart lived in a sheltered housing complex for people aged 55 years and older, and they had become friends. They met in the housing complex's communal garden and enjoyed coming on the day trips. Stuart showed me photographs of the garden. It was evident that they enjoyed coming on day trips to go to the pub as they liked drinking with each other. A sense of community and companionship was important for these friends, and they enjoyed gardening, crosswords, and socialising, it was simply that they wanted to find this on their doorstep and in the realm of their everyday. This sentiment was shared by many. Structured activities were not for them, it did not allow the freedom of lifestyle they enjoyed 'I'd go to the local and to the shops, but that's about it.' For Kate, Stuart, and Lena, the activity of drinking or sitting in a pub was within their everyday boundaries, but the joy of this outing was that it gave permission to spend the whole day doing so. Here there was a reciprocal relation between the social and the spatial (Shields, 2013) and a sense of liberation from the usual norms of daily life. This sense of spatial freedom is something highlighted within the tourism literature,

see for example, Andrews, (2012), who looked at drinking and behaviour in Brighton. My findings show the whole day trip, not just the pub, to be a space without usual boundaries, promoting agency and allowing behaviour both within and beyond the everyday. For many this was the pub, but I watched this played through shopping, treating themselves to a new pair of shoes, eating out, fish and chips or ice-creams, and other such indulgences.

Another group of about ten people were scattered around three tables, seated outside on the High Street at Wetherspoons. Bill, one of the Phase 1 interviewees, was amongst them and made introductions around the table. With the exception of his wife and a couple of volunteers, this group had virtually all been handpicked by Bill, everyone he 'had known for years', and lived 'within a stone's throw' of the community centre. During my first interview with Bill, he spoke of a need within the local community to support those isolated and get people connected, which had triggered his focus on provision for older adults. Olive, 93 years old, one of the oldest on the coaches, highlighted this need when telling me her story:

> This is the first time I have been out for ages, normally sitting at home, napping, and watching TV. I live quite a lonely life now. My neighbours, one has moved away, the other she passed away, she was always the one that told me what was going on. (Olive, 3rd September 2019)

For Olive, the pub was not such a familiar setting, 'not the done thing for a lass', she told me. Like the others, she was there through a personal invitation from Bill. I sat and heard similar stories of a limited social life in older life, and whilst listening, a number of other groups of day trippers passed by. Sometimes Bill made new introductions, and sometimes these were not necessary. Despite this group of people describing themselves as 'lonely', the conversations and observations evidenced past connections existed between many of these people who had all lived in the same area for the majority of their lives. What lacked was the opportunity to catch up informally in the communities where they lived. I talked to Colin, who had been pleased to see someone he had known from a previous job. He confirmed my thoughts:

> The problem is that we have nothing like this round us, it's only the local shops where you might meet someone back home, and no one wants to sit around down there. (Colin, 3rd September 2019)

I noted significant differences in the community set-up, material assets, and access to third places between the areas of north and south Manchester where my fieldwork took me. In south Manchester, there was an abundance of outside cafés and restaurants and on several occasions, even with a limited time in this locale, I bumped into group members in charity shops and cafés and enjoyed an impromptu chat. These occasions offered me in that moment a temporal belonging to their community, something that is reflected in the wider literature (Hall, 2012; Edwards and Gibson, 2017). Here, cafés were being used by those who did not get on as well with group dynamics or structured activity sessions. Enid, an ad hoc participant of the drama group, agreed to an interview in a local café, where she and her dog, were regulars. She explained she found groups 'difficult, stressful really', something that on reflection she saw as a constant throughout her life:

> I have probably never been a group person, I never did the school mum thing, and although through the groups I am learning to be more tolerant, and patient, I am happier when I am here, I think. People stop and they chat, and I feel connected sitting here, you get to know a place and they get to know you, comfortable, at a distance, but part of it too. (Enid, 19th June 2019)

Blokland (2017) positioned cafés as places where people can experience public familiarity, developing ties to place and a sense of community, this was so for Enid. Coming to this café for lunch a few times a week made her feel more connected to the local community than sharing an organised activity space. Enid, and her dog, were on first name terms with the staff, and she knew that she was lucky to have 'choice in location', giving options of both groups and third places. She chose this setting liking 'an edge of anonymity that groups do not offer' but still feeling the benefits of 'coffee with a dash of love', referencing the social support and belonging to be gained from third places (Rosenbaum, 2007:43).

This subsection has considered the importance of different spaces and the wider social infrastructure as being a crucial factor within cultural activity provision. It has

highlighted the importance of different spaces and the need to consider activities within the realm of the everyday. Local geographies across Manchester are inequitable, which leads to disparities in the access and maintaining connections. I return to this in my discussion (Chapter Eight).

6.6 Negotiating Ageing Continuations in the Context of Others, with Disruptions of Caring

I conclude this chapter with a section considering how cultural activities support individuals to accomplish and perform a positive narrative of themselves in the context of ageing, what this excludes, and how caring roles contribute and detract from this.

I did not expect my fieldwork to have so much direct talk about being an older adult, but this has led to interesting insights. For example, during a drama session, there was a whole group discussion around stereotyping of older adults and how to challenge myths of ageing, held as a precursor to an improvisation exercise of things people would not expect older adults to do. Sally spoke about how she was felt, being almost 70: 'I am the new pensioner - I am not like my mum who was scrubbing floors'. She did not feel defined by her age but lucky to have choices, options, and fun in her life, in contrast to her mother, who had been bound to a 'relatively mundane life' that Sally believed was inherent of her (gendered) role of housewife and a lack of opportunity. She was not alone with this viewpoint; there was agreement across groups that ageing was something not to be bound by and an unnecessary label. Adrian's comment was applauded: 'It means nothing, it's just the way other people describe us!'

Active ageing framed the ways in which older adults were considering themselves, others, and participation in cultural activities. I gathered many comments in the field that reference 'a lot of apathy out there' (Connie, drama group, 22nd May 2019). Such comments were directed towards older adults who were not joining groups, or visibly participative, but content to 'sit at home and watch TV' (Connie, 22nd May 2019). Degnen (2007) conducted an ethnography of British village life in which she found that older adult participants judged their peers according to signs of ageing, and enacted

social sanctions excluding those who were showing physical and cognitive decline. Within my research, I noted similar signs of othering (Tyler, 2013; 2015), where judgements of self and others, both upward and downward, were being made in both physical and cognitive domains. I return to consider different approaches to those with memory difficulties later in this section. However, in certain situations, generally when people felt that they were doing better than the social and cultural expectations of a person of their age, there was a pride of them somehow beating the system, and the notion of aesthetics as a form of older age capital was seen within my research (Anderson et al., 2010).

Lynn considered herself one of the 'older ones' in the drama group. These were her words, but I noted she used them on several occasions, so I asked her if she minded me knowing her age. 'Oh no, that's fine, I am 83'. She seemed proud of this and added, 'I am lucky, I have good genes, I have done nothing but use Oil of Olay[5]!', alluding to the fact that it was her appearance that defined her age beyond other aspects of her life. Similar viewpoints were shown by close friends Muriel and Vanessa on the bus to Southport as they told me about their busy weekly schedule. Originally, they had got to know each other through a local church, but both widowed relatively recently, they tended to invite each other to anything they heard of and undertook many activities together. They were chatting about how in later life, it is more life circumstances than age that 'throws you together', telling me of a 10-year age gap between them.

> You wouldn't know that she's 81 and I'm 72 though, she looks very good for her age, don't you think? It surprises people when I tell them, if I didn't like her, I'd be jealous [laughs]! (Vanessa about her friend Muriel, 3rd September 2019)

I did not observe the men making comments about age, nor seeing themselves beating their biological age (or counterparts) in terms of looks, but there was instant competitiveness and bravado amongst the men when faced with a physical activity. For example, at the end of a drama session focused on circus skills and performance, there was free time for anyone who wanted to try out different activities. The hula

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[5] Oil of Olay – a high-street brand of anti-ageing creams and beauty products

hoop[6] attracted the men, Mike, Ron, and Pete all had a go. Pete excelled, 'You see, still got it!', he joked with the others when he got the hula spinning around his waist. These types of gendered narratives of ageing from an embodied perspective are supported by previous work (Twigg, 2004; Paulson and Willig, 2008; Jankowski et al., 2016; Bennett et al., 2020). In contrast, many of the women sat out of the end of the circus skill session. From their conversations it was clear such physicality was more uncomfortable. Whilst pleased with the activities, such as juggling, from earlier participation it also gave rise to feelings of control, appropriateness, and achievement, similar to Gillies et al. (2004) who explored the embodied experience and tensions of sweating and pain. Although there was also evidence that how people looked was becoming less of a focus, a greater concern was how society valued them. Examples included Irene, who I met heading back to the coach in Llandudno. She had bought 'running bits and bobs' in the charity shop, then climbed up The Great Orme[7] telling me that she was:

> [On] a mission to win the prize for the most steps in the day, 16,231, hopefully that'll do it? (Irene, 13th June 2019)

Active ageing was used to disrupt historical stereotypes around physical decline and loss (Holstein and Minkler, 2007; Boudiny, 2013). Accompanying this, however, was an increase in othering towards those who did not go out and get involved - even the likes of Enid (drama group) who talked of times of depression, difficult times, and not liking groups commented:

> There is a lady there who is 100 in August; she has been an accountant, is a golfer, and does all kinds of things. There are some interesting people, but then there are some very sad situations where they just sit in their flats and do nothing except watch TV from morning till 10 at night. (Enid, 19th June 2019)

Here, talking of those she lived with, making clear whom she admired and whom she didn't, in a similar way that Townsend et al. (2006) observed. Consistently, I noted that

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[6] Hula Hoop – an old-fashioned toy, still popular today. A large hoop, nowadays usually plastic, that goes around the waist and through hip gyration the user aims to keep it circling the body at this height.
[7] The Great Orme is a 2-mile limestone headland jutting into the sea, just north-west of Llandudno.

the unengaged adults were grouped together in a stigmatised fashion, regardless of circumstance. I also became conscious that I was talking predominantly to those engaged in activities by situating myself within activity groups, which is why I was pleased with the opportunity to interview Mavis.

I met Mavis on the first coach trip with her daughter, Pat, who had connections, through AF initiatives, with a few of the day trip volunteers. We had travelled to Llandudno on different coaches, but coincidently ended up in the same café, and they were happy for me to join them for a chat. I learned that Mavis had a rich history of community engagement, running local events whilst working part-time and bringing up a family. This changed 26 years ago, when her husband 'had a massive stroke, it took all his left side'. Mavis explained how he needed full-time care, which she provided until a year ago when he moved into a care home not far from where she lived, allowing her to visit him most days. This had been a hard decision for her. After her husband had a dementia diagnosis, the situation had worsened. We spoke a fair amount about her husband, Arthur, and being a carer. This was, Mavis thought, why she didn't know anyone, and why she didn't usually come on day trips. Mavis cared for him for '20 years not 12 months!'. She did get some respite, but as she stressed, 'you're tied, your life is not your own', and only used this to get the shopping or other essentials, always with an eye on the time.

> I don't think people realise till they've done it themselves. People say, 'You were born to be a carer!' but no-one is, it's there, so you do it! Well, I did for as long as I could, and then it got, well I just couldn't do it anymore, so I handed it over. (Mavis, 25th September 2019)

I reflected here on Mavis' term 'handing it over' - there was the sentiment of loss in the way she said this. She could not see she was still caring. She visited every day, worried about him, and missed him, and it was how she was still structuring her time. She had joined the coach trip as her daughter had encouraged her to. Mavis did not join the second coach trip and her daughter, Pat, told me that Mavis had been unwell and wasn't able to attend the coach trip. Pat and I chatted about my research and that

a limitation was the fact I was talking to what Pat called the 'converted', yet there were so many older adults who, like Mavis, were not able to join in for a lot of valid reasons.

Grandparenting was also raised by many as an important aspect of their lives, something that they gladly gave their time to and found hugely rewarding. The drama group participants often missed a meeting due to grandparental duties; Iris had in fact started the group to fill the loss of her grandparental duties with her granddaughter's imminent school start. At the final drama show, several grandchildren of the drama group came and gave their support. Having some of the grandchildren at the showing added a lovely dimension, watching a loved one on the stage, copying every move that was made and dancing along to some of the songs. It was evident that caring for grandchildren, whilst a pleasure and something they would prioritise, was no longer enough for some participants. They were looking for opportunities to volunteer in other capacities, contribute to institutions and community life, in addition to familial support as a parent, son/daughter, spouse, and grandparent. This is similar to the findings of Marhánková (2019) who explored how older grandmothers channel their time and resources as they are negotiating their older adult identity in the framework of active ageing and conscious of distancing themselves from negative stereotyping of old age (Hurd, 1999; Lund and Engelsrud, 2008). In my research, caring for spouses and familial caring roles were mentioned, but these were not positioned as contributing to society. The local community was the desired place to focus these efforts, and cultural activities, as discussed in Section 6.3, were a significant mobiliser for these people finding the opportunities to contribute and gain a sense of worth.

There was a lot of care and compassion within the groups. The coach, and day out in particular, allowed a temporal break from a current difficult situation, offering an in-between place (not home, nor work), momentarily easing the challenges and stresses of life. There are again many examples, but here I consider Doris who was on the first coach trip and was living with dementia. She was accompanied by her younger sister and niece. During my conversation with Doris, I was aware of her family members listening attentively and intercepting occasionally with prompts. I also noticed an affectionate smile pass between them reflecting their pleasure with how she was

managing, despite the odd stumbling points. There can be a tendency for loved ones to 'over-care' and take over with people with dementia, nurturing a dependency (Keyes et al., 2019), yet those on the coach demonstrated both an awareness and a patient restraint in doing this, promoting forms of living that better support interdependency (Goodley and Runswick-Cole, 2016). I witnessed this with another group of friends who were out at lunch, the gentle prompts and concern. There were a number of other connections to dementia voiced during the two-day trips. Some still cared for partners at home but had come alone, others had partners and friends who now lived in care homes, sad they were no longer able to manage the trip, but all still making regular visits. The care that was being given on the day trip was in each case fore-fronted by a relational positioning of that individual, seeing the individual above the condition. I now show how this was not the case in all groups.

The drama group had developed caring bonds as evidenced through calls if people did not show up, setting up a WhatsApp[8] group, and sharing of advice and information, all of which Parr (2004) classed as mundane acts of care, demonstrating inclusion, and supporting neighbourhood belonging. However, despite conversations with members signifying a collective belief and understanding of themselves as a highly inclusive group, there was an undiscussed alienation of and disregard for cognitive weakness. On one or two occasions, Pamela did not manage to keep up with what she was meant to be doing. For example, during a one-word summing up of the experience of the group, Pamela sat midway around the circle, but by the time we arrived at her she declared 'Oh, I am not sure what we are doing'. In isolation this would not be noteworthy but similar situations happened several times over the duration of the sessions. Nothing Pamela did had detriment on what the group was doing but it was interesting to see how omissions of concentration and failing memory were not accepted by some of the others; there was eye-rolling, small asides such as 'fancy that' or 'typical'. Equally, the mention of a performance in a care setting was dismissed, the perception being that this was not really a 'community platform' but bracketed away from community. Interestingly other (dis)ability issues, such as hearing loss or not

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[8]WhatsApp is a messaging platform on mobile phones using text, voice messages, video calls, and pictures

being able to stand for long, were never a problem and practical solutions were found yet cognitive weakness seemed unacceptable. This links back to the boundaries of inclusion that were muted through Phase 1 interviews and highlight a permeation of marginalisation through both the micro and the macro levels of cultural activity provision. In the drama sessions, there was caring and compassion but unlike the collective familial support of the coach space, this group had a focus on individualised autonomy which supports ableism, summarised by Goodley (no date: online) as 'the contemporary ideals on which the able, autonomous, productive citizen is modelled'.

6.7 Summary

This chapter has considered how cultural activities have contributed to the importance of social connections, how there are different ways of accessing cultural activities, and how interpretations of engagement reflect a person's past and present beyond participation. I have also considered the place and fit of some of the institutional boundaries, and co-production in relation to the heterogenous older adult population. The importance of social infrastructure and third places as enablers of cultural activities, and the need for this to be within the realm of the everyday have been highlighted. Lastly, I have explored the negotiation of active ageing in the context of others, and how family and caring commitments can fit with and disrupt this. The next chapter moves from this more explicit experience of participation to the implicit experience of cultural activities.

Chapter 7: Making Connections and Building Affinities through the Medium of Cultural Activities

7.1 Introduction

This chapter is about the themes of making connections and building affinities through cultural activities. The groups' practices and participation within cultural activities is a collective, relational, and embodied process through which attachments are formed. Firstly, I consider the practices and rituals within the drama group and the flows of movement, bodies, materialities, and attributed meaning, through being in the activities (Cresswell, 2009). I am influenced by the work of Mason (2018) around affinities (see Chapter Three), who explored intangible or in-between moments where there are sparks and charges as a means to better understand the building of connections and relational bonds. Then, I build on the notion of affinities, looking at how music and reminiscence can play a prominent role in making connections. I discuss the creativity, collaboration, and performance required in the drama group, and finally how the materiality of making can help overcome other barriers of participation.

7.2 The Sparks that Start Building Connections

In Chapter Five, I described the weekly drama sessions. The sense and atmosphere of engagement, and the sparks and charges through the warm-up activities were significant in building affinities between the group members. The first session I attended on 5th June 2019 is one example.

