

Deakin Research Online

Deakin University's institutional research repository

This is the published version:

Ramsey White, Tabitha and Rentschler, Ruth 2005, Toward a new understanding of the social impact of the arts, in *AIMAC 2005 : Proceedings of the 8th International Conference on Arts & Cultural Management*, HEC, Montreal, Montreal, Quebec.

Available from Deakin Research Online:

<http://hdl.handle.net/10536/DRO/DU:30014382>

Reproduced with the kind permission of the copyright owner.

Copyright : 2005, HEC

Toward a New Understanding of the Social Impact of the Arts

Tabitha Ramsey White
Doctoral Student
Deakin University, Australia

Ruth Rentschler
Executive Director, Centre for Leisure Management Research
Deakin University, Australia

Tabitha Ramsey White (MA, Sydney) is a doctoral student at Deakin University, Australia. Prior to her current study, she worked in the visual arts industries of Australia and Los Angeles.

Ruth Rentschler (PhD, Monash) is Associate Professor and Executive Director, Centre for Leisure Management Research Bowater School of Management and Marketing, Deakin University, Australia. She is editor and author of a number of books, including Cultural and Entertainment Industries Handbook, Shaping Culture and Innovative Arts Marketing and The Entrepreneurial Arts Leader. In 2003, Shaping Culture was published in Chinese in Taiwan.

Abstract

Australia was pivotal in placing empirical study of the social impact of the arts on the map, and yet, a lack of continued robust research has meant that it no longer holds this place. Despite a general acceptance within the arts and health industries that the arts can have positive social impacts, there is little robust evidence to prove this. This paper reviews existing research, finding three primary debates around meaning, methodology, and mastery. This paper recommends a holistic approach to arts impact studies that juxtapose the social and intrinsic impacts. This paper is part of a larger research project into the impact of the arts that will redeem Australia's place as leaders in social impact of the arts studies.

Keywords

Arts, Social Impact, Intrinsic Impact, Australia.

Introduction

The rise of the 'creative industries' has seen the re-evaluation of the economic impact of the arts. The creative industries contribute \$12 billion to the Australian economy annually (Cultural Ministers Council, 2002). The economic benefits are more easily measured. But what is the social impact of the creative industries? And how do we measure it? Existing exploratory research suggests that there is not adequate provision for identifying or measuring the ways creative industries impact on the social arenas such as cohesion, health and well-being, inclusiveness, community identity and education. This literature review explores the research and debates regarding the social impact of one aspect of the creative industries, the arts, over the past 12 years and the more recent introduction of the intrinsic impacts of the arts to the topic. As arts and health organisations look for ways to attract and maintain funding, assessing benefits is one way such support may be attracted. A greater understanding of the range of impacts of the arts is vital to program and policy development. Social and intrinsic impacts are in essence intangible, and in a climate where there is an increasing demand for accountability of public monies, it is important to develop ways to demonstrate their worth.

Despite a general acceptance within industry and government that there are positive social impacts as a result of the arts, there is little robust empirical evidence to prove this (Jermyn 2001; Belfiore 2002; Guetzkow 2002; McQueen-Thomson and Ziguras 2002; Merli 2002; Reeves 2002; Scott 2004). There are three main debates concerning the study of the social impact of the arts. The first is about meaning: a need for clarity and consistency of definitions and interpretations of the terms 'arts' and 'social impact' in relation to the studies and the consequences of these interpretations for research. The second is about methodology: the need for them to be more robust. The third is about mastery: the need for the *intrinsic* value of the arts in relation to social impact to be known as part of understanding the social impact of the arts. The issues raised in these debates have resulted in increasing calls for robust data, sound evidence and more holistic means of establishing the value of the arts. Considering the emergent nature of the field, it is not surprising that the debates are focused on clarification of definition, methodological rigor, and appropriateness of the research field. The remainder of this paper analyses the three debates through past literature and makes the recommendation for a more holistic approach for future research.

Background

Australia was considered a pioneer in the study of the social impact of the art (Merli 2002), yet a lack of continued research means it has not maintained this position. In 1995, Australian Deidre Williams conducted the first extensive empirical research in the field. Williams is considered to have pioneered the methodology that later international studies used to assess the social impact of arts programs (Merli 2002). Williams' report concluded the social impact of the arts was positive and vital. Despite Australia's early innovation, little further study has been conducted. Williams addressed the Regional Arts Australia Conference eight years later stating that despite social impact of the arts studies being vital still no further Australian research had been undertaken in the area (Williams 2002). This is indicative of the embryonic state of the research field and demonstrative of the relatively small amount of research that has been undertaken since her 1995 study (Williams 2002).

