methuen | drama

APPLIED PRACTICE

# EVIDENCE AND IMPACT IN THEATRE, MUSIC AND ART

Matthew Reason and Nick Rowe

BLOOMSBURY

# Applied Practice

The **Applied Theatre** series is a major innovation in applied theatre scholarship, bringing together leading international scholars that engage with and advance the field of applied theatre. Each book presents new ways of seeing and critically reflecting on this dynamic and vibrant field. Volumes offer a theoretical framework and introductory survey of the field addresses, combined with a range of case studies illustrating and critically engaging with practice.

**Series Editors**
Michael Balfour (Griffith University, Australia)
Sheila Preston (University of East London, UK)

*Applied Theatre: Aesthetics*
Gareth White
ISBN 978-1-472-51355-7

*Applied Theatre: Development*
Tim Prentki
ISBN 978-1-472-50986-4

*Applied Theatre: Facilitation*
Sheila Preston
ISBN 978-1-4725-7693-4

*Applied Theatre: Performing Health and Wellbeing*
Veronica Baxter and Katharine E. Low
ISBN 978-1-472-58457-1

*Applied Theatre: Research Radical Departures*
Peter O'Connor and Michael Anderson
ISBN 978-1-472-50961-1

*Applied Theatre: Resettlement Drama, Refugees and Resilience*
Michael Balfour, Bruce Burton, Penny Bundy, Julie Dunn and Nina Woodrow
ISBN 978-1-472-53379-1

# Applied Practice

## Evidence and Impact in Theatre, Music and Art

Matthew Reason and Nick Rowe

*Series Editors*
Michael Balfour and Sheila Preston

methuen | drama
LONDON • NEW YORK • OXFORD • NEW DELHI • SYDNEY

METHUEN DRAMA
Bloomsbury Publishing Plc
50 Bedford Square, London, WC1B 3DP, UK
1385 Broadway, New York, NY 10018, USA

BLOOMSBURY, METHUEN DRAMA and the Methuen Drama logo are
trademarks of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc

First published 2017
Paperback edition first published 2019

Copyright © Matthew Reason, Nick Rowe and contributors, 2017

Matthew Reason and Nick Rowe have asserted their right under the Copyright,
Designs and Patents Act, 1988, to be identified as editors of this work.

Cover design: Louis Dugdale
Cover image © Shuttershock

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or
transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical,
including photocopying, recording, or any information storage or
retrieval system, without prior permission in writing from the publishers.

Bloomsbury Publishing Plc does not have any control over, or responsibility for,
any third-party websites referred to or in this book. All internet addresses given
in this book were correct at the time of going to press. The author and publisher
regret any inconvenience caused if addresses have changed or sites have
ceased to exist, but can accept no responsibility for any such changes.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Names: Reason, Matthew, 1975- author. | Rowe, Nick, 1954- author.
Title: Applied practice: evidence and impact in theatre, music and art /
Matthew Reason and Nick Rowe [editors].
Description: London: New York: Bloomsbury Methuen Drama, 2017. | Series:
Applied theatre | Based on a conference held at York St John University,
UK, in 2014. | Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2017003696 (print) | LCCN 2017022221 (ebook) | ISBN
9781474283847 (Epub) | ISBN 9781474283854 (Epdf) | ISBN 9781474283830
(hardback: alk. paper)
Subjects: LCSH: Qualitative research–Congresses. | Arts and
society–Congresses. | Performing arts–Social aspects–Congresses.
Classification: LCC H62.A3 (ebook) | LCC H62.A3 A67 2017 (print) | DDC
306.4/7–dc23
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2017003696

ISBN: HB: 978-1-474-28383-0
PB: 978-1-3501-0193-7
ePDF: 978-1-474-28385-4
eBook: 978-1-474-28384-7

Series: Applied Theatre

Typeset by Deanta Global Publishing Services, Chennai, India

To find out more about our authors and books visit
www.bloomsbury.com and sign up for our newsletters.

# Contents

List of Illustrations viii
Notes on Contributors ix

Introduction: A Rope Comprising Several Cords
*Matthew Reason and Nick Rowe* 1

Part One Framing Evidence and Impact in Participatory Arts

1 Purpose, Outcomes and Obliquity: To Plan or Not to Plan *Nick Rowe and Matthew Reason* 11
2 Evidence, Knowledge and Persuasion in Arts Impact Research *Matthew Reason* 24
3 Intrinsic and Instrumental Impacts in Participatory Art *Matthew Reason* 37
4 Participatory Research in the Participatory Arts
*Nick Rowe and Matthew Reason* 48