I entered what I thought was a starkly empty community hall and soon saw it brought to life with people and conversations. After signing in at the table by the door, people crossed the room to the drinks trolley to get a tea or coffee, appearing glad of something to focus on and the warm welcome given by volunteer Keith. A few tentative introductions were made. A lot of the first arrivals were newcomers to the group but there were people I recognised from the planning meeting (see Section 5.4.3.2) who, true to their 'love bomb' intentions, were mingling to make people feel welcome. There was a little nervousness amongst some of us who were new, not

knowing quite what to expect, and Enid compared it to the first day at school. Anil (facilitator) was not able to attend so Daisy, trained in circus skills and performance arts (I later return to this use of circus skills), ran the session. She had brought one of those battered, old-fashioned trunks that I imagined had a history all of its own. Out of this she pulled an array of predominantly unidentifiable objects. However, I could recognise hula hoops, juggling balls, and spinning plates - a feast of colour, textures, and curiosity. Daisy grouped some of the objects at different spots in the room, before piling a selection in the centre of the group. Daisy, I noted, who wore 'bright yellow and black polka-dot baggy trousers and a sparkly top', somehow matched her eclectic colourful objects. She grabbed our attention by giving a quick demonstration of a few of her props in the centre of the circle around which we were seated. Then she suggested an introductory exercise to get everyone involved. She picked an item which initially looked like a flat two-dimensional doughnut however, once thrown in the air, opened into more of a sphere – it was a form of slinky[9]. My fieldnotes noted:

> The flat metal rings, almost magically, opened up into a ball shape - the air going through it causing the metal rings to create oval petals in a flower type of formation. Then, as this ball met her hand, it opened in the centre, enveloped her hand, and travelled down her arm like a massive bracelet. It seemed by the expressions, fleeting smiles, and focus, that even if this was not what people were expecting from their morning, they were now both impressed and bemused. (Fieldnotes, 5th June 2019)

Mason (2018:124), influenced by Ingold's (2008; 2010; 2011; 2013) concepts of materiality that I return to in Section 7.6, rejects seeing material items purely as an object reduced to 'context or backdrop'. She argues that there is a need to move beyond these literal interpretations and to consider these in more animated ways, with a focus on relational forces and the entwinement of the energies from material objects alongside human energies and agency (Mason, 2018). The quote above supports this argument, as the slinky, when combined with human interaction, did take on different form and effectively came to life. The 'magical' aspects of this material transformation allowed this frisson of charge and the exchange of 'fleeting

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[9] The slinky was invented in the 1940's by Richard James. It is a pre-compressed helical spring, a type of toy that can perform movement tricks.

smiles', which sparked the connections and relational affinities that Mason (2018) speaks of. This exchange is one of the in-between moments which need not be exclusively person to person but can happen in the gaps that the material objects, such as this slinky, bring to life.

The group members took turns using the slinky to introduce themselves and passed the slinky seamlessly between their bodies around the circle in a clockwise direction. Daisy moved the slinky over her clasped hands from her raised right arm to her lowered left arm. As she did so, she introduced herself, then raised her left hand so the slinky went towards the top part of her arm and as she moved the arm down, she held the hand of the person on this side and the slinky twirled over her arm and onto the next person. Each person said 'hello' and introduced themselves copying her sway of arms to move the object from right arm to left and joining hands to move it on to the person on their left who in turn said 'hello' to that person, introduced themselves. Picture 3 shows the process.

Picture 3: Sally and Adrian Working Together with the Slinky

I felt completely immersed in the activity, a factor that Phoenix and Orr (2014) have considered as an element of the pleasure derived from physical activity participation for older adults. It required concentration to physically co-ordinate and synchronise the movement, and introduce oneself, forcing everyone to be present in the moment.

It was also dependent on the whole group engaging in a mutually somatically and close fashion to keep the flow of the movement.

> As the room was silent with concentration, you could just hear the metallic whorl as gravity drew the slinky up and down people's arms following their movements. It provided a continuous gentle jangle, the steady tempo of which had a pattern that was unchanging regardless of whose arm it was on. [Fieldnotes, 5th June 2019]

The sound of the activity seemed liked 'a light metal drizzle'. The slinky had an energy and charge of its own that moved through the group. At the transfer points, the group members joined hands and coaxed the slinky across - an intimate moment between people who had just met and there seemed to be an added intensity of being watched by the rest of the group. It was a process that was managed with care, so as not to harm the slinky or to break the chain of motion. I wrote in my fieldnotes:

> [T]hey were almost nursing it steadily across from one to the next, using joined up coordination and sole concentration on this between the participant dyads…. (Fieldnotes, 5th June 2019)

The slinky created what Amin (2015) describes as a 'charismatic crossing', an idea that contributes to Mason's (2018) theoretical work on affinities. Using this affinities orientation to explore the sensory atmospherics, the charges and tensions help to give a better understanding of the slinky exercise, and how it offered sparks that both supported, and perhaps accelerated relational connections. As a researcher, I thought that the slinky was a visual outward representation acting as a mirror of this internal energy flow and some of the first glimmers of connection between sets of individuals' and the group as a whole. As the slinky crossed in-between members, it was weaving social connections from one person to the next and through the group. At the break after this routine, I noted that conversations were both 'louder' and more 'fluid and animated' than the 'slightly stilted awkward conversation' at the start of the group.

Each week these exercises helped to create and build connections, some using objects like the slinky, and others that occurred without such props. Simple breathing exercises were common, reappearing in slightly different formats throughout the ten

sessions. Mindfulness exercises have previously been shown to help group cohesiveness (Cleirigh and Greaney, 2015). Still using Mason's (2018) aperture of socio-atmospherics, I noted the change in energy and focus within the room as contributory to connecting people to both the here and now and to each other through mindfulness:

> After setting our feet on the floor, evenly spaced, resting our hands by our side or on our knees and rolling back our shoulders it was suggested that we closed our eyes (although this was optional) and focussed on our own breath. With my eyes closed I did this and to my knowledge so did everyone else. After a couple of deep in and out breaths, where we were encouraged to try to widen our ribs with the intake of breath, you could not help to get into a slow and steady pattern. As I focused, everyone's breath seemed to merge into one and the whole room was breathing in time. (Fieldnotes, 19th June 2019)

This start to the session broke (what had I scribbled had become) quite 'frantic conversations' around the room where members were 'squeezing as much as they could about the previous week' into the limited time allocated for this. I noted both calm and intentness as everyone adopted the same pose and focused on their presence in the room. My fieldnotes reflect my experience, excluding the sensation of sight as we focused on our breath, heightened the auditory awareness to everyone's breath. The embodied synchronicity is again key as it allowed equity and togetherness. However, looking at this from a purely embodied experience the atmospherics of the room was lost. This atmosphere, as argued in Chapter Three, is more than the product of the people or their actions but comes 'in-between' the people and the space as a spatially extended quality of feeling (Kanyeredzi et al., 2019) and it is this feeling that opens the space for connections. These experiential observations were also mentioned by a few of the group as Sally, Joan, and Mary told me. Sally spoke about the feeling of actively positioning herself in the room, and how this allowed her to ignore everything else and enjoy just being in the here and now. Mary and Joan highlighted how the activities provided a different atmosphere that supports relational connections.

> Sally: Everyday should start like this, you forget all about the bread being mouldy or your bus being late [all laugh], that goes, it doesn't matter anymore and instead you are just transported and everything else disappears. I should breathe more often.

Mary: You're right, this group is fabulous for that. I know that we are here for the drama but these extra bits [like the breathing exercises] add so much more, brings us together as a group.

Me: In what way?

Mary: Well, when you stand and do all that together, well you just feel like you can chat to everyone. I started this group not knowing anyone, but I don't mind who I get my coffee with, we are all together, the same if you like – it opens up the group and lets everyone in.

Joan: Yes, I speak to someone different every week here, and there are some groups where you just don't know where to put yourself, and no-one even notices. Here everyone counts, everyone sees you, and I am sure doing all this together helps.

During the next few sessions, I took extra notice of who was sitting where and with whom; they had made a valid point, as rarely were people in the same seat or next to the same person. Of course, some connections grew stronger throughout the course of the group, and some people did not stay so this was not necessarily a universal experience, but I witnessed a web of connections flourishing within the group.

There were passing exchanges or moments of charges and the affinities that developed across and within the group cannot be attributed to any one session. An exercise where you struck a pose, closed your eyes, and then opened and took someone else's pose, initiated a spark between those who copied one another, grabbing a knowing moment of eye contact, and giving conversation hooks at break. 'Were you putting on lipstick in your pose?', I heard Peggy asking Iris. Threading through all my illustrations of these sections was also a more undefinable power - a magical frisson of something intangible but extra (Mason, 2018). I have used the drama group here, as this is where these frissons were most potent, and I attribute this in part to the nature of this cultural activity. There were different ways for people to connect and different forms of connection within the coach trips, craft group and at the story-telling session. I now turn to connections that built cohesion and camaraderie within these groups, focusing first on the power of music.

7.3 Ah Ha Ha Ha Staying Alive

Here, I discuss music as this appeared to support connections being made. I explore the cohesive properties of music from a sensory kinaesthetic perspective and how playing music charges the room with a synchronicity of rhythm and heightened energy, drawing on current literature, which relates to the sensory and relational elements of my findings. Where my findings deviate from the main narratives within the literature of music and older adults, is the group's ability to foster a temporal, place-based identity, and the work that this can achieve in connecting the social and the self through a strength of shared local identity.

By week seven of the drama group (17th July 2019), the play was taking shape. The group had developed three different sketches focusing on different modes of transport, but a wider plot was needed to bring these three acts together as a play. Early conversations were about a suggestion to meet a local celebrity. A couple of ideas were met with a tepid reception, until Adrian (drama group member and keen local historian) spoke, 'How about Barry Gibb?' This suggestion seemed to provoke an air of excitement within the group, noted by 'a rise in volume as a number of separate bubbles of conversation happened simultaneously around the room' (Fieldnotes, 17th July 2019). Barry Gibb was one of the Gibb brothers who founded the Bee Gees[10] and a local claim to fame. Anil started a group exercise where everyone gave a reason as to why they would like to go and see Barry Gibb. This is a selection of the comments that I scribbled down as the group laughed and listened to one another's answers:

> He was the King of the disco and played wherever you went dancing. (Peggy)
>
> Because he used to live on my road when I was 4. (Adrian)
>
> So, I can show off my dance moves! (Sylvia)
>
> He was in the same class as my brother for the first couple of years at school. (Flo)

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[10] The Bee Gees are a famous band known for their disco music in the 1960s and 70s. They had over 60 hit singles since this time and grew up in South Manchester.

For Peggy and Sylvia, Barry Gibb evoked fond memories of dancing - most of which it transpired was done in local venues - and personal connections. Nostalgia and reminiscence are covered in the following section. Barry Gibb was inter-twined with their past, and in this way this popular music was tied with their identity of being a local. The conversation for this part of the session was completely absorbing; in my fieldnotes I comment on 'the group leaning inwards' eager to catch the next person's tales and that members were 'struggling to wait their turn' to build on these stories. Links built between members, and around the group, as they individually pieced themselves and each other in situated temporal context, mapping this out through their local connections to Barry Gibb. This connection tied music, time, and place as a shared commonality for (almost all) the group and it seemed to build and reinforce a sense of collective identity.

Place and urban identity are multifaceted topics, in which local music can be a key cultural connecting feature of both individual identity and place representation (Bennett, 2005). Bennett (2005:336), whilst stating that there is often conflict and pluralism in these narratives, asserts:

> [M]usic in local contexts involves its interweaving with existing stocks of local knowledge to produce powerful narratives of the local.

In this group there was harmony in their narratives, not division or pluralism as Bennett (2005) suggests. Gloria was the only one who said that she could not picture Barry Gibb. Even when the soundtrack 'Staying Alive'[11] was played to see if it triggered recall, she simply stated he 'must have passed me by!' This may have positioned Gloria as an 'outsider' in terms of her belonging at this moment in time (Savage, 2005; 2008). However, being a local resident for over 50 years and of the same generation, there was enough homogeneity through peripheral connections to time and place beyond the music that she was no less interested in the discussions nor excluded from the group. In going back to the literature around older adults and music, I have found a gap about the value of collective urban identity in relation to supporting ageing in

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[11] Staying Alive – a disco hit and one of the Bee Gees' most popular:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I_izvAbhExY

place or cultural activities. Instead, there is a plethora of literature with individualistic orientation, linking music and the social, physical, and emotional well-being of older adults (see, for example, Hays, 2005; Daykin et al., 2018). Much of which (see Chapter Two) is from the vantage of participation, generally evaluating an intervention which consistently makes positive links between memory retrieval and social interaction, and to a lesser extent sense of self (except where an individual has a history of musical engagement). I suspect this approach is less conducive to evidencing a more pluralistic concept around a shared anchoring to place or a sense of collective shared identity as shown here.

I now move on to consider the affect, and sensory kinaesthesis of music within the activity groups, starting with the moment when 'Staying Alive' was played to the group which spontaneously triggered a group dance. The music changed the dynamics of atmosphere, and re-invented the space transforming a church hall into more of a disco:

> Staying Alive was turned to full volume. With no hesitation the entire group got out of their chairs and I was dancing with them around the room, everyone keeping their place in the circle but swinging hips in time with each other and singing along as they danced to the music. It was a fun moment, laughter mingled with some singing along. It had a rejuvenating effect, [in that there was a spring in their step, a bounce] and the energy levels in the room were heightened. (Fieldnotes, 17th July 2019)

Mason (2018:105) references vibes from a song and describes how this 'motors along creating bodily empathy, involvement' which promotes a potency that encourages engagement and connections. This was exactly what happened for this group in this moment. People were connecting, they were turning around to check those behind were involved. I noticed that Peggy and Maureen had linked arms, and were going around as a pair, wrapped up with the warmth and frivolity of the moment. My fieldnotes highlight that the tempo of the music infiltrated the group, and this is the bodily empathy, as the group were in unison keeping up with the rhythm. This mirroring of music tempo and beat is not a new revelation. Music has been shown to support people with later stage dementia and Parkinson's disease to walk and is

conducive to helping patterns of walking (Clair and O'Konski, 2006; Arias and Cudeiro, 2010), which fits with the observation of spontaneity of movement to music in this session. There are also academic links with mobility and sociability. Through studies of walking groups, it has been argued that the movement can aid a relaxation of social norms which, in turn can allow for both an ease of silence and also an increased physical proximity promoting increased physical and social connection (Ahmed, 2008; Doughty, 2013). Whilst the music and dance were not necessarily as conducive to conversation as a walk would be, there is much similarity in relation to the proximity and connection and the atmospheric affect it created (Sumartojo & Pink, 2018). An example of this were Peggy and Maureen who on no other occasion linked arms.

My reflection on this moment, on the train back home, was of the spontaneous nature of this event. Acting aside, the activities within this group were planned and structured, all with an underlying purpose and predominantly with instruction of how to achieve this. There is limited literature around spontaneity or being 'in the moment' within cultural activities for older adults, except in the dementia literature where this is advocated to better connect to the here and now of where the person with dementia is at that moment in time (All Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing 2018; Keady et al., 2020). Dowlen et al. (2021) focused on 'in the moment' aspects of music groups looking at the embodied and sensory experiences of improvised music-making with people with dementia. Three of their themes were similar to my findings especially in relation to finding, music an effective tool to elicit story-telling and life histories, the ability to form connections through music, and a ripple effect which I discuss at the end of this section (Dowlen et al., 2021). Sensory and situated methodological approaches to data collection may account for some of this overlap but I argue this approach can be just as pertinent to our understanding of building connections in wider community activities. Here certainly, exploring the 'in the moment' has allowed for a better perspective of the ordinary, yet extraordinary and intangible, elements of connections through cultural activities.

Picture 4: Barry Gibb – Star of the Show

The show did include Barry Gibb (see, Picture 4) and this was a coveted role. I noted that the audiences in their live performances also joined in with the singing of his songs, appreciating the music and community connections that came with it. Music was less of a feature in the other groups, but there was a moment on the bus back from Llandudno, on the 13th June 2019, when again I was struck by the emotionality with which music can infiltrate a space, change mood, and join individuals. I was chatting with Edith and a few others, asking more about the different groups they went to, and why those specific groups. Having had five children, Edith had always lived a busy life and was happier when busy and consequently had a lot of different activities to tell me about. 'Do you still go to that choir group?', Bert chipped in. Edith was surprised by her omission: 'Oh, definitely, thanks, that is one of the best. I've been doing that for years, it does wonders for my COPD[12]', referencing how this helped a lot with the breathing difficulties that she has. Bert, it turned out, went to another choir group in north Manchester, so they started swopping notes on which songs each had been singing recently, and where they'd performed. Then Edith mentioned that they

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[12] COPD – stands for Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease

had been working on 'Hallelujah'[13]. 'I love that one', piped up the woman sat next to Bert, and Bert started to sing. Background music was coming from the coach stereo, not that loud as people were chatting too, but as Bert started singing, others joined in and gave a performance-worthy rendition of the song. People applauded as it finished. Once again, I noted in my fieldnotes the transformational and enchanting affect that music brings - 'it was simply magical' - emanating through the coach, creating atmosphere and a sense of togetherness. The day trippers did not operate as a whole like the drama group; they were there on their own or with a friend, a sibling, or as a smallish group. This was one occasion that they were in harmony; there was a togetherness in that moment. I found myself humming the tune for a few days or weeks and mentioned this to Edith on the following outing. It had stayed with Edith too, singing the song and being taken back to that moment with 'the feel of a hug'. I loved this expression, and it relates back to Dowlen et al.'s (2021) notion of a ripple effect, where the moment stays and continues into the everyday life, in that the sense of the benefits and connectedness lasted outside the activity. I had similar comments re the Bee Gees; Mike, for example, said it brought back so many memories he had 'dusted off his albums later that week!'. This all supports DeNora's (2000:67) assertions that music has the ability to evoke memories of the past by allowing us to relive the temporal situation and see the 'dynamism as an emerging experience' by allowing us to relive the moment. The next section considers the connective agency that reminiscence and nostalgia held across the different groups.

7.4 Bonding through Reminiscence and Nostalgia

Mason (2018:3) describes affinities in a cumulative, layered fashion, comprising of sensations that spark or bring the affinities to being, and this charge or flow of connection then takes shape through 'socio-atmospherics' and 'ineffable kinship' which adds to the potency of the affinities. Fundamental to these layers of connectivity is time as affinities are not a linear concept, potency can evolve through a different sense of time jumping back and forth across the lifespans and generations. Through

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[13] Hallejulah – a Leonard Cohen song: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ttEMYvpoR-k

the previous subtheme of music, the idea of the temporal link to the past as a connector has already started. Music was just one element of this, providing potent but occasional connection; reminiscence and nostalgia more generally were seen throughout.

The reason for joining the cultural activity for the day trippers was, unlike other groups, not to meet new people as the vast proportion were doing this with friends and generally just spent the majority of the day with the people they knew. Spending time with these different groups allowed me to see how the day trips supported a complex strengthening of old connections with people and place, past and present, and simultaneously layering new ones. Throughout the two day trips, there were countless occasions when people told me of nostalgic links to people and places that had historic and current importance to them. I learned of people whom members valued, past and present, holidays, employment, journeys, and connections with places, and food. This accorded with Tuan (1977:3) 'space becomes a place when we get to know it and endow it with value'. I am sure I would not have been told many of these tales, if not for the sensory triggers of travelling to a place and being outside the usual everyday setting. For some, like Geoff, who was recently widowed, this connection to the past was something he loved about these day trips:

> I tend to do what we would have done, take a look round the shops, see if I can get a bargain, and then sit on our favourite bench to have pie and chips. I feel close to her, but you have all these people around too. (Geoff, 13th June 2019)

For Geoff it was the perfect balance of being able to connect closely to the past, whilst feeling the support of a wider community. He did not look for close connections in the present but liked the comfort of knowing 'you always end up chatting with someone on these day trips!'.