There have been limited Australian studies since 2002. The studies conducted are specific to an organisation or individual program (Gibson 2002; Keating 2002; Theile and Marsden 2002); concentrate on community development arts programs or programs with an intended social outcome (VicHealth 2003; Mills and Brown 2004); or look specifically to participation in arts programs (Theile and Marsden 2002; VicHealth 2003). To date, Australian research has not utilised the more recent component of the debate, the juxtaposition of social and intrinsic as a means of more holistically and inclusively understanding the impact of the arts (McCarthy, Ondaatje et al. 2004).

Internationally, research is also limited. While Williams is lauded as conducting the first empirical research in the field, it is accepted that the earliest conceptual study was a discussion paper by United Kingdom cultural research organisation, Comedia, on behalf of the Arts Council of England in 1993 (Landry, Bianchini et al. 1993). The discussion paper initiated Comedia's study, *The Social Impact of Arts Programs*, from which the pivotal report *Use or Ornament* evolved (Matarasso 1997). The study is limited to the social impact of participation in the arts only and concluded positive social benefits resulting from arts participation. It further concluded the complexity of social impacts of the arts research and that further work is required in the field. Simultaneous to Comedia's work, a research centre, *The Social Impact of the Arts Project (SIAP)*, formed at the University of Pennsylvania, USA in 1994. The ongoing project has conducted a variety of research in the field all concluding a positive social impact of the arts.

Alongside continued studies by SIAP and Comedia looking into the more general social impact of the arts, there have been studies focussed on only one theme or impact such as education (Fiske 1999), health (Health Development Agency 2000; Staricoff 2004), social exclusion (DCMS 1999) or creative cities (Florida 2002).

VicHealth is the peak body for health promotion in Victoria, Australia. They have taken a strong industry interest in the links between the arts and health and well-being. VicHealth have an extensive Arts for Health Program including the coordination of a Community Arts Participation scheme (CAP) and an Art and the Environment scheme. In 2002 they contracted an academic review of the literature in the field (McQueen-Thomson and Ziguras 2002), which concluded in essence that despite an indication of positive social impact of the arts, methodology is generally poor and evidence lacking. As a result, VicHealth is actively pursuing research and funding academic scholarship within the field. The level of commitment and interest by VicHealth is indicative of broad industry interest and the importance of study in the field. This literature review is the first stage of a larger research project primarily funded by VicHealth. The larger study aims to develop usable frameworks for the creation of a model for a variety of constituencies to determine the anticipated, perceived and actual social impact of the arts to be utilised in arts management program planning. The study will look at an Australian and an American community. This is an exploratory and revelatory literature review enabling the researchers to contextualise the larger study in terms of the research and debate in the international field.

Method

An analysis of the existing research was conducted. The authors drew on social impact of the arts literature from a range of disciplines including arts management, health, arts policy and community cultural development. As it is accepted within the field that the first publication was in 1993 (Landry, Bianchini et al. 1993), the literature search was confined to the period from 1990 to the present and to English language articles only. These were documented using EndNote and the results analysed so the prevalent themes became evident. The authors do not discuss government policy relating to the social impact of the arts, although they do recognise this would be an appropriate step for further research. Similarly, while the authors recognise there is interest and consequent literature on the social impact of related fields such as events, festivals and sport, it is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss them.

Findings

A total of 104 articles were sourced relevant to the social and impact of the arts, including academic and industry research; government reports and community evaluation. The literature was predominantly from the United Kingdom (50 articles), United States (27 articles) and Australia (23 articles). From these, the authors identified 12 key articles (or group of articles in the case of Stern and Serfeit 1997–2003 and the Valuing Culture Conference 2003) that are examined in this paper. The articles are considered key due their role in defining the path of social impact of the arts studies through in depth analysis or approach and thus informing the concept of this paper.

The literature, including empirical research, conceptual literature and critiques, is grouped into three broad categories based on the primary debates for discussion in this paper: meaning,

methodology, and mastery. The paper concludes with discussion of a more holistic approach to arts impact studies and recommendations for future study.