Part Two Researching Participatory Arts: Analytical Perspectives

Section Introduction *Matthew Reason and Nick Rowe* 63
5 On the Need for Diversity of Methods in Researching Arts and Health Practice *Stephen Clift* 67
6 Do You See What I See? Arts, Science and Evidence in Autism Research *Nicola Shaughnessy* 80
7 Wrestling with Beauty: Putting the Aesthetic into Arts Evaluation *Katya Johanson and Hilary Glow* 95

8 Capturing the Intangible: Exploring Creative Risk-taking through Collaborative and Creative Methods *Elanor Stannage* 109

9 Besieged by Inappropriate Criteria: Arts Organizations Developing Grounded Evaluation Approaches *Anni Raw and Mary Robson* 123

10 The Performance of Prison Theatre Practices: Questions of Evidence *Caoimhe McAvinchey* 139

11 Researching Applied Arts through Ethnographic Performance: Perspectives from an African Context *Kennedy C. Chinyowa* 156

12 Thou Art, I Am: Discovery and Recovery in the Art-making Process *Olivia Sagan* 172

Part Three Researching Participatory Arts: Practice-Orientated Case Studies

Section Introduction *Nick Rowe and Matthew Reason* 191

13 'Dear Younger Me': Writing, Songwriting and Choral Singing while Incarcerated as a Means to Build Identities and Bridge Communities *Mary L. Cohen and Perry Miller* 195

14 Exploring the Perceived Benefits of Shared Musical Experience *Christine Bates and Liz Mellor* 202

15 The Wisdom of Crowds: Applied Theatre, Social Media and Data Visualization *Paul Sutton* 210

16 A Community-based Theatre Arts Programme for Adults with Disabilities: Evidence through Research, Observation and Individual Transformation *Natalie Russo, Melissa Luke, Kevin Heffernan, Luis Columna and Elizabeth Ingram* 217

17 Bespoke Practices: A Practitioner's Perspective on Documenting and Evaluating the Experiences of Artists with Disabilities *Jennifer Gilbert* 224
18 'There's No Pill For That': A Practitioner's Perspective on the Evidence Imperative in the Arts and Mental Health *Linda Boyles* 231
19 Embracing Indeterminacy in Participatory Storytelling *Catherine Heinemeyer* 238
20 Art Knows No Boundaries: Cross-Cultural Bridge Building through Transnational Arts Project *Matthew Hahn, Lungile Dlamini and Marius Botha* 246
21 Foot in Snout, Snout in Trough: Doing Good, Evaluation and Other Megalomania *Scott Rankin* 254

Afterword: Confidence in Art as Evidence *Ross W. Prior* 262

Notes 269
References 271
Index 303

# List of Illustrations


**Figure 1.1** The Converge Communitas choir, York St John University. Photograph Jen Todman. 20

**Figure 5.1** Changes in SF12 mental health scale over the course of the trial and the three-month follow-up. 76

**Figure 7.1** Filming of *Wild at Heart*, reproduced with permission of Curious Works and Meet+Eat. 102

**Figure 9.1** Roots and Wings. Example adults' prompt sheet. 132

**Figure 14.1** Converge Research Project: Data Set 2b: Research Tool. 206

**Figure 14.2** The distribution of responses by Converge music students in improvisation. 208

**Figure 15.1** Wisdom of Crowds. C&T Data Visualization by Paul Sutton. 215

**Figure 18.1** Illustration of common aims of different stakeholders involved in an arts project. 232

**Figure 21.1** Big hART's Yijala Yala Project. Featuring Timara Bradshaw and Jennifer Daniel. Roebourne. Western Australia. Photograph Claire Leach. 255

# Notes on Contributors

**Christine Bates** is Senior Lecturer in Community Music at Leeds College of Music. Her career has formed from experience as a classroom teacher, practising community musician and researcher. She is a graduate of both the University of Wales and Durham University and Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy.

**Marius Botha** is a Durban-born musician, studio owner/engineer and guitar doctor (a name earned from his unique skill of restoring/making guitars). He has forty years' experience in the music industry, performing, promoting, recording and composing. He often collaborates with musicians and artists in other art forms who share his strong commitment to fulfilling their educational responsibilities.

**Linda Boyles** is Arts Development Manager for Arts and Minds, a mental health and arts project hosted by Leeds and York Partnership NHS Foundation Trust. She has twenty-five years of experience in arts and mental health development work in the statutory and voluntary sectors. She is also an exhibiting fine artist and community artist, and has worked as an occupational therapist in mental health settings. www.artsandmindsnetwork.org.uk

**Kennedy C. Chinyowa** is currently Research Professor in the Department of Drama and Film Studies at Tshwane University of Technology in Pretoria, South Africa. He was the head of the Dramatic Arts Division at the University of Witwatersrand (2011–14) and a visiting scholar in the Centre for Applied Theatre Research at Griffith University (2001–5) where he obtained his PhD in applied theatre. He has presented papers and workshops internationally and published widely in books and refereed journals.