I enjoyed seeing the sparks of connection and the memories that day trips afforded. In a café in Llandudno, I recognised a group of people from the coach that I had not yet spent time with. With permission, I joined them whilst they waited for their lunch to arrive. In amongst the smell of vinegar and frying fish I heard an abridged history.

164

They were three sisters and one cousin, and always set time aside to come on these trips. They all lived in Manchester, two still worked and the others were retired. They had always been close and loved these days out - 'special days' I was told. 'Sorry if we were noisy on the coach!', Dana suddenly apologised. 'We seem to act like when we were about 12!' I said I hadn't noticed, which I hadn't, as laughter seemed plentiful, but questioned what she meant. 'It makes us giddy, like when we were younger – teasing and tormenting each other', she laughed. 'They mean tormenting me!', Louise quipped back. 'I was always the one who forgot my towel, dropped my ice-cream, got pooped on by a seagull!' Raucous laughter and banter, while considering and reliving moments from the past, embodying those spirits of their younger selves, was common in the different groups. I did not stay with these women for long as their lunch came and I left them to enjoy it, but I did frequently tune in to their laughter whilst in the café.

Mason (2018:86) highlights 'ineffable kinship' and the connection of family resemblances or similarity (physical mainly in looks or mannerisms) that creates powerful connections between people often as a 'spark of recognition that carries a force of impact when it hits you'. She invites 'both a way of seeing and something of an ether in which affinities can flourish' (Mason, 2018:106). These day trips allowed for moments, like outlined above, that triggered memories that had impact of reliving and strengthening connections through a sharing of memories (and no doubt also creating new ones).

Connections to the past keep memories alive and strengthens connections. This does not mean that the day trip did not also allow for building new connections. Lynn valued the length and quality of time that you got on these day trips, when you weren't focused on 'doing or making', to just chat and 'rub along' with acquaintances as this quote highlights:

> I knew Janet before, but it is only now, and because of the trips that I would really count her as a friend. (Lynn, 3rd September)

There were several who rekindled connections from the past, where paths no longer crossed but the coach trip had put them back in contact. I also noted a rekindling of relations: of note, there were those, like Sharon, who had been unwell and commented that this coach trip enabled an environment for her to be 'a sister again, as opposed to patient' for the day.

Mason (2018: 11) acknowledges 'frissons of ineffability' are made as people are not simply genetic but are also social, cultural, spiritual, and biological in construction and in being. This is something I have given ontological primacy to from the outset of my research. As such, I extend this connection beyond familial relationships to be inclusive of shared historic connections that came from bringing together older adults who shared age and place. There were many instances within the Story Tellers reminiscence group when shared experiences and an intwined past positively impacted building new relationships. This was grounded in the commonality of age, as well as living and growing up in Manchester; through these commonalities people were getting to know one another and finding hooks for future conversations. The reminiscence group started with a topic, such as influential people in your life, discussed initially by the whole group and then in smaller groups. This was where connections started. Anne, who I had got to know through the craft group, was keen introduce to me to Rita:

> Can you believe it? We were both nurses and both met our husbands on a coach! What are the chances of that. I will definitely make sure I chat to her again at the coffee morning, I can't believe we haven't spoken before! (Anne, Story Tellers, 31st August)

They had known each other from a distance but, having started the coffee morning at different times, they sat at different tables meaning they had not made a deeper connection. Mason (2018: 115) highlights 'fate' and 'serendipity' as a contributing factor of the ethereal nature of affinities that are made through resemblances such as this. This chance finding and shared memories had sparked a connection. What I do not know is if this was a passing moment of serendipity or more, as I did not see either

of these women again. Much of this came down to creating the spaces and opportunities for such relationships to develop, which I considered in Chapter Six.

Wrapping up with an evaluation discussion at the end of this session, participants shared how they had found the group over the last four weeks and what they had gained from the meetings. This comment was made by one of the writers, probably not quite an older adult himself, who was there to listen, capture, and to co-author the stories of the older adults to make a book:

> There is young energy in the room. Going back in time to those memories I feel it seems that people around me are getting younger. It's like magic. (Mark, writer at Story Tellers, 31st August 2019)

His remark reflected my fieldnote comments and my use of the term 'rejuvenation' when describing the dancing scene to 'Staying Alive'. Mark's comment prompted further discussion within the group and made me reflect a little on the negative connotations of being older as somehow less vibrant and dynamic within society (Centre for Ageing Better, 2020). The participants told me it was not that it made them feel any younger, but the conversations had stirred them to recall and give recognition to the fact they had experienced a 'valuable and active life'. In doing this they were appreciating not just a connection with others, but also as Sadie mentioned, '[it] reconnects you with the fullness of you as a person'. Although there has been considerable work in relation to intergenerational platforms to support connections with wider communities (see, for example, The Together Project, 2017), this group felt definite value in sharing experiences with people of the same age, above interaction with those younger. Ava stated:

> My son doesn't really want to know about things like this, life for him has moved on. You can sometimes feel a bit obsolete and pushed to the margins. But the chatting with others today, and finding things in common, the connections, the similarities – well it makes you feel that, that there is meaning in what you have done and been through.' (Ava, Story Tellers, 31st August 2019)

Degnen (2016), in her ethnographic study exploring older adults' everyday experiences and activities in the North of England, drew similar conclusions, social memory practices can form solidarities. A sense of attachment between shared memories is something that does not pass as easily across the generational divide where the realms of experience have less in common. A recent systematic review considered the combination of reminiscence and music to support the well-being of older adults (Istvandity, 2017). This review found limited studies (only 5 of sufficiently high quality), and their focus was on mental health as opposed to the social and emotion aspects of wellbeing (Istvandity, 2017). My study contributes new knowledge in this space, considering these aspects from an experiential and relational perspective.

May (2017) argues that belonging is a temporal experience and that a sense of belonging can endure across time and, like the situation with the music, through history and nostalgia. She argues that past sources of belonging can 'warm up and give vitality to the present' (May, 2017:401), developing temporal belonging by using the connections of old to anchor new connections (May, 2017). My findings have parallels to the work by May and Lewis (2020) who explored older adults' relationship to their built environments, and how relationships and material aspects from across our life can influence our sense of belonging in the present. Such materiality is entangled within the lifeworld of that individual (Ingold, 2011), where the agency of this past carries an influence and energy into the present day. In my study, it was music and memory not buildings through which this material-temporal belonging and the sparks of connection to others was felt. Connections are also made through the creation of new things and this is the focus of the next section.

7.5 'The glue that held everyone together'

For the drama group, the co-construction of the play and the performances illustrated how making and creating can develop connections. Throughout the drama sessions, with the final production in sight, the main focus of these sessions became the refinement and development of the sketches forming the play. By week six, an increasing amount of the session was spent with the main group divided into three

sub-groups based on who was in which sketch: the balloon; the tram; or the bus – the three methods of travel to Barry Gibb. I observed the sparks of connections, outlined previous sections, strengthening, and growing. As mentioned in Chapter Five, by this stage of the fieldwork I spent more time observing than participating, which allowed me better opportunity to notice the subtle changes in how the group were working together. I admired the intensity within the three groups as each and every member made contributions. For example:

> Almost oblivious to anyone else in the room, the balloon women rushed up to get a coffee and then, with their drinks, huddled back in the corner of the room where they had been practising, and carried on. They laughed when Sally teased, 'what's wrong with the rest of us today', but just did not want to break their run of creativity. (Fieldnotes, 24th July 2019)

This group was also the last to leave the hall this week, busy going back over the details of their sketch totally absorbed in the analysis and creativity of their work. All around the room this session, members were 'pooling ideas' to make their sketch as good as could be by going through each member's exact role, their positioning on stage, how they worked together, and the minutiae of each scene. In this I observed them coaching, critiquing, teasing, and encouraging one another:

> You would not know that some of the group were novice actors today. They are all learning together and through one another and the play is definitely coming together. It was great the way that they will stop and critique one another on what was working and what wasn't. Peggy thoughtfully complimented the new joke that Iris had put into her part in the balloon play, and you could tell that she was pleased to hear this. ... The bus group were trying out different techniques to see if they could work out a way to portray the movement of the bus, together they picked up chairs and shuffled forward with them. (Fieldnotes, 24th July 2019)

The group worked together on the finishing touches of the play (such as a sense of movement for the bus and elements of humour). I noted that much of this was without input from Anil (the main facilitator) and it was evident that the last few months had been invaluable for the group to move their learning into practice to produce the components of the play (Lave, 1990). I caught glimpses of how the social connections had grown from the early slinky moments and were continuing to form.

The bossing about, joking, teasing, and also praising, was evident in my fieldnotes and indicated a different level of engagement to the tentative starting points of connection in Section 7.2. This had been made possible, through these drama sessions, the group exercises, and the production of a play. Sally told me:

> It's the collaboration and because we have all given so much of ourselves to this. I think that is one of the major successes. This is why it has come together so well. People are often quite insular, but this makes you open up and share your ideas, yourself, it builds something special, it connects us – they are all coming to my 70th now, [Laughs]! (Sally, coffeeshop post-play, 15th August 2019)

In Chapter Two, I highlighted other empirical work considering this notion of creativity and creating together as a bonding factor or source of connections (see, for example, Bernard et al., 2014) who also looked at drama engagement. The friendships were integrally entwined, not as much in terms of personal growth, discussed more in Chapter Six, but more of a collective growth. By the end members were teaching and mentoring one another, rarely looking to Anil for direction. Ingold's (2013) work on making is pertinent here regarding these connections and how the group was working symbiotically. Ingold (2013:45) likened the art of making to a journey, 'not as an iteration of steps but as an itineration', not as a process of building step by step or an 'assembly' production through to completion but more of a 'procession' along a path, growing step by step, then 'overshooting its destination'. He valued the importance of flow, and the forward motion of connections unfolding (Ingold, 2010) that has been omnipresent throughout this chapter. For the drama group this journey continued into their productions.

I saw the group next on 14th August 2019, the day of the first live performance to the Thursday coffee morning group which was hosted in the same room as the drama sessions. I noted it 'felt a little strange walking through the usual space quite different in design and ambience'. At the coffee morning, tables were packed in tightly as up to 80 people attended. It was noisy, but people were sedentary, more static, and apart from conversation more passive somehow; waiting to be entertained. There was also a very different feel in the adjoining room where the drama group gathered. Today there

was no relaxed banter, no laughter either, instead there seemed to be tensions, nerves mixed with excitement. Gloria was fussing as to whether she had got the 70s vibe enough, questioning Maureen 'Do I look okay in this outfit?'. Angela peeked into the main hall and commented in alarm, 'Have you seen how many people there are!'. I jotted down comments like 'Oh, I must have a wee before going on stage', alluding to the bodily manifestation of the nerves present in today's atmosphere. It was infectious, I started feeling anxious for them, especially having seen all the hard work that the group had put in.

Picture 5: Group Solidarity and Unity Before the Performance

There was a final run-through in this side room after which, as final preparation, the performers held hands, did some deep breathing exercises, and raised their arms, as shown in Picture 5. Despite the nerves, maybe because of, there was perhaps an even bigger sense of unity.

The play was well received, and Peggy joked, 'I am pleased we made them all laugh, at least they got our humour'. There was relief all round, a collective pat on the back was voiced by Laraine 'Everyone did a great job, we made ourselves and Fiona [co-ordinator] proud today.'. The final comment that I share from Mike goes back to

support the journey analogy, 'haven't we come a long way!'. There was undeniably a strong sense of solidarity that this process, and also this performance had evoked.

The group performed twice again, in slightly different combinations of people as the busy lives and competing priorities of the group members outside the drama groups were such that they couldn't always squeeze everything in. 'You can't expect me to perform when Man City are playing!', was Adrian's excuse! Consequently, there was one performance occasion when a shortage of members meant things did not look like they were going to go well, or at one point even be possible, highlighting the unpredictability of volunteer work. Angela told me that they 'couldn't let this happen – this one's for our community', referencing that this was being done as part of an arts fair for their area of Manchester, giving the play an increased significance. The group worked through the lack of members. They moved things around, and people offered to do different and multiple roles. It was arguably the best performance they gave, but what was interesting here was the impact of adversity on the group and how an element of collective resilience had the ability to forge tighter bonds:

> It [the live performance] was fantastic, it was a bit different, but it really taught me how people can actually all pull together – even if you think you are at the end of the road! The remaining members pulling together was just unbelievable. It amazed me, just the glue that held everyone together. (Mary, 31st August 2019)

I asked why this was the case and she told me:

> I think it was, it was just the fact we are a team, and we all wanted it to work as best it could. Everyone just pulled everything out the bag. (Mary, 31st August 2019)

Liddle et al. (2013) researched women's participation in craft activities and highlighted the connecting notion of challenge and personal growth of making things with social connections to others, and as such this bears similarity to what was found in the drama group. Phinney et al. (2014) outlined similar findings in their research. They too found that the sense of cohesion and commitment that was fostered through the creation and performance of art making and working towards a shared goal led to a feeling of

belonging in the group, and the wider community. Getting through tough experiences as a group, and being able to rely on one another, was a strength. A study that interviewed middle-aged women about adventure activities found similar (Wharton, 2020). Wharton (2020) argued that building new skills and rising to challenges facilitated a sense of belonging developing within a group. These factors played an equally significant influence in the sense of achievement and belonging that Mary, and others, expressed. Gauntlett (2018:10) asserts that 'making is creating', positioning cultural engagement as an active process that connects people in three fundamental ways: connecting of ideas and materials to form something new; connections through social dimensions; and sharing which stretches the boundaries of our social and physical world. The drama group certainly exemplified this.

7.6 Material Alchemy

The building of connections between groups members in different ways as a result of cultural activity participation threads through this chapter. I have highlighted how this had been done, and how it was valued by the older adult members. The focus so far has been on the more intangible or ethereal elements of connection through cultural activities (Mason, 2018). Here I show how, for the craft group, their cultural activity provided a dynamic flow that allowed for energy to be directed away from the relational, instead keeping the flow on the material. Considering how making can serve different purposes in different contexts I borrow the title, and the idea of alchemy from Ingold (2013:28). Ingold (2013) opposes a hylomorphic notion of making, in which artists impose an idea conceived in their minds onto something material, and instead see making as a dynamic engagement with materials and their properties.

> Material is known not by what it is but by what it does, specifically when mixed with other materials, treated in particular ways or placed in particular situations. (Conneller, 2011, as cited in Ingold, 2013:29)

The contention within this is that materials are 'realised in terms of different practices that themselves have material effects' (Conneller, 2011:5). In Section 7.2, the slinky was the material that created opportunity for connection; for the craft group, the act of making and material engagement within this did something very different.

The art group (see Section 5.4.2.3 for an overview), was a very small group with three regular attendees, Anne, Melanie, and Fred, and Vicky who ran the group. Anne attended of lots of groups and 'loved to chat'. Melanie and Fred were very quiet, in the three or four sessions I spent with them, I learned little about either of them. This was unusual as almost everyone else I met during my time in the field seemed willing to share so much of themselves with me. Fred lived on his own, his wife passed away a few years prior, but this was the only group that he attended. I was informed that he had hearing difficulties, which may have been a factor in his low engagement levels. Even when sitting next to him and ensuring that he was able to hear me, his gaze would drop which signified a shyness or reticence to engage as soon as he had given me enough of an answer so as not to be rude. The exception was a chat about tennis in which he became really animated. Melanie was a mother and grandmother, lived in south Manchester and told me she 'dropped in' on a couple of craft groups. Melanie always arrived slightly late and as soon as she finished the activity and quiz she would 'scoop up her bag and make a dash out of the room'. I do not know if she had grandchildren to collect from school or other reasons for her hurried exit. I suspect that even if there wasn't a reason this would have happened anyway. This I am surmising from an awkwardness, I noted: 'fiddling in her bag', 'nervous short laugh' and delays in answering with hesitations like 'oh, me, oh, um'. All of this left very little space or inclination for social interaction at the start and finish of the sessions, unlike the other activity sessions where chat seemed effortless and spontaneous, darting from topic to topic. This group was a complete contrast; here, the conversation was stilted and felt like an effort. What I later learnt during an interview with Anne was that there had been a few 'disagreements' between Melanie and Anne. Anne did not give much detail except to tell me they have 'very different views on a few things', and that Anne tried hard not to get 'aggravated by Melanie'. Vicky worked hard to keep things going and purposely seemed to always be trying to create a level of neutrality (Langer, 2004). This is a section of my fieldnotes on my third visit that illustrates this point:

The group welcomed me with an immediate offer of tea and biscuits. Vicky was keen for me to update everyone with what I had been up to since I last came. I sensed a feeling of relief to have someone else to contribute to the chat. Then, as before, the conversation reverted back to pets, weather and past holidays all dominated by Anne. (Fieldnotes, 3rd July 2019)

Vicky managed this well but at times it felt strained, almost uncomfortable, and this was where the craft-making had such a significant part to play as I now illustrate with a few examples from a couple of the sessions.

Before the group arrived, Vicky set out the materials. The group all sat, with each member taking the same side of the table every week. The first week was about copying pictures using pens, pencils, and crayons. In the previous session they had spoken about different art styles and Anne had commented that she liked Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, a French artist. Vicky explained to the group she was 'keeping it easy this week' and we were just going to make some pictures and colour them in. Below are a few pictures from this group including the products of this session:

Picture 6: Artwork from Craft Group 22nd May and the 12th June 2019

With the exception of Fred, who needed some helped deciding on a picture and getting started, everyone else focused on their drawing and colouring. I observed a sense of purpose in the room; there was no longer pressure to fill the space and silence. It felt to me that there was kindness in the room, as Vicky complimented and encouraged, others would at times agree but with spaces for silence:

> As the conversation dried up, I was grateful to have the colouring to do; it took pressure off filling that silence. I too, like other members, could look down and maybe just ask for a different colour to be passed. There was also something quite soothing about this gentle rhythm of the session and the ability to sit in company and quietly focus on something quite simple but not unsatisfying. (Fieldnotes, 22nd May 2019)

Ingold (2013) talks of manual creative work and a mindfulness that comes with constructive work, an attentiveness of the surrounding environment through a 'current of on-going activity'. As I describe in my fieldnotes, there was an awareness of others and at times, particularly with a few more detailed activities, they supported one another to complete the finished product. Despite differences and not having the deeper connections of other groups, there was still a level of shared intent and cooperation. For example, making the flowers on 12th June (see Picture 6) I noted how Anne helped Melanie and then Melanie gave Fred a hand with the gluing as things needed a firm press. This group, through art, supported each other and co-operated and although focused on their own tasks, worked together. They also left the group with a sense of achievement, 'pleased with that one' was a rare comment from Fred on 12th June, which suggested a positive outcome of improved self-esteem for Fred. This sense of achievement and self-esteem is prevalent in the literature, see for example, Gutheil and Heyman (2016) and Corvo de Armas (2019) who both highlighted similar when exploring craft sessions held in library spaces.