Table 1, *Social Impact of the Arts Core Literature*, below summarises the 12 key articles identified by the authors, as a result it is indicative of the literature only, not exhaustive. The author/authors are identified in Column One. Column Two indicates the year of publication. Column Three titled 'C' indicates the country of origin. Column Four titled 'M' indicates the Methodology with 'E' for Empirical research and 'C' for a Conceptual article. Column Five summarises the views expressed by each author. The table illustrates that of the 12 core studies over the past 12 years approximately 1/3 are Empirical and 2/3 are Conceptual. The Empirical research is predominantly case study analysis. The table highlights the key themes of empirical research. The table supports the authors' findings of the three primary debates surrounding meaning, methodology and mastery.

**Table 1:
Social Impact of the Arts Core Literature**

Author	Year	C	M	View expressed
Landry et al	1993	UK	C	Original discussion paper arguing that an assessment of the social impact of the arts did not exist and making suggestions as to how this could occur. The basis for later Comedia study by Matarasso 1997.
Williams	1995	AU	E	A national study of the impacts of community-based arts projects funded by the Australia Council in 1991. Case studies. Findings indicate social, economic, educational and artistic benefits.
Matarasso	1997	UK	E	Considered first major study into the social impact of participation in the arts – both community and professional. Substantial social benefit. Marginal adjustment of cultural/social policy priorities would deliver further socio-economic benefits to communities. Case studies.
Stern & Serfeit	1994–2001	USA	E	Ongoing project, Social Impact of the Arts project, gathering systematic data on the role of arts and culture. Various methodologies. Participation has clear and substantial relationship to well-being and influence extends to broader community through collective efficacy.
Fiske	1999	USA	E	Report compiling seven major studies into the impact on learning through student participation in arts programs. Unparalleled opportunities for enhanced learning and achievement for students.
Jermyn	2001	UK	C	Review of social exclusion and the arts; methods and models of art evaluation; and claims and evidence of the impact of the arts. Research reviewed demonstrated consistent themes of positive social impacts but issues exist with methodology and challenges arising from conceptual confusion, measurement; lack of longitudinal study; and difficulties in distinguishing art impacts from other impacts.
Guetzkow	2002	USA	C	Critical review of arts impact on communities literature. Research reviewed indicates positive social impact but issues with definitions (arts, impact, community) and methodology.
Reeves	2002	UK	C	Overview of arts impact research. Growing body of research and anecdotal evidence demonstrating positive social benefits. Vigorous debates about feasibility and efficacy of measuring the impact of arts activities. Lack of consensus across sector about priorities for future research. Common themes from literature include: need for common definitions; need for systematic evaluation and methodologies; multi-value approaches needed recognises quantitative, qualitative and narrative; standardisation of methodologies; longitudinal research.
Merli	2002	UK	C	A critical review of Matarasso's <i>Use or Ornament</i> . Points to a lack of internal validity, an assumption that social impact can result in social change, and that not all participatory arts activities have identical impacts. Suggests in depth interviews as appropriate methodology for future study.
Belfiore	2002	UK	C	Critique of cultural policies and social impact studies in the UK. Points to lack of evidence and risk of assessing the arts within broader social and economic framework.
Valuing Culture Conference, McCarthy et al	2003 2004	UK USA	C C,	Conference considering the 'value' of culture. Primarily pointing out a concentration on the social and economic values at the exclusion of intrinsic values in current debate and policy. Includes contributions such as Ellis, Hewison, Saumerez Smith and Selwood. States the importance of both the instrumental (social and economic) and intrinsic (captivation and pleasure) of the arts. Cites issues with current methodologies and calls for a re-evaluation of the debate to incorporate these components.

Debates in the Literature

As stated earlier, there are three main debates about the social impact of the arts. The first is about definition and interpretation; the second is about the need for more robust methodology; the third is about the need to consider the intrinsic impact of the arts in relation to their social impact. These are summarised as meaning, methodology and mastery. Each debate is now discussed.

Meaning

To understand the social impact of the arts we first need to establish the meaning of the terms *social impact*, and *the arts*. There is no agreed upon definition of the terms within the field, resulting in a lack of clarity and inconsistent or exclusive use of the terms. This has attracted criticism within the field (Jackson 1998; Mattern 2001; Guetzkow 2002). One complication is that the term 'social impact of the arts' is an umbrella phrase for a broad range of studies from evaluation of the impact of one art organisation (Theile and Marsden 2002) through to urban regeneration as a result of cultural activity (Landry, Green et al. 1996). Let us now examine some interpretations and criticisms within the literature and the author's consequent definition of the terms within the field.