**Stephen Clift** is Professor of Health Education and Director of the Sidney De Haan Research Centre for Arts and Health, Canterbury Christ Church University. The De Haan Research Centre, established in 2005, has made original contributions to research and practice on the value of singing for people with enduring mental health challenges and older people with chronic respiratory illness, dementia and Parkinson's.

**Mary L. Cohen** is Associate Professor and Area Head of Music Education at the University of Iowa. She researches music making and wellness with respect to prison contexts, writing and songwriting, and collaborative communities. She leads the Oakdale Prison Community Choir and the prison songwriting workshop.

**Luis Columna** is Associate Professor in the Exercise Science Department at Syracuse University. His research focuses on methods to increase participation of families (especially Hispanic families) of children with disabilities in physical activity, and to better prepare teachers to work with diverse populations in physical activity settings.

**Lungile Dlamini** is a celebrated South African singer/songwriter, who believes in the healing power of the arts. In conjunction with her music career, she works tirelessly to take music and arts to schools where no formal lessons are taught in these fields.

**Jennifer Gilbert** is the manager of Outside In, an organization supporting artists facing barriers to the mainstream art world. She has been working in this field since 2008. She has a BA in graphic design from Central Saint Martins as well as a master's degree in art, health and well-being. She runs training in disability equality and in 2016/17 toured two exhibitions around the UK.

**Hilary Glow** is Associate Professor at Deakin University, Australia, where she is Director of the Arts and Cultural Management Program in the Faculty of Business and Law. Her research is in the areas of audience

engagement and cultural policy, particularly focusing on evaluation processes for arts organizations, the impact of arts programmes on people's views of cultural diversity, barriers to arts attendance and audience measures of artistic quality.

**Matthew Hahn** is a creative producer, playwright, theatre director and theatre for development facilitator specializing in creating theatre for social change, examining behaviour, resolving conflict and improving communication skills. He works with emerging and established theatre-makers to find new ways for audiences and communities to access art through partnerships.

**Kevin Heffernan** is Assistant Professor of Exercise Science and is a director of the Human Performance Laboratory at Syracuse University. His research examines the impact of diet, nutritional supplementation and exercise on vascular health in chronic disease and disability throughout the human lifespan.

**Catherine Heinemeyer** is a storyteller specializing in story in community and youth settings and in response to environmental change. In 2017 she completed a practice-as-research PhD in participatory storytelling practice with adolescents, funded by an AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Award and conducted in partnership between York St John University and York Theatre Royal.

**Elizabeth Ingram** is Associate Professor of Drama at Syracuse University, a faculty advisor and originator of 'The All Star C.A.S.T.' programme, a drama group for people with special needs and drama students. Elizabeth was an actress in England before coming to the United States.

**Katya Johanson** is Associate Professor in the School of Communication and Creative Arts at Deakin University, where she teaches and researches

across both communications and creative arts. Her major research interest is in improving the relationship between audiences, citizens and communities on the one hand and strategic cultural policymaking on the other. With colleagues Jennifer Radbourne and Hilary Glow, she is the co-editor of *The Audience Experience* (2013).

**Melissa Luke** is Professor and school counselling programme coordinator in the Department of Counselling and Human Services at Syracuse University. She is a nationally certified counsellor (NCC), an approved clinical supervisor (ACS) and a licensed mental health counsellor (LMHC) in the state of New York.

**Caoimhe McAvinchey** is Reader in Socially Engaged and Contemporary Performance at Queen Mary University of London. Prior to this, she established the MA Applied Drama programme at Goldsmiths, University of London (2005–9). Publications include *Theatre & Prison* (2011) and *Performance and Community: Case Studies and Commentary* (2013). Forthcoming publications include *Phakama: Participatory Performance in the Making* (co-edited with Lucy Richardson and Fabio Santos), *Applied Theatre: Women and the Criminal Justice System* and a monograph about Clean Break theatre company.

**Liz Mellor** is Professor of Music at York St John University. She taught at Homerton College, University of Cambridge, before joining YSJU in 2000. Liz has a wide range of teaching experience and research interests across music perception, creativity, collaboration, community, arts, health and well-being, and is currently involved in exploring aspects of her experience in gestalt psychotherapy to inclusive pedagogy and student engagement. She is a National Teaching Fellow of the Higher Education Academy.

**Perry Miller** was a remarkable writer and lyricist. He sang in choirs and played in bands throughout his life. In his younger years he travelled

to Italy with a youth choir. Perry recorded a few CDs with his own Christian band called Seraph. He most recently sang with the Oakdale Choir and the Mt Pleasant Choir in Iowa. Perry died on 23 November 2015.

