
**CULTURAL MINISTERS
COUNCIL**

Statistics Working Group

**Social Impacts of
Participation in the Arts
and Cultural Activities**

Stage Two Report

Evidence, Issues and Recommendations

*Prepared by the Australian Expert Group in
Industry Studies of the University of Western
Sydney*

2004

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The Cultural Ministers Council Statistics Working Group (SWG) commissioned this project, and the Australian Expert Group in Industries Studies (AEGIS) is pleased to present the report signifying the completion of Stage Two report of the *Social Impacts of Participation in the Arts and Cultural Activities: Evidence, issues and recommendations*. The research team at AEGIS was composed of Prof. Jane Marceau and Miss Kate Davison. We thank the Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts (DCITA) and SWG for their input and time. We are grateful to our colleague Carol Scott from the Powerhouse Museum for sharing her expertise, helping with literature searches and advising on evaluation methodology. We would also like to thank both Josephine Watts for her hard work conducting interviews and the persons who were interviewed for giving generously of their time. Appreciation is extended to Professors Susan Cozzens and Herb Marsh for their help in designing evaluation options and Tim Turpin for kindly revising the final draft.

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Stage Two Report, *Social impacts of participation in the arts and cultural activities: Evidence, issues and recommendations*

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The Australian Expert Group in Industry Studies (AEGIS)

AEGIS research focuses on elucidating the dynamics of industrial growth and development, mapping product systems to reveal and analyse the drivers of innovation in different industries. AEGIS focuses on exploration and analyses of innovative capacity in industry, including both technological bases and organisational arrangements, and the relationships between such capacity and economic growth.

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Preface

This project was born of the increasing focus on *how* participating in arts and cultural activity intersects with other areas of public concern such as education, crime prevention, community identity and development. While continuing to recognise the intrinsic value of arts and culture, this project focused on the growing body of research work examining the impact of participating in arts and cultural activity on other areas of social interest and concern. The impact areas examined were cognitive skills and educational attainment; community pride/identity; crime prevention; mood; self-esteem; social behaviour; social cohesion; and health.

The aim of this project was to identify, collate and evaluate existing applied research on the social impacts of participation in arts and cultural activity to bring together the existing body of evidence. This would then inform future research initiatives in the area and assist decision-makers regarding the efficacy of arts and cultural participation in achieving other social outcomes. The project draws together existing statistical data and research on the social impacts of participation in arts and cultural activity from within Australia and overseas. The focus was on consolidating the results of key, current international and national research that contained some applied quantitative research.

Stage One of the project resulted in an annotated bibliography of research presented in a user friendly Excel database. This database, contains a total of 104 entries {(87 reports +17 background papers); 41 in the United Kingdom, 20 in the United States of America 19 in Australia, five in Scotland, and two in Canada} outlining the most recent and relevant papers dealing with arts impact research.

The database can be searched by any of the following categories: title, year of publication, date of study, type of document, country, institution, author, publisher details, source, keywords, type of arts/cultural program, methodology, study population, type of participation(creative or receptive), impact areas addressed, summary of report and main findings, comment from the consultants, recommendations and other conclusions.

The database is online at: www.dcita.gov.au/swg/publications/Database_January_2004.xls.

The Stage Two report draws together the information assessed in Stage One and provides an analysis of this information in the context of Australia's current arts and cultural policy framework. The Stage Two report explains the complexities involved in this emerging research field, indicates the research gaps or shortcomings and identifies the types of research models useful to arts and cultural policy and program development.

This report can be used as a basis for a discussion or workshop to inform researchers and policy makers as to how the existing body of work surveyed, and its conclusions, apply to future and specific areas of interest.

Individuals can search the database for their unique areas of interest and use the report to ensure an understanding and diffusion of prior knowledge in the area of social impact research. The information can assist in theoretically underpinning and devising the next steps in their own policy and program evaluation procedures. While it's clearly understood that 'social impacts' are complex phenomena, likely to be affected by a broad range of social, economic and environmental factors, this project is a first step in progressing our collective understanding and guiding any future research work in the area.

Cultural Ministers Council Statistics Working Group

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2003, the Cultural Ministers Council Statistical Working Group (SWG) via the Department of Communications, Information Technology, and the Arts (DCITA) commissioned the Australian Expert Group in Industry Studies (AEGIS) to conduct a study into the *Social Impacts of Participation in the Arts and Cultural Activity*.

The first stage of the project aimed to map and assess the current international and Australian research based around the impact of participation in arts and cultural activity on eight focus areas. These were:

- cognitive skills and educational attainment
- self esteem
- community pride
- mood
- social cohesion
- crime prevention
- health
- social behaviour.

The project aimed to identify, collate and evaluate existing applied research on the social impacts (benefits and costs) of participation in arts and cultural activity into a searchable database. It aimed to draw together current statistical data and research on the social impacts of participation in arts and cultural activity both from within Australia and overseas with a focus on current, key, quantitative international and national research.

The second stage of the project aimed to draw together the information collated in stage one and analyse this information in the context of Australia's current arts and cultural policy framework and future directions. The project is viewed as a first step in bringing together current work on the social impacts of participation in arts and cultural activity in order to help identify further research needs and allow for better informed policy development and programming.

The first stage, completed in late 2003, comprised the collection and review of current literature from selected countries on the social impact of participating in arts and cultural activities and some interviews in the United Kingdom (UK) with policymakers in the field. The literature was collated into a searchable annotated database that includes reference details, summary information on focus impact, participation, population, methodology and country. Eighty-seven reports and papers were entered into the main database—forty-one from the UK, five from Scotland, nineteen from Australia, twenty from the United States of America (USA), two from Canada and one from Finland. The biggest single group of studies addressed cognitive skills and educational attainment or self-esteem while almost as many addressed community pride/identity and or mood respectively. The definition of 'participation' used in the study followed the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) in distinguishing between *receptive* (passive) participation, such as going to a concert, and *creative*,

such as the active learning of a musical instrument. The methodology used to create the database is outlined in the introduction of this report.

The present report constitutes the second stage—analysis of the written data gathered, supplemented by interviews with Australian policymakers and arts administrators.

The data from stage one showed a broad range of methodologies used to examine social impacts. Most used case studies or small numbers of interviews, while fewer were based on national or other surveys. A small group of studies used meta-analyses of existing studies. The quantitative studies on which the project was originally to concentrate proved to be few in number. Evaluation methodologies and policy aims have not always been well matched.

The diversity in the range and appropriateness of methodologies reflects both the diversity of the projects and programs assessed and divergence of views among policymakers and evaluators as to appropriate approaches. Within arts and cultural programs/activities variation occurs along many dimensions—scale, duration, target group(s), type of activity, type of participation, and geographical and social location. All these affect impact.

The report discusses this overall finding in relation to evidence of impact, gaps in knowledge, priorities for research and promising lines of inquiry and approach.

Social impact is defined as desired changes in attitudes or behaviour in target groups or individuals.

Issues and major findings

There is much anecdotal and otherwise informal evidence of positive impact(s) from participation in the arts and cultural activity but little data to support the hypotheses.

Reasons for this include:

- absence of clear intentions with regard to the social objectives of policies;
- poor design of studies;
- a focus on outputs rather than longer term outcomes or impact;
- lack of consensus around definition of terms;
- insufficient evaluation expertise in the arts field; and
- insufficient attention to the mechanisms which underpin any impact and hence to effective policy design for the activation of these mechanisms.

The field is highly complex because all the terms are subject to multiple definitions and interpretations and there is almost never any clear result from a particular intervention. The complexity of the issues and differing interpretations of key terms means that there is no single widely accepted model for investigating the social impacts of participation in the arts and cultural activities.

Evaluations need good theoretical grounding and evidence of adequate theoretical grounding was not commonly found.

Cultural institutions mostly have goals which have little to do with social impact, focusing on heritage conservation and presentation (museums and galleries) or information storage and dissemination (libraries and archives).

Research results provide evidence of diversity and complexity rather than of clear lines of causality or even associations between arts and cultural programs or activities and their impacts in the multiple arenas of the social domain.

In Australia there is great interest among policymakers in considering social as well as economic impacts when developing policies and programs for arts and cultural activities and in encouraging collaboration between arts fields and other social and economic initiatives in the pursuit of social objectives.

Many agencies around Australia are commissioning studies in different fields, notably to assess the impact of participation in arts and cultural activities on educational attainment, and collecting evaluation data on a wide range of projects.

Several jurisdictions have a focus on 'creativity', broadly conceived, as part of development strategies. These broad programs, such as Creative Queensland and Creating Capacity (Victoria), cover a range of arts and industry development activities. Several governments have strong commitments to making a social difference through the activities of many portfolio areas. The arts and cultural portfolio areas have developed initiatives to contribute to broad government objectives, including the reduction of social exclusion, community development, improvements in individual self esteem, educational attainment or health status. Other important initiatives are particularly focused on sustainability or regional development and on Indigenous populations.

The considerable interest and commitment to supporting broader social outcomes is not always matched by deep knowledge and understanding of the issues surrounding the impacts of policies and programs. Most interviewees were aware of the need to assess impacts and understand the mechanisms connecting program design with desired outcomes among the target groups but in Australia, as elsewhere, confusion surrounds issues such as what constitutes 'evidence'. This is not surprising given that the level of successful evaluation activity in the international arena remains limited and still mostly relies on anecdotal and small scale evaluation methods.

The flood of criticisms of evidence currently available is, however, increasingly matched by widespread efforts to develop better approaches and ensure better practice in evaluations of the social impact(s) of participation in the arts and cultural activities. Australian policymakers and administrators are clearly aware of the many limitations of the methodologies used and are seeking to find better ways forward.

Ways forward: priorities for research and action

Policymakers developing programs or policies in the arts and cultural spheres and linking these to the achievement of other desirable social and behavioural changes should be aware of the different bodies of literature and theoretical underpinnings of each social impact area.

Each area of impact is the subject of many studies, both theoretical and empirical, and behind each stands a substantial body of literature. These bodies of literature are distinct and each generates different hypotheses as to factors of cause and effect in

their development in specific communities or individuals. This theory will point to the mechanisms through which desired social changes may (or may not) be made. If outcome 'b' is desired then it is critical to understand the influences that determine whether it will be achieved at all using policy or program 'a'.

Seeking out and understanding these literatures and their implications should perhaps be the top research priority.

It is important to examine the cumulative and interaction effects of participation in arts and cultural activity, either among several such programs or in conjunction with non-arts interventions. Given the complexities of social environments it is not likely that any one program will be the sole intervention.

It is probably too early in a fast-moving field to expect to find completed studies of this kind but the aim should be to develop them as baseline data are collected and the methodologies in the field grow more sophisticated.

Some progress has been made in providing useful definitions, which can be generalised. In the UK, Resource has developed a preliminary set of definitions of inputs, outputs, outcomes and impacts. These have already been used by the Cultural Heritage Consortium for identifying relevant quantitative time series (2002) and form a basis for comparison for future research.

Discussion of the gaps in the literature and the information gathered from the interviews conducted with Australian policymakers and administrators suggest that further research is needed in all the fields relevant to consideration of the social impact(s) of participation in the arts and cultural activities. There seems to be no field or sub-field in which the evidence is well established and the data robust.

Priorities for further research in the immediate future should be selected strategically by policymakers and practitioners, the choice of focus being related to the differing policy emphases placed within different jurisdictions and portfolio combinations. Some priorities will concern fields and disciplines or types of programs and impacts sought while others target groups, such as Indigenous or inner urban populations.

The scale (resources) of the intervention and timeframe of the intervention are critical in planning for and measuring its expected effects. Many programs in the arts and cultural activities in Australia are very small in terms of scale and limited in terms of timeframe. It is almost certainly unrealistic to expect a short program, for instance of a few weeks, with few resources to effect behavioural or attitudinal change. More 'heavy duty' social impact analysis should perhaps be reserved for large scale, longer term, well-resourced policy endeavours and programs. These seem to be the only ones that can be designed to provide robust enough data to justify many of the claims currently made but largely unsupported by evidence.

Disseminating evaluation 'toolkits' may be the most useful and appropriate way of ensuring quality evaluation of smaller scale policies and programs.

Agreement among policymakers as to the focus selected for future research should be matched by a willingness to design studies to maximise comparability across states and territories in selected fields. This will serve to facilitate pooling of resources to ensure studies of sufficient scale and duration and to involve the relevant sector providers.

Policy makers will be well-served by ensuring diffusion of good knowledge of earlier studies in the field—of what can theoretically be expected as linkages between programs and their outcomes. This knowledge then may be used to design empirical approaches which combine surveys—interviews, questionnaires, mail-out or phone—of sample populations selected on a purposive or random basis with carefully selected case studies to demonstrate in more detail the mechanisms of the effects observed.