Arts: Guetzkow (2002) alleges that different research projects rarely define arts in the same way and often include diverse activities and organizations. This is not unusual as the question of what constitutes art has been debated since at least the late 1800s (Tolstoy 1898). Reeves (2002, p.23), states there are no 'consistent definitions of arts and creative industries across the sector', but concedes that the nature of the industries makes this very difficult. A lack of consistency of interpretation of the arts is therefore not unexpected, rather what causes confusion is that few studies clearly outline their interpretation of the arts at the outset of the study. Most studies, operate from the limited stance of researcher demarcation of an organised arts, in essence limiting the findings only to the social impact of that specific arts activity (or combination of activities). The lack of consistency and concentration on a specified art activity opposed to the arts as a whole makes comparison difficult.

The interpretation of art is further complicated within this context by whether it is process or product that is being referred to. Another criticism is that interpretations of art adopted within many studies are not culturally inclusive and that the mainstream definitions utilised exclude the values and cultures of many groups (Jackson 1998; Mattern 2001). It is important to note that most studies look at community arts programs or come from a community cultural development perspective, meaning that study is often limited to organized art activities (more often than not government funded and therefore incorporating certain rules or regulations). As a result, the impact of personal art (playing an instrument, painting at home); the convergence of art and the everyday (for more information on this concept see Featherstone 1991; Farquharson 2001); the commercial art market; alternative or underground art (graffiti art, tattoos, comics); and art in popular culture (for example film or skateboard art) is either less researched or wholly ignored.

As a result the authors have adopted an inclusive definition to accommodate all activities involving creativity in the process and product. This includes but is not exclusive to both professional and community art; organised and personal art; visual arts and crafts, music, literature, dance, and performance; the convergence of art and society; alternative and underground art; and popular culture. To ensure that the definition of art is representative of the individuals being researched in the broader study, the authors have adopted an inductive approach asking participants to self-identify their interpretation and presence of art in their life.

Social Impact: ‘There is ongoing debate about the meaning of the term “impact” and about appropriate ways of measuring it’ (Arts Council England 2004, p.4). This debate is considered a result of a lack of clarity surrounding the definition of social impact (Guetzkow 2002; Reeves 2002). In fact, much conceptual literature cites the working definition Landry posed in his 1993 paper of ‘those effects that go beyond the artefacts and the enactment of the event or performance itself and have a continuing influence upon, and directly touch peoples lives....’, as the only existing definition (Reeves 2002; Scott 2003).

Despite few studies attempting to clearly define social impact at the outset of the study, the themes used to evidence social impact across most studies are often similar, if not the same. When the themes of social impact were synthesised across seven empirical studies, commonalities were clearly indicated. The five most common themes used to assess social impact are: community empowerment and self determination; social cohesion; local image and identity; health and well being; improved understanding of other cultures/lifestyles.

Inconsistencies arise then, not in the interpretation of social impact but in two primary areas. First, that many of these impacts are concomitant and it becomes difficult to distinguish the impact in one area from another. Second; that the same indicators are used across studies with differing scope and dimension making comparison difficult. Guetzkow (2002, p.13) states that it is the scope of the impact that needs to be clarified in order to assist in defining impact: is it impact on individuals, organizations or communities; is it long or short term; is the impact greater for some than others? Similarly, dependant on the activity being researched, the intention will have been different, some programs have a social aim, some an aesthetic. Some have institutional requirements or aims. Others do not. Tensions exist then between the intention of the study and the consequent social impact. As most studies research only the positive impacts, confusion arises between the value of the arts and the social impact of the arts.

Another issue with the interpretation of social impact is discussed by Merli (2002) in his critique of Matarasso’s *Use or Ornament*. That is, the assumption (if the impact is positive) that positive social impact generates positive social change. Merli contests that the ‘theory of social change implicit in Matarasso’s work [and I would further of others] is questionable’ (p. 112), arguing that individuals feeling differently about their life or community, through arts participation does not ‘change peoples daily conditions of existence—it will only help people accept them’ (ibid). He furthers that making deprivation acceptable, reproduces it and the only way to stop deprivation is by fighting the structural conditions that cause it, not through art programs.

The authors define social impact as non-economic impacts that occur in broad social domains including health and well-being, social inclusion and cohesion, community identity, community empowerment, and education and learning. These impacts can have either personal or public consequences.

Methodology

Currently there is no established or universally accepted methodology for researching the social impact of the arts. Difficulties arise from attempting to create appropriate, transferable means of objectively measuring something that is in essence complex and subjective. The lack of protocols and the often differing agendas (for advocacy, for funding application, for academic pursuit) and perspectives (art, health, community cultural development, urban regeneration, public policy) of studies mean that different studies have vastly different scopes and have used different methodologies making systematic comparison difficult.