**Ross W. Prior** is Professor of Learning and Teaching in the Arts in Higher Education at the University of Wolverhampton. He is best known for his book *Teaching Actors: Knowledge Transfer in Actor Training* and his work in applied arts and health as Founder Principal Editor of the *Journal of Applied Arts and Health*. He has a record of research surrounding learning and teaching within a range of educational and training settings.

**Scott Rankin** is a playwright, director and, for twenty-five years, the creative director and executive producer of Big hART. His collaborative cross-media projects have won many awards, and he has toured extensively. He is an Australia Council fellow and lives in the north-west coast of Tasmania (land of the Tommeginner Aboriginal people).

**Anni Raw** was previously a community musician and has worked as an evaluator in participatory arts for fifteen years. She completed her PhD, exploring community-based participatory arts practice, Durham University's Centre for Medical Humanities. Currently combining work as a Senior Research Associate and freelance evaluation consultancy, she is also Visiting Fellow at University of Leeds School of Fine Art, History of Art and Cultural Studies, and research active with collaborators in Mexico and Brazil. She currently investigates cultural value, and research and evaluation methodologies and practices in relation to the arts and social change.

**Matthew Reason** is Professor of Theatre and Performance at York St John University, UK. Publications include *Documentation, Disappearance and the Representation of Live Performance* (2006), *The Young Audience: Exploring and Enhancing Children's Experiences*

*of Theatre* (2010), *Kinesthetic Empathy in Creative and Cultural Contexts* (co-edited with Reynolds, 2012) and *Experiencing Liveness in Contemporary Performance* (co-edited with Lindelof, 2017). www.matthewreason.com

**Mary Robson** trained as a theatre designer and has worked as an artist, social educator and arts and health consultant in the UK and beyond. Her influential arts in health and education work in schools focuses on the social and emotional development of children. She is Creative Facilitator for two Wellcome Trust-funded research projects at Durham University, and has received a Royal Society of Public Health award for 'innovative and outstanding contributions to arts and health'.

**Nick Rowe** is Associate Professor at York St John University. He trained as a psychiatric nurse and drama therapist and later was a project coordinator of Skills for People, an advocacy project with people with disabilities. He is a performing member of Playback Theatre York and the author of *Playing the Other: Dramatizing Personal Stories in Playback Theatre* (2007). Nick founded Converge in 2008, a project offering educational opportunities to people who use mental health services.

**Natalie Russo** is Assistant Professor of School Psychology and the director of the Center for Autism Research and Electrophysiology at Syracuse University. Her research interests focus on the development of individuals with an autism spectrum disorder and specifically on sensory perception and multisensory integration. She is a licensed psychologist.

**Olivia Sagan**'s research explores first-person narratives of mental illness. Her book *Narratives of Art Practice and Mental Wellbeing: Reparation and Connection* was published in 2014, and she is currently editing and contributing to *Narratives of Loneliness: Multidisciplinary Perspectives from the 21st Century,* to be published in 2017.

**Nicola Shaughnessy** is Professor of Performance at the University of Kent. Her research and teaching interests are in the areas of applied theatre, contemporary performance and cognitive theory. She was Principal Investigator for the AHRC-funded project 'Imagining Autism: Drama, Performance and Intermediality as Interventions for Autism'. Her publications include *Applying Performance: Live Art, Socially Engaged Theatre and Affective Practice* (2012), and she is the editor of *Affective Performance and Cognitive Science: Body, Brain and Being* (2013) as well as the Bloomsbury Methuen Drama Performance and Science series.

**Elanor Stannage** is completing doctoral research in arts in mental health at York St John University, working in particular with Converge and Arts and Minds. Her research explores the experiential processes of arts in mental health practice. She is a theatre practitioner with over a decade of experience working across diverse communities as facilitator, writer, director and project manager.

**Paul Sutton** is the founder and artistic director of applied theatre company C&T. He has extensive experience in schools, colleges and universities in the UK and internationally, working as teacher, actor, director and digital media producer. He has worked with organizations such as the BBC, British Film Institute and Arts Council England. Paul has published widely on drama, education, applied theatre and digital technologies. He is Digital Editor of *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Performance.*

# Introduction: A Rope Comprising Several Cords

Matthew Reason and Nick Rowe

The participatory arts are driven by a deeply held belief in their powerful and potentially transformative impact upon both individuals and communities. Often produced in the context of tight budgets, low pay, lack of respect and other constraints, it is this *belief* that motivates and underpins the vibrant practice of committed and skilful practitioners. First-hand experience provides tangible examples of how the participatory arts can provide new opportunities, change lives and forge community connections across a diversity of contexts, from education to hospitals, mental health to prisons. However, while participatory arts practitioners are frequently able to produce stories of tremendous impacts, in the context of reduced and competitive budgets they are also asked for more and to produce 'evidence' about the impact and outcomes of their work.