This report can be used as a basis for a discussion or workshop to inform researchers and policy makers as to how the existing body of work surveyed, and its conclusions apply to future and specific areas of interest. Participants could search the database for areas relating to their own centres of interest and devise the next steps in their own policy and program evaluation procedures as they relate to the areas of impact determined for this study.

Additional trends

Two important trends seem to be emerging. These perhaps reflect some of the same difficulties outlined in this report also being encountered by many policymakers and practitioners in the evaluation of the social impact of participation in the arts and cultural activities.

The first trend is a refocusing of attention in the arts and cultural policy world onto the intrinsic value of arts and cultural activities, rather than their justification in terms of other social purposes.

In the second parallel trend, there is increasing recognition that it may be more effective in policy terms to directly address difficult issues, rather than through indirect means via individuals in target groups or whole communities in arts and cultural programs. This is not to say that such programs have no impact or that they are not valuable partners in concerted efforts to achieve social goals. It is simply to say that a balanced approach and active partnerships with other agencies may be needed.

1 INTRODUCTION

The impetus for the project as a whole derives from several elements of the current policy contexts, both internationally and within Australia. First, there is greatly increased international and Australian interest in the role that can be played by participation in the arts and cultural activities in contributing to the achievement of broader policy goals. A second element of the policy context is interest in the role that such contributions by the cultural sector can play in justifying public funding for arts and cultural programs and institutions and thus helping ensure the financial viability of the sector in a climate of greatly increased demand for public accountability. Thirdly, in the UK at least and in several Australian states and territories there has been increasing interest in the reduction of social exclusion and other areas related to equity and access.

The project consisted of two stages. The first stage, completed in late 2003, comprised collection and review of the current literature from selected countries (England, Scotland, Canada, Australia and the USA) on the social impact of participating in the arts and cultural activities. The literature was obtained from websites such as the British Department of Culture, Media and Sport, the Canada Council for the Arts, and the Australia Council for the Arts. Websites of leading research institutes were also searched such as Comedia and the Centre for Arts and Humanities in Health and Medicine at the University of Durham. Broad Internet searches were then undertaken and the studies mentioned in the reports were followed up.

This literature was collated into a searchable database that includes the following information for each entry: reference details, summary information (including impact, participation, population, methodology, and country), author's abstract and additional comments. Just over one hundred documents were located, of these 13 were classified as not useful for the study, 17 were classified as background information, and the remaining documents formed the basis of the searchable database. Comments are provided on the studies and the searchable database is therefore an annotated bibliography of literature on the social impacts of participation in the arts and culture.

It is intended that the searchable database will be made available on the Cultural Ministers Council Statistics Working Group's website. In this report we propose some options and suggestions for making best use of the database.

The aim of the second stage of the project was to assess available information concerning the impact(s) of participation in the arts and cultural activity, in both the international and Australian context, so as to inform and assist the effective direction of resources by government and the cultural sector in developing policy and projects and pursuing practical development strategies. The present report builds on Stage One providing analysis and discussion on the literature included in the database and thus reports on the project as a whole.

The information needed for analysing the data available in the context of Australian policies was gathered first from websites and then through personal interviews with arts and cultural policymakers and administrators in all the states and territories and the federal Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts and

with staff of the Australia Council. Interviews were conducted with several staff in most of the organisations concerned in Australia and with Baroness Blackstone, Minister for Culture in the UK until June 2003, with staff at the Department of Culture, Media and Sport and with Dr Sara Selwood in London. Discussion in the interviews covered the place of social impact in the design and intent of policies and programs for arts and cultural activities, the definitions of the relevant terms used by the agencies concerned, their own activities concerning evaluation of the programs and organizations administered and views on what is now needed if there is to be a greater focus on potential social impacts when thinking about new activities. The interview schedule is provided in Appendix 1.

The interviews suggested that in Australia, as in the UK and elsewhere, there is great interest among policymakers in considering social as well as economic impacts when developing policies and programs for arts and cultural activities and in encouraging collaboration between arts fields and other social and economic initiatives in the pursuit of social objectives. Every organization consulted expressed such interest and many had been very active in seeking out information from elsewhere and in thinking about the issues. Many states have a focus on creativity broadly conceived and as part of the development strategies for their jurisdictions. These very broad programs, such as Creative Queensland and Creating Capacity (Victoria), cover a wide range of arts and industry development activities under the program umbrella. Similarly, in some states and territories current governments have strong commitments to making a social difference through the activities of many portfolios and the arts area has developed initiatives as contributions to these broad government objectives. Included in the social objectives are sometimes explicit references to the reduction of social exclusion, community development, improvements in individual self esteem, educational attainment or health status. Other initiatives are particularly focused on sustainability or regional development or on Indigenous populations.

The study thus found widespread interest in and commitment to the inclusion of social impact objectives in the development of policies and programs for the arts and cultural activities among policymakers and arts area officials. There was a commensurate interest in discovering what had been tried and found elsewhere, both by their Australian counterparts in other jurisdictions and international experts and policymakers. Many respondents had made considerable efforts to learn from the experiences of others while retaining their own local priorities and areas of focus..

The interviews also suggested, however, that the amount of interest and commitment, has not yet been matched by deep knowledge and understanding of the many issues surrounding the impacts of policies and programs in the social sphere. Most people interviewed were aware that they needed to be able to assess impacts, and understand the mechanisms which may connect program design with desired outcomes among the target groups, so that they could both evaluate policies and actions and design more effective ones where needed. However, there is confusion about what constitutes evidence and the level of rigour needed to justify focusing funds on programs with specific social impact aims and target populations.

This is not surprising given that the level of successful evaluation activity in the international arena is very limited and mostly relies on anecdotal and non-quantitative evaluation methods.

Thus, as the database created for the present project indicates, while there are many reports and small scale studies in the general domain of the social impact(s) of participation in the arts and cultural activities, there are very few quantitative, large scale, methodologically rigorous and long term studies providing evidence of impact. There are even fewer such studies of the specific impact(s) of different areas of the arts or cultural activity, such as the impact of the arts on improvements in health status. Those studies that there are available are fragmented in terms of programs assessed, populations covered, duration (of projects and studies), type of participation and assessment of the longevity of a given effect. Even fewer have good baseline data against which to compare results. There is thus relatively little, whether within Australia or internationally, that is appropriate and sufficiently robust for policymakers and practitioners to rely on when designing policies and programs or evaluating what they have achieved.

The lack of robust evidence about the positive relationship between participation in the arts and cultural activities does not, of course, mean that there is no such relationship: it merely means that more systematic and more sophisticated work is needed to tease out the very complex issues at the heart of the matter.

Section 2 of this report presents the key observations from the analysis of the database developed through Stage One. It summarise what seems to be known from the studies now available from Australia and overseas. Section 3 focuses on the methodologies and the links between evidence and impact. Section 4 provides further analysis of methods, especially measurement tools, and draws out some major lessons from the study about best practice, ways of applying information to policy, and identifies the gaps in existing research. Section 5 continues the analysis in the context of the Australian policy environment, making international comparisons across the study generally. The findings presented in this section reveal similar issues to those experienced overseas and similar weaknesses in the availability of baseline data. Section 6 proposes a way forward for steering future research to the needs of policy development. Options for research design and associated recommendations are presented. Finally Section 7 presents summary observations from the study as a whole on the current state of evaluation of the social impacts of participation in arts and cultural activity with particular reference to the policy environment in which it is carried out.

2 ANALYSIS OF INTERNATIONAL AND AUSTRALIAN SOCIAL IMPACTS RESEARCH

Stage Two of the present project analyses the literature included in the database with a view to identifying areas of best practice in approach and in methodologies for evaluation and gaps in the information available that make further research necessary. As required by the terms of the project, the following sections:

- summarise the availability of international and Australian research into the social impact(s) of participation in the arts and cultural activities, research and identify areas that are covered and areas where research is sparse;
- highlight the links between disciplines and new ways to apply that information to policy;

- identify areas of best practice in research undertaken to date, both internationally and in Australia;
- identify the measurement tools and methodologies utilised in best practice research in key areas;
- identify types of research useful to policy and program development; and
- prioritise the existing research gaps and highlight future areas of focus linked to policy development areas.

The discussion of these areas does not always take place in separate sections but takes place across sections where it was felt more appropriate in terms of clarity. In some cases, too, clarity has required additional sections in the discussion, notably where methodologies are concerned.

The analysis (worth and applicability) of the annotated bibliography focuses on the quality divide—discerning those articles of broad relevance to policy development in Australia—followed by analysis of the specific relevance to the development of best practice.

2.1 Availability of research

Research into the long-term impact of arts participation began with the publication in 1996 and 1997 of studies by Williams in Australia and Matarasso in the UK. Since then much has been written. Eighty-seven reports and papers were entered into the main database. Many were ‘informally’ published (websites, house publications) or were unpublished reports and other documents. Some books and a few journal articles were also included. The fact that only relatively few of the studies (14 out of the 87 included in the database were journal articles, four were book chapters and one was a book) were published in peer-reviewed journals or commercially published books suggests that the findings and the studies on which they are based in many cases have not been subject to the close scrutiny of other experts in the field.

2.1.1 Country sources

Reports of studies were most readily available from the UK, in particular from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and the Arts Council of England. In total, forty-one studies were collected from the UK and used in the main database. These constitute almost half of the eighty-seven studies in the database. A further five studies were based specifically in Scotland. As these were based only in Scotland rather than the UK as a whole, they have been counted separately. The database also included nineteen studies from Australia, two from Canada, one from Finland and twenty from the USA. The ground covered by these studies is broader than the number of studies would suggest as the majority were reviews of several programs or policies, rather than of one specific program alone.

2.2 Coverage

2.2.1 Impacts

The impacts assessed for the present project were categorised into eight impacts as determined by the project brief:

- cognitive skills and educational attainment
- community pride/identity
- crime prevention
- mood
- self-esteem
- social behaviour
- social cohesion
- health.

Coverage of the impacts selected for this project by the studies reported in the database was fairly even, although some fields attracted somewhat less attention. Thus, of the 87 entries in the database, the biggest single group (41) addressed cognitive skills and educational attainment. Next came studies of self-esteem (34), while almost as many (27) addressed community pride/identity and 24 focused on mood. Just below in numbers, 22 focused on social cohesion and 21 on crime prevention while 19 addressed health and 18 social behaviour. Many studies addressed several of these issues, making the number of issues covered greater than the number of reports. A significant number of studies (27) did not examine impacts per se but were included because they addressed associated issues such as the methods appropriate for studying such impacts and their relationships to participation in arts and cultural activities or because they provided useful background data. A significant group of reports was gathered into a special issue of the *Journal of Aesthetic Education* in 2000 and reported on meta-analyses of a very broad range of studies of the impacts of arts programs on educational attainment. Box 1 provides an example of the contents of the database.

2.2.2 Programs and institutions

A distinction was made between ‘programs’ of arts or cultural activity, such as a community-based program (19) or an arts in education program (10), and the on-going use of a cultural institution or facility, such as a library (5), museum (14), gallery (6) or archive (4). Many studies (32) reviewed a broad range of types of programs.

2.2.3 Types of participation

The types of participation used by the studies were, following the ABS, creative and receptive.

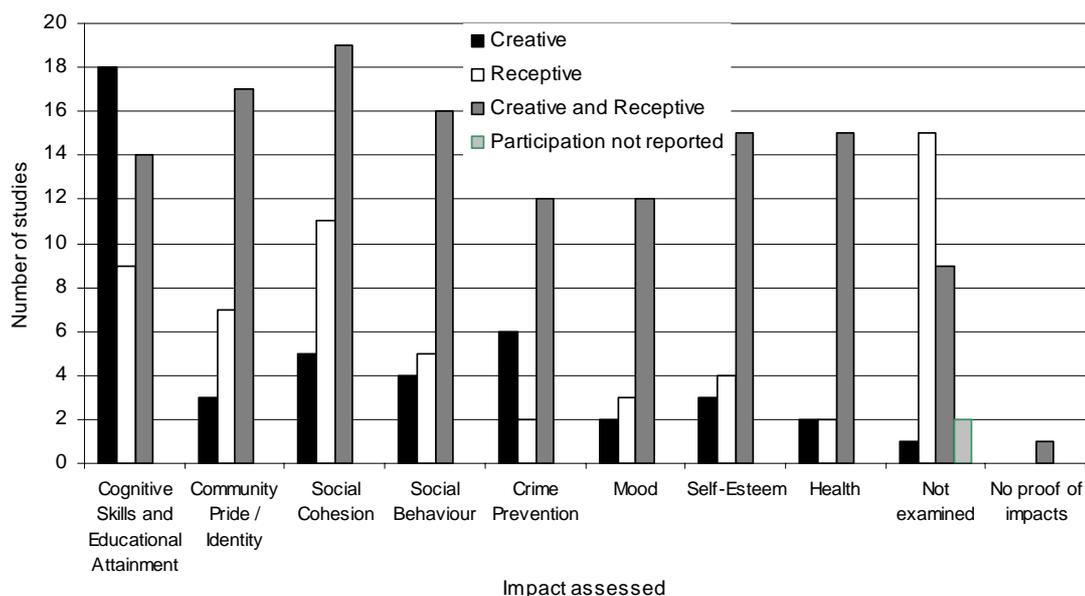
Creative participation is defined as ‘participation associated with making, creating, organising, initiating, producing, facilitating arts activities and indicates active engagement. Also included are intermediary, supply and enabling participation (e.g. film distribution, theatre management, curatorial activities, supportive involvement of family). No value judgement is applied to the quality or outcome of the artistic expression, rather the emphasis is on the act of being creatively engaged.’ (Cultural Ministers Council, Statistics Working Group 2003:4). It is not clear whether this very broad definition is used internationally.