Difficulties with measurement: Measurement issues are further compounded by a lack of longitudinal data, small sample sizes; reliance on anecdotal evidence and use of selective case studies that are not necessarily representative as discussed by Jermyn (2001) and Guetzkow (2002). It has been observed that there is a lack of internal validity to many studies – that the data used is not evidence of social impact of the arts and can provide correlations only (Guetzkow 2002; Merli 2002). Most studies also measure the impact on individuals and their communities directly involved with an arts program (active participants) and therefore do not consider passive participants (for example, some one who may walk past a public artwork in their community but who did not play a part in its process) or non participants (for example comparison between a community with an arts program and one without).

Consideration of causal relationship: The causal relationship between the arts and the social impact is also not often considered. What evidence is there that the social impact occurred directly as a result of the arts? Were there other factors? Could the same impact have been achieved by other means? (Guetzkow 2002). Attempts are being made to address the issue of comparison by the development of universally appropriate cultural indicators by a range of agencies including UNESCO (IFACCA 2004). Although whether universal indicators are appropriate and functional in such a field is another issue for debate as some researchers believe it is not tenable to expect that all arts activities would have the same social impacts across all cultures and communities (Merli 2002, p.114).

Are there negative impacts? Despite the phrase, social *impact* of the arts, most studies have focussed overwhelmingly on the social *benefits* or *positive* social impacts of the arts with little acknowledgement of possible negative impacts of inadequately conceived or implemented programs and issues for the broader community such as gentrification.

The larger studies, such as Matarasso, SIAP and Williams only provide a cursory mention of negative impacts, looking more toward why projects may fail than what the social impact of failure may be. Negative issues that the conceptual literature points toward include: arts programs building solidarity amongst one group but divisions within broader community (Mattern 2001; Guetzkow 2002); exclusivity or cultural bias of arts programs (Jackson 1998; Mattern 2001); noise pollution and delinquency in certain events like concerts (Guetzkow 2002); and gentrification (Mattern 2001; Guetzkow 2002; Gibson 2004). The two main issues are societal division and gentrification. Mattern (2001, p.302) uses the example of the failed implementation of the arts to drive community building in Santa Ana, California to discuss societal division:

Despite exceptional promise and significant achievements, the most notable result...is a divided community, starkly exposed by Hispanic exclusion from development efforts and their benefits. Although art helps create and develop community within Santa Ana, it also divides people along lines interrelated class and ethnic lines by segregating experience and by providing inequitable opportunities for participation in the public and civic life of Santa Ana. In effect, art in Santa Ana acts more as a social wedge dividing the two groups...it is more of a social solvent than social glue.

Related to societal divisions come questions of gentrification. Simply put, the notion that the inclusion of arts in a community can attract affluent peoples leading to gentrification and the displacement of lower-income people. In her paper *Port Phillip's Creative Class*, Gibson discusses the gentrification of inner city Melbourne suburb through the rise of what Richards Florida refers to as the *creative class* in *The Rise of The Creative Class* (2002) . Gibson asserts that the *creative class* is attracted to Port Phillip due to its creativity and cultural diversity as

Florida indicates, but that their residence in the area has led to increased property prices and the displacement of its original inhabitants. She continues that while the inclusion of the creative class may be important for economic growth it can be detrimental to the original inhabitants and for the authenticity and identity of neighbourhoods leading to 'Disneyland bohemia's'.

Mastery

How can we master social impact? Does an emphasis on creating an intended social impact in fact undermine or ignore the creative process that drives impact inherently? There are those who have observed that throughout the history of art, art that has made a great impact on society did not necessarily do so with an intended social objective, but that social impact occurred epiphenomenally:

Mozart is Mozart because of his music, not because he created a tourist industry in Salzburg...Picasso is important because he taught a century new ways of looking at object not because his painting in the Bilbao Guggenheim Museum are regenerating an otherwise derelict northern Spanish port. (Tusa, J in Reeves 2002, p.36)

And

When Pope Julius II commissioned Michelangelo to repaint the Sistine Chapel in 1508, he didn't have to get planning permission. Nor did he have to submit a business plan to the Papel Lottery Fund that demonstrated an increase the economic viability of the project as a result of uplift in visitor spend resulting from the increased access to this tourist offer. Nor did he have to demonstrate to the Holy See's Social Exclusion unit how the project would meet the relevant targets covering health, crime, education and employment. (Hewison 2003, p.1)

And yet the impact, be it social or intrinsic, individual or community, of Mozart, Picasso or Michelangelo is undeniable. So should arts organisations be attempting to instil social impact into their programs or only funding programs with an intended social impact?