The origins of this book rest in a symposium that we coordinated at York St John University, UK, in 2014 titled *Elusive Evidence*. Inviting contributors from across the United Kingdom and guests from the United States, this research event aimed to bring together a diverse range of approaches to documenting and researching arts in health, education, community and social contexts. During this event we explored how practitioners and researchers can document, measure and evaluate the impact of participatory arts practice.

This book does something similar, although despite enjoying its alliterative rhythm, we have ditched the title. Our premise – no doubt naïve, although we suspect fairly widely held – was that the problem holding back the participatory arts in making its case was a *lack* of

evidence. The evidence, we implied, was hard to find or not easy to capture through measurement or verbal documentation. It was perhaps situated and difficult to generalize. It was most likely rooted in very particular participatory relationships, the product of the particular approach to facilitation, the particular art form, the particular people involved. The evidence, we implied, was elusive and – moreover – that whatever *was* presented was never enough.… But *if* we could capture it, then all would be (re)solved.

The premise was mistaken in all sorts of ways, not least because far from being elusive (in the sense of being rare), there can often appear to be a surfeit of evidence. Instead we discovered that the challenge was more subtle and perhaps more intractable, located not in the 'elusive' but in the less evocative yet more meaningful word 'evidence'. The situation is more accurately described by Theo Stickley, who writes in the context of arts and mental health that there is 'much evidence continually being produced that supports arts and health practice. … But until the right kind of evidence is produced for the NHS, the evidence that is produced often remains marginalised and will continue to be the subject of criticism within the scientifically dominated health care arena' (2012: viii).

Something does remain elusive within this context, but it is more discursive than the magic bullet solution implied by our original title. Any 'answer' – we are sorry to say – is not as simple as commissioning more research and producing a particular kind of evidence. Rather the issue is more fundamental, concerned with reconfiguring the philosophy, the ethics, the discourse of *how* we conceive of evidence within the context of participatory arts practice.

It is this that our collection seeks to achieve, engaging with a diversity of contexts, locations and art forms – including theatre, music and fine art – to bring together theoretical, political and practice-based perspectives on the question of 'evidence' in relation to participatory arts practice. This collection is a unique contribution to the field, focusing on one of the vital concerns for a growing and developing set of arts and research practices. It asks us to consider evidence not only in

terms of methodologies but also in the light of the ideological, political and pragmatic implications of those methodologies.

## A short word on terminology

As authors and editors neither of us is particularly predisposed to get mired in what can become overly inward-looking questions of terminology. Often, as soon as you step outside the discipline itself, the difference between terms – say 'arts for health' and 'arts and health' or 'participatory arts' and 'arts in social context' – reduces to less than zero. Nonetheless we did find ourselves needing to settle on some shared terminology for this book. Our conversations about how to resolve this crossed between the purely pragmatic and the more conceptual and meaningful. The question was simply what should we label the activities that we are talking about, with the options variously including community art, socially engaged art, art in social context, applied practice, art as social engagement and participatory art.

The question does, of course, matter, and not just for reasons of consistency. In a paper on art in health, Raw, Lewis, Russell and Macnaughton discuss how in the specific context of arts and health the terminologies and definitions in use are 'fragmented and disputed, with a plethora of different terms used and defended by different groups, nationally and internationally'. The consequence, they argue, is a lack of 'visible identity' that results in a less impactful and less cohesive body of research (2012).

This book seeks to draw together an even more disparate and interdisciplinary body of material, stretching across not just arts and health but also education, prisons and community contexts and embracing a diversity of art forms. While not seeking to construct a singular identity for this research we are certainly hoping to increase its visibility and certainly arguing that as a body of research it is strongest considered collectively – as a rope comprising several cords, an image we will return to in a moment.

It was in this context that as editors we have adopted the wording ‘participatory arts’, in order to signal our focus on the active, creative *doing* of art-making that concerns us in this book. ‘Participatory arts’ also evokes a broadening and widening of *who* is making the art, from a narrowly defined and even elitist specialism of The Artist to an inclusive and radical proposition of anybody and everybody. What is the impact – in various social contexts – of *doing* art? What kinds of evidence support these claims to impact?

This is not to ignore the sizeable aesthetic or ethical discourses and dilemmas surrounding notions of participation. Within the arts Tom Finkelpearl describes strands of participatory practice including ‘interactive, relational, cooperative, activist, dialogical and community-based’ (2014); while from the social sciences have emerged various typologies, including most famously Sherry Arnstein’s ‘Ladder of Participation’, first published in 1969. We return to some of these questions surrounding participation in Chapter 4, which explores among other things the relationship between participatory arts and participatory research practices when it comes to questions of evidence. We want to reflect on this theme here as well, while also returning to what we hope to achieve by bringing together the various voices present in this book.