Receptive participation is defined as ‘participation that involves receiving (watching, purchasing etc.) a culture or leisure event or product. Included is participation that uses, purchases or observes a culture or leisure product or event.’ (Cultural Ministers Council, Statistics Working Group 2003:4).

More than one type of participation could be addressed by a single study. The biggest group, 33 studies, addressed projects involving both creative and receptive participation together, while 27 addressed receptive participation and 24 addressed creative participation alone. A further two did not address participation. These studies examined indicators and evaluation.

Figure 1 shows that for many of the impacts assessed, the most common type of participation was both creative and receptive. Studies that addressed receptive participation were the next most frequent, followed by those that looked at creative participation. Studies related to cognitive skills and educational attainment, crime prevention and health did not follow this pattern. The studies addressing cognitive skills and educational attainment most commonly also addressed creative participation, then creative and receptive, and finally receptive participation alone. In the case of crime prevention, more studies addressed creative than receptive participation, presumably because they largely involved activities keeping at-risk people otherwise actively occupied. The studies that focused on health involved equal numbers of studies discussing creative and receptive participation. The studies that did not specifically examine impacts usually concerned projects centred on receptive participation.

Figure 1: Comparison of impact assessed and type of participation



2.2.3.1 Creative and receptive participation

Some studies focused on both creative and receptive participation. Many of the programs involving both creative and receptive are, not surprisingly, community-based projects. Such projects often have multiple components and involve residents or participants in several ways according to interests and talents. The arts and community development field has changed over the last thirty years, away from focusing on the encouragement of community members' participation in the arts and towards communities taking 'control of their cultural direction and development' (The Australia Council 2000a:28). Boxes 1-5 show the wide range of social impacts said to be associated with creative participation in the arts and cultural activities or with both creative and receptive participation in different types of programs.

Studies of the impacts of creative participation tend to be those where a more sophisticated methodology is required to assess impact than is often available at the point of evaluation. A number of the suggestions about methodologies outlined in the following sections are drawn from these studies. Suggestions for improvements are also discussed below.

Box 1: Impacts of arts programs (both creative and receptive participation)

| ACTIVITY | IMPACT CLAIMED | STUDY |
|----------------------------------|--|--|
| Participation in an arts program | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased employment rates • Reduced levels of crime • Better and more equal standards of health • Enhanced personal development • Social cohesion • Active citizenship • Public art and a sense of public ownership • Building cultural bridges • Better equipped cultural citizens • Better understanding of different cultures through diverse touring artists' performances • The development of cultural facilities as centres of civic pride • Improved education and life-long learning • Improved economic and employment opportunities • Improved social cohesion and community empowerment and community safety • Some environmental impacts • Development of self confidence and self-esteem • Increase in creativity and thinking skills • Improvement of skills in planning and organising activities • Improvement in the communication of ideas and information • Increased appreciation of arts • Creation of social capital • Strengthening of communities • Development of a community identity • Decrease in social isolation • Improved understanding of different cultures • Enhanced social cohesion • Activation of social change • Raised public awareness of an issue • Enhanced mental and physical health and well-being • Contributions to urban regeneration • Reduction in offending behaviour • Alleviation of the impact of poverty • Personal growth • Injects creativity into organisational planning | Long <i>et al.</i> 2002; California Arts Council 2003; Coalter 2001; Jermyn 2001; Matarasso 1997 |
| Cultural and sporting activities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make a vital contribution to the educational attainment of children and young people • Can contribute to neighbourhood renewal • Can make a real difference to health, crime, employment and education. | Department for Culture Media and Sport 2003 |
| Cultural participation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional, spiritual and physical well-being | London Arts 2001 |

Box 2: Impacts of community programs (both creative and receptive participation)

| ACTIVITY | IMPACT CLAIMED | STUDY |
|---|---|--|
| Participation in the arts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive role models for those living in deprived neighbourhoods • Economic benefits to communities and individuals • Help develop personal confidence, flexibility and self-reliance • Develop a sense of community • Help communities to express their identity and develop their own, self-reliant organisations • Restores individual and community identity • Give individuals social, organisational and marketable skills • Bring out hidden talents • Give individuals greater self-respect, self-confidence and a sense of achievement • Can contribute to greater self-esteem and improved mental well-being • Change perceptions of an area • Help to build outside links for insular communities | Policy Action Team 10 1999 |
| Participation in community based arts projects | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gaining skills • Increasing confidence • Divert youth from gangs, drugs and the juvenile system • Reduce truancy • Improve academic performance • Build self-discipline, communication and job skills • Crime prevention • Fewer new court referrals • College attendance • Increased ability to express anger appropriately • Increased ability to communicate effectively with adults and their peers • Increased ability to cooperate with others • Increased ability to work on tasks from start to finish • Decreased frequency of delinquent behaviour • Improvements in attitude towards school, self-esteem and self-efficacy | University of Glasgow Centre for Cultural Policy Research and Department of Urban Studies 2002; Americans for the Arts 1997a; Americans for the Arts 1997b |
| Participation in community-based projects related to health | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthy personal development • Healthy eating • Healthy mothering • Positive mental health • Emotional literacy • Health promotion • Healthy communities • Less reliance on medical support • Feeling better | Everitt and Hamilton 2003 |
| Being creative and becoming absorbed in the arts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps in acknowledging and revealing feelings | Everitt and Hamilton 2003 |

Box 3: Impacts of health programs (both creative and receptive participation)

| ACTIVITY | IMPACT CLAIMED | STUDY |
|----------------------------------|---|---|
| Participation in an arts program | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stress reduction • Therapeutic benefit • Improved sociability • Skills development • Fewer readmissions to psychiatric hospital • Maintenance of mental health • Promotion of health networks • Increased referrals to health services • Sustains brain development • Promotes healing • Helps in treating Alzheimer's • Helps with reclaiming at-risk youth • Improved physical and mental health • Promotes recovery | <p>The Centre for Arts and Humanities in Health and Medicine 2003; California Arts Council 2003</p> <p>The Centre for Arts and Humanities in Health and Medicine 2003</p> |
| Development of arts programs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive staff development and retention in the area of health | London Arts 2001 |
| Exposure to the arts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decrease in blood pressure • Lowered anxiety • Lowered fear • Elevated mood | Wikoff and Langan 1998 |

Box 4: Impacts of arts education programs (both creative and receptive participation)

| ACTIVITY | IMPACT CLAIMED | STUDY |
|--|--|--|
| Participation in arts activities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perform better at school in a range of areas • Improving academic performance • Imparting skills for the 21st century workforce • Improving citizenship • Improving attendance • Fortifying cognitive skills • Increasing self-esteem • Reclaiming at-risk youth • Supporting life-long learning • Helping families cope | The Arts Education Partnership and The President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities 1999; California Arts Council 2003 |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher academic grades • Higher standardised test scores • Higher measured reading levels • Improved attitudes concerning commitment to the community | Catterall 1997 |
| Instruction in music | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationship between music and enhanced reading ability • Enhances spatial-temporal performance for preschool and elementary school-aged children, at least while instruction is occurring and at least up through two years of instruction • There is a 'Mozart Effect'. It is limited to a specific type of spatial task that requires mental rotation in the absence of a physical model. The enhancing effect is not limited to Mozart's music | Butzlaff 2000; Hetland 2000a; Hetland 2000b |
| Exposure to music | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students scored higher on spatial-temporal tests | Canada Council for the Arts 1999 |
| Studying the arts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transfer was found from experience in the arts to performance on tests requiring drawing. • No transfer was found from experience in the arts to performance on tests requiring one to generate ideas, concepts or words • Positive relationship between studying the arts and academic achievement, but no evidence of a causal relationship • When art instruction is not integrated with reading, such instruction has no effect on reading achievement scores, but has a moderate effect on reading readiness scores • Small support found for the hypothesis that an arts reading curriculum does work to improve reading • Students who take any kind of art course in high school achieve higher scholastic aptitude test (SAT) scores than students who take no art course at all • Students who take four years of arts courses had higher scores than those who take some art but less than four years' worth. | Moga 2000; Winner and Cooper 2000; Burger and Winner 2000; Vaughn and Winner 2000 |
| Integrated arts and academic instruction | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools adopting this method, outperformed other schools in test score comparisons | Catterall and Waldorf 1999 |

2.2.3.2 *Receptive participation*

An important group of studies focussed on the social impact of receptive participation in the arts and cultural activities but many focused rather on trends in attendance at arts and cultural events or venues than on social impacts. A few studies made recommendations relating to this. Studies ranged from a focus on specific institutions or events to nationwide investigations of usage of arts and cultural facilities and institutions (museums, galleries, libraries and archives).

Box 5 shows the range of impacts identified as being related to receptive participation in the arts and cultural activities. These included community ownership, education and increased self-esteem. One study also found that the presence of a cultural institution had an effect on the sense of place in a local area (Usherwood 2002).

Box 5: Impacts assessed by studies concerning receptive participation

| ACTIVITY | IMPACT CLAIMED | STUDY |
|---|---|---|
| Use of the library | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved sense of community ownership • Education (reading and literacy) • Development of community confidence • Equity | Usherwood 2002 |
| Attendance at museums, galleries and archives | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social inclusion • Increase in the individual's sense of self-worth, value and motivation • Release of latent creative abilities and enhanced imagination, vocabulary and self-expression, leading to increased confidence and social inclusion | Department for Culture Media and Sport 2000 |
| Visiting a museum(s) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contributes to community identity • Provides a forum for debate about emergent social issues • Fosters tolerance and understanding • Provides reverential and commemorative experiences • Creates a collective identity through a shared history and a sense of place • Increased self-esteem • Acquiring skills leading to further employment. • Community empowerment • Capacity building | The Scottish Executive 2003; Scott 2002; Sandell 2002 |

Recommendations made by the studies focused largely on the need for better recognition of possible impacts that cultural institutions can have on visitors and measures to improve such recognition. Some suggestions for achieving this were practical—one study, for instance, recommended a greater emphasis on training staff at museums to recognise the possible social benefits that exhibits can have and to identify indications from visitors that further contact may be needed/desired (Dodd 2002). After consulting museum and gallery stakeholders in Scotland, another study suggested that local museums have an important role to play in realising educational

agendas and promoting social justice and equity but this can be achieved only if their planning takes a strategic focus (Scottish Executive 2003).

3 ISSUES OF EVIDENCE

3.1 Methodologies

3.1.1 Range of approaches and data collection methods

The range of methodologies used to examine impacts in the studies reported in the database was broad. The biggest single type of method used was case studies (28). Literature review (20) came next as the approach of choice. Interviews (14), national surveys (9), meta-analysis (9) and studies conducted using large scale or more formal surveys or questionnaires (8) as the means of data collection were much less common. Relatively few studies used focus groups, workshops or meetings, alone or in combination, as evaluation tools (5). Some studies just mentioned 'program review' (5). Many reports used several methodologies. The variety of approaches used to some extent reflects the differing nature of the projects and programs evaluated but also perhaps the fact that, as one paper suggested, 'there is, as yet, no broad consensus as to how impact could be measured, and no clear view of the timescales that should be involved' (Cultural Heritage Consortium 2002:20). In addition, it may reflect the '...widespread uncertainty about what evaluation methods to use and what methods will be acceptable to other stakeholders' (Centre for Arts and Humanities in Health and Medicine 2003:37).

The diversity visible in the range and appropriateness of evaluation approaches and data collection methods used reflects the diversity of the projects and programs assessed. Within arts and cultural activities there is a very great range of variation along most dimensions: scale, duration, target group(s), type of activity, type of participation, geographical and social location and many others. Equally important, there is diversity in the definitions of what constitutes an arts or cultural activity and so sports and cooking, for example, may at times also be included as assessable activities. With definitions as broad as this being used by policymakers, it is not surprising to find a consequent diversity in the range of evaluation approaches. The important thing is to match methodologies and policy and evaluation aims. In this connection more care may be needed.