Merli considers this in *Evaluating the social impact of participation in the arts: A critical review of François Matarasso's, 'Use or Ornament'*. Merli points to the distinction between the original phenomenon of community arts in the 1970s and the conception of arts participation advocated by current social impacts studies. Observing that the 'while original phenomenon was a spontaneous movement, its revival is a 'device' offered by the government. He further observes that the original movements aim was emancipation from social control through art and the current advocacy is the restoration of social control through art. It is yet to be established if contriving positive social impacts through art can be realised.

How does this affect policy implications and intentions? The issue of contrived social impact has two primary implications. First, data may not be collected objectively or analysed constructively and 'says more about policy intentions than actual impact' (Selwood 2002). Take for example, Belfiore's example of England where, despite a lack of evidence as to the positive social impact of the arts, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, has as one of its ten goals for the arts to 'develop and enhance the contribution the arts make to combating social exclusion and promoting regeneration' The Arts Council then creates documents 'to 'deliver' against performance indicators derived from these goals' (Belfiore 2002, p.93). It is questionable then, if the data is objectively producing these results or if organisations are being required to create indicators that will produce these results.

The second implication as observed by Belfiore is, to paraphrase: In order for the social impact of the arts to be vindicated, it needs to be demonstrated that the arts are a more effective means of producing positive social impact than other means. Otherwise, arguing for funding for the arts based on such unsubstantiated claims will not only fail, but will put at risk the cause for funding the arts based on other criteria (Belfiore 2002, p.104).

Introducing intrinsic impacts: Recent debate in the literature has addressed this, calling for the scope of social impact studies to include intrinsic impacts, arguing that there is not only personal but also public consequences of intrinsic impact (McCarthy, Ondaatje et al. 2004). The debate further contends that current policy focuses on the contribution of the arts to wider economic and social goals leaving under-articulated and undervalued the intrinsic worth (Ellis 2003). The issue being that the abstract nature of response to art makes it a difficult thing to articulate much less study, measure and universally encapsulate. The difficulty of articulation and consequent measurement has led to governments dismissing this aspect of intrinsic impact and as much of the existing research has been intended to inform public policy or to gain government funding or support, researchers also have neglected this component. As Charles Saumarez Smith, Director of the National Gallery of the United Kingdom stated at a conference specifically about this issue:

I would never dream of arguing that there is a role for looking; for understanding art; for individual contemplation; for the realm of the beautiful; for the development of minds and the creative imagination through the appreciation and study of great paintings of the past...I would not do so because I would take it for granted that they would fall on deaf ears—that governments over the last twenty years...have been indifferent or positively hostile to the belief that culture might be of value for its own sake and not just what it does for education or urban regeneration or cultural tourism or the leisure economy. (Smith 2003, p.2)

Interestingly, in Matarasso's early study he did indeed touch on this debate, as the title *Use or Ornament* suggests (Matarasso 1997). Although responses to the report seldom discuss this and concentrate rather on the emphasis on social impacts which initiated much of the later literature. Matarasso argues that art is worthwhile as art but that this is not undermined by considering the social impacts. It is not a requirement of the arts to have social objectives but rather that arts *programs* can be used to achieve social objectives by organisations or government bodies with that purpose (Matarasso 1997, p.80-81). Reeves (2002, p.30-31) suggests though that the sector traditionally relied on an emphasis on aesthetic and intrinsic values but that while these are still valid they are not strong enough due to current public policies to attract resources for the arts. Unlike other arguments calling for policy change to recognise the benefits of intrinsic impact, Reeves interestingly seems to argue the converse. Perhaps this is because the concomitant relationship between intrinsic and social impacts has not been viewed holistically. Nor have the public benefits of intrinsic impact been considered alongside the personal.

Toward a more Holistic Approach

A recent publication by the RAND Institute, USA (McCarthy, Ondaatje et al. 2004), addresses this notion of a more holistic approach through a discussion of the recent emphasis on what they term the *instrumental* benefits (social and economic) in empirical research and that current research ignores the *intrinsic* (captivation and pleasure). They determined it essential to 'step back from the terms of the current debate which is coloured by the need to justify public

spending in the face of other pressing societal demands.’ Instead they developed a framework that defines arts benefits as either instrumental (indirect benefit that is a means to achieving outcomes in non arts areas) or intrinsic (inherent in the arts experience and of value in itself not as a means to something else).