## The death of the expert

At the febrile height of the 2016 Brexit referendum in the United Kingdom, Conservative politician Michael Gove declared ‘people in this country have had enough of experts’. In this blurt of invective Gove was calling for voters to trust their own experiences, to trust their own perceptions and own values, over the ostensibly more informed or more evidenced claims of those anointed experts. Moreover, he was doing so in the context of what could be called a (flawed) process of participatory decision-making.

There are, no doubt, multiple reasons for this growth in scepticism, including a general dislocation with various forms of authority. More particularly, the suspicion of experts – and of the evidence that experts provide – has grown as a result of a suspicion of the possibility of impartiality and the existence of a neutral place from which to observe. In part this has taken place in the context of a conscious effort among academics and activists within the progressive movement to resist or overturn the claims of 'objectivity' that accompany scientific certainty. Exemplary of this is Donna Haraway's influential text 'Situated Knowledge: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective' in which she seeks to unmask 'the doctrines of objectivity because they threatened our budding sense of collective historical subjectivity and agency and our "embodied" accounts of the truth' (1988: 578). The radical and genuinely liberating power of this movement has been in its giving voice to previously 'subjugated' or marginalized perspectives, including feminist, postcolonial, queer, disabled and mad. These, Haraway writes, are all 'marked bodies', possessing 'situated knowledge' that have historically excluded the pseudo-objective positions of truth. One of the great achievements of the progressive movement has been in giving validity to the particularity of such individual and collective lived experiences.

Yet it is immediately possible to see how the celebration of lived experience presented here might morph in different and less progressive contexts. This is the focus of Bruno Latour in his essay 'Why Has Critique Run out of Steam?', where he observes how his philosophical objective had always been to 'emancipate the public from prematurely naturalized objectified facts' and combat 'ideological arguments posturing as matters of fact' (2004: 227). An unintended consequence of this, however, has been the adoption of similar processes of critique from other, less progressive and even reactionary perspectives. If critique has invited us to question the stability of any claim, if there is 'no sure ground anywhere', then the result is a potentially dangerous position of absolute relativism where any perspective – Latour is

particularly focusing on climate change denial – warrants equal respect and equal airtime.

The following passage from Latour illustrates the investment of the intellectual progressive movement in the concept of critique, and his fear of the unintended consequences:

> Entire PhD programs are still running to make sure that good American kids are learning the hard way that facts are made up, that there is no such thing as natural, unmediated, unbiased access to truth, that we are always prisoners of language, that we always speak from a particular standpoint, and so on, while dangerous extremists are using the very same argument of social construction to destroy hard-won evidence that could save our lives. (2004: 227)

As writers and researchers we come from within this uneasy tradition, from within the progressive movement with its invested belief in political empowerment through the positive validation of stories of individual lived experience and from within a tradition of critique that has sought to doubt and question voices of authority. Yet as writers and researchers we also recognize the value of expertise, of rigorously uncovered evidence and of the insight and knowledge that come from education and learning.

These ideas warrant a far more subtle and nuanced discussion than we can give them in these brief paragraphs, particularly as we also want to map a way forward within the context of evidence and impact within the participatory arts. Here some of the issues can be situated within the framework we have uncovered, particularly a tension between a drive for impartial, objective, authoritative evidence on the one hand and the validation of invested, subjective and partial lived experience on the other.

To help us move forward, we draw upon the work of Phillip Kitcher, who argues that neither the exclusive elitism of the expert nor the 'tyranny of the ignorant' is a sound base on which to found research. He calls for a 'well-ordered' science within an 'enlightened democracy' in which tutored judgements are made by experts and non-experts

through democratic processes (cited in Faulkner 2004: 2). To Kitcher's concept of 'tutoring' we might add other processes that have sought to unite the evidence that comes from expert knowledge with the insight and democratic validity of participatory processes. Examples include the development of 'citizen juries' within participatory action research or, to give a specific example, the Irish Constitutional Convention of 2012. What both these processes share is the establishment of a 'jury' consisting of a random or representative cross-section of society which is required to hear, cross-question and consider expert witnesses and evidence before producing a collective conclusion.

The explicit parallel is of course with the far more familiar legal jury system, where a random selection of peers considers and weighs up the evidence presented to them. What is interesting for our purposes here is that this enables a disparate range of types of evidence to be considered and enables the non-expert to engage in considering and balancing evidence.