The range of methodologies used also varies with field of focus. It is important to remember that projects aiming at different areas of social impact, such as health or education or community development, may be best served by a particular range or combination of approaches and data collection methods. In the education field, despite the difficulties encountered in persuading teachers, parents and children to participate, it is relatively easy to conduct large scale and long-term studies of impact as there are many students, many schools and many arts programs, as the large numbers of publications on the subject found by the Reviewing Education and the Arts Project (REAP). Students are usually 'captive audiences' for studies in ways that are seldom found in areas such as community arts/local development. Again, the studies suggest the critical importance of matching aims, areas and methodologies. Box 6 summarises some of the more useful methods of evaluation.

Box 6: Useful methods of evaluation

| Methodology to consider/elements to be included | Study |
|---|---|
| Examples of cases where specific techniques and surveys have been used to collect data. Also using the data to plan for displays and facilities. | Department for Culture Media and Sport 1999 |
| This is a document to consult before designing a longitudinal data collection on the impact of the arts. The section that suggests indicators that fall under the headings of input, output and outcome indicators is thorough and would be a good source of ideas for items that should be accounted for. | Matarasso 1999 |
| This paper offers a model for an evaluation process. | Carpenter 1999 |
| A good example of a methodology for developing an evaluation process that is relevant and realistic for museums, archives and libraries. | Bryson <i>et al.</i> 2002 |
| Report is on a community-based program around which has been developed a method of evaluating a complex and extensive network of service providers. The organisers have developed indicators that report against outcomes that the program aims to achieve. | Head Start Bureau 2003 |
| A useful framework that has been developed to identify data sources and areas where data collection is needed. It is a good guide for examining Australia's datasets. | Department for Culture Media and Sport and the English Regional Cultural Consortia 2002 |
| The report includes recommendations for appropriate impact valuation methodologies and provides examples of studies that have used each type | Reeves 2001 |
| A good evaluation from the viewpoint of the government department responsible for the funding. | Jermyn 2002 |
| An evaluation guide developed by a number of organisations in Victoria in order to fill the gap in the resources available to community arts practitioners to assist them in identifying, collating and reporting on the positive outcomes achieved through community arts projects. | Keating 2002 |
| This working paper is based on the study that the author carried out in 1994-1995 for the Australia Council to identify the long term social, educational, artistic and economic benefits arising as a result of government funded community-based arts projects. The aim was to develop a methodology for evaluating the social impact of arts programmes and to begin to assess impact in key areas. The author outlines diverse areas that community groups had been interviewed about and reports their responses. Indicators for each outcome are suggested. | Williams 1996 |
| Social audit | Usherwood 2002 |

3.1.2 Quality of evidence

Box 7 indicates the major areas of criticism regarding the quality of data. At one level the range of methods itself may be a problem as they may not be replicable, relevant to conclusions drawn or robust. As Selwood (2002) points out, existing data are mostly drawn from case studies, project evaluations, cameos, brief accounts of engagement with specific groups in the community, and anecdotal quotations from staff, project workers and project participants. This is not usually sufficient to demonstrate specific effects, associations or causality and may be positively misleading.

Box 7: Principal areas of criticism

| The main areas of methodological concern | Criticism |
|---|--|
| Comparative data | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of baseline data • No longitudinal data • Variations in methodologies over the years, making long-term comparisons hard |
| Methodological approach | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inappropriate assumptions • Few pre- and post- studies non-existent or single group • Methodological flaws • Compatibility of data with claimed impact • Absent or inadequate reporting of methodologies used • Lack of quantitative data • No discussion of levels of impact • Measures often ill-defined |
| Lack of understanding and/or rigour applied to impact | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Causality not established (i.e. mechanisms of connection not clear) • Lack of rigour in claiming causality (eg claims too general) • Target populations not well defined • Inadequate appreciation of the complexities of links between programs and impacts • Inability to separate out the effects of the arts and cultural activity from the impact of other factors, such as other programs or simply added attention (the Hawthorne effect) • No information on outcomes, outputs alone being identified • Case studies not set in a proper theoretical framework • Reliance on post facto explanations • Indicators not always appropriate • Impacts not well defined |
| Purpose | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation only conducted because was a condition of grant and methods not well understood or applied |

In particular, the studies suggest that there is excessive reliance on the (very often) single case study method, usually with inadequate discussion of the parameters of choice for the studies selected or their place in the broader theoretical context that justifies that choice. In many instances, case studies rather than larger scale surveys seem to be selected for reasons of cost or apparent simplicity or because alternatives were not adequately considered. In some cases, there may even be a sense among evaluators that the nature of arts and cultural activity lends itself to evaluation by qualitative methods, essentially a small number of interviews with participants, rather than more rigorous approaches. This may or may not be appropriate.

Other observers plead for more, not less, recognition of ‘soft’ (qualitative) data as an essential and appropriate part of the evaluation process in the arts and cultural field (see, for example, Kay and Watt 2000). Sometimes this is a plea for the place of anecdotal evidence in evaluation approaches. The author of one major report in the UK, for example, concludes that, while there are many challenges associated with

measuring the social impacts of the arts, the themes have been consistent and the large body of anecdotal evidence supporting the themes should not be ignored (Jermyn 2001).

Others conclude, as summarised by Reeves, that ‘though claims of impact may be made, the issue of available evidence to substantiate these claims is problematic. There is: ‘...widespread consensus among commentators that there is a lack of robust evaluation and systematic evidence of the impact of arts projects, or cultural services, more broadly, despite a wealth of anecdotal evidence’ (2002:31–32). In some reports collated here, however, the suggestion is that this body of evidence may not only be ‘good enough’ but realistically is all that is likely to be available, for reasons of expertise and resources notably.

Despite this perhaps rather widespread view among people closely associated with the field, it is important to emphasise here that very few of the studies examined for the present project were able to provide extensive data to support or prove their claims or to suggest clear reasons for the associations reported or assertions made.

Whether particular approaches are valid or robust depends essentially on the aim of the evaluation, not necessarily on the aim or focus of the activity assessed. If the aim of the evaluation is to establish, for example, a connection between participation (creative or receptive) by children in music as part of the curriculum and their success in spatial thinking and mathematics, the task is highly complex and demands a great deal of methodological sophistication. This sophistication centres initially on appreciation of the theories underpinning cognitive development among children of different ages and intellectual potential, for example.

3.2 *Limitations of existing research*

3.2.1 *Absence of clear intentions with regard to social objectives*

Several studies note that policymakers have not always clearly spelled out what they understand by ‘impact(s)’. This makes evaluation difficult since, as numerous writers have pointed out, impact evaluation by its very nature requires clear intentions about what is to be achieved and through which means and about the criteria for assessment. The absence of clear social objectives was pointed out by Matarasso (1996:8) and more recently in relation to reviews of museums by Alison and Coulter (2002), Wavell et al. (2001) and by Bryson and Usherwood (2002), among others.

3.2.2 *Lack of evaluation expertise and resources*

Many studies recorded in the database prepared for the present project indicate that there are issues of both interpretation and value systems as well as lack of practical expertise in the field of arts evaluation. One reason given for the lack of data on the subject is often said to be that the main aim of the arts and cultural organizations concerned is not to have a social impact on the community but to encourage participation in the creative process itself (Moskin and Jackson 1999 and Selwood 1999 quoted in CHC 2002:20) so that mechanisms for collecting the information required to assess social impact are not built into the design of the program and the requirement for evaluation may even be resisted. This means that the impacts reported are simply ‘found’ afterwards. There is often also no incentive to carry out further evaluation because evaluation is not included as a requirement for receiving funding (Selwood 2002). Where evaluations are conducted, they are often program specific

and focused on immediate outcomes and lack the methodological structures to make the results comparative or permit them to be used for longitudinal studies (Alison and Coalter 2001). One expert observer remarks that

...as far as arts organisations are concerned the process often becomes bogged down because it is so difficult to review progress without an agreed framework for doing so. The problem is that the work of arts organisations is ultimately about quality and assessing it requires the definition of quality (Matarasso 1996:4).

The lack of expertise in evaluation and the associated understanding of good practice in designing studies, collecting data and assessing the robustness of results are evident in several areas. The major issues are outlined in the sections below. Resources in terms of both people and funding are also often scarce.

Indeed, it is possible to argue, and it was argued by some interviewed for this study, that evaluation for social impact is clearly secondary to that of the other benefits of arts programs. The argument is especially made in relation to the role and impacts of collecting and conservation institutions that have only limited program functions.

3.2.3 Focus on outputs rather than outcomes or impact

When evaluation is carried out, it has been based on an inputs/outputs/outcomes model in which the amount of activity and the tangible outcomes generated (publication and performances/works of art produced) are assessed against resources (inputs). The model produces a focus on (largely quantitative) outcomes based on the immediate result of the activity rather than long-term impacts, reported changes in behaviour or attitudes due to the project/program (Selwood 2002).

3.2.4 Insufficient attention to mechanisms

For evaluation studies to be of value to policymakers, it is important that they provide information on the *mechanisms* by which a desired impact or effect may be achieved. Few studies provide this information. The studies covered by the REAP project suggested some possible mechanisms (notably cognitive or motivational) but in most cases the studies collated for the present project database provide little information on this important aspect.

One study stands out as providing clear possible explanations for the impacts that were observed (see The Arts Education Partnership and The President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities 1999 for a description). The study, carried out by Catterall, explained the finding that children engaged in arts activity performed better at school in a range of areas by reference to the action of several factors. The hypothesis explaining why it was that youth attended arts activities and returned to them was that the arts attract interest from students not otherwise reached; that they reach students in more effective ways; that the arts connect students to themselves and each other; that they transform the environment for learning and provide learning opportunities for the adults in the lives of young people; that they provide new challenges for students already successful; and that the arts connect learning experiences to the world of real work.

3.2.5 Lack of consensus around definition of terms

The present project was a complex one and complexity is a feature of most of the studies examined. Many issues arise from attempts to link outcomes with broad areas of activity, or even specific programs of activity within that broader area. At a

conceptual level, there are many very difficult issues when seeking to link something as broad as ‘social impacts’, even when broken down into smaller categories, with the stated aims and outcomes of different arts and cultural programs and activities. Clear definition of terms is essential. Given the broad nature of social impacts and with few sophisticated quantitative studies, it becomes difficult to separate out, for instance, the impacts of the arts from impacts deriving from other social variables which affect individuals.

The issue of finding and seeking links is complicated by the fact that all the major terms in the project focus are open to different and valid interpretations, and indeed were found to be interpreted differently by many organisations interested in the field and whose work is included in the database. Thus, ‘social’, ‘impact(s)’, ‘participation’, ‘arts’ and ‘cultural’ activities are all terms used in diverse ways by both observers and actors in the field.

‘Social’ did not include ‘economic’ for the purposes of this study. In reality many arts programs have considerable economic value and hence social value as they provide employment and hence may be beneficial in terms of crime reduction, health improvements and so on. For the purposes of examining mechanisms for social impact, economic-focused activities should perhaps thus be included in ‘social’ as they are of at least indirect benefit in achieving social aims.

‘Impact(s)’ may also diverge or alter within different time frames—immediate, short, medium, long—and the effects of participation may be latent or evident (and differently so within the differing timeframes) and be direct or indirect. The timeframe of the project and the point of its evaluation are not specified frequently enough. There may also be different levels of impact among different individuals and evaluations seldom take account of these nuances or specify (define) levels aimed for and achieved. The definition of impact has also varied greatly across studies and in relation to policy objectives. Some progress has been made, however, in providing useful definitions which can be generalised. In the UK, Resource has developed a preliminary set of definitions of inputs, outputs, outcomes and impacts. These have already been used by the Cultural Heritage Consortium for identifying relevant quantitative time series data (2002).

Lastly here, in many instances, especially where government agencies were concerned, the key terms of the ‘arts’ and ‘cultural activities’ were not defined clearly and were simply matched by officials to the activities covered by the department’s portfolio. Thus, for instance, the Department of Media, Culture and Sport in the UK defines sport as part of cultural activities while other agencies explicitly or implicitly exclude sport and some include attending the cinema while others, perhaps most, do not. In Australia, sport is included in the definition of cultural activity in Tasmania, Queensland and Victoria. Libraries and archives and heritage are included in the definition of the arts in some states but not all.