One aspect that changed when craft and material interact is less of a need for eye contact, allowing members to look down without social expectation. This is similar to research on Men's Sheds where practical work supports attendance through having a purpose and a meaningful occupation when there. During these sessions, men stand or

sit at their workbench and similarly craft in a side-by-side fashion, easing conversation, with banter an optional factor of the group (Liechty and Genoe, 2013). This also coalesces with further walking group findings, where, in addition to a shared pace, a sharing of visual field is a further facilitator in conversation with a forward face deemed as less confrontational (Lee and Ingold, 2000). Reynolds (2009) researched the experiences of accessible art/craft-making for older people and found that the act of art making had the ability to preserve equal status relationships across a diverse cohort and was a possible factor in the ability to make a group work with a more divergent cohort, more recently Takashima et al. (2020) found similar.

Fiona didn't appear to champion this group and certainly it did not get profiled like the drama group and other 'successes'. Vicky was struggling to know what to do with this group, telling me of some inner conflict - she was not that sure about keeping the group going anymore or its viability.

> We have lost numbers over the years and I feel it's kind of run its course. It takes me time to think of ideas and sort out the sessions, which I don't really mind, but, but then I think of Fred, I know it's all he goes to, and so I keep going. (Vicky, 19th June 2019)

This highlights issues of group sustainability and the unpredictability of volunteers, but of perhaps greater concern is how groups are evaluated. Much of what counts for funders is focused on numbers and outcomes that are quantifiable, but it can be easy to lose sight of the individuals. Fred definitely, and possibly Melanie, would not engage in any other activity groups and consequently have limited connections to wider networks. These individuals might not have made allies or connections as outlined with other groups, but they were connected to a community group with which comes a layer of care and connection - albeit through increased institutional ties rather than relational ones. They have chosen to participate, and although I was unable to find out exactly why they chose this group it appeared to be important for them.

7.7 Summary

In this chapter, I have illustrated how, in different ways, I observed affinities developing and connections being made through participating in cultural activity groups. I have explored the different mediums at play within the groups from the socio-kinaesthetics within the groups' embodied practices, the power of music and the temporal value of reminiscing to forge new relations. I have considered the value of creativity and collaboration to make something new and then share this with wider communities, and how making can forge connections and cohesion, without the need for strong relations.

Chapter 8: Discussion

8.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I consider the key findings of my research and resituate these within existing theory, empirical evidence, and policy. This chapter is organised into five sections. Starting with 'Older Adults as Cultural Curators', I explore the way older adults are actively choosing which cultural activities are important to them and how their choices are a unique intersection of personal, social and practical factors. Next, I examine how cultural activities are a conduit for 'active ageing' and 'citizenship' in older age, as well as outlining the problems inherent. Social isolation and the potential of cultural activities to support community connections have been foregrounded throughout this thesis and will be considered in a policy context in Section 8.4. My next section is about the importance of third places and social infrastructure within the framework and mobilisation of cultural activities. Finally, I reflect on the thesis' contribution to enhanced understanding of how social connections are made through cultural activities, as I unpack some of the 'magical' sparks and affinities highlighted through Chapter Seven.

8.2 Older Adults as Cultural Curators: Mixing the Personal, the Social and the Practical

I used ethnographic methods to explore older adults' participation in a range of cultural activity settings across Manchester. I have gained a nuanced understanding of the complex, heterogenous ways by which cultural activities are incorporated into the everyday lives of older adults. My research demonstrated that cultural activities are beneficial to health and well-being, especially through the fostering of social connections which can help to combat loneliness (see Section 8.4). However, my research also suggests an oversight (or at least a lack of attention) within the academic and policy literature of older adult's agency in curating their own everyday cultural engagement. The empirical literature, still with a deficit orientation, continues to frame cultural activities as targeted interventions with specific and predictable outcomes, as explored in Chapter Two. This research has highlighted that previous studies often overlook the everyday engagement in, and importance of, cultural

activities within the lives of older adults. Admittedly, in policy where frequently older adults are seen as a resource (on which there exists a degree of dependency) as well as participants, this is less the case.

Through spending time with older adults, the focus and skill with which they integrated cultural activities into their daily lives became apparent. There was dynamic and proactive interplay with cultural activities, which when explored on an individual level was nuanced and agentic (Hand et al., 2020). Personal, social, and practical factors varied from person to person, but a blend of these elements influenced which activities were engaged with and how individuals engaged with these activities. I start by considering some of the practical and logistical factors.

My findings illustrated that there were those who did not know about activities or found them inaccessible; something I return to in Sections 8.4 and 8.5 when considering social isolation and social infrastructure and in my recommendations for policy and practice (Section 9.5). However, the nature of my research design and methodology meant that an overwhelming majority of the older adults I spoke with were highly engaged. Many had busy lives and struggled to fit in everything they wanted to do. For instance, those on the coach had to forego weekly activities (or work) to attend the trip. At the drama session, not everyone made the performances because they were on different days, sessions were missed, and some only came to one or two sessions to see if it was worth giving up other regular activities for ten weeks. Cultural activities provided a pleasurable and sociable means to structure a day (Dare et al., 2018; Schneider and McCoy, 2018; Yamamoto, 2020), but had to compete with other - more important - demands such as work, volunteering, caring, and giving familial support. When considering participation in cultural activities from the point of an intervention, the fact that older adults' have preferences and need to juggle multiple commitments is often neglected.

Biographical and historical factors were also present in older adults' choices. Many used their retirement as an opportunity to start new hobbies (Sargent et al., 2013; Colley et al., 2019), others, such as Sylvia, for whom drama was historically embedded

in her life-course, continued with activities that had always been a significant part of their lives (Morrow-Howell et al., 2014; Lee et al., 2018). This has demonstrated that activities contributed to a sense of self, similar to findings within the existing literature as explored Section 2.3.3.

There were also participants for whom culture was a barrier. This was made clear through Phase 1 participants comments about planning cultural events, such as the ballet, and through conversations in the field where older adults were clearly uncomfortable with notions of (high) culture. Much of this reluctance could be attributable to class. Tyler (2013), and more recently Tyler and Slater (2018), have positioned class as a struggle of inequality, but first I consider the immutable nature of class (Scherger et al., 2011) and its interplay with cultural activity engagement (Newman et al., 2013). As Scherger and Savage (2010: 424) stated 'classes are not monolithic'. Inevitably class was a presence within my research playing out through individual choices of cultural participation, but there were inconsistencies. Exercising cultural capital was a choice, as was the ability to mobilise it through other forms of capital, especially social capital. Stuart, who I met in the pub, told me he was highly educated, something that is generally considered as a marker for engagement in high culture (Bennett et al., 2008; Morrow-Howell et al., 2014), but he opted for activities predominantly in the everyday realm, such as the day trips, gardening and (more contentiously) the Guardian crossword. In contrast, Connie said of herself: 'I am not an educated person, but I do quite like the arts' and she visited galleries and the theatre with her daughter and friends. Both cases support Bourdieu (1986), who proposed that taste is influenced by subjective taste as well as class position, and simultaneously that both need to be exercised to be converted into social capital (Skeggs, 2004). Friendships were a significant mobiliser as I now discuss.

Cultural activities were often attended because of a personal invitation, see, for example, Olive in Section 6.5. Here, I also return to Molly and her friendship group. I draw parallels with Skegg's (2011) research, although her focus was on younger women from deprived areas. The female networks Skegg (2011:504) studied were nurtured through 'social solidarity' that consisted of offers of material, and social

support for one another through precarious times; this resonated here. I noted that, with Molly, and with other groups, there was interdependency and reciprocity which helped participants to carry one another through difficult times (Gardner, 2011). These social ties, developed through community engagement, made cultural activities more accessible and, as a collective, participants accessed activities beyond an individual member's comfort zone. This related to both the number of cultural activities and also the range - from everyday to high culture, such as attending an immersive theatre production, something that they would not have contemplated without the comfort of friendship groups. Like others (see, for example, Walmsley, 2018), my own ethnographic approach has shown class and cultural participation as fluid, rather than fixed, and as a movable within the complexities and limitations of the social and the historical.

Strathern (1982:272), when looking at class within a village setting in Essex, positions class for one of the villagers as:

> '[A] mixture of what he is and what he does, both moulded by background and created afresh by his unique achievements'.

This played out within cultural activity engagement for some of my participants. However, even with this cultural turn, there has been insufficient attention beyond the fixed nature of class and there is still emphasis on the interdependence of class and culture (Belfiore and Bennett, 2007). As a result, inequalities and assumptions are still at large within the narrow systemic offering and expectations of cultural consumption (Skeggs and Wood, 2008; Miles and Gibson, 2016; Taylor, 2016). Bourdieu (1986) argued that a double standard of intertwined class culture still exists which is situated at the structural level of capital and social relations, and within symbolic practices. A lack of mobility to access cultural activities likely accounted for non-attendance, which social prescribing schemes are attempting to address through the introduction of link workers (Polley et al., 2017). Far less considered, or accepted, is the desire of older adults to participate in the more mundane, non-therapeutic, everyday realm (Miles, 2007). My research supports the need for broadening the offer of cultural participation in terms the types of activity included, and how engagement is enacted (see Section

8.3), and to shift and anchor this within the realm of the everyday (Kaszynksa, 2018, Wilson et al., 2018). Otherwise, inequality of cultural participation (and beyond), will continue to persist and efforts (and budgets) to increase engagement will predominantly benefit those already engaged. My research also challenges societal stigma, inherent in deficit models of intervention, where lower classes are considered in need of help and support to access activities that are deemed good for them (Tyler, 2013; 2015). Culture is firmly situated within this bracket (All Party Parliamentary Group on Arts Health and Wellbeing, 2018). Engagement in cultural activities have traditionally been delineated by class, but my findings have shown this to be far from the whole picture. Issues of class and inequalities continue to thread through this chapter. I now consider cultural engagement as performative rather than participatory in the context of active ageing.

8.3 Commodifying Participation through Volunteering: Achieving Citizenship in an AF City

Here I explore the commodification of cultural activity engagement and consider the following: how volunteering within the activity ecosystem appeared to be the norm, was a mobiliser of activity provision and how volunteering was enacted contextually through biographical, situational, and geographic factors. I then return to the boundaries and tensions within community or civic engagement and lastly, I reflect on achieving citizenship in older age through cultural activities in an AF city.

A significant, and unexpected finding was the way in which older adults engaged with cultural activities. I had not anticipated that I would be speaking to more people who positioned themselves as a volunteer (or a hybrid volunteer/participant) than solely as a participant. In Chapter Four, I highlighted that volunteering was a crucial part of the infrastructure of activity provision in the context of austerity. Interviews with providers showed contribution through volunteering in this sector was largely by passionate and committed older adults, who made it possible to offer provision at a community level to support older adult's well-being. My findings highlighted that frequently this was resultant of a lack of consistent or adequate funding (Holstein and Minkler, 2007; Humphries et al., 2016; Winterton, 2016). I join those who are sceptical of

sustainability without strengthening the resource foundations of this citizen-based approach (Warren and Garthwaite, 2015; Glimmerveen et al., 2018).

From an older adults' perspective, it became apparent that the focus on volunteering was not just a 'mining of resources' (Glimmerveen et al. 2018:1) from a political perspective, but a crucial factor in many participants becoming engaged with cultural activities. Volunteering also contributed to sense of self in my analysis, a finding that aligns with previous work in this field (see, for example, Sabeti, 2015; Yamamoto, 2019; Takashima et al., 2020). In Chapter Six, I connected my research findings back to the literature around generativity and demonstrated that volunteering was consistently supporting cultural activity engagement. Volunteering choices were active, personal, and also class related. Ron was an example of someone for whom there was a continued status (Damman et al., 2015) - and an easement from work to retirement (Principi et al., 2016; Cahill et al., 2019) - and he pitched his volunteering to initiate and manage community projects for older adults. For others, whilst there was still a need to be productive and contributing, decisions seem to be made from a more 'altruistic' outlook. Like participation, the parameters shaping volunteering engagement were complex and my findings echoed previous research by Smith et al. (2010) who highlighted that voluntary work was routed in an individual mix of life history and embedded geographical situatedness. In this way, it was not just individual agency at play but, again demonstrated through Molly and friends, this was a relational and collective process. The need for volunteering to 'fit' was highlighted by many participants.

Considering the 'fit' of volunteering, I reflect momentarily on the contextual factor of geography and community. In relation to volunteering, there was a consistent desire for this to be local and efforts directed at a community level; more so than for participation where the actual activity and company were the primary force of attraction. In some communities across Manchester, where people were mobilised to be productive in this way, it was clear to see how this translated to the richness of cultural activity provision on offer in that neighbourhood. Community is a contested concept that is ambiguous, hard to define, and it is also lived differently (see, for

example, Gilchrist, 2009). Manchester is a very diverse city, and as such there are areas where the community is more fragmented (Bullen, 2016). Bal, a Phase 1 participant of north Manchester, warned that AF initiatives in this geography were not successful as there was little input from local residents. Bal attributed this to them not relating to the term volunteering. It is well documented that cultural differences exist with regards to volunteering (Warburton and Winterton, 2010; Donahue et al., 2020). However, this does not mean that communities and groups within these areas are not being supportive of each other and not being generative or productive, rather neoliberal policy frameworks do not support and recognise their activity in the same way. Policy, encourages specific types of volunteering in the local community, see, for example, the Civil Society Strategy (HM Government, 2018a), which has had a validating effect in everyday lives. This effect needs to be considered carefully in the context of a pluralistic society. Pluralistic society and hegemonic rule understand 'community' as one thing, but the reality is that within a locality is there are many communities with many different ways (Modood and Werbner, 1997). My research highlighted that dominant neoliberal rhetoric is becoming ingrained within older adults' outlook and discourse, as familiar caring roles (particularly of spouses) were not being viewed as making a worthy contribution by self or others (see Section 6.3 and 6.6). It was widely acknowledged that there is:

> [I]nherent complexity of the inter-relationships between markers of differences like ethnicity, socio-economic status, gender and immigration status. (Koehn et al., 2013:456)

However, it is also noted that gerontology is struggling to move beyond acknowledgement and an understanding of the existence of different perspectives to having an impact on practice (Torres, 2019).

As with participation, social relations, and personal biography (as highlighted by Smith et al., (2010)) influenced how people volunteered. Further analysis, and better attention to these factors will support diversification of volunteering engagement. It could also improve sustainability by negating (or reducing) the potential of overburdened volunteers. Wanka's (2019) research, although more interested in the

temporal mechanisms that make post retirement volunteering successful, is also instructive. In my research, men frequently favoured volunteering - sometimes to the preclusion of participation – but, my findings suggested volunteering had a similar impact in relation to building social networks to participation in cultural activities. Same et al. (2020) examined benefits, reasons, and motivation for volunteering, this included: needing a personal fit; growth of self; gaining visibility; and belonging to a social group or community, which aligned with this research. With this in mind, I argue that blurred boundaries of participant volunteering can work and participation on multiple levels should be encouraged and supported. However, consideration from the outset of that individual, what works for them and how support needs to be structured would be beneficial. It is also important that these boundaries, if pushed, are acceptable and have the right support through line management and training (Hoad, 2002; South et al., 2011). From an organisational perspective, this is also complex (De Weger et al., 2018) as highlighted through the flash mob in Section 6.4. Expertise of all parties must be recognised and celebrated within co-production (Brock, 2019). There is pressure to develop practices that enhance participation and social inclusion, but this needs to be instigated from a situational perspective, equitably considered from all those who are affected without the leverage of power dynamics (Joy et al., 2019) – not a straightforward ask. Consensus and collaboration are facilitated by relations of respect, which Brown (2016) argue are a veil for neoliberal governance. My research suggests implementation of collaboration, even with good intent, is currently lacking in contextual nuance and understanding of older adults' heterogeneity and requires a look beyond those who are neoliberal agents of performativity; generally, those want to be at the fore of co-production (Gallistl, 2020).

Buffel et al. (2014:68) states that in the context of global AF cities there needs to be 'wider debates about rights and citizenship within the urban environment', a point that resonates with my study. In policy, three theoretical approaches are commonly identified: libertarian, communitarian, and civil republican (see, for example, Jones and Gaventa, 2004). The WHO and AF Manchester are taking a citizen approach to promote inclusion, as summarised by the WHO (2002:13):

It shifts strategic planning away from a "needs-based" approach (which assumes that older people are passive targets) to a "rights- based" approach that recognizes the rights of people to equality of opportunity and treatment in all aspects of life as they grow older. It supports their responsibility to exercise their participation in the political process and other aspects of community life.

In my study, I found that citizenship had become both a status and active practice which is not attainable for all. However, as Golant (2015b) asserted, the WHO remains silent on the issues and realities of family care giving. My work suggested the exclusion of those affected by family care giving is becoming engrained within the everyday perspectives of participation and contribution. The 'othering' of people who were living with disability, particularly with cognitive impairments, was one of the key findings of my research, and I suggest that the enactment and promotion of this citizenship model eschews personhood in its completeness. Additionally, there was a lack of cultural sensitivity in relation to AF engagement which lends support to Zubair and Norris (2015:897) who postulated ethnic minority older adults were often considered as 'culturally static' and homogeneous 'others'. Much of this reaffirms the arguments made by others regarding the AF framework as set out in Section 1.4.3. and I agree with Joy (2021:online) who calls for a 'rehumanizing [of] our cultural understandings of citizenship'. Lastly, in relation to cultural activities and social participation within this dominant discourse of citizenship, I argue that it is crucial not to devalue participation that is of a more passive nature, to simply fill a day or to try out different things. Although many older adults in my research presented as the neoliberal ideal, there are also many who do not conform to the neoliberal narrative of self-enhancement. Participation on all levels is essential for keeping healthy individuals well connected to their communities, which supports ageing in place and can delay the need for more substantial and costly support. There are those for whom this is the only way to engage.

It was not the intention of this study to make generalisations. However, parallels can be witnessed between Manchester and many other large cities that are similarly trying to best use AF frameworks to support older adults under conditions of inequalities, economic hardship, globalisation, and inadequate social infrastructure (Dobner et al.,

2014; Buffel at al., 2018; Joy, 2021). I will address issues of social infrastructure in Section 8.5, first I return to social isolation.