Crucially, among the kinds of evidence that become admissible within the jury system are those described as both hard and soft, both absolute objective facts and different forms of more or less subjective testimony. Testimony is rooted in experience, in the body, in the self, in the position of first-hand witness. In the context of participatory arts practice, testimony documented through words, pictures or video has a particular value in making the lived experience visible. There is movement in this direction, as Olivia Sagan writes, 'Testimony from people is increasingly regarded as a valid form of "evidence" despite the continued clarion call to positivistic means by which to count, measure and offer statically significant proofs of X' (2015: 6–7). Testimony in this context is knowledge rooted in the personal, in the subjective story of experience. Such testimony is also easily dismissed as subjective, individual, even 'anecdotal' (to use a word that is almost anathema in the context of evidence).

Yet testimony as evidence has an utterly vital and indisputable function. Within the law, personal testimony represents a cornerstone of our justice system, as a form of evidence that might not always stand

on its own but is not neglected or ignored. Instead, cases are built through the careful joining together of multiple testimonies, with one classic articulation of testimony as being 'like the case of a rope comprising of several cords. One strand of the cord might be insufficient to sustain the weight, but three strands together may be quite of sufficient strength' (*Pollock CB, R v Exall* (1866) 4 F & F 922, 929).

This cumulative construction of evidence through the weaving of multiple strands seems a valuable way forward, and, in a small way, this is what we hope to present across the three sections in this book, adopting conceptual, analytical and practice-orientated relationships to the subject. In Part One, we begin with four short chapters that seek to frame reflections on evidence and impact in the participatory arts; Part Two brings together eight full-length chapters by invited international contributors that present analytical perspectives on the question of researching the participatory arts; Part Three contains nine shorter, more practice-orientated case studies, again with international scope. Short section introductions will seek to draw connections between these chapters. Across all these chapters the evidence accumulates, with your task as readers being to weave together the cords, the perspectives, the knowledge and the evidence, and over the course of the collection as a whole reach your own conclusions.

# Part One

# Framing Evidence and Impact in Participatory Arts

1

# Purpose, Outcomes and Obliquity: To Plan or Not to Plan

Nick Rowe and Matthew Reason

In his book *Imagination in Action*, Shaun McNiff tells us that those who work in participatory arts practice, and particularly in arts and health, need to 'move between worlds' (2015: 156). He suggests that such practitioners journey between worlds that employ very different languages, epistemologies and practices that can easily lead to misunderstandings and incomprehension. To pursue his metaphor: in the 'kingdom of health' clear, unequivocal outcomes are sought, evidence gathered through scientific methods is favoured and achievement of objective measures uncontaminated by emotion and individual experience is aspired. In this world single causes are sought, multiple variables are excluded and treatments or interventions have clear aims, an approach that is essential in establishing the most effective medication or surgical procedure. The language and tactic of the 'republic of art' are radically different: it operates on multiple levels – inspirational, visual, textual, creative, affective, sensual – and tends to eschew linear causalities, preferring the indeterminate and multilayered. The benefits that artists may claim for their work are underpinned by cultural values that often treat subjectivity as an actively positive marker of experience and perspective.

Although one needs to be cautious of slipping into an unhelpful binary discourse, which will only serve to reinforce misunderstandings, the differences are real and deeply embedded. As long ago as 1959, C. P. Snow, in his highly influential Rede lecture, identified the problem

of these two cultures. As a scientist and novelist he felt that he was constantly moving between

> two groups – comparable in intelligence, identical in race, not grossly different in social origin, earning about the same incomes, who had almost ceased to communicate at all, who in intellectual, moral and psychological climate had so little in common that instead of going from Burlington House or South Kensington to Chelsea, one might have crossed an ocean. (1959: 1)

This polarization is, he told his audience, 'a loss to us all' and a major hindrance to solving the world's problems. Although Snow was referring more broadly to the cultures of science and the humanities, his concerns are clearly evident in the debates surrounding evidence and impact in the arts. Those of us working in the field have perhaps heard community artists angrily, and sometimes rather preciously, accusing those who ask for evidence of not 'understanding' the nature of art processes. We may also have heard medics or policymakers speaking rather dismissively of the arts as 'touchy, feely stuff' and of its evidence of impact as 'soft', as opposed to the 'hard data' available through the scientific method. These shouting matches and dismissive language can bedevil communication between policymakers and the arts.

In articulating their practice, participatory artists are inevitably influenced by the historical and cultural claims made for the arts. As John Carey writes, 'People in the West have been saying extravagant things about the arts for two and a half centuries' (2005: ix). He goes on to list some of the claims that have been made: art can improve and civilize us, produce social tranquillity, foment social change, cement social bonds, maintain the position and status of the elite, help us transcend material limitations, teach us, help us to remember, increase our aesthetic sensibility, allow us insight into the experience of another and provide a means to explore our inner world. In a similar vein, Alain de Botton summarizes the arts as

> a vehicle through which we can do such things as recover hope, dignify suffering, develop empathy, laugh, wonder, nurture a sense

> of communion with others and regain a sense of justice and political idealism. (2014)

The aims and rhetoric of participatory arts projects can be seen as emerging directly from this tradition of either idealistic or grandiose claims. In contrast, the scientific method is in many ways more sceptical but also less ambitious in its approach. It sets out to test and indeed, if possible, disprove a hypothesis. There is an insistence that it can be falsified, that there are circumstances in which it can be disproved. Indeed, for Karl Popper (2005), falsification is a criterion of 'demarcation' between what is scientific and what is unscientific. The claims for the arts discussed above are in this definition unscientific: we cannot disprove the claim that arts enable us to recover hope or that they allow us insight into the experience of another.