3.3 Education case study: an example of best practice

Issues of definition, correlation and causality were highlighted in a series of papers emanating from Project Zero’s REAP study examining the links between education in the arts and educational attainment and published in a special issue of the *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, Vol 34, numbers 3/4, Fall/Winter 2000. The following example shows what is possible in the field of education in order to emphasise the need for

great care in designing evaluations in the field and making claims which may involve redistribution of resources. This is not to suggest that there are not other useful approaches but to indicate the 'gold standard' in the studies assessed for the present study, especially since it relates to cognitive development and educational attainment, one of the impacts of central interest to this project.

The published papers resulted from meta-analyses of 188 study reports on the links between participation in arts programs and educational attainment in diverse fields. The studies of the different areas of the arts and education all took the same format, collecting project data from diverse sources, reviewing them for relevance and compatibility with the techniques of meta-analysis and testing the results. In a number of cases, the analyses were in two parts. First, evidence was reviewed in terms of correlations between aspects of educational attainment and the field considered; examples included the evidence on effects of participating in music education on attainment in other fields, notably mathematics and spatial understanding. The second stage used the relatively few studies which considered causal relationships (defined as experimental) and conducted separate meta-analyses on these.

REAP first conducted a comprehensive search for all studies from 1950–1999 (published and unpublished and appearing in English) that tested the claim that studying the arts leads to some form of academic improvement. Searches turned up 11,267 such studies of which 188 were retained for the study proper as those considered robust and relevant enough. Effect sizes were calculated for each of the relationships claimed. The results of each stage were startlingly different and reveal the difficulties of establishing causal relationships rather than associations (correlations) between the variables of interest. A few examples will suffice here to indicate the issues and conclusions.

Three areas were found in which a substantial number of studies have demonstrated a clear causal link between education in an art form and achievement in a non-arts academic area. The effect sizes found in these three areas ranged from small to large. Although, the authors of the summary say, small or medium differences may seem trivial, at a practical level they may be of importance for individuals—for example, even a few extra children staying on at school is important.

In contrast, in seven areas studied no reliable causal link was found. The authors say that the lack of findings in these seven areas is attributable to one or more of three factors: in some cases the failure to find a causal link probably reflects the fact that there is no causal link; in some cases a causal link was found but it was not strong enough to be reliably generalized to other studies; and in other cases, the lack of findings may have been due to the small number of studies carried out on a given research question (Winner and Hetland 2000).

The three areas where reliable causal links were found were: listening to music and spatial-temporal reasoning; learning to play music and spatial reasoning; and classroom drama and verbal skills. In contrast, no reliable causal links were found in arts-rich education and verbal and mathematical scores/grades; arts-rich education and creative thinking; learning to play music and mathematics; learning to play music and reading; visual arts and reading; dance and reading; and dance and non-verbal reasoning. In other words, there were differences in effects between disciplines, between these and the impacts sought and found, and between populations different in social characteristics, particularly age.

The analyses undertaken were complex and involved clear thinking about exactly what it was that was measured or expected to be the mechanism for a potential link. Thus, for example, much thinking about the potential links between arts education and creative thinking or mathematical skills depends implicitly on assumptions about cognitive development and the transferability of skills and achievements to other fields. Implicitly, too, many studies assume that the effects of arts education can be transferred to all areas of educational achievement and that the effects will be long lasting. The REAP team distinguished both between immediate and long-term effects and between what they call transfer to ‘near’ areas and to areas ‘further away’ in cognitive terms. The further definition of potential areas of transfer proved to be critical in obtaining positive results. Thus, for example, in their paper on the arts and creative thinking, Moga and colleagues distinguish between verbal and figural creativity. This proved important because the meta-analyses undertaken showed different results between the two. The authors say that:

...we found modest evidence of a causal relationship between arts study and creativity measures but only when the creativity measure was figural. When the measure was verbal/conceptual, no evidence for a causal relationship was found. Thus, we found some transfer when the bridge is narrow; from experience in the arts, which includes the visual arts, to performance on tests requiring drawing. We find no transfer when the bridge is wide: from experience in the arts to performance on tests requiring one to generate ideas, concepts or words (Moga *et al.* 2000:102).

The summary paper on any overall link between arts study and academic achievement by Winner and Cooper in the 2000 issue of the *Journal of Aesthetic Education* is entitled ‘Mute those claims: no evidence (yet) for a causal link between arts study and academic achievement’. The paper discusses the different areas of potential connection, notably what might be called the cognitive argument, the motivational argument and the self-confidence argument, and tests the available studies accordingly. From the first meta-analyses of correlational studies, they find a positive and significant relationship between arts education and academic outcomes. They state that:

...the claim that involvement in the arts improves verbal and math achievement is consistent with the positive effect size found in the studies. Importantly, however, the studies do not prove a relationship: as they say, because the effect sizes are based on correlational studies, they do not allow us to conclude that arts education causes academic skills to improve. It is certainly possible that studying the arts leads to the development of cognitive skills that in turn lead to heightened achievement in academic areas. It is also possible that studying the arts leads to greater engagement in school, which in turn leads to greater academic achievement. But these studies do not allow us to rule out a causal relationship in the opposite direction; high academic achievers may choose to study the arts (Winner and Cooper 2000:32).

Other authors further conclude that:

...we have as yet no evidence that studying the arts has a causal effect on academic achievement. We cannot draw any inferences about transfer from the correlational studies that we have reviewed and that are so often cited in the press, since correlational studies do not prove causality. For an investigation of causality, we must turn to the experimental studies. And the experimental studies revealed essentially no impact of the arts on academic outcomes (Moga *et al.* 2000:65).

The authors of many of the studies included in the REAP project make several recommendations for studies that could provide more robust data and suggest several

problems with existing research, including their own. They emphasise, for example, how important it is to find the most appropriate measures and the results of multiple choice testing used in most of the studies reviewed by REAP may not be getting to the relationships underpinning any causality. It is important for all to understand that theory needs to be developed further to find the most appropriate methods for testing.

3.4 Summary conclusion of issues arising around evidence

There are difficulties associated with the quality of the evidence produced in most of the studies covered by the present project. These difficulties are acknowledged in most studies carried out in many countries and by many different organizations. Australian policymakers and administrators are clearly aware of the many limitations in the methodologies used and are seeking to find better ways forward.

Our assessment of the material discussed here is that many of the criticisms are valid and need addressing if the effects desired from participation in the arts and cultural activities are to be achieved. Poor data can damage policy chances in an important arena.

This is not to say that there are no areas of good practice and the flood of criticisms of evidence currently available is matched by widespread efforts to develop better approaches and ensure better practice in evaluations of the social impact(s) of participation in the arts and cultural activities. The interviews conducted in Australia show much activity here in this regard and new areas of good practice are beginning to emerge.

4 USEFUL MEASUREMENT TOOLS AND METHODOLOGIES: RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE STUDIES COLLATED

Many studies examined for the project provided examples and recommendations for elements that should be included both when determining the data to be collected and when carrying out an evaluation. These are largely drawn from the criticisms made of existing research and discussed above. They are summarised in Box 8.

Box 8: Recommendations for elements to be included in evaluation

| Recommendation | Study |
|---|--|
| Determine targets before the project begins in order to conduct appropriate evaluation of the project | The Centre for Arts and Humanities in Health and Medicine 2003 |
| Undertake longitudinal studies to determine whether there is a lasting social impact | Long <i>et al.</i> 2002 |
| Secure baseline data | Long <i>et al.</i> 2002 |
| Undertake more quantitative studies | Several authors |
| Spell out in a testable manner the expected mechanisms of effect so as to make causality easier to establish | |
| Establish that the measures used are properly matched to the causalities sought | Several REAP authors |
| Map robust existing evidence as widely as possible and include findings | |
| Collect and coordinate evidence from different areas/studies | |
| Identify and refine the measures used to evaluate the success (or otherwise) of cultural projects. Create a framework by which these can be applied in a consistent manner across sectors | Anonymous 2003 |
| Develop consistent indicators, data collection, and analysis | Wavell <i>et al.</i> 2002 |
| Determine long-term impact (Wavell <i>et al.</i> 2002 and many others) as well as short and medium term ones (this may need different approaches) | |
| Allow for further development in the impact evaluation of alternative approaches to core service provision by institutions | |
| Ensure full commitment to a program of staff development to encourage understanding and adoption of self-evaluation | |
| Further develop toolkits and guidelines | |
| Commit to funding large scale user surveys in terms of them being externally conducted, using good survey design and increase frequency of surveys | Wavell <i>et al.</i> 2002 |
| Address the ethical issue associated with seeking to produce social benefits as the result of participation in a project | Matarasso 1996 |
| Develop more experimental studies, especially those in which participants in the study are randomly assigned to different groups to reduce the impact of previous situations; and in particular | |
| Develop more studies with control groups | |

4.1 Areas of current best practice

A number of studies collated in the database for the purposes of the present project demonstrate or make recommendations about best practice. Box 9 provides a list of these studies, with a brief explanation as to which element of ‘best practice’ they address.

Perhaps the most important element of best practice, demonstrated by some studies included in the database, is the longitudinal nature of the research undertaken. When addressing the question of the social (or any other) impacts of participating in the arts and cultural activity and as a result directing additional resources to an area or areas of policy and program activity, it seems vital to address the issue of the ‘durability’ of the positive results obtained. It is thus important to carry out studies not simply of immediate or even medium term impact(s) but to assess whether the effects are carried forward and affect behaviour and achievements later in time, perhaps much later.

Studies need to come to grips with the complexities of the issues concerned and break down what may too easily be seen as ‘obvious’ relationships between participation in particular arts or cultural programs, especially when data are gathered using case studies or interviews without proper consideration of the frameworks to be used or areas to be covered. At a community level, the evaluation guide put together by three Victorian agencies provides a very simple and easy to understand manual of what to ensure happens in the course of a project and its evaluation. That toolkit, like its counterparts in the UK, however, is not really geared to assessing social impacts, and certainly not long-term ones. It would be useful to develop this tool further with the aim of focusing more specifically on the needs of social impact evaluation. The tension is between providing a simple guide and recommendations for a sophisticated study and raising the quality of data and ensuring greater coverage of activities which can then be put together to better inform policymakers. If a more standard methodology could be developed and applied it would go a long way to ensuring comparable data within program types (community arts etc) and to providing some data for cross-area studies.

Collection of baseline data is an area which needs much more development, in Australia as elsewhere, but we did find some studies which collected such data and one or two which provided a tool kit for the development of better levels and quality of information. Some respondents in Australia said that they were thinking about baseline data collection but this was not yet universal and few collections of such data had been completed at the time of the present study.

It is also important that evaluations be timely. Timeliness in this context may vary from a study conducted immediately after the end of a project to studies carried out some years afterwards. We indicate in Box 9 some studies which seem to have been undertaken at the appropriate point.

In summary the key points are as follows:

- The most important element of best practice is the longitudinal nature of the research undertaken, which can address the question of the ‘durability’ of the positive results obtained by assessing whether the effects are carried forward beyond the short to medium term.

- The evaluation guide produced by three Victorian agencies provides an easy to understand manual for project evaluation, however, it is not really geared to assessing social impacts, and certainly not long-term ones.
- This tool could be further developed with the aim of focusing more specifically on the needs of social impact evaluation.
- If a more standard methodology could be developed and applied it would go a long way to ensuring comparable data within program types (community arts etc) and to providing some data for cross-area studies.
- Collection of baseline data is an area which needs much more development in Australia.

4.2 Links between disciplines, information and policy

No research was found that linked the effects of participation in combined arts disciplines, such as music and dance or music and drama, except insofar as the studies were of participation in the arts as a group as in the REAP studies of participation in arts education and scholastic aptitude test (SAT) scores. It would be possible, however, to design studies of participation in several disciplines and indeed *a priori* one could expect that outcomes in terms of social impacts would be more powerful. Such studies would be rather more complex to design and carry out in a rigorous manner because each additional arts discipline adds another variable and the cumulative or interactive nature of the experiences of participation would require very careful thought before a study could be designed.

Participation in some arts disciplines could also be expected to have impacts in several areas, for example, in educational attainment and social inclusion or self-esteem but there seem to be few or no studies as yet of the spread of impacts across several domains. To some extent, the question of the effects on several domains is discussed in some studies through discussion of the mechanisms through which participation in arts and cultural activities achieves the impacts claimed. Thus, for instance, the impacts of arts education on academic performance are sometimes said to work through the mechanisms of adding to self-esteem which suggests that there are several areas of impact from the same set of participations.

It is also theoretically possible to add study of participation in multiple arts disciplines to analysis of several domains of impact. This undertaking is far more complex and probably beyond current evaluation capabilities in the arts and cultural participation field.

Given that some states in Australia have been developing umbrella policies and programs which include arts and cultural activities within a broad set of policy initiatives, these initiatives could form a potential basis for studying the impacts of multiple disciplines and the possibility of multiple impacts. Studies could also be designed to link the outcomes of participation in arts and cultural activities with participation in some of the other initiatives made available under the umbrella policies which have similar social and economic agendas.