8.4 Social Isolation: 'The Biggy'

Having considered differences in the way participation was accessed, enacted, and how this sits within the parameters of an AF city, I now consider why participation in cultural activities for older adults was important. Social isolation and loneliness have been a prominent theme. The premise for cultural activities as a component to support connected communities, AF cities, and ageing-in-place, is evident in the empirical evidence and policy priorities as set out in Chapter One and Two. In Chapter Two I evidenced that loneliness and social isolation are widespread, and detrimental to health and well-being, and that they permeate indiscriminately across society. The provider interviews in Phase 1, as outlined in Chapter Four, identified loneliness and social isolation as 'the biggy' and much of the rationale of their provision was to lessen social isolation for older adults in local communities across Manchester. From the viewpoint of the older adults, as highlighted through Chapter 6, there was an abundance of individual stories of bereavement, relocation, caring, declining health, divorce, diminishing family responsibilities, and retirement that all reduced social networks. These are all common factors associated with loneliness prevalence (British Red Cross, 2016; Ong et al. 2016; Age UK, 2018a). Loneliness does not occur in isolation and it was clear that the breadth of life complicates this (Kharicha et al., 2017). I found many older adults actively sought out cultural activities to replenish lost networks and connections, although in relation to people being active agents in their choice of strategies, caution has been advised regarding the positivity with which this is framed (Khariacha, 2017). Throughout my findings, mobility advantages helped older adults gain entry to, and engage with, cultural activities (Portes, 1998). Although, it is likely, in light of older adults' stories when initial attendance was to break patterns of loneliness and social isolation, that those who came and stayed could be classed as on a positive incline of this social mobility. The reality will be that many older adults are not on this incline and there will be those who feel unable to join or continue with activities, however I was not in the right spaces to understand the perspectives of

these older adults. Research is being undertaking in this regard, but more is needed (see, for example, Lavasseur et al., 2020).

Before focusing on how the spaces and practices of activities supported social connections (see Sections 8.5 and 8.6), I consider what I have learned within the context of the Government's Loneliness Strategy, introduced in 2018 (HM Government, 2018b). This strategy was acknowledgement of loneliness as a societal issue, and the need to build communities, and individuals, that are socially connected, and therefore healthier, happier, and more resilient. The strategy's premise was (HM Government, 2018b:3):

> Increasingly, we understand the link between having strong and meaningful social connections and living a healthy and successful life.

The Government plan was to embed strategies to combat loneliness within policy, underpinned by a transcending focus, additional resources, (such as the Building Connections Fund), and an ambition to build a national conversation through which awareness can be raised and stigma tackled (HM Government, 2018b). Within the strategy more research was called for to develop effective measures of loneliness, to gather more information about the causes of loneliness and find effective ways to address and prevent this for different ages and groups. My work contributes to this agenda in relation to older adults. All these initiatives were intended to develop the 'expertise necessary to confront loneliness and put in place mechanisms to connect people' (HM Government, 2018b:24). Within this strategy, opportunities to socialise and build connections were at the forefront alongside a recognition of the value of community groups and local people.

One of the UK Government's suggestions to support better community engagement was centred around making it easier to access information about available community services (HM Government, 2018b). From employment experience, desk-based research, and this fieldwork, I am aware that access to information is a genuine problem. This is also recognised within the literature, using dementia as an example, where navigating a system of support has been described as a 'maze' (Peel and

Harding, 2014:642). The reality, particularly with funding often directed towards short-term projects and split between many different pockets of provision, is that this is a changing dynamic. Categorisation of services or activities can be difficult especially since, as my fieldwork illustrates, groups spread and evolve to cover a range of welfare services for older adults. Suggestions within the loneliness strategy are related to the construction of digital apps and directories of services, but in light of digital poverty issues (Centre for Ageing Better, 2021), this approach will be high maintenance and is unlikely to reach those who would benefit from it most. It may work better with younger age groups. Word of mouth was definitely the most utilised method from my time in field and the AF work, and networks, were a definite contributor, as were key connected individuals. Improved community mapping of social hotspots, such as hairdressers, post office or charity shops maybe a more effective and cheaper way to spread the word and increase connections (Anderson et al., 2010; Hall, 2012; Edwards and Gibson, 2017). The AF team, and its network of volunteers, worked well to share best practice, publicise, and champion opportunities for older adults and to support community involvement and connections. Another effective step would be greater provision for publicity within budgets. Budgets were consistently tight for cultural activity provision in Manchester, especially within smaller community level operations that were doing crucial work to support issues of loneliness. The AF work, and cultural activities generally, were excellent examples of raising and increasing a 'sense of agency and ownership' (HM Government, 2018:65) as shown in Chapters Four and Six. However, as I outlined in Section 8.3, this has its own caveats and there was an absence of funding to support the infrastructure of volunteering and community groups generally, which would make a positive difference (Skivington et al., 2018).

My final point here is in relation to the stigma and building a national conversation. In my study, there did not appear to be a stigma around loneliness, which might again have to do with my participants being on a positive incline connection. Instead, and sadly, loneliness seemed to be taken as an inevitable part of getting older and people were very happy to talk about the causes, contributing factors, and impact of this in very open and frank ways. Being with those who know and share similar experiences was important here (see Section 8.6). The stigma, from the perspective of my study,

was directed towards those who were not doing something about their loneliness (Townsend et al., 2006). This distinction is an absence within the strategy that needs addressing. My fieldwork also suggests that the ambition of building a national conversation, backed by excellent work of The Campaign to End Loneliness, is translating into lived experience and life choices - see, for example, Paula and Gemma in Section 6.2. Loneliness and social isolation were not the primary focus of this thesis however, appreciative inquiry and ethnography have supported detailed, inductive understanding of what matters from a lived experience (O'Reilly, 2009). I would advocate further use of this approach to continue to build a more complete picture of loneliness and social isolation. Within the Loneliness Strategy, was the importance of social infrastructure, this also became apparent in my research and is the topic of the next section.

8.5 Social Infrastructure: A City Divided and the Importance of Spaces

Social spaces are '…multi-layered, connected, physical, imaginative, emotional and symbolic experiences of people' (Wiles et al., 2009:666) and this was evidenced throughout my fieldwork. I did not anticipate a deeper understanding of how cultural activities operate within the spaces of the everyday, and beyond the designated activity time into 'personal communities' (Pahl, 2003:357) located within wider social settings. In this section of the discussion, I will explore the importance of third places and the social infrastructure of communities.

In Chapter 6, I outlined Oldenburg's (1999) concept of third place, which he positioned as a vital component of healthy connected communities. Despite his original work being criticised for lacking a strong empirical base to underpin his arguments, the concept has endured. One example is a recent book by Klinenberg (2018), who is passionate about third places and social infrastructure and how these are fundamental to healthy civic life. Star (1999:10), described infrastructure as an embedded and 'part of the background for other kinds of work'. Klinenberg (2018), adopted this to argue that third places provide much of the background for the social work that brings people and communities together. These are crucial to the social infrastructure of a place which he describes as 'the physical places and organisations that shape the way

people interact' (Klinenberg, 2018:5). Others have argued public service should also be included to highlight the importance of people as much as place, and therefore a better fit with levelling up agendas (Kelsey, 2021:online).

From my study, it became clear that the social connections from and within cultural activity engagement reached far beyond the designated venue of the activity. This highlighted the importance of third places (Olderburg, 1999) like the pub or café and 'threshold' and 'transitory' places (Gardner, 2011) which are the semi-public places (such as the shared garden that had forged friendships between Stuart, Lena, and Kate in Section 6.5), as well as the places through which our daily life occurs (such as the High Street, which in Southport became a focal place for passing social transactions).

In Section 6.5, I suggested that the coach for the day trippers was more of a third place than a mode of transportation, or 'non-place' (Augé, 1995). The atmosphere on the coach was completely contrasting to my tram ride to get to the coach, where each passenger was enclosed in a bubble of anonymity (Bissell, 2010) - often behind headphones, books, or a phone (Berry and Hamilton, 2010). This is not to suggest that social connections and relational dimensions with regular transport spaces do not occur (Urry, 2003; Bissell, Wilson, 2011), but there was a different atmosphere. I used Oldenburg's (1999) terminology of 'convivial', although Durkhiem's term of 'collective effervescence' used by Klinenberg (2018:31) might also have worked. I highlighted in Section 6.5 how many of the other key markers of a third place had been met through lots of conversation, levelling, having regulars, low profile, playful, accessible, and homelike. I accept the argument that often physical and financial mobility are needed to access third places, which for some sits in opposition to these being accessible, and that acceptability of place can also vary for people of different ethnicity (Yarker, 2019). Typically, the third place is locally situated; the coach wasn't local, but it was filled with locals and therefore gave this sense. A major criticism of the third place as set out by Oldenburg (1999) has been the static and rigid description of what counts as a third place, (see, for example Johnson, (2013); Purnell and Breede, (2017)), who considered transient spaces such as farmers' markets and conferences. My work supports this attention to ephemeral and mobile third spaces and argues for an understanding of

third places as more fluid and dynamic, and an approach that prioritises the interaction and bonding within these places as opposed to focusing on a specific set locale.

Within my field work, I also became very aware of disparities of social infrastructure between my sites in the north and south of Manchester, with north Manchester being at a disadvantage. Izenberg and Fullilove (2016:online) state that 'hospitality invites sociability' and reference the possibilities of high streets to improve mental health through the provision of opportunities to facilitate and maintain social bonds, as I witnessed in Southport. This is supported through explorations of everyday engagements at communal places like local convenience stores and swimming pools (Hall, 2012; Dolley and Bosman, 2019); but social geographies are inequitable.

I noted significant differences in the community set up and access to third places between the areas of north and south Manchester. South Manchester has an abundance of outside cafés and restaurants, and on several occasions, I bumped into group members in charity shops and cafés and enjoyed an impromptu chat; feeling in that moment a temporal belonging to their community or as Miller (2003:220) stated a 'sense of accord' with the various physical and social contexts. The pubs and the cafés were used by those who did not enjoy group activities and more structured activity sessions, such as Enid (and her dog). Blokland (2017) positioned cafés as places in which people can experience public familiarity and develop ties to place and a sense of community; and her point resonates with my observations. Of my north Manchester field sites, the local community centre had a garden, as did the housing schemes but these were hidden at the back of the buildings and not open for use by the public. I saw no vibrant High Street, there were a few small functional shops and take-away restaurants but nothing that was an obvious source of chance encounter or visibility. Economic and social deprivation means that many areas of north (and some in south) Manchester lack community financial wealth to perhaps sustain High Street economies (Manchester City Council, 2017), and therefore lack the visible spaces needed to offer these chance encounters. Added to which, national austerity measure and slashed public service budgets have resulted in a loss of community assets. Libraries are one example where there are now 500 fewer in operation across the UK than 10 years ago

and Manchester has been subject to these spending cuts (Dobson and Cachai, 2018). Yet, research indicates it is precisely these areas, where inequalities are higher and other capital resources lower, that these third places are particularly valuable (Hickman, 2012). A more recent study showed that older adults living in deprived urban neighbourhoods had higher levels of social exclusion compared with less deprived neighbourhoods, resultant of barriers to access to services and amenities, social relationships, and civic, cultural, and leisure participation (Prattley et al.,2020).

My time in Southport highlighted the need and desire for these third places, which for some are preferred to more structured or 'cultured' cultural activities. Third places were also preferred as they removed the 'older adult' label that came with some of the activity group activities. Even the volunteer drivers at the coffee morning, who lived locally and could have gone home, sought out spaces within the periphery of this group companionship and social time. These eight men would never have been included in attendance figures, as they sat in the office space as opposed to joining the main group making them invisible from an accounting perspective, which is an important factor for funding. This example provided an insight into the value of community spaces and the importance to demonstrate flexibility so that people can exercise agency to use the spaces that work for them. It is suggested this element of self-directed choice as to how spaces are used will become more important with future generations of older adults (Majón-Valpuesta et al., 2021). Therapeutic landscapes, it has been argued, too often give primary focus on the materialities of the settings, neglecting the role of individual agency in shaping how and why they are used (Bell et al., 2018); but these materialities are rarely considered when setting up or evaluating cultural activities. This is an oversight, and potentially neglects the benefits of cultural activity participation at an informal, everyday level, particularly in relation to community cohesion, resilience and the building of social networks and should be reconsidered in relation to third places too. Some researchers have suggested that online forums are akin to third spaces (Soukup, 2006). WhatsApp groups were being set up as an extension of the drama group, but I noted that this was with a selective number bringing to question element inclusion and accessibility that contribute to the value of third places. Further research is needed on whether WhatsApp is an adequate

replacement of, or addition to, third places and how this may work best in practice. The Covid-19 pandemic has created a surge in this field, see, for example Zaccaria et al., (2020).

Inherent to third places and infrastructure, is a consideration of social capital (see Section 2.4). Amin (2010) points out that many local settings are not specifically designed for socialising, but nonetheless allow regular and repeated social interaction. The depth of the relation for some of the members was not necessarily relevant, more important was a visibility or local belonging – 'a smile of recognition in the supermarket' was what one member wanted and others agreed. This tallies with the work of Lager et al. (2015), who found value in weak ties, even without verbal social contact, because what mattered was being known and looked out for. Morgan (2009) classes these ties as acquaintances. The seminal work of Granovetter (1973) is influential here, pointing out that these weaker ties are a bridging conduit, and I could see this in the signposting on the bus, and the swapped recommendations of other activity groups to try at the drama sessions. This also links into broader work around ageing in place and older adult loneliness (Nyqvist et al. 2016) and the importance of community connectedness for ageing in place (Kemperman et al, 2019; Woolrych et al., 2019). Local bridging capital, built through local communities, fosters stronger, bonding capital, as shown in the work of Jupp (2012) who found that it was often the informal community spaces and causal community engagement that were a crucial starting point. Similarly, Gardner (2011) highlighted the benefits of diverse social networks gained through engagement with everyday community spaces and I return to her work in the following section.

Social infrastructure can harness local identities, pride in place, and well-being of local older adults. My research highlighted the importance of joining up the social infrastructure with cultural activity practice and provision. A better understanding of the community and the everyday, alongside the issues of inequalities of space (Valentine, 2008) and the power relations within (Cresswell, 1996) could all have positive impact on local ageing in place.

8.6 Making Social Connections through Cultural Activities: Unpacking the Magic

This is the final section of my discussion and is about the findings within Chapter 7 which focused on the connections that were made in, and through, cultural activities. The academic disciplines of arts and health have generally focused on drawing links, but a lack of theoretical development has been acknowledged (Stickley et al., 2017). These findings have relevance in this space and the potential to strengthen practice. Mason's (2018) work on affinities (outlined in Section 3.3.1.3) was used to attune and orientate me to the sparks and the potency of connections paying attention to the more ethereal, magical, or other worldly. These magical elements, Mason (2018:186) describes as:

> [S]parks or charges of connection, that intensify, enchant or indeed toxify personal life and the experience of living.

These are not inherently positive (Mason, 2018), as my findings may allude, but I attribute this to the homogeneity within the groups and the active choices people made in their continued participation. Through Mason's (2018) facets of sensation, ineffable kinship, and socio atmospherics it was possible to witness these sparks, noticing the points at which they occurred, how they were lived, and what made them potent. Affinities have helped me get to grips with the experience of cultural activities, from a bottom-up perspective and extend to social constructionism beyond the usual focus of people, practices, and spaces, in order to consider their interplay and the connections and entanglements within. I have split this into three short sections.

8.6.1 Structure, Routine, and Materials

My research findings demonstrate that cultural activity spaces are produced through material and social practices (Lefebvre, 2004), and contain a temporal rhythm that produces familiarity (Miller, 2003). This was all significant to the experience of belonging within the groups. There was a difference between the three groups that I spent time with but, as I have shown through Chapters Five, Six, and Seven, each had its own rhythm. Some were highly structured, such as the drama group, but even with the day trippers where there was much autonomy as to how the day was spent, their

routine and a certain order were evident. I moderated my behaviour to fit with the groups and noted an ease of reattendance for myself and the members once this was understood. O'Neill, (2001:4) suggested that the meaning of a place is dependent on our 'unconscious embodied knowledge' learned through performance of daily tasks. Whilst the members made and created these spaces it was the ability to act in socially significant ways, recognised by others, that sustained (or eroded) belonging within the cultural activity groups (May, 2013).

Within the more structured warm-up exercises, described and analysed in detail in Chapter 7, it was clear there were certain factors that carried a powerful force of connection. Here, and of note, was embodied synchronicity of movement, breathing and the whole group engaging in a mutually somatically fashion; Edensor (2010) highlights the cohesive properties of synchronicity. Mimicry was also a strong connector in the drama activities eliciting an energy between people. Such shared bodily engagement has been shown to be a good social connector (Edensor, 2010), and it has also helped to increase empathy – another relevant relational tool (Stel & Vonk, 2010). Csikszentmihalyi's (2014) concept of flow has traditionally been linked more with leisure rather than high culture activities (see, for example, Lee et Payne., 2016; Veal., 2017), but I advocate for its relevance across wider cultural domains. Flow is a creative state of complete concentration which has been defined as 'the holistic sensation present when we act with total involvement' (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014:136). Focus combined with a willingness to learn and embrace the experience also attributed to the success of the warm-up exercises I observed. Here, as has been highlighted in Chapter Four, efficacy is also likely to rest on a skilled facilitator – but this requires funding (Thompson et al., 2020; Husk et al., 2020).

Finally, I turn to findings from Sections 7.2, 7.5 and 7.6, regarding the connections between people and material, and how these vary depending on the practical and relational composition of the group - be it in terms of physical interaction with the slinky or the end-product of a play; materials connected people in my research. Here, co-construction facilitated negotiation, trust, and collective sense of achievement which was strengthened further in the face of adversity. Elements of group production,

and then the generative sharing (for example: a play to the community or a book of life histories) allowed opportunity for friendships to start. Through the course of the fieldwork, I witnessed them strengthen, and again, this is backed by the literature (as illustrated in Chapter Seven). For the craft group, the importance of materiality was quite contrasting. Instead of the material promoting connections within this activity, crafting offered a dynamic flow that allowed for the energy to be directed away from the relational, keeping the flow on the material. This is a less established finding, but I employed the work of Ingold (2013) to rationalise it. In my research, material played a crucial role in nurturing and ordering relationships.

8.6.2 Feeling Kindred - Solidarity, Commonalities and Collective Knowing

One of Mason's (2018:86) three facets through which to consider and attune to affinities is 'ineffable kinship' described as:

> They are relational energies, flows and forces. They are not simply points that are put in contact, or even processes of comparing them. It is these relational energies that spark a sense of recognition which can carry the force of an impact when it 'hits' you.