We write this chapter as occasional travellers between these two discourses, considering the pragmatic, attitudinal and cultural barriers to mutual understanding. To do so, this chapter explores the articulation of aims and purpose in participatory arts practice, identifying the main problems that lead to misunderstandings and disappointment. It follows the journey from aims to outcomes, from the establishment of purpose to the evaluation of impact, detailing some of the issues that cause problems in the determination of efficacy. Given the lack of comprehension that can occur, we suggest the need for a mutually sensitive understanding of these different cultures; we need to be pragmatic, searching for areas of agreement and accepting variations in language and emphasis. This understandable desire is likely to be more problematic in light of four interrelated problems:

1. The tendency of participatory arts practitioners to express their aims in broad sweeping terms and a general reluctance to define the direction of their work too tightly;
2. The communication of aims across a range of stakeholders;
3. The embedded contextual nature of participatory arts practice;
4. The problem of identity.

## 1 Definitions of purpose in participative arts practice

The methodological differences between participatory arts projects and the realms of scientific research are often most clearly evident, and the problems most acute, in the articulation of the aims of any given project. As Mike White asserts: 'A serious and widespread shortcoming [in arts and health work] is a failure to state and agree clear aims for a project' (2009: 204). In Chapter 5 of this book, Stephen Clift similarly notes the 'surprising finding' that many arts projects do not 'formulate clearly expressed aims'.

Typically, participatory arts practitioners will identify broad aims, such as to provide access to the arts, to break down barriers or to enable participants to tell their story. Some concrete examples taken from the UK will illustrate this. Stepping Out, a theatre company comprising people who use mental health services, 'provides a place where people can participate in the production of high quality, socially-valued theatre' (2016). The participants are 'challenged with support to find new ways of being'. Meanwhile, Graeae Theatre Company, which engages people with disabilities, aims to 'boldly place disabled artists centre stage' (2016). Our own project, Converge, states that one of its key aims is 'to challenge the dynamics of social exclusion that make it difficult for people who use mental health services to access good quality educational and employment opportunities' (2016). We would all perhaps readily ascribe to these aims and praise their ambition. It is also clear how they are derived from cultural assumptions about the value of the arts described above by Carey and de Botton. However, they do not allow easy verification. They are not falsifiable. It would be very difficult, if not impossible, to design a method that would disprove them.

The scientific method requires a clearly defined hypothesis to be tested; it aims to reach conclusions that are universal and generalizable across large populations. Does this drug reduce blood pressure? What dosage is most effective? The aim is clear and largely demonstrable through experimental designs such as a randomized control trial. To put this rather more vividly: the scientific method takes aim rather like

an archer does to his target; success or otherwise is easy to determine. The arts practitioner invites participants to plunge themselves into an immersive pool of creative experience, trusting that this will have an effect that cannot be fully predicted at the outset and is likely to be difficult to define. Indeed, in Chapter 19 of this book, storyteller and researcher Catherine Heinemeyer provocatively and convincingly seeks to place positive value on notions of 'indeterminacy'.

In addition to the problem of setting aims that are untestable through the scientific method, participatory arts practitioners are sometimes reluctant to define aims at all. This is not surprising given an understanding of the artistic process as immersive rather than one-directional. Artists do not usually begin their work with clearly defined goals. With the exception, perhaps, of strictly defined commissions, writers, artists, musicians and theatre-makers begin with ideas, impulses or images that take them in unpredictable directions. Surprises and changes of tack are to be expected and welcomed. Very often the final product is multilayered, inviting a range of possible meanings and interpretations. It is a process of discovery that cannot be predicted in advance. For many this is the joy and the thrill of art-making. This desire to remain open to new unexpected directions may lie behind the resistance of many participatory arts practitioners to set aims and evaluate their work. It certainly compounds the difficulty of establishing outcome measures that will convince the scientific and policymaking communities. This reluctance to set defined aims presents a problem when external funders call for evidence and evaluation. Against which aims will the work be measured? If we do not know where we are going, how will we know if we have arrived?

## 2 Communicating purpose across a range of stakeholders

If they are searching for funding or institutional support, arts practitioners inevitably need to negotiate the aims of their projects. A