Without these preliminary studies it is not possible to suggest specific new ways to apply any results to policy except that different portfolios need to work together for maximum effect.

4.3 Gaps in existing research

The project revealed the largest concentration of existing research was on the links between education and the arts and the arts and certain aspects of community development. The database shows the beginning of information on the arts and health outcomes and some interest in the arts and regional development and at an individual level on the impact of the arts on self-esteem. There is relatively little existing work on crime prevention, except in a more or less implicit manner or as a by-product of other activity.

The studies suggest that there is a major research gap relating to time series data on the impacts of activity by conserving and collecting institutions (libraries, museums, galleries and archives), the principal areas where receptive participation has been studied. One study states that in this context:

...the existing time series provide quite a lot of information about inputs. They have little to say about the processes undertaken within the institution [which may have impact]. They do ... record information about the outputs from the services but do not, usually provide much guidance on outcomes. Nor have we been able to find anything substantive about the impact made by museums, archives and libraries (Cultural Heritage Consortium 2002:11). (Emphasis added).

In addition, none of the existing time series assess the extent to which archive, library and museum services contribute to overall local, regional and national economic development, an important policy objective (Cultural Heritage Consortium 2002). Similar comments were frequent in relation to longitudinal studies in general. In Australia this gap may be less evident and several studies, including notably by Scott 2002 and 2003 (thesis in progress) have provided useful information on available evidence.

Other current research gaps indicated by the studies reviewed include those summarised in Box 10.

Box 9: Examples of studies advising on or demonstrate elements of ‘best practice’

| Study | Element of best practice | Summary |
|--|---|--|
| Everitt and Hamilton 2003 | Evaluation of community-based health programs. | An excellent model on which to base evaluation of community-based programs and details of how to go about designing an evaluation are given. |
| Australian Bureau of Statistics 2003 | Longitudinal nationwide study | Report of the results of the General Social Survey. Comparisons can be made between years, although the survey methodology differs in between the years, so the ABS advises readers to treat results with caution. This is a good base on which to build further analytical work. |
| NFO System Three 2002 | Longitudinal nationwide study | A good example of a longitudinal study of participation in the arts and cultural activities. It is unusual in asking questions about participation (creative) instead of just addressing attendance. |
| Department for Culture Media and Sport 2000 | Evaluating the social impact of visitation to museums, galleries and archives | The document provides a framework within which museums, galleries and archives can work to achieve improvements in social inclusion. |
| The Arts Education Partnership and The President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities 1999 | Longitudinal study of the effect of participating in arts activities on academic achievement in school | Summarises a number of studies concerning arts and education. It is aimed at educators and includes advice about the features that should be included in an arts program aimed at these outcomes. |
| Long <i>et al.</i> 2002 | Developing indicators for outputs and outcomes | Links the impacts identified with participating in the arts and cultural activities with outcomes and indicators for assessing these outcomes. The report also gives examples of best practice in the context of real projects. |
| Department for Culture Media and Sport 1999 | Collection of baseline data in cultural institutions | Outlines methods for cultural institutions to use to collect baseline data on visitors for comparative analysis. |
| Wavell <i>et al.</i> 2002 | Example of an evaluation of the social impact of participation in an arts or cultural activity | Differentiates between those impacts for which there was direct evidence and those areas for which impacts were perceived by users, staff and project workers. This is important because it shows the areas on which to focus data collection. The presentation of impacts and evidence, however, emphasises the difficulties associated with establishing causal relationships in this area. |
| Catterall 1997 | Example of a longitudinal study focusing on the effect of participating in the arts on educational attainment | The data result from ten years of surveys and testing and strongly suggest that participation in the arts does have an impact on educational attainment. |
| Canada Council for the Arts 2002 | Example of a longitudinal, nationwide study | Very clear and easy to read and understand. Examining this report would give other countries a good framework to follow. |
| British Market Research Bureau 2000 | Evaluation at time of event | Good example of an evaluation undertaken at the time of the event. Outlines the aims and objectives of the program. The evaluation was designed to determine whether these were met. |
| Resource: The Council for Museums Galleries and Archives 2001 | Example of a longitudinal, nationwide study | An excellent study—thorough, well planned and includes a detailed account of the methodology employed and the selection criteria. The first section of the study is comparable to those nationwide studies carried out in Australia, the United Kingdom and Canada. The second part of the study includes the study of attendance at cultural institutions by school children, which is largely excluded by the other studies as their selection criteria restrict the studies to people over the age of 15 or 18. |

Box 10: Non-methodological gaps in research

| GAPS | STUDY |
|---|---------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Private or independent organisations are not always accounted for in studies, often it is only the publicly funded organisations The added value of the museum sector (e.g. what differentiates the museum from the history book) Evaluation of core services as well as special projects Determination of the economic impact of the sector The social, learning and economic impact of the archive domain | Wavell <i>et al.</i> 2002 |
| Community cultural development at the national level | Wavell <i>et al.</i> 2002 |
| Little emphasis on outcomes or impact in proportion to the amount on provision | Madden 2000 |
| Very little data collected about community cultural development at the national level, although there has been much more in Australia | Madden 2000 |
| Baselines from which to measure progress and evidence on the likelihood of short-term interventions such as arts events changing underlying behaviour | Jermyn 2001 |
| Assessment of differences in effect between private or independent and public organizations | |
| Very little on capacity building | |
| Proportionately not much on health or crime reduction or prevention impacts | |
| Research into the impact of participation in the arts and cultural activities on crime prevention | AEGIS review |
| Research into the impact of participation in the arts and cultural activities on health. | AEGIS |

In the international field there has been an strong emphasis on very deprived groups in urban areas because these are the focus of many related initiatives, especially in the UK and the USA. In Australia Indigenous groups have been the focus of a considerable number of studies but many of the initiatives concerning these groups have focused specifically on economic development rather than the broader approach of the present study. Overall, where evidence is concerned it would perhaps be useful to focus on well-defined general population samples to assess factors such as educational achievement as it may be easier to hold other aspects of these populations constant to compare them with the target deprived populations.

Finally, and importantly, there seem to be gaps in the research in some critical areas. Given the complexities of the issues and the strong likelihood that major effects result from interaction between programs and participant situations, studies which cross types of program focus (community, health, crime, education), participant types and organizational arrangements (institutional or other providers, for example) would seem to be essential. We found none of these. It is probably too early in a fast-moving field to expect to find completed studies of this kind but the aim should be to develop them as baseline data are collected and the methodologies in the field grow more sophisticated.

Overall, in relation to Britain at present, one well-respected expert in the evaluation of impacts of policies and programs in the arts and cultural activities concludes rather harshly that: ‘...despite the government’s desire to pursue evidence-based policies, little has been achieved so far. The quality of extant quantitative data is questionable,

and securing qualitative data is fraught with methodological problems' (Selwood 2001). If this assessment is correct, it suggests that there are many gaps in the field which remain to be filled. Our assessment of the ensemble of studies brought together for this project is that this is indeed the case. In this field, policy initiatives have proceeded much faster than evaluation has been carried out. This is because of the complexities inherent in the field of establishing connections and the nature of the field itself. It was not possible within the confines of the present project to map the work presently being carried out by arts and other community groups. Anecdotal evidence suggests that a great deal of work is currently being undertaken in all countries considered, including several examples mentioned to us in the interviews in Australia. The quality of that work in terms of the methodological issues raised here is unknown but it seems likely to continue to vary for a long period to come as different groups try to come to grips with the important issues involved and try out different approaches.

5 CURRENT AUSTRALIAN POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

5.1 The Australian policy environment

The interviews conducted for this project showed that almost all government arts and cultural departments and many major cultural institutions in Australia are seeking to include some areas of social impact in the targets they set for their policies and programs. In part, this focus is a response to the perceived need to 'present evidence of common impact to Treasury', in line with the international trend pushing all public sector agencies to justify their spending in broader social and economic terms, rather than the simple development of their portfolio activity.

More explicitly in policy terms, several current Australian governments are very concerned with community building and engagement and hence in the social impact of all their policies, including those related to the arts and cultural activity. As one respondent noted, there is an increasing trend towards the consideration of social engagement and social inclusion as policy goals which in turn generates more explicit policy targets. Thus, there was considerable interest in the relationships between particular arts policies and programs and other areas of social activity, such as health or educational attainment.

In seeking to reach their targets, policymakers are interested in social impact which they see in terms of individual well-being, especially self-esteem, skills and feelings of personal well-being. They are also interested in the development of social capital as seen in the level of community trust, the development of social networks, the evolution of different groups and the extension of social relationships and community. In some cases, this benefit is seen as extending to the development of regions or of more particular economically and educationally disadvantaged communities, including Indigenous communities or the populations of outer urban areas. Some have particular social groups as the target population, notably children and youth or boys or Indigenous populations. The concern may be with capacity building, both in terms of communities and individuals, whether or not this involves formal or informal training or is expected as a more general result of participation in the arts and cultural programs.

In other cases, the focus is on both creativity and access as the basis of more general capacity building. In a general sense, this focus encourages attempts to develop programs that develop social capacity and social cohesion and inclusion through cultural activities. A good deal of activity is underway in projects carried out by libraries in both Queensland and Western Australia. The principal policy areas identified for Arts Victoria, for example, are community building and social capital. One of the three major goals for new arts policy is 'engaging communities and creating social capital'. The Opal project in Queensland aims at improving community access to the Internet, and in the Northern Territory the Boys in Business program links music and literacy for boys. These are just a few examples of what is underway in the field.

In these ways, the Australian policy environment is very concerned with the eight kinds of impact discussed in the literature and brought together in the database constructed for the present project, with the possible exception of crime reduction which was specifically excluded as a goal by several respondents as a current policy or program focus.

In Australia there is a move towards arts policy and program areas seeking to develop partnerships with other areas of government to bring together policies in associated fields. For example, in Victoria, arts policymakers have been working with their counterparts in health, both to develop policy approaches and programs that bring the two areas together in designated communities and to develop evaluation tools for use in the joint field and more broadly. In other states too, departments are joining forces to focus common efforts on community or region building. In Queensland, for instance, the new Creative Queensland policy reflects a whole-of-government approach to engage with cultural development mechanisms and develop best practice, joint accountability in the search for outcomes in terms of links between cultural policy and social and economic development through strategies of lifelong learning, culture and tourism and the development of a sense of place. In Tasmania, the arts and cultural activities have been brought together with other areas to contribute specifically to the 'Tasmania Together' initiative which includes arts activities as part of the overall local development plan for the State. In Western Australia, the State Sustainability Strategy include arts and cultural activities, while in South Australia the Arts and Social Inclusions Forum held in October 2002 led on to partnerships with arts and health communities. These included funded initiatives in Playford, a multicultural area of Adelaide with a lot of Indigenous and Indo-Chinese communities.

This building of cross-portfolio partnerships matches experience in the UK where interviews conducted for this project revealed a trend towards less reliance on arts and cultural policies alone to achieve desired social effects and a move towards partnerships with other departments and agencies in a bid to link arts to other policies. These partnership programs may be more directly targeted to improving skill levels or creating new employment opportunities through both arts activities and other community or business-related initiatives, such as those of the DCMS linking cultural institutions with education and lifelong learning.

5.2 *Current issues and responses*

Australian policymakers and program designers seeking to achieve particular targets which link the arts and cultural activities with particular social and individual

outcomes face the same issues of evaluation and measurement as their overseas counterparts. Interviews for this study showed both widespread awareness of these issues and the emergence of many useful initiatives aimed at finding solutions.

5.2.1 Appropriate definitions

The issue of appropriate definition and the various definitions of key terms in Australia are similar to those found overseas. In Australia, our interviews showed considerable variation in what was included in the definitions. Some agencies suggested that the 'arts' and 'culture' should be restricted to areas more traditionally included, such as painting or sculpture, and exclude areas such as sport. Yet others include sport as 'an important element of our culture' or other fields of recreational activity. One at least included in culture 'anything undertaken in the community, from cooking to sports and festivals, art and craft' and another said they wanted the term culture to remain broad and, while focusing on the arts, wanted to include education, sport, recreation, any form of creativity, 'anything that gives meaning and identity'. Another defined 'arts' as linked to cultural institutions, libraries, art galleries and museums as well as to the activities of community-based organizations and school art departments. Some differences in definitions used were linked to different combinations of activity in 'arts' departments as some included sport while others excluded areas such as heritage which may cover collecting institutions. As one said, taking the same line as the DCMS in the UK, arts and cultural activities cover 'all the arts bodies that we fund'.

Similarly, the definition of terms such as 'participation' may vary but policies seldom make explicit distinctions between 'active' (creative) or 'passive' (receptive) participation or recognize important elements in participation in different types of programs which may mean that involvement may be once-off or regular, long-term or short.