Through Chapter Seven, I highlighted how opportunity for reminiscing and music had the impact Mason (2018) describes. Music and reminiscence stirred previously unknown revelations that connected group members, and, as a combined consequence of commonality of age and shared geographical life history, it was clear to see these potent connections formed. I agree with Blokland (2003) and Miller (2003) that belonging is experienced within social encounters, through shared memories of history and geographical connections. Additionally, the cultural activities offered a space to exchange familiar memories of the community that generated a place-centred belonging (Fortier, 2000). A clear a sense of attachment to the community was obvious from my observations, regardless of local changes, and these collective memories were nurtured by the group (Fortier, 2000). My research also found that there was a shared connection through age, which added a further unifying, shared solidarity. Talking with peers, and activity groups run by older adults, were favoured to

younger company which is a finding that is potentially troubling to the growing interest in intergenerational research (Bernard et al., 2015; Bocioaga, 2020).

Mason's (2018) focus is predominantly on a biological interpretation of kinship. However, my findings align more closely with Edwards (2000:27) who places kinship on a wider platform of multiple connections, and states:

> My interest in kinship is in the way in which it reckons relatedness not only to persons but also to places and to pasts. It is a mode of thought which orders and organises immediate social worlds, and as such can neither be hived off as a discrete sphere of social life, nor be treated as one aspect amongst many of social organisation.

Edwards' (2000) holistic understanding is more relevant to my findings, both in relation to how the initial connections were sparked and how these weak connections developed into stronger connections that extended into the everyday lives of older adults. As shown through Molly and friends (but there were many other examples), the kinship, that started with everyday cultural activities represented a connection of pasts (through shared geographies and histories) and present (through situational life stage commonalities) and thereby greatly supporting their well-being and ability to age (well) in place. My conversations with participants as to how these connections transferred to daily life made me reflect again on the work of Gardner (2011:269) (and also of Skeggs (2011) in Section 8.2), who moved beyond the initial connections my work illuminates, to consider why this works on a sustained neighbourhood level.

> A natural neighborhood network however, is a type of informal, community-based social structure founded on principles of interdependence, rather than (functional) independence, and sociality, rather than support.

This highlights the value of cultural activities in supporting older adults to increase and strengthen networks. It also gives recognition to the increasing awareness and importance of non-family roles in the well-being of older adults (Oswald and Wahl, 2004; Fong et al., 2021), and their importance within a 'natural neighborhood network' (Gardner, 2011). To support this benefit of cultural activities, my work suggests that cultural activities need to consider the factors that bring such kinship to the fore

through activities, such as music and reminiscence, that can foster a collective sense of historically and geographically belonging to past and present. Of course, this also required a recognition of third places and social infrastructure as discussed in Section 8.5.

8.6.3 In-between Moments, in the Moment, and Allowing a Moment in Time

Atmospheres become in-between people, materials, and place (Anderson, 2009) and I found that these affinities, or moments of connection, also occurred in the in-between moments - as exemplified through the slinky that connected people through materiality. This is usually beyond the lens of exploration for cultural activities, but the use of sensory ethnography (Pink, 2015) has given valuable insight. I reflect on this further in Section 9.3.1.

Throughout Chapter Seven, I discussed a number of examples where engagement, connection, and enjoyment occurred 'in the moment'. The breathing exercises, as outlined in Section 7.2, showed how narrowing sensory input, and turning concentration inwards, allowed full focus, which in turn emphasised the value of the here and now and required an active presence in the activity. Some tasks needed physical co-coordination that again demanded a fuller immersion in the moment, which, similar to the findings of Phoenix and Orr (2004), added to pleasure and engagement. Spontaneity of song, where I drew parallels to recent work of Dowlen et al. (2021), was another example of my members being 'in the moment' and through which I gained a better perspective of the ordinary, yet extraordinary, and intangible (or magical) elements of connections through cultural activities.

The final thread that I draw on from my research, is that cultural activities also offer an important moment in time. I learned throughout the research (as highlighted throughout the findings chapters) that the time older adults bracket off in their weekly or monthly schedules for cultural activities was sacred and, family commitments aside, these activities were priorities to stay socially connected with meaningful lives.

For Sylvia, drama gave her a moment to feel visible, having spent much of her working life feeling invisible – a temporary 'becoming' one could argue (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004). For those who were carers, cultural activities allowed a moment to be themselves, away from responsibility; and to stay connected to local know-how that was often privileged over professional advice. I met those who were quite ill, like Sharon, who was with her family to rekindle old memories of holiday times and to make new ones, an effort made more important in light of her poor health. Sharon positioned the day trip as an in-between place where she could be away from the challenges and harshness of life, where she could laugh and be a sister not a patient. Here, some of the care literature is instructive; especially in light of informal care that takes place within and outside the domestic sphere (Bowlby and McKie, 2019) and through everyday encounters that need to be levelled (Conradson, 2005). Lastly, I give the example of the pub, where being in the bracketed moment of an excursion allowed freedoms, such as a whole day in the pub, that sat outside everyday norms and boundaries.

Walmlsey (2018:272) argues there is:

> [A] misplaced focus on knowledge [of cultural participation]; that instead of striving to understand and rationalize the value of the arts, we should instead aim to feel and experience it.

To address this, he undertook an anthropological 'hanging out' at different cultural venues and identified a theme of escapism that seems to be at play in my research; others have agreed (Carnwath and Brown, 2013). My study helps to redirect this focus of knowledge and give an insight of the lived, but more intangible, value of cultural activity participation that has largely been overlooked and remains under-explored. On reflecting on these in-between moments and moments in time, I was drawn to the work of Stenner (2017:15) who asserts, in relation to liminal temporal experiences, that:

> [T]hey are precisely about undoing the ties that bind a person into a given social position and form of social processes....and on the other hand, they are

about binding new connections between that person and the social position and form of social processes they are in the process of joining.'

Stenner's (2017), work on liminality could offer further useful insights into cultural activity participation.

8.7 Summary

In this Chapter, I have considered fundamental elements of my findings in a more theoretical context. Through this I have situated cultural activities as an agentic means of negotiating the ageing self, and its ability to be melded to a range of temporal, biographical, situational, and relational factors. I have considered this in the context of volunteering, citizenship, and an AF city. Loneliness and social isolation have been examined, as has how cultural activities can make a difference. I have also explored cultural activities through third places and drawn attention to the importance of social infrastructure. Lastly, I have shown how my findings contribute to a better understanding of the experience and connective potential of cultural activities through the respective adoption of, and attunement to, sensory ethnography, atmospheres, and affinities.

Chapter 9: Conclusion - Looking Back and Looking Forward

9.1 Introduction

This final chapter draws my thesis to a close. I start by returning to my research aims and show how these have been met. Then I offer final reflections from a methodological and a personal perspective. I briefly consider the impact of COVID on my research experience, as well as on my findings and I identify some of the limitations of my research and highlight areas to be investigated further. Policy and practice implications and recommendations are suggested, before bringing the thesis to a conclusion.

9.2 Returning to the Research Aims

At the outset of my research my aim was to explore the value of older adults' participation in cultural activities and how they are connected to a sense of self, place, and belonging, underpinned by five main research objectives as stated below.

> RO1: To examine how older adults experience participation in cultural activities.
>
> RO2: To establish how cultural activities have the potential to contribute to older adults' sense of self, place and belonging.
>
> RO3: To explore the provision of cultural activities for older adults in Manchester through interviews with key informants and mapping of services.
>
> RO4: To develop a new understanding of how cultural activities for older adults contribute to an age-friendly environment.
>
> RO5: To inform future directions of the provision of cultural activities for older adults in Manchester.

I start by considering each in turn.

RO1: My research has offered insight into how older adults experience participation in activities; it demonstrated that this is done in an agentic fashion, and that it involved transitioning between the roles of participant, volunteer, provider, and commissioner.

There is considerable nuance in deciding which activities a person is interested in and on what level(s) participation is enacted. This is dependent on many intrinsic factors, such as: previous life history; previous hobbies; social and cultural capital; current mental and physical well-being; and the motives, whether that be egotistic or altruistic. Alongside this, I have highlighted extrinsic factors in terms of geographic location, embeddedness within community networks, knowledge of the activities and community infrastructure. The choice of which cultural activity to engage in will be dependent on a unique mix of these factors, be that in the realm of high culture, leisure, or the everyday. All of these cultural activities were accessed across the city of Manchester. Also evident from my research, is the extension of participation beyond the actual cultural activity into the everyday (Morgan, 2009).

RO2: Cultural activities are bound up with sense of self, place, and belonging. In Chapter One, the complexity and interdependence of these theoretical concepts was set out, and I highlighted the temporal, multi-faceted and dynamic nature of each (May, 2011); the characteristics were also reflected in my findings, and proved a valuable lens from which to understand the importance of cultural activities to ageing in place and community well-being. The nuances of cultural activity engagement mirrored the nuances of these theoretical concepts. In relation to sense of self, as with previous research, I found that cultural activities had the ability to establish a continuity of self and also could, sometimes simultaneously, act as a channel for learning and growth, be that in skills, tolerance, confidence, or sense of adventure. However, my research added a better understanding of how this is enacted, and how this aligns with - or runs against - neoliberal rhetoric and governance.

In relation to a sense of place, the older adults I spoke with were mainly born and bred in Manchester; this was a key part of who they were and resulted in 'profound ties' to their city (Relph, 1976:37). When accessed through reminiscence or music, this triggered strong connections and created a shared elected belonging (Savage, 2005). The strength of place attachment expressed and witnessed, supported the notion that it endures overtime (Lewicka, 2011). A desire to contribute was directed almost exclusively at an immediate neighbourhood level. This ties into the wishes of older

adults to centre their lives within an increasingly tight perimeter (Gunnarsson, 2009) and aligns with principles of ageing in place (Wiles et al., 2005; Woolrych et al., 2020). The contrasting wealth of social infrastructure within the areas of north and south Manchester of my fieldwork, and the impact of this was highlighted through my research and supported by previous studies (Yarker, 2019). This disparity did not appear to negatively affect a sense of attachment or identity with place, but it did impact provision, especially on an everyday level of cultural activity which was often the preference for local residents. I suspect my findings would have been different in this regard if I have been talking to those who were experiencing greater levels of exclusion and isolation from the local environment, but those I spoke with had a strong notion of place insiderness (Buttimer and Seamon, 1980), although did not express this in these terms.

May (2013:90) states that:

> [B]elonging is not something we accomplish for once and for all. Because the world and the people in it, including ourselves, are constantly undergoing change, belonging is something we have to keep achieving or doing through an active process.

This was pertinent to my research where the lives of the older adults I spoke with, and communities they lived in, were often in a state of flux resulting in older adults with diminished social networks. Cultural activities allowed an accessible platform from which belonging could be renewed or re-invigorated. This does not mean that this was enacted in one unified way; rather people made choices about what to go to or not. I am unaware of another study that considers a citywide range of actives explored with this lens in an ethnographic fashion. As such, my research opened new insights as to the means through which these social connections form for older adults and a sense of belonging develops. Again, this was complex but congruent with the wider literature of belonging (see, for example, Fortier, 2000; Wright, 2015; Lewis and May 2020) occurring in material, temporal, sensory, political, and embodied ways that were influenced by relational and situational factors, (see Chapter 7 and Section 8.6). This concoction of influences means that replicability is an unlikely outcome, not that this is

ever a goal of ethnography (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007), but it has given insight into what works in different situations and for whom. However, I suggest there is transferability, a quality criterion of qualitative research identified by Braun and Clarke (2021), as my study could be transposed to other settings, and my findings could be translated into other contexts, or AF cities.

RO3: Phase 1, was designed with the purpose of building a contextual basis for my ethnography (Greenfield et al., 2018). In Chapter Four, I mapped out the 'messy' ecosystem of cultural activities within Manchester. It provided insight as to how cultural activities were funded (a cause of concern for many), how this integrated with wider welfare work with older adults, and that the rationale behind provision was largely intended to reduce social isolation. In relation to the perceived benefits of cultural activity provision, much of the literature from Chapter Two was confirmed. It was apparent at this stage that volunteering was a crucial support for cultural activity provision, and that without older adults' involvement and commitment at micro, meso and macro levels there would be considerably less on offer. Provision was largely at a local level, where organisations were well-placed to meet local need. AF work was seen as a connector and mobiliser of much of the provision, but there were issues around geographical disparities of provision and some questions around funding allocation away from direct support of older adults most in need; in light of current cutbacks and austerity this was of particular concern.

RO4: The AF platform was embraced by both older adults, and providers of cultural activities. From a provider perspective, it afforded support through funding, contacts, sharing practice and networking, although there were also a few tensions as mentioned above. Culture is a priority within Manchester's AF work and considered a key component through which to realise AF goals, particularly in relation to social participation, civic participation, and social inclusion (see Figure 1). My research positioned cultural activities as a valuable outlet for generativity and the ability for older adults to build and strengthen connections through this medium was my study's primary finding. Ward (2017a:online), Strategic Lead for Culture in GM Hub, states:

Age Friendly Culture builds upon Manchester's, and GM Hub's citizen-based approach to ageing. This champions agency, active participation and work led by older people themselves.

Throughout this thesis I have evidenced how active participation and agency abound throughout the entire infrastructure of cultural activity provision and participation. There is support for older adults leading this work – but there is no renumeration and limited administrative support for volunteering. There is also little visible support for grant application and project management which would allow older adults to develop their own ideas and initiatives. This gap in skills development needs to be addressed in order for cultural activities to continue to thrive and diversify, which is the GM ambition (Greater Manchester Combined Authority, 2018a). I suggest a better understanding, from the viewpoint of older adults is needed so that tailored packages of support can be offered alongside preparation for grants and getting new programmes off the ground. Added to this, nationally as well as locally, volunteering (and citizen-based approaches) needs investment and a more supportive infrastructure for longevity and sustainability (Daly and Westwood, 2018; Glimmerveen et al., 2018).

My findings diverge from Ward's (2017a) in relation to the categories of culture included within the Great Manchester AF work. The current emphasis is biased towards high culture, although there is recognition that inclusion would be improved if this was broadened to also encompass leisure. I argue that a substantial number of Manchester's older adults would better engage at the more everyday level and this should be reconsidered. Doing this would also sit alongside a more inclusive focus on social infrastructure, something that often sits outside of cultural remits, but my research shows to be integral, and is also in need of both attention and investment.

My final reflections, in relation to my research objectives, are more broadly about the Active Aging Framework that AF Manchester uses for its work with older adults. There is an urgent need for a more personhood orientated citizen ideal, which moves away from an emphasis on productivity. Such as a shift would mean older adults experiencing illness, who are caring, or who belong to different ethnic groups (and other such differences) could be supported and represented as well as those better

able to conform to normative neoliberal ideals. My arguments align with already existing work (see, for example, del Barrio et al., 2018; Joy, 2021) and are starting to be reflected in the latest WHO AF framework (WHO, 2020).

RO5: This stage of the research is still in progress, but I am committed to fulfilling this objective and see dissemination as an ethical part of the researcher role. After Phase 1, I gave direct feedback to the participants who were working in the field, and I also presented at internal University and external Conferences (See Appendix 9). With Phase 2 findings I will look to prepare and share a briefing guide, containing recommendations for practice and policy, with the AF Manchester team. I will also be back in touch the group leads of Phase 2 field-sites to share findings; I was due to attend and present at the AGM of one of the groups in 2020 but this event had to be cancelled due to Covid-19 – I would gladly do something similar to share my findings with the older adult participants who contributed to this thesis. I will also work up my research into peer-reviewed articles and I am keen to share the value of considering affinities and atmosphere when exploring connections through cultural activities.

9.3 Final Reflections

9.3.1 Methodological Reflections

My research methods have supported the research objectives. I believe that taking a Phased approach has strengthened this work. It eased my transition into the field (Coffey, 1999) and has allowed me to better appreciate and reflect on the contextual basis of how older adults engage, participate, and add meaning to their lives through activity provision which has allowed a more robust understanding of how cultural engagement occurs within an AF city. AI and ethnography are not frequently paired, but I would assert that this has also been a strength in my study, evidencing from a practical perspective the synergistic fundamentals of each approach which both place relational and reflexive elements at the fore (Grant and Humphries, 2006; Davies, 2008), and from a pragmatic sense to open up opportunities and positive conversations. As mentioned in Chapter Three and Four, there are also parallels to AI and the strengths base approach within community and social care and I would argue for further use of this methodology within this field, but I suggest that this adoption

needs to be undertaken with full appreciation of the 'shadow' element of AI (see Section 3.3.3) and approached with a critical lens to maximise knowledge gained (Bushe, 2011; Ridley-Duff and Duncan, 2015).

Whilst initially naive to all the skills an ethnographer needs to employ in a reflexive and iterative way, this approach was a key component to knowing the practices, rhythms, and meanings people attributed to cultural activities participation (Pink, 2015). Morse (1998) states that you cannot learn ethnography purely from a textbook and I concur. Morse (1998) advocates the need for skilled mentors, and I have been fortunate with the support and guidance from my supervisory team who have helped me navigate the field and learn how to be a researcher. I do not believe that the richness of my findings would have been possible through any other means than ethnography. I assert that there are two major factors at play: the benefit of first-hand experience in the field and knowing what flows from this, and the time spent with people in the field deepened relational bonding and afforded trust and a better depth of contribution from the older adults (Coffey, 1999). This excerpt from my fieldnotes, shows the changing depth of information that I received from time spent in the field.

> Day trip 1:
> I am exhausted but have loved my day out; you forget how nice it is to have a complete change of scene and fresh sea air. The people I met today have been great - so kind and welcoming taking me along with their holiday vibe. I honestly never expected to spend so much of my day laughing! (Fieldnotes 13th June 2019)

> Day trip 2:
> What a contrast, there were some very familiar elements of the day - the processes, patterns and procedures, and the humour and welcome, but I did not set off this morning expecting so many serious topics of conversation too. I have still laughed, but it is different. I come home with a slight heaviness, sad for their stories and that I am unlikely to see them again. I see the value of these coach trips in a different light. (Fieldnotes, 3rd September 2019)

Reynolds (2003:8) criticises the 'tidiness' of answers in relation to interview orientated research that explores cultural activities and attributes this to the surface view of

these as 'fun' prevailing. This methodology allowed some insight beyond the surface level of knowing.

My last methodological reflection relates to my focus on atmospheres and affinities, and the use of Mason's (2018) conceptualising. I believe this approach gave my work strength, interest, and nuance. It allowed a way to become receptive to the more ethereal elements that form the first connection, to potent flickers of connection by attuning to the in-between moments – not spoken but felt in socio-kinaesthetic ways (Mason, 2018). However, I am also aware that affinities and atmospheres are intangible, they cannot be seen, and are ever shifting and becoming (Anderson, 2009), which makes this subjective work with inherent tension and open to critical review. I have worked in a reflexive and co-constructive way to mediate this and have endeavoured, where possible, to make such tensions clear in my findings and analysis. As with previous work by Sumartojo and Pink, (2018) and Kanyeredzi et al., (2019), I have found the concepts of atmospheres and affinities an excellent medium through which to observe power and agency within the cultural activity settings.