The RAND report is the first research to systematically study the impact of the arts in this way. The report found three major issues with the current approach. That it relies too heavily on instrumental benefits; that it ignores intrinsic benefits; and that it is tailored to serve the financial needs of the non-profit arts sector (McCarthy, Ondaatje et al. 2004, p.67). They deem this problematic as the reliance on instrumental benefits will not be convincing due to weak methodologies, absence of specificity and failure to consider opportunity costs. They determine that many arts advocates are uncomfortable with reliance on instrumental impacts but are hesitant to emphasise the intrinsic benefits in case this does not resonate with funders. They argue that this is ignorant of two vital facts: that intrinsic benefits are why people participate in the arts and that the intrinsic impacts can produce public benefit as well as the instrumental impact (McCarthy, Ondaatje et al. 2004, p.68).

What they are essentially arguing for is a more holistic approach to studying the impact of the arts ‘that recognizes not only the contribution that both intrinsic and instrumental benefits make to the public welfare, but also the central role intrinsic benefits play in generating all benefits deriving from the arts, and the importance of developing policies to ensure that the benefits of the arts are realized by greater numbers’(McCarthy, Ondaatje et al. 2004, p.xii).

This argument is crucial in recognising the relationship between intrinsic and instrumental impacts and the concomitant impact they have on individuals and communities. The report recognises that little analysis has been conducted in this way and calls for a new approach based on a broader understanding of arts impact. The report makes several recommendations including that instrumental benefits research should not be abandoned as it is vital, but rather that more robust methodologies need to be utilised and that it needs to be conducted in conjunction with intrinsic benefit research. This leads to another vital recommendation, which is that a language for discussing intrinsic benefits needs to be established in order for this research to take place and for government and policy to recognise the importance of intrinsic benefit (McCarthy, Ondaatje et al. 2004). If both these recommendations were taken up, the conceptual confusion and dissatisfaction with and within current discourse, as indicated by the literature and industry debates, would be alleviated and a significant move forward in the field would occur.

Conclusion and Further Research

The social impact of the arts is an emergent area of research meaning inevitably issues such as definitions, robust methodologies and appropriateness of research are still embryonic. In conclusion there are four recommendations for further research that would assist the evolution of the research field.

- *Meaning* A more transparent basis for interpretation of the primary terms (art and social impact) is required to allow clarified understanding of the field and comparison between studies. The use of self-identification of art and impact rather than researcher demarcation would be more inclusive and ensure interpretation was representative. As recommended in the RAND report (McCarthy, Ondaatje et al. 2004), the terms of social

impact need to be re-addressed to include the intrinsic impacts and a new language for discussing the impacts needs to be developed.

- *Methodology* The prevailing criticism within the literature is of the lack of robust methodology within the field. Robust, innovative and transparent methodologies are required both to fully understand the social impact of the arts and also to understand its place within broader arts, impact and public policy debates.
- *Mastery* It is evident that there is a distinction between art being utilised as an intended tool for positive social impact and art whose aims and thus impacts are based on other criteria (such as aesthetic or intrinsic). The research field needs to clearly delineate these, particularly in light of advocacy and funding implication.
- *More holistic approach* Dissatisfaction with the scope of social impact studies within both academia and industry calls for a more holistic approach to impact studies that look to both social and intrinsic impacts and the personal and public consequences of these impacts. The RAND report was conceptual only and indicates a clear need for empirical research conducted into the impact of the arts in this way.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to acknowledge VicHealth, City of Ballarat and ARTScorpsLA for their ongoing support of this project.