In addition, the present project's terminology suggests what may be described as 'programs', such as events, programs of musical education etc are the principal focus of interest. But in practice, many arts and cultural-related experiences are provided by institutions, both public and private, notably museums, galleries, archives and libraries. While these may in turn provide particular 'events' or programs such as educational talks, their main role is one of collecting and conserving objects of national and international importance and social benefits tend to occur as by-products of cultural programs rather than being the primary *raison d'être* (Matarasso 2000b:5). Indeed, any social impact they may have in terms of the categories of impact of interest to this report may be limited by the nature of their major role. Several persons interviewed commented on the important differences in the roles of institutions and programs and that sometimes these were not highlighted enough when social impact is considered.

Differences in understanding in all these areas create problems right from the beginning for organisations seeking to assess their social impact on target populations. Some of the issues are unlikely to be solved while others may be open to improvement.

Most respondents to the study were aware of much of the overseas literature and the methodological issues raised. As one asked: '[C]an we really connect arts activity to an outcome? In many areas, there is nothing concrete to measure, no levels of hospital admission, for instance. The impact is subjective, about how people feel'. The

difficulties experienced occur on many levels, from the definition of the program and its goals to the identification and measurement of outcomes, but most policymakers interviewed were actively seeking information on best practice and trying to recognize and overcome the issues raised in these respects of their program activity and its evaluation.

5.2.2 Various stakeholder interests

Another issue is generating sufficient interest in evaluation and measurement of impact from the organizations implementing policies (receiving grants and organising projects and programs) on the ground. There is considerable evidence that the involvement of service providers is necessary to achieve willing cooperation and a sense of common purpose in pursuit of desired outcomes. A common response at this stage has been to make evaluation a condition of funding, an approach well established in the UK and elsewhere. This has been more or less successful overseas but brings its own set of problems in that the preoccupations of funders tend to dominate rather than those of the sector and arts organizations on the ground often still find it difficult to think about and undertake meaningful evaluation in terms of social impact.

5.2.3 Program aims and objectives

Much evaluation undertaken seems largely to be related to whether the programs concerned have met their immediate targets and whether the conduct of the activities could be improved in terms of management and outreach to the target audience. Much evaluation of this kind has been said to be related essentially to the need to get further funding and thus to prove success so far rather than being a serious attempt to assess outcomes in broader terms (Selwood 2002 and personal interview 2003). The focus is thus frequently on outputs rather than outcomes. Many such program leaders also lack skills in evaluation, having been selected rather for their arts and community leadership skills than for their expertise in evaluation. Finally, it has frequently been pointed out that most arts programs are not funded to include the costs of evaluation and therefore program leaders rely on simple forms of evaluation which may not be well suited to the complex 'matching' of aims, program characteristics and outcomes needed to provide robust data on social impact(s).

5.2.4 Collaboration across agencies and states

The interviews in Australia both showed that in some cases the need for evaluation has been recognized and incorporated into the programs concerned, although the criteria set may run the risk of excessive complexity. As an example of this problem, the *Tasmania Together* public sector area has 24 goals and 212 benchmarks. Many agencies around Australia are commissioning studies in different fields, notably to assess the impact of participation in arts and cultural activities on educational attainment, and collecting evaluation data on a wide range of projects. As yet, however, there is no clear trend emerging in terms of the preferred method of evaluation and perhaps little expert appreciation of the methods, issues and how to minimize them. Many of the studies are still in train and have shown few results as yet. There are a number of evaluation projects underway in several jurisdictions. For instance, in South Australia, an evaluation partnership has been set up with Flinders University: in Queensland studies are underway into the impact of the arts on educational outcomes, the research including surveys, case studies and interviews; and the Australian Government has commissioned studies of impact in education. In

Victoria, the health department, arts agencies and a local council (Darebin) have collaborated to develop an evaluation guide for evaluation for arts-based programs.

Australian studies face many of the same issues as those conducted elsewhere. In particular, our interviews showed that there is currently little or no baseline data collection underway and few quantitative studies have either been undertaken or commenced. The Australia Council has also commented that ‘those within the community cultural development industry do not see the lack of quantitative evidence demonstrating the links between art and social cohesion as a weakness,’ (The Australia Council 2000a).

The interviews also suggested that most policymakers and administrators are happy to review their role as specialists in the arts and cultural arena and to encourage arts organizations to play a role in broader fields of social change, believing, as one said, that ‘we have always been into that’ or that the arts may have an especially valuable and as yet not fully appreciated contribution to make. Making that contribution they see as an exciting undertaking and they bring much enthusiasm to it. In some cases, notably perhaps in *Tasmania Together*, the umbrella activities have generated public enthusiasm as well and already impacted on both the artists’ and the whole community’s sense of self-worth (source: interview data).

5.3 Participation in arts and cultural activities in Australia: social characteristics and trends and comparison with the UK, Scotland and Canada

This section draws attention to some trends in the factors that inform evaluation of social impact. Some of these go beyond immediate evaluation of social impact but nevertheless affect the outcomes and impact. If such trends are misunderstood by policy designers there may be expectations of impact which cannot be achieved. If arts and cultural activities are to be used as a vehicle for achieving other social goals, it is important to know who participates in different kinds of activities, when during their lifetimes and with which motivations. Such data provide background information on the characteristics of present audiences and can help suggest ways in which target audiences not currently participating might be reached by highlighting areas of weakness in participation rates in relation to different arts disciplines or cultural activities. It is important to know, for example, the size and characteristics of potential pools of participants as well as who already participates and the reasons why community members do or do not choose to participate in the arts and cultural activities potentially available to them. They can also compare the characteristics of people who participate actively (creatively) or more passively (receptively). Sometimes the results can seem initially quite surprising. It was reported in an interview for the present study, for example, that participation rates in modern music concerts are greater than that in all football codes combined. Presenting this information is not the aim of the present project and report but it is briefly discussed here to indicate the actual and potential audience for policies targeting social change via arts and cultural activities, policies and programs.

Several national studies of visitors to different institutions and attendees at arts events have been carried out in Australia, covering the years 1975 to 2002 and studies at institutional level on audiences are constant. The most extensive of these studies was carried out by the Australia Council in 2000 and compared the trends from 1975 to

1998. This study showed that attendance rates had decreased over most of the 1990s (The Australia Council 2000b). One explanation given for the decrease was that younger people's artistic activity was not measured by the attendance survey undertaken by the ABS (The Australia Council 2000b).

The Australia Council carried out a further study in 2000, using data collected in 1996. A survey was conducted with 1000 respondents, and in addition 20 interviews were carried out. The information reported includes the demographics of people who attend different types of events. For example, the people attending 'dance' events are evenly split between males and females and fall into different age groups (The Australia Council 2000c). Of the 1000 respondents, a number said that they did not attend arts events (The Australia Council 2000c). These people were questioned further about their reasons for not attending. The report summarises reasons for attending or not attending the different types of event, which were often two sides of the same coin. For example, the reasons that people attended the opera were that it was a special night out where you dressed up, that they had a sense of the music and enjoyed the story and considered it to be attendance at a highbrow event; the reasons that people did not go included their perception that it was a highbrow event and/or that they did not understand the music or story. In addition, they said that they would rather be more 'spontaneous' and participate in a recreational event rather than an intellectual one (The Australia Council 2000c).

It is also important to understand trends in different areas of participation for the same reasons. Australia shares some of the characteristics found in studies of trends in the UK and Canada.

The Australia Council carried out a third study in 2003, using data collected between 1994 and 2001. The study provides an overview of participation in the arts and cultural activities in Australia by combining information from several major ABS collections, including the 1999–2000 Service Industry Surveys, the 1999 Survey of Attendance at Selected Cultural Venues and the Survey on Work in Culture and Leisure Activities and Children's Participation in Cultural Activities (The Australia Council 2003). The report outlines the demographics of people participating in a number of different activities and in some cases a comparison between years is possible. For example, except in the cases of museums, botanic gardens, popular music, dance and operas/musicals, the total number of people aged 15 years and over who had been to cultural venues or events increased between 1995 and 1999. The largest decline was at museums, probably explained by the temporary closure of some large museums.

The ABS produced a report in 2003 based on data from the General Social Survey carried out in 2001–2002. It found that approximately 88% of the Australian population (12.8 million people) had attended at least one of the cultural venues and events surveyed during the 12 months before interview in 2002 (ABS 2003). The areas where attendance rates were highest were: cinemas (70%), libraries (42%), botanic gardens (42%) and zoological parks and aquariums (40%). The study also found that, with the exception of dance performances, attendance rates at all venues and events included in the survey were much higher among people living in the six state capital cities than those among people in the rest of Australia. At most venues and events surveyed, people born overseas in the main English-speaking countries had significantly higher attendance rates than those born in Australia or in other countries.

Several demographic studies have been conducted overseas. One such study was published in Scotland in 2002 covering information gathered between 1998 and 2001. It found that there had been a slight decrease between 1998 and 2001 in the proportion of respondents who indicated that they attend an arts or cultural activity or event from 89% (1998) to 85% (2001) (NFO System Three 2002). Participation in events and other arts or cultural activities decreased from 85% (1998) to 78% (2001). This category, 'other arts or cultural activities', mainly consisted of reading books, buying works of fiction/poetry, and/or buying a work of art/craft object. Very small proportions of respondents took classes or were in clubs or groups for any of the activities studied.

The study is interesting in the context of the present report, however, because it shows that 90% of people agreed with the statement that 'The success of Scottish artists, performers and writers gives people a sense of pride' and 89% agreed with the statement that 'The success of Scottish art and cultural activity gives the outside world a good impression of Scotland' (NFO System Three 2002). The existence of arts and cultural activities could thus possibly be construed as contributing to the sense of self-worth of the Scottish community, even though the programs were not explicitly designed to have social impacts, other than attracting tourists perhaps. The Australian equivalent may be seen in the Tasmanian Arts Audit which showed how Tasmanian attitudes to themselves were affected by the realisation that they could view themselves as competitive in the arts on the international stage.

A recent British study examined the impact on visitation rates of introducing free entry to museums and galleries in England and Wales at the end of 2001. They were able to compare the results with those collected two years prior to the study. It found that the numbers of visits to museums and galleries increased (Market and Opinion Research International (MORI) 2002a). While the increase in visits was substantial, the actual number and the demography of visitors were relatively unchanged; demonstrating that removing admission charges alone is an insufficient basis on which to widen social access.

The study also examined the profile of visitors to museums and galleries in 2002. It found that, within a familiar demography, there were increases among people attending with children and among the 45–54 year and 55–64 year age groups. The more frequent visitors were generally people with increased leisure time and increased income and the majority were from a well-educated professional middle class.

This study also found, however, that visitation rates overall had decreased through the 1990s. It was thought that this might have been due to increasing demands on people's leisure time and a greater range of leisure activities available. Participation trends may affect the targeting of arts and cultural policies seeking social impacts.

A further MORI study examined the differences in attendance at different types of arts or cultural activities. It showed that the most popular cultural activities for Britons were attending the cinema (65% in the past two years), art gallery or museum (54%), play, opera, dance performance or classical music concert (43%), musical, outdoor festival, pop or rock concert (42%), major sporting event (29%), or none (14%) (MORI 2002b).

A recent longitudinal study carried out in Canada examined data as trends from 1992 to 1998. This study also found an overall decrease in attendance at cultural events

(Canada Council for the Arts 2002). The decrease was largely in the number of participants from higher income groups and educational levels while the rate of participation remained steady for other groups. On the basis of the demographic data, the study concluded that the decrease was probably a result of decreased leisure time or increased choice rather than of social exclusion (Canada Council for the Arts 2002). The study also found that people with lower income levels and lower educational levels still participate to a far lesser extent than those with higher income and educational levels (Canada Council for the Arts 2002).

These studies suggest that demographic issues will affect participation in arts and cultural activities and Australia may share some of these or face specific ones deriving from the nature of the population and broader social structures.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A WAY FORWARD

6.1 Future areas of focus for policy development

Each area of impact is the subject of many studies, both theoretical and empirical, and behind each stands a substantial body of literature. These bodies of literature are distinct and each generates different hypotheses as to factors of cause and effect in the development of the area of impact in specific communities or individuals.

We conclude that policymakers developing programs or policies in the arts and cultural spheres and linking these to the achievement of other desirable social and behavioural changes should be aware of the different bodies of literature and think about their approaches accordingly.

Put at its simplest, the differences between the bodies of literature in their analysis of the mechanisms of impact imply that some approaches may be expected to work better in relation to some impact areas than to others, to crime prevention rather than to community pride, for instance. It means that in some cases given arts or cultural programs should not be expected to have certain desired effect(s). In all cases, the dynamics of influences on target populations need to be well understood and generic policies either modified accordingly or recognized as serving different purposes in relation to different groups. Understanding these literatures should perhaps be the top research priority. Evaluations need good theoretical grounding and evidence of adequate theoretical grounding was not commonly found.