9.3.2 Personal Reflections

Looking back to September 2017, I was unaware of the enormity of undertaking a PhD and, although proud to have got to submission, there have been times when on a personal level I doubted I would make it. I agree with Scrambler (2018:94) who in relation to reflexivity suggested that at times 'internal conversations intensify [practitioners'] distress and disorientation rather than leading to purposeful courses of action' and feel apologetic (especially to my patient supervisors) that at times I have made hard work of some aspects of the job. The writing was a particular challenge, and I can relate to Badley (2013: 315) (as referenced by Fisher (2013)), who refers to the 'frivolous four-process model of scrabbling, scribbling, scribing, and scrubbing'.

Whilst researching in communities I have realised the importance of my topic on a personal level too, and as is common with PhD researchers – particularly those who are distanced from their institution – I have also experienced times of loneliness (Cantor, 2019). I felt this most acutely when leaving the field. Time in the field brought

to the fore why I chose to work with older adults and also affirmed the importance of research being situated in the context of lived experience. I had not expected my studies and the personal to necessarily overlap quite so significantly. As a result, I completed the final 18 months of this PhD part-time, which freed up capacity to get involved with research projects at the University, and to do some community work locally, which gave me connections to two different communities and an improved sense of personal well-being.

9.3.3 COVID -19

One of my biggest reflections has to be in relation to COVID-19, the global pandemic that started within six months of my data collection completion. There was an irony, that whilst starting this thesis with a desire to ground my research within the everyday, everyday reality shifted significantly for almost everyone, which almost made this thesis a more traditional form of anthropological study of a foreign culture. The familiar and taken for granted suddenly turned strange and incomprehensible making me, and many others, feel abandoned on the beach, like Malinowski [1922:4] in Argonauts of the Pacific:

> Imagine yourself suddenly set down surrounded by all your gear, alone on a tropical beach close to a native village, while the launch or dinghy which has brought you sails away out of sight... Imagine further that you are a beginner, without previous experience, with nothing to guide you and no one to help you. For the white man is temporarily absent, or else unable or unwilling to waste any of his time on you. This exactly describes my first initiation into field work on the south coast of New Guinea.

I experienced a significant 'haunting' whilst in the tricky stage of writing up my thesis. This is a concept introduced by Gordon (2008) to describe memories that re-surface, stay, and have an influence on insights of knowledge. The concept has been used by Smart (2007) in connection to triggers in personal live and Morriss (2017) in relation to stigmatised mothers. It was almost impossible, whilst reading and writing from fieldnotes about very sensory, embodied and relationally connected activities, not to feel haunted. My thoughts drifted as to what might be happening in the lives of the older adult group members and their welfare and sense of well-being, which was

intricately connected to cultural activities and other forms of community engagement no longer available because of being potentially lethal and certainly risky. Hage (2020:663) writes:

> Especially in times of crisis, there is something fundamentally unethical in treating reality as existing for the purpose of exemplifying our theories.

This ethical and moral disquietude was another reason for my decision to change to part-time study and to engage in community work alongside my studies. The temporal nature of research was highlighted by the pandemic, which sharpened inequalities and exposed the fragility and vulnerability of both systems and people (Scharf, 2020; SCIE, 2020). It has perhaps also shaped some of my critique in relation especially to class and social infrastructure.

9.4 Study Limitations and Future Research

This research has given lots of insights as to the way people engage, and the benefits thereof. Although approaching this study from a social constructionist stance, I am mindful that there will have been a wider range of viewpoints; and different experiences of the atmospheres, spaces, and activities than I have managed to incorporate into this thesis (Davies, 2008; Burr, 2015). I am also conscious that, especially on the coach, I spoke to a very small proportion of older adults that attend these day trips and therefore the findings within this thesis (as with all research) are never a complete reality and is not attempting to be representative of all.

Missing from this work is a better understanding of those that do not attend. Where possible, I attempted to follow up with those who chose to cease participation, for example with Mavis and Annette, but there is scope to explore this further and in detail. I believe that more longitudinal, ethnographic work, to follow paths of connection and to explore the longevity, impact and journey of connections would be beneficial and I would welcome the opportunity to (and see value in) returning to these field sites.

The lack of diversity within my sample could also be seen as a limitation. My intention at the start was to try and engage a range of participants that were representative of the ethnic, and socio-economic population across Manchester. This was my reason for selecting my ethnographic sites, hoping that the day trippers in particular would allow this, but this did not play out in practice. Similar research across different groups would be interesting and a particular focus should be towards BAME groups, those living with disability, and LGBTQ groups, all of whom were under-represented within my research groups and within social gerontology where it has been argued that normative assumptions are deeply embedded and continue to exclude a wide range of older adults (Westwood, 2019). There needs to be consideration to inclusion within and across groups and I would advocate a similar style of exploration in order to better understand how these groups frame, and engage in, cultural activities. Multicultural societies are the norm from a city stance, but diversity is not evenly distributed, the challenge is to embrace and better enable cohesive multiculturalist societies. I agree with Amin (2002) who asserts that barriers between different ethnic groups could be broken down through everyday engagement in shared interests or activities. This clearly deserves better exploration.

There were also elements that I was unable to unpack more thoroughly and that would welcome further research: one of which was drinking and older age, a topic that came into a number of conversations; another would be to understand more of the complexities, both political and practical, of genuine co-production with older adults.

9.5 Practical Implications and Policy Recommendations

The implications and recommendations are divided into two main sections looking first at AF work and then at cultural activity provision. I reflect on where my findings have application but appreciate that there is overlap between these sections. All findings have a relevance at a national and a local level.

9.5.1 Age Friendly Recommendations

Practical Implications:

- Study findings show current cultural activity is often provided to the already well-connected. Frequently the same people seemed to be feeding into AF work, attending, and supporting activities and also working within commissioning allocations. Existing organisations are regularly needed to anchor short-term projects, which attract similar populations and perpetuate the cycle. A persistent goal was broader inclusion, but this comes with inherent difficulties. I advocate for grass-roots organisations to be given more scope to develop new projects and for increased capacity building work with older adults to help them bid for funding to make their own ideas and projects come to fruition. Better diversity of provision would suit a more pluralistic community instead of trying to broaden inclusivity within all groups, especially given group success was largely due to organisers exercising skill to know and tailor provision to their audience.
- Co-production is central to citizen-based approaches. Study findings have demonstrated where this is working well and how older adults achieve personal and community well-being through contribution and reciprocity. However, it has also highlighted limitations and a discrepancy in what older adults want from co-production. More work is needed to allow tailored co-production approaches that allow for better distribution of power and new ways to support broader inclusion of older adults that better represent this heterogenous population.

Policy Recommendations:
- This study suggests that current notions of 'citizenship' are not attainable for all. There is inadequate recognition of familial caring, of disability and a lack of cultural sensitivity, which can, and does, have a marginalising affect. I recommend a more inclusive and attainable vision of what is a 'citizen', and fuller consideration of concepts of personhood would be useful here. Without this, further marginalisation appears inevitable and AF ambitions, especially around inclusivity, will fail.
- Inequity of geography and social infrastructure have been highlighted within this research, alongside the impact and value of these contextual factors on the

lives of older adults. There is recognition of this within AF frameworks, and increasingly within general health and social care policy and guidance, where there is a focus on the role of the community and place-based provision. I, however, argue this needs to be moved to centre stage and gain greater priority and consideration to creating accessible public spaces for community engagement across all areas of Manchester.

9.5.2 Cultural Activity Provision

Practical Implications

- Culture needs to be accessible for all. Diversifying and expanding the categories that fall under this umbrella, to be more inclusive of everyday realms of culture, are needed for this to be fully realised. Cultural activities are deemed a factor in reducing inequalities and connecting communities, this study highlights that without inclusion of the everyday, the current focus (and funding streams) will continue to privilege those who arguably need this least. This is particularly pertinent in light of these study findings as to how class and social infrastructure interacts with cultural activity engagement.

- Participation, within this study, was often accessed through the route of contribution as opposed to participation. This is considered essential in regard to feasibility of provision within tight budgetary remits, however there is scope to increase older adult participation through recognition of this as an access route to engagement. Developing a better understanding of the geographical, practical, and biographical factors that accompany volunteering (or 'fit') would increase longevity of this involvement and cultural activity generally.

- Volunteering was a major facilitator of many cultural activities, a better platform of support for this – both financially and practically – would ease the pressure on organisers and improve long term sustainability.

- Volunteering participation within cultural activities should be factored into evaluations as funding was based on the number of older adults as participants not wider involvement. This underplays the breadth and reach of provision for many organisations who are working with very limited funding.

- The current research focus, to strengthen the evidence base on cultural activity participation, still favours intervention orientation biased studies (as per Chapter Two). This research has highlighted the value of extending knowledge to a wider view of the contextual factors, such as geography and biography, and also the mechanisms (as highlighted through Chapter 7) that make the activities a success. Increased focus on these component aspects of cultural activities is likely to advance understanding and improve the value and reach of cultural participation.

- Common barriers to participation were not knowing what activities were available, there was a reliance on personal connections to initiate involvement, and people did not always recognise activities labelled as 'cultural' or 'older adult' as relevant – despite valuing time with fellow older adults. This should be considered when setting up, funding and advertising new initiatives.

Policy Recommendations

There are two main policy initiatives where my work has the most direct relevance, social prescribing (NHS, 2019) and the Loneliness Strategy (HM Government, 2018b) which I will consider in turn.

Social prescribing and cultural activities are not synonymous, but there is considerable overlap, and it is intended for social prescribing to be increasingly funded and supported by local partnerships at the neighbourhood level. This makes community based cultural activities crucial. Key recommendations from this research therefore include:

- More inclusivity of leisure, the everyday and more contributary methods of engagement within cultural activities to support a wider demographic is needed, alongside wider considerations of my findings related to social infrastructure and class. This is often overlooked in preference to high culture, particularly when funding initiatives and within commissioned research. I raise concerns that if a social prescribing kitemark was introduced, funding would be channelled further away from the grassroots, everyday cultural activities (like

pub lunches), where a small financial outlay can go a long way and meet the needs of many.

- Research funding, to improve robustness of the evidence base is largely directed at high culture, and often with a quantitative steer. I advocate for more qualitative research, such as this, which helps better understand how and why cultural activity engagement works at a community level.

- Ultimately the success of such social prescribing programmes will rely on 'well stocked communities' to be able to link people to appropriate, alternative services (McNally, 2018:362). This returns arguments to social infrastructure and the need to level this to better support communities where higher inequalities are already prevalent.

- On a more positive note, my findings showed that cultural activity groups needed to be visible to be viable (see Section 6.2), therefore investment in social prescribing link workers has potential.

This research has supported the value of cultural activities to reduce issues of loneliness and social isolation for older adults, and Section 8.4 explored how these dovetail with the Governments Loneliness Strategy (HM Government, 2018). In addition to the forementioned recommendations about considering participation from an active and contributory perspective, and broadening the lens to include the everyday realm of cultural activities, three further recommendations include:

- Better funding and more creativity to publicise and promote cultural activities at a community level. A digital platform is unlikely to reach those more isolated who would potentially benefit most from inclusion.

- A shift from evidencing the value of cultural activities towards understanding what within cultural activities promotes connections is advocated. Better recognition is needed of the value of rich textualised qualitative research, such as this, that is focused at a community level.

- This study also suggests value in peer networks, to open accessible platforms to discuss and normalise life stage related aspects of loneliness. Findings here

indicate this promoted valued solidarity and support, whilst simultaneously reducing associated stigma.

9.6 Summary

In this final chapter I have summarised my findings, how I have met my research objectives and the academic contribution this thesis offers. I have also given my final methodological and personal reflections, highlighted study limitations, future possible research, and policy implications. My PhD has been a rich multi-sited ethnography that has allowed for better understanding of cultural activity provision for older adults in an AF city. This cityscape approach had not been done before. This research has led to a more nuanced understanding of how and why older adults are engaging with and building connections through cultural activities. Engagements in and connections with cultural activities contribute to a sense of community well-being and help navigation of (successful) ageing, although consistently I have debated the premise and inclusivity of this. Undertaking this doctoral research has been a massive privilege and, especially as I reach the end, I am glad to have been given the opportunity. I remain very grateful to all my participants who have shared their stories and allowed me to experience the positive effects of cultural activities with them and am confident that by sharing my findings this research has potential to make a difference.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Table with Phase 1 Participant Group Table

	Type of organisation	Geographic location	Role	Type of cultural activities offered include:	Funding situation and charges to older adults	Older Adult
P1 – Paul	Housing Association	Central	Group Cultural Lead 3 years in this post, which was created at this point.	Artist lead sessions, cultural outings, and informal social drop-in groups. Also undertaken a large drama project in partnership with local theatre group.	Majority through JP Getty Foundation (external source). 3 years of funding programme. Some additional funding support from Housing Group. No cost to participants	Yes
P2 – Ushi	Charity / Community Group	Central	Health and social care leader Running for 30 years +	Celebrations, dance, craft, reminiscence, food-based events. Cultural activities part of wider well-being programme	MCC funding for 3 years. Participants make small contribution to all activities	
P3 - Fiona	Community Group	South	Manager / co-ordinator Running for 50 yrs +	Social activities, drama, craft, history group, snooker. Gardening, singing Cultural activities part of wider well-being programme	MCC funding for 3 years. Participants make small contribution to all activities	Yes
P4 - Sarah	Local Authority	All Manchester	Strategic Managerial role	Supports community engagement through cultural programmes at libraries and other venues.	Funded strategic post at Manchester City Council	

				A more strategic role with some commissioning influence.		
P5 – Jane	Community enterprise group	South	Owner and originator of company Running for about 5 years	Pub lunches, jewellery, reminiscence, film, mosaics Cultural activities part of wider well-being programme	MCC funding awarded for 3 years, however this does not cover running costs. Does own fundraising in creative ways. OA pay membership and minimal costs towards refreshments.	Yes
P6 – Susan	Cultural Institution	Venue south Mcr Cultural champions – city wide	Dual role: Running an in-house cultural programme and co-ordinating cultural champion roles	Activity sessions run by artists in different mediums – pottery, painting, needlework etc.	Funding from institution for regular crafts programme. No charge for attendees for regular group but additional activities are at cost to OA's Cultural champion role part of paid remit of P6.	
P7 – Bill	Community Centre And lead for self-sustaining charity / outings group	North	Dual role: starting OA programme at community centre where has been for 50 years. Main point of contact / organiser of independent self-sustaining group for cultural outings. This is run as a volunteer with other volunteers	Luncheon clubs with bingo, gardening, bric a brac sales, tea party, talent shows. Lots of intergenerational ideas – limited at present but ideas for lots more. Cultural activities part of wider well-being programme Cultural outings and Xmas do happen 4 times per year and runs independently	No funding for community centre activities, although occasional grants from local businesses. OA's charged at cost. Independent outings group: started through an AF fund. Also receives external funding from Airport tax and	Yes

				from community centre	ad hoc smaller donations. OA's £5 membership subscription and outings at cost.	
P8 – Bal	Community Group / Charity mainly for BAME OA's	North	Manager of charity. Much of which is done as volunteer.	Games, craft sessions, celebrations, reminiscence, outings,	Some MCC funding but not enough to sustain group. Looks to other sources for grants such as local CCG's, Big lottery, Peoples trust. A juggle to make funding stretch. Minimal charge for lunch and for exercise provision.	Yes

Appendix 2: Phase 1 Ethics Approval

19/04/2018

Manchester Metropolitan University

Project Title: Older people's sense of self, place and belonging through engagement in cultural activities

EthOS Reference Number: 0313

Ethical Opinion

Dear Alison Jane Tingle,

The above application was reviewed by the Health, Psychology and Social Care Research Ethics and Governance Committee and on the 19/04/2018, was given a favourable ethical opinion. The approval is in place until 01/10/2020 and is based on the documentation submitted with your application.

Conditions of favourable ethical opinion

The Health, Psychology and Social Care Research Ethics and Governance Committee favourable ethical opinion is based on the following conditions

Adherence to Manchester Metropolitan University's Policies and procedures

This ethical approval is conditional on adherence to Manchester Metropolitan University's Policies, Procedures, guidance and Standard Operating procedures. These can be found on the Manchester Metropolitan University Research Ethics and Governance webpages.

Amendments

If you wish to make a change to this approved application, you will be required to submit an amendment. Please visit the Manchester Metropolitan University Research Ethics and Governance webpages or contact your Faculty research officer for advice around how to do this.

We wish you every success with your project.

Health, Psychology and Social Care Research Ethics and Governance Committee

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Interviews with professionals who are involved in the provision of cultural activities for older adults in Manchester

Study Title

Older adults' sense of self, place and belonging through engagement in cultural activities.

Invitation

I would like to invite you to take part in a study to explore the provision of cultural activities for older people in Manchester and older people's experience of these activities. Engagement in cultural activities can be through many different mediums and the breadth of this is purposefully left open at this stage of the research.

Before you decide to take part, you need to understand why the study is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Ask questions if anything you read is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not to take part.

What is the purpose of the study?

The aim of this study is to explore cultural activities for older people in Manchester and through this develop new understanding of how cultural activities contribute to an age friendly environment for older people. The study is adopting a phased approach. This initial phase will explore cultural activity provision for older people in Manchester, from the perspective of those who are providing and commissioning such activities. Through interviews with professionals in this field I aim to examine how older people experience participation in cultural activities and how this contribute to a sense of self, place and belonging. Subsequent phases will look to directly engage older people who are participating in these cultural activities.

This research is being conducted as part of a PhD thesis and has no external funding or sponsorship.

Why have I been invited to participate?

You are being invited to participate in this study as your work is related to the provision of cultural activities for older people in Manchester.

276

What will happen to me if I take part?

I will arrange a convenient time to conduct one face-face interview with you. The interview should take no more than 40 minutes. I will come to meet you at your location of work, or if you prefer, we can meet at Manchester Metropolitan University. Questions will be asked about your role in relation to cultural activities for older people and how this fits with Age Friendly agendas in Manchester. You will also be asked for your views about how the cultural activities you are providing impact older people. The interview will be recorded on an audio recording device and then converted into a written document for analysis.

Do I have to take part?

No, your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and it is up to you to decide whether to take part. If you decide to take part, you can choose to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

There are no immediate benefits, but the information we get from the study will help to increase understanding of how cultural activities for older people can contribute to positive ageing through an increased sense of self, place and belonging. A summary of the study findings will be made available to you.

What are the possible risks of taking part?