References

- Arts Council England. 2004. *The Impact of the Arts: Some Research Evidence*. Arts Council England. UK.
- Belfiore, E. 2002. "Arts as a Means of Alleviating Social Exclusion: does it Really Work? A Critique of Instrumental Cultural Policies and Social Impact Studies in the UK." *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, Vol 8, no 1, p. 91-106.
- Cultural Ministers Council Statistics Working Group 2002 *Selected Cultural Industries 1999-2000*, Prepared by the National Centre for Cultural and Recreation Statistics, Australian Bureau of Statistics.
- DCMS 1999. *Policy Action team 10: Report on Social Exclusion*. London, Department for Culture, Media and Sport.
- Ellis, A. 2003. *Valuing Culture*. Valuing Culture, London.
- Farquharson, A. 2001. *The Magic Hour: The Convergence of Art and Las Vegas*. Ostfildern-Ruit, Hatje Cantz Verlag.
- Featherstone, M. 1991. "The Aestheticization of Everyday Life." *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism*. London, Sage Publications.
- Fiske, E. B. 1999. *Champions of Change: the Impact of the Arts on Learning*. E. B. Fiske. Washington, Arts Education Partnership.
- Florida, R. 2002. *The Rise of the Creative Class*. North Melbourne, Pluto Press.
- Gibson, C. 2002. "Rural Transformation and Cultural Industries: Popular Music on the New South Wales far North Coast." *Australian Geographical Studies*, Vol 40, no 3, p. 337-356.
- Gibson, L. 2004. *Port Phillips Creative Class*. 2nd Gentrification Forum, Melbourne, Australia.
- Guetzkow, J. 2002. *How the Arts impact Communities: An introduction the Literature*. Taking the Measure of Culture Conference, Princeton University.
- Health Development Agency. 2000. *Art for Health: a Review of Good Practice in Community-based Arts Projects and Initiatives which Impact on Health and Well-being*. London, HDA.
- Hewison, R. 2003. *Money for Values*. Valuing Culture, London.

- IFACCA 2004. *Statistical Indicators for the Arts*. IFACCA, Sydney.
- Jackson, M. 1998. "Arts and Culture Indicators in Community Building: Project Update." *International Journal of Arts, Management, Law and Society*, Vol 28, no 3, p. 202-205.
- Jermyn, H. 2001. *The Arts and Social Exclusion: a Review Prepared for the Arts Council of England*. London, The Arts Council of England.
- Keating, C. 2002. *Evaluating Community Arts and Community Well-being: An Evaluation Guide for Community Arts Practitioners*. Melbourne, Effective Change for Arts Victoria; Darebin City Council; City of Whittlesea and VicHealth.
- Landry, C., F. Bianchini, M. Maguire, and K. Warpole. 1993. *The Social Impact of the Arts A Discussion Document*. Stroud, Comedia.
- Landry, C., L. Green, F. Matarasso, and F. Bianchini. 1996. *The Art of Regeneration: Urban Renewal through Cultural Activity*. Stroud, Comedia.
- Matarasso, F. 1997. *Use or Ornament? The Social Impact of Participation in the Arts*, Comedia.
- Mattern, M. 2001. "Art and Community Development in Santa Ana, California: The Promise and the Reality." *International Journal of Arts Management, Law and Society*. 30(4): 301-315.
- McCarthy, K., E. Ondaatje, .L. Zakaras, A Brooks, 2004. *Gifts of the Muse: Reframing the Debate about the Benefits of the Arts*. Santa Monica, RAND Institute.
- McQueen-Thomson, D. and C. Ziguas, 2002. *Promoting Mental Health & Wellbeing through Community & Cultural Development: A Review of Literature focussing on Community Arts Practice*. VicHealth and The Globalism Institute. Melbourne. 2005.
- Merli, P. 2002. "Evaluating the Social Impact of Participation in Arts Activities: A critical review of Francois Matarasso's *Use of Ornament?*" *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, Vol 8, no 1, p. 107-118.
- Mills, D. and P. Brown, 2004. *Art and Wellbeing*, Australia Council for the Arts. 2004.
- Reeves, M. 2002. *Measuring the Economic and Social Impact of the Arts: a Review*, Arts Council England.
- Scott, C. 2003. "Museums and Impact." *Curator: the Museum Journal* 46(3): 293-310.
- Scott, C. 2004. *Museums and Impact: Some Issues for Museums to Consider*. Uncover conference, 24th September 2004.
- Selwood, S. 2002. *Measuring Culture*. S. Online. London, Spiked Online. 2005.
- Smith, C., 2003. *Valuing Culture*. Valuing Culture, London.
- Staricoff, R. S. 2004. *Arts in Health: a Review of the Medical Literature*. London, Arts Council England.
- Theile, M. and S. Marsden 2002. *Engaging Art: The Artful Dodgers Studio, A Theoretical Model of Practice*, Jesuit Social Services.
- Tolstoy, L. 1898. *What is Art? What is Art? And Essays on Art (1930)*. A. Maude. London, Oxford University Press.
- VicHealth 2003. *Creative Connections: Promoting Mental Health and Wellbeing through Community Arts Participation*. VicHealth. Melbourne, VicHealth.
- Williams, D. 2002. *Research Models for Regional Arts, Researching the Social Impact of the Arts - The Role of Practitioners*. Regional Arts Australia National Conference.