It is not anticipated that there are any risks to taking part in this study.

Will what I say in this study be kept confidential?

Any information that you disclose during the course of the research will be kept in an anonymised format so participants will not be identifiable. Only the researcher and supervising team will have access to the data. The procedures for handling, processing, storage and destruction of data in this project will be compliant with the Data Protection Act 1998 and in line with MMU Data Protection Policy (2011)
http://www.mmu.ac.uk/policy/policy.php?id=100

What will happen when the research study comes to an end?

The findings from this study are primarily for my PhD thesis. The findings will also be presented at conferences and published in academic journals. At all times your privacy and anonymity will be maintained. You will not be identified in any publication.

Interviews will be recorded on a portable audio recording device, immediately after the interview this will be transferred to a password protected laptop and the recording from the portable device will be deleted. The recording will be transcribed verbatim, and a written copy of the interview will be used for the duration of the study. At this point in time the recordings will be destroyed. All other data will be held securely for the time required by the ethics

committee and will then be destroyed in line with the Data Protection Act 1998 and in line with MMU Data Protection Policy (2011) http://www.mmu.ac.uk/policy/policy.php?id=100

Who has reviewed the study?

This study has gained ethical approval from the Manchester Metropolitan Faculty Research Ethics Committee (Ref: 0313).

What if there is a problem?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, please contact Alison Tingle alison.j.tingle@stu.mmu.ac.uk

The person overseeing this project is Dr Jenny Fisher (J.fisher@mmu.ac.uk or 0161 247 2225). Please contact Dr Jenny Fisher should you continue to have any concerns regarding the way this study is being carried out.

Alternatively, if you have any concerns about the way in which the study has been conducted or would like some independent advice, you can contact the Chair of the Faculty of Health, Psychology and Social Care Research Ethics Committee, who is Professor Carol Haigh. c.haigh@mmu.ac.uk 0161 247 5914. The address is: Carol Haigh, Manchester Metropolitan University, Brooks Building, 53 Bonsall Street, Manchester, M15 6GX.

Further information and contact details:

Alison Tingle c/o Dr Jenny Fisher, Department of Social Care and Social Work, Manchester Metropolitan University, Brooks Building, 53 Bonsall Street, Manchester, M15 6GX. alison.j.tingle@stu.mmu.ac.uk

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this study.

Manchester Metropolitan University

1st March 2018
Alison Tingle Full-Time PhD
Manchester Metropolitan University
Social care and Social Work, Brooks Building
Tel: 0161 247 2225

Consent Form

Title of Project: Older adults' sense of self, place and belonging through engagement in cultural activities

Name of Researcher: Alison Tingle

Participant Identification Code for this project:

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet:

'Interviews with professionals involved in the provision of cultural activities for older adults in Manchester' for the above project and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the interview procedure.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason to the named researcher.

3. I understand that my responses will be sound recorded and used for analysis for this research project.

4. I give permission for my interview recording to be archived as part of this research project, making it available to future researchers.

5. I understand that my responses will remain anonymous.

6. I agree to take part in the above research project.

7. I understand that at my request a transcript of my interview can be made available to me.

8. I consent to my contact details being kept by the researcher for the duration of the study so that a summary of findings can be offered.

_____ _____

Name of Participant   Date   Signature

_____ _____

Researcher   Date   Signature

To be signed and dated in presence of the participant

Once this has been signed, you will receive a copy of your signed and dated consent form and information sheet by post.

Additional consent:

Please initial this box if you are also consenting to be re-contacted in relation to subsequent research phases.

_____ _____

Name of Participant   Date   Signature

_____ _____

Researcher   Date   Signature

1. Tell me a bit about your role and your time at [name of org]?

2. What is your remit in relation of cultural activities for Older People in your position
   Prompts:
   - What projects are you involved in?
   - How long have these been going?
   - Geographical remit?
   - Is it a time limited project?
   - What happens?
   - Who attends?
   - How are these activities funded?
   - How do you attract older adults to your group?
   - What are you trying to achieve / rationale of project?
   - How would you measure success of your projects?
   - Tell me about funding criteria – for people in more of a commissioning role

3. What do you perceive to be the value in this?

   Prompts:

   - Individual level
   - Community level

4. What are the facilitators of this project? How could these projects be improved on / what could be done to help older people navigate and engage in more cultural activities?

5. What are the specific projects / programme in relation cultural activity for older people that in your mind stand out as exemplary projects? Can be ones that you have worked on or other project that you are aware of? And why?

6. What do you think it means to be an Age-Friendly city?

7. How do cultural activities contribute to this? How could they contribute to this more?

8. Where else do you attend meetings? How does your organisations fit with others in Manchester with similar agenda re cultural activities?

9. Who else would you recommend I speak with to help build a clear map of Manchester in relation to provision of cultural activities? [Probe as much as possible here!]

10. Have you a definition for cultural activities? (Explore place for everyday activities in this too?)

Thank you and anything else you would like to add?

Appendix 6: Phase 2 Ethics Approval

Manchester Metropolitan University

09/04/2019
Project Title: Exploration of older adults engagement in cultural activities

EthOS Reference Number: 3244

Ethical Opinion

Dear Alison Jane Tingle,

The above application was reviewed by the Health, Psychology and Social Care Research Ethics and Governance Committee and, on the 09/04/2019, was given a favourable ethical opinion. The approval is in place until 31/07/2020 .

Conditions of favourable ethical opinion
Please change to logo on the consent form to the new MMU logo as in PIS.

Application Documents

Document Type	File Name	Date	Version
Project Proposal	Phase 2 plan for ethics final	01/12/2018	1
Additional Documentation	Consent-Form for older adults vs 2	27/03/2019	2
Additional Documentation	Participant information sheet for older adults vs 2	27/03/2019	2
Additional Documentation	reviewer comments for ethics	27/03/2019	1

The Health, Psychology and Social Care Research Ethics and Governance Committee favourable ethical opinion is granted with the following conditions

Adherence to Manchester Metropolitan University's Policies and procedures

This ethical approval is conditional on adherence to Manchester Metropolitan University's Policies, Procedures, guidance and Standard Operating procedures. These can be found on the Manchester Metropolitan University Research Ethics and Governance webpages.

Amendments

If you wish to make a change to this approved application, you will be required to submit an amendment. Please visit the Manchester Metropolitan University Research Ethics and Governance webpages or contact your Faculty research officer for advice around how to do this.

We wish you every success with your project.

HPSC Research Ethics and Governance Committee

**Manchester
Metropolitan
University**

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Older adult's participation in cultural activities

Study Title

Older adult's sense of self, place and belonging through engagement in cultural activities.

Invitation

I am joining this group, [insert name of group], for a limited time to explore the provision of cultural activities for older adults in Manchester and older adult's experience of these activities.

Before you decide to take part, you need to understand why the study is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take your time to read the following information. Ask questions if anything is not clear or if you would like more detail.

What is the purpose of the study?

The aim of this study is to explore cultural activities for older adults in Manchester and develop new understanding of how cultural activities contribute to an Age Friendly environment. This research is being conducted as part of a PhD thesis and has no external funding or sponsorship.

Why have I been invited to participate?

You are being invited to participate in this study as your group offers cultural activities for older adults.

What will happen to me if I take part?

I intend to come and join your group for a limited period; anything from a couple of sessions to being with you for a few months. Whilst at your groups, I will be looking to make observations and to have conversations with people who are participating in cultural activities or volunteering to support these activities.   Through observations, and conversations, I am looking to see how older adult experience participation in cultural activities including the meaning that they hold, the reason people attend and to see how this contributes to a sense of self, place and belonging.

I am also wanting to join in and help with the groups so that I experience what it is like to take part alongside you. I intend for this to be very unobtrusive. Before each session I will always let you know the purpose of my attendance. If you do not want to take part in the study you can tell me before, or during, the session and I will not include you. If you want me to stop observing you, you can ask me at any time. I will always be happy to answer any questions you have about the observation or the study. Please do not hesitate to ask.

On occasion, I may ask your permission to audio recording some of your thoughts or comments. I may also ask your permission to take photographs, these may be used in my final thesis as well as in journal articles, conference papers or other publications related only to this research. Before any photographing or audio recording you will be asked your permission asked separately. Consent forms will be given to ensure that you are understanding the purpose of this and how your information will be treated and used.

Do I have to take part?

No, your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and it is up to you to decide whether to take part. If you would prefer me not to talk to you or make any observations that include you, please let me know and I will not include you in the study. Additionally, if you decide to take part but change your mind, you can choose to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

There are no immediate benefits, but the information we get from the study will help to increase understanding of how cultural activities for older adult can contribute to positive ageing. A summary of the study findings will be made available to you.

What are the possible risks of taking part?

It is not anticipated that there are any risks to taking part in this study.

Will what I say in this study be kept confidential?

Any information that you provide for this research will be anonymised, so participants will not be identifiable. Only the researcher and supervising team will have access to the data. The procedures for handling, processing, storage and destruction of data, including photographs and audio recordings, in this project will be compliant with the Data Protection Act 1998 and in line with MMU Data Protection Policy (2011).
http://www.mmu.ac.uk/policy/policy.php?id=100

Interviews will be recorded on a portable audio recording device. Immediately after the interview this recording will be transferred to a password protected laptop and the recording from the portable device will be deleted. The recording will be transcribed, word for word, and a written copy of the interview will be used for the duration of the study. At this point all

identifiable information will be removed and the recordings will be destroyed. Likewise, photographs will be immediately transferred from the camera or phone and stored in encrypted files on a password protected laptop. The original photographs will then be destroyed.

The only occasion when confidentiality would be broken is if you raise serious concerns about your, or another person's, safety, and well-being. In this situation the researcher has a duty of care to share this information so that appropriate support can be accessed. This is likely to be the local authority or the person in charge of the cultural activities you attend. Any course of action will be discussed with you in the first instance.

What will happen when the research study comes to an end?

The findings from this study are primarily for my PhD thesis. The findings will also be presented at conferences and published in academic journals. At all times your privacy and anonymity will be maintained. You will not be identified in any publication.

Who has reviewed the study?

This study has gained ethical approval from the Manchester Metropolitan Faculty Research Ethics Committee (Ref: 3244).

What if there is a problem?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, please contact Alison Tingle alison.j.tingle@stu.mmu.ac.uk

The person overseeing this project is Dr Jenny Fisher (J.fisher@mmu.ac.uk or 0161 247 2225). Please contact Dr Jenny Fisher should you continue to have any concerns regarding the way this study is being carried out.

Alternatively, if you have any concerns about the way in which the study has been conducted or would like some independent advice, you can contact the Chair of the Faculty of Health, Psychology and Social Care Research Ethics Committee: Juliet Goldbart. Her contact details j.goldbart@mmu.ac.uk or Manchester Metropolitan University, Brooks Building, 53 Bonsall Street, Manchester, M15 6GX, 0161 247 2225.

Further information and contact details:

Alison Tingle c/o Dr Jenny Fisher, Department of Social Care and Social Work, Manchester Metropolitan University, Brooks Building, 53 Bonsall Street, Manchester, M15 6GX. alison.j.tingle@stu.mmu.ac.uk

Thank you for taking the time to consider participating in this study.

Manchester Metropolitan University

April 2019
Alison Tingle
Full-time PhD
Social care and Social Work
Brooks Building
Manchester Metropolitan University
Tel: 0161 247 2225

Consent Form

Title of Project: Older adults' sense of self, place and belonging through engagement in cultural activities

Name of Researcher: Alison Tingle

Participant Identification Code for this project:

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet:

'Older adult participation in cultural activities' for the above project and
have had the opportunity to ask questions about the research.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to
   withdraw at any time without giving any reason to the named researcher.

3. I understand that my responses will be sound recorded and used for
   analysis for this research project.

4. I give permission for my conversation to be recorded and archived as
   part of this research project, making it available to future researchers.

5. I understand that my responses will remain anonymous.

6. I agree to take part in the above research project.

7. I understand that at my request a transcript of my interview can be
   made available to me.

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8. I consent to my contact details being kept by the researcher for the duration of the study so that a summary of findings can be offered.

9. I give consent for my picture to be taken and understand how the image will be stored and that it may be used in the final thesis or for other publications, conference papers or articles that evolve from this research.

10. I give consent for quotes from informal conversations to be used in publications as well as quotes from recorded conversations.

_____   _____

Name of Participant   Date   Signature

_____   _____

Researcher   Date   Signature

To be signed and dated in presence of the participant

One copy to signed for researcher and one for participant.

Appendix 9: Conference Abstract and Phase 1 Poster Presentation

Abstract accepted for The British Society of Gerontology Annual Conference 2019 where I had a symposium place on the opening day.

"It's about community networks, it's about keeping people active, out of hospital"

Cultural activities: social prescribing without the label?

Social prescribing is currently a hot topic for policy, practice and in academia. In principle it's about linking people to a range community resources, including cultural activities such as gardening or music groups, to support sustainability of general practice (GP) and offer more individualised, holistic care (Bickerdike et al, 2017). For older adults social prescribing is seen as the panacea to a wider range of mental, physical, and social health issues, such as depression, diabetes, and loneliness (Husk, 2019). Linked to GP's, social prescribing tends sit within primary care. This means effective work in the social care domain, crucial to the success of this public health ambition, has been undervalued (Skivington et al, 2018).

This paper draws on findings from a qualitative study, informed by appreciative inquiry, exploring older adults participating in cultural activities in Manchester. Thematic analysis of verbatim transcripts showed complexities within the vibrant voluntary and community sector warranting attention and consideration for the asset-based approach of social prescribing to flourish. Key themes include: the diversity of definition and practice of cultural activities and the value of everyday cultural participation; the importance of providers local knowledge to pitch activities to best support local audiences; the commitment, agency, and hybridity of older adults within the ecosystem of cultural activities key to facilitating provision; and a tendency towards project-based initiatives and partnerships to help counter funding insecurities. This paper addresses the call for additional evidence to better support social prescribing initiatives (Polley, 2017) by exploring the overlap and synergistic potential between social prescribing and cultural activity initiatives for older adults.

References

Bickerdike, L., Booth, A., Wilson, P., Farley, K. Wright, K. (2017) Social prescribing: less rhetoric and more reality. A systematic review of the evidence. BMJ Open. 2017:7

Husk, K. (2019) Social Prescribing: where is the evidence. British Journal of General Practice

Polley, M., Flemming, J. Anfilogoff, T., Carpenter, A. (2017) Making sense of social prescribing. University of Westminster

Skivington, K., Smith, M., Chng, N.R., Mackenzie, M., Wyke, S. Mercer, S. (2018) Delivering a primary care-based social prescribing initiative: a qualitative study of the benefits and challenges. British Journal of General Practice

Poster Presentation with Phase 1 Findings

This poster was submitted to the Faculty Research High Summer Conference 2018 – it won 3rd Prize.

Appendix 10: Leaflets Handed out on Day Trip 3rd September 2019

A page of fieldnotes scribbled at a café after my first craft group. In all of these the fieldnotes in the margins are my thoughts, basic coding, links to literature references and where I might want to follow up. The main page is my observations in situ or immediately after the session.

Fieldnotes from the drama group midway through the series of sessions.
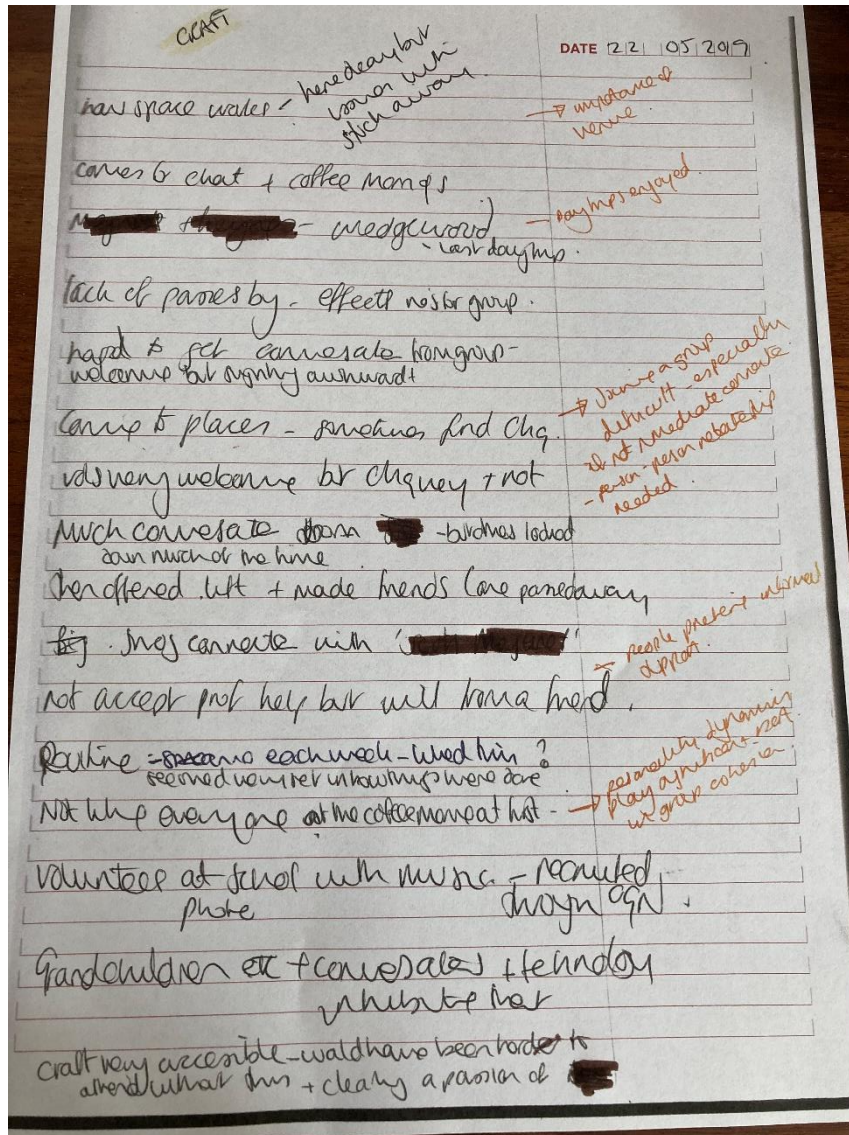
These notes were grabbed in the kitchen during the session, as prompts or quotes following a conversation. I would write up longer notes of the session as a whole from these. Often whilst on the train home or in the café opposite the group.

Fieldnotes written on a bench in Llandudno after I grabbed 20 minutes with three women who were looking for a shoe shop, I took then to the shop (Pavers) as I had passed it earlier and stayed with them whilst they tried on and bought shoes, chatting with them as they did this.   The second picture is Vera modelling her shoes back on the coach when I caught up with them at the end of the day!