Similarly, it is important to examine the cumulative and interaction effects of participation in arts and cultural activity, either among several such programs or in conjunction with non-arts interventions. Given the complexities of social environments, where programs have been targeted to selected groups with the aims of specific social outcomes it is not likely that any one program will be the sole intervention. This issue was not commonly addressed in the literature and may be considered a research priority. It is probably too early in a fast-moving field to expect to find completed studies of this kind but the aim should be to develop them as baseline data are collected and the methodologies in the field grow more sophisticated.

The discussion above of the gaps in the literature surveyed for this project and the information gathered for the project from the interviews conducted with Australian policymakers and administrators suggest that in substantive terms further research is

needed in *all* the fields relevant to consideration of the social impact(s) of participation in the arts and cultural activities. There seems to be no field or sub-field in which the evidence is well established and the data robust. In all the countries from which data were gathered there is a great deal of activity and interest but few, if any, definitive studies.

This suggests that priorities for further research should be selected after detailed discussions by interested policymakers and practitioners of the information presented in the studies collated here and the initial discussion of them in the present report.

The choice of focus should be related to the different policy emphases placed within different jurisdictions and portfolio combinations. Some priorities will concern fields and disciplines or type of program and impact sought as judged by the particular local policy contexts and social groups targeted. In the case of the umbrella policies including the arts and cultural activity in the achievement of broader policy objectives, for example, the focus may be on community or regional development which then focuses attention and priorities onto the many aspects of that field.

Given the dearth of information and lack of consistency in methodologies and conclusions of presently available studies as well as the limitations on evaluation skills and resources in this complex field, it would seem helpful that those most concerned determine the studies of most value. It also would seem that:

Agreement among policymakers as to the focus selected for research should be matched by a willingness to try to design studies to maximize comparability across states and territories in the fields selected. This will encourage exchange of information and pooling of resources where possible to ensure studies of sufficient scale and duration and to involve all the relevant sector providers.

6.2 Identify types of research useful to policy and program development

In terms of sophistication of methodologies employed and robustness of findings, the studies carried out by the REAP team provide very useful examples of what is ideally needed. While their level of rigour would be hard to emulate by practitioners in the field, the methods used in the meta-analyses indicate the way in which studies could be set up by academic researchers. There seem to be few studies which show best practice in this area at an experimental level but at a correlational level there are more such studies.

Box 11 summarises specific methodologies that should be considered for future evaluation research in order to build an Australian national picture of social impacts of participation in arts and cultural activities.

Box 11: Specific methodologies for a national strategy

| Methodology to consider | Study |
|---|--|
| <p>Smaller studies Skilled interviewers conduct semi-structured, in-depth interviews that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore people’s experiences • Explore the relationship between the experiences and the individual’s current circumstances <p>The interview should cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subjects similar to those covered in the national survey of archive users • Explore the extent to which the use of the service brought about any changes in the individual’s circumstances – both tangible and intangible <p>Project evaluation:</p> <p>1. <i>Planning</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a partnership between the stakeholders and identify the problem, need or aspiration to be addressed • Devise an appropriate arts project or decide a different form of intervention if required <p>2. <i>Indicators</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The partners decide how they will know when objectives have been met • Plan how to collect the information needed <p>3. <i>Execution</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out the work • Monitor the work by whatever method has been chosen <p>4. <i>Assessment</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sufficient evidence should be available to compare with the indicators to enable everyone to assess progress • Time should be set aside to collate it and to consider other, unforeseen impacts <p>5. <i>Reporting</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This will close the project • It will allow stakeholders to discuss and begin planning potential routes for further joint or individual development • Becomes the first stage of the next cycle | <p>Cultural Heritage Consortium 2002</p> <p>Matarasso 1996; Keating 2002</p> |
| <p>Building a national picture In order to construct a national picture of the social impact of participating in arts and cultural activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use large-scale, interview-based surveys of the general population • Supplement this by similar surveys of different population segments • Carry out surveys at regular intervals • Institutions use the same basic approach as the national survey to survey a sample of their users • Compare the two sets of results | <p>Cultural Heritage Consortium 2002</p> |

6.2.1 Option One: Experimental studies

Option One is the most rigorous approach and corresponds to the types of study analysed within the REAP project discussed above in the present report. In this option there are several sub-options. Option One is an experimental model. In this option, the studies define in detail the exact dimensions of the issues to be examined in terms of their potential links and careful matching of the aims of a project and the outcomes

desired so that causal connections can be examined. It involves careful delineation of types and levels of impact expected or achieved and use of a range of statistical techniques to analyse the data for links. In short, this option involves very precise determination by program designers of the policies and programs to be tested for impact and of the impacts both desired and expected. There is thus a considerable onus placed on program designers and policymakers to be clear in aims and to be sure that the program's dimensions and timing are appropriate to the achievement of the aims specified, although we recognise that this may not be realistic in many cases. Any or all of the sub-options outlined can be incorporated into the design of the study to add degrees of robustness to the resulting data.

6.2.1.1 Sub-option 1

A study using an experimental design in which participants are allocated on a random basis to different groups in order to minimize the effects of previous experiences and characteristics.

6.2.1.2 Sub-option 2

A study using a control group and several pre-and post-test groups. In this sub-option intact or non-randomly assigned groups are the basis of the study.

6.2.1.3 Sub-option 3

A study conducted over a time period sufficiently long to enable assessment of impacts after, for example, two years of study of the arts, four years of study and so on. The length selected should take account of the findings of existing studies where possible to enhance comparability.

6.2.1.4 Sub-option 4

Setting the new studies in the framework based on the results of meta-analyses of existing studies to check for study design.

6.2.2 Option Two: Correlational (associational) studies

Correlational or associational studies rely on correlations between variables rather than experimental design in the full sense. This option, despite being easier to design and administer than Option One, is nevertheless fairly demanding on the methodological side in terms of the specification of the variables, the number of participants, matching of groups and time period concerned. It also requires that policymakers and program designers specify clearly the aims and objectives of the activities expected to have social impact or impacts and the definition of the impacts themselves. This option relies on quantitative approaches and the use of appropriate statistical techniques. This may be the approach most readily utilized by observers on the ground and the academic researchers who study the relevant linkages. It must be stressed that there is very considerable value in correlational studies of this kind, as discussed in the REAP project, but there are limitations and their findings may be reliable only as guides to the linkages made. In some cases, the information thus obtained may be sufficient for policy evaluation purposes, especially for example where there is considerable anecdotal evidence in the specific field and where studies have been repeated over a lengthy period of time. The correlations may seem

especially robust where the mechanisms connecting actions and impacts have become clearer.

Meta analyses of carefully chosen existing studies can be of value to designing and interpreting both experimental and correlational studies.

6.2.3 Option Three: Surveys and time series

Methods for obtaining quantitative data usually rely on surveys of some kind. These may be of different scales depending on the focus and spread of the populations to be questioned. Surveys may be of an entire population, such as all participants in a project or program, but where they are intended to inquire into a field more generally they usually involve samples selected in different ways. It is often thought that such samples must be chosen on a random basis, as the ABS does, for instance, but in many cases where the relevant population is not large or its characteristics are to some degree known in advance, a purposive sample will be sufficient. Not all such samples need to be large scale to be of value, again especially where relevant characteristics of the population are already known.

6.2.3.1 Sub-option 1

Long time series data are especially useful if numbers in the studies are large and access to participants easy. The studies need a series of data points which can be linked initially to the project (before, at start, during, after) and later to points such as school leaving, entry to tertiary education, first employment etc. Not all participants need to be involved—random samples can be used at each data point.

6.2.3.2 Sub-option 2

Short-term series (pre, start, during, end) also have value in establishing baselines and in testing to see if results are stable over the periods. Short-term series approaches are useful for smaller scale projects and studies. It could be useful to add a control or ‘placebo’ group that resembles the target group but has not been involved in the projects concerned.

6.2.3.3 Sub-option 3

Single pre-post-group testing. This is not a strong methodology but in certain cases may be the only design feasible. Post-test only is not methodologically defensible but could provide indications of where to look next if nothing else is possible at the time.

6.2.4 Option Four: qualitative approaches

It was frequently stated both in the literature surveyed and by respondents in the interviews carried out that qualitative approaches are in some unspecified ways the best for the study of the impacts of participation in the arts and cultural activities. This preference may reflect some unease among practitioners, and those most likely to be reviewing the impacts of arts and cultural programs with more quantitative methods, but in some cases qualitative methods can provide valuable insights as to both the linkages between policies and results and the mechanisms which achieve those results.

A broad variety of qualitative methods is available and has been used with some success in undertaking evaluations in the field of concern here. Most important among

these are case studies, interviews with selected participants and focus groups with participants selected for representation of the principal actors.

There is already considerable literature on the proper use of case studies (see, for instance, Yin 1994). The issue is always that of the ability to generalise results. To be capable of providing results robust enough to be of value to policymakers and practitioners cases must be chosen with care. In particular, case studies must be selected with a good knowledge of the theoretical literature concerning the field of activity in which the case study activities are occurring in order to ensure a reasonable degree of representativeness and must be chosen to demonstrate in a new situation what has been found or considered elsewhere. They cannot be chosen simply on the basis of availability or apparent simplicity, an approach which too often bedevils the use of case studies in policy fields, if they are to generate data robust enough to be transferred to similar situations in the future or in other geographical or social segments of the populations or to justify redistribution or reinvestment of funds. Case studies are especially useful for formative purposes (learning for improvement by program managers, for example) but are less useful by themselves for summative purposes. They can usefully supplement formative studies. They are particularly valuable as pilot studies.

Where small numbers of interviews are the basis of the evaluation it is important that the samples be appropriate and the instruments used (questionnaires, *aides memoires* etc) for data collection be well adapted to the field in question. This means that they must be informed by knowledge of the theory and other studies in the field so that the selection of questions is meaningful and results can be compared with those of similar studies carried out elsewhere.

6.2.5 Evaluation toolkits

In general, it is important that tool kits developed for evaluation be made specific enough to deal with the complexities of establishing social impact as well as the management of projects and its potential improvement. A recent example is the evaluation guide developed in Victoria to evaluate community arts and well-being. A variety of tool kits may need to be developed to cope with the many dimensions of assessing the social impact(s) of the very various types of project or program, including variations in scale, duration and target population as well the variety of impacts that might have occurred and their timing and duration.

Overall, this project suggests that a variety of approaches is needed and that the degrees of sophistication used be adapted to the means and skills available to practitioners and researchers in the field. One way may be to ensure diffusion of good knowledge of earlier studies in the field, of what can theoretically be expected as linkages between programs and their outcomes. This knowledge then may be used to design empirical approaches which combine surveys—interviews, questionnaires, mail-out or phone—of sample populations selected on a purposive basis and carefully selected case studies to demonstrate in more detail the mechanisms of the effects observed. See Boxes 12 and 13.

6.2.6 Aligning purpose with scale of evaluation

Since there is no single model available it is important to consider the purposes of the evaluation in terms of two sets of dimensions. The first relates back to the theory in the bodies of literature that underpin notions such as self-esteem or community

development. This theory will point to the mechanisms through which desired social changes may (or may not) be made. If outcome 'b' is desired then it is critical to understand the influences that determine whether it will be achieved at all using policy or program 'a'. This understanding must underpin both policies which desire to effect changes to the attitudes, attributes (e.g. employability) or behaviour of target groups.

The second set of dimensions concerns two critical elements of the policies or programs concerned with reference to their evaluation in terms of social impact(s). These are: scale of the intervention, and timeframe of the intervention and its expected effects. To put it simply, one should not have expectations which are unrealistic in terms of the timeframe and scale (resources) intervention.

Many programs in the arts and cultural activities in Australia are very small in terms of scale and limited in terms of timeframe. It is almost certainly unrealistic to expect a short program, for instance of a few weeks, with few resources (dollars and people) to have any major effects on communities or individuals that have 'problems' (i.e. attributes or behaviours that you wish to change) however defined. Expectations must be tailored properly to what can realistically be done. This means that evaluation approaches used must reflect those expectations. There is no point in attempting most of our recommendations in this section of the report where programs are very small or carried out over a short time frame. In that kind of case, disseminating toolkits providing information on fairly elementary steps to take in evaluating whether or not aims were achieved and perhaps how things could be done differently in future may be the most useful and appropriate. It is hard to see how data gathered from these studies can be brought together to demonstrate social impact in most fields but it would ensure accountability at the level of proper expenditure of funds and they could be perhaps designed to provide baseline data to inform larger scale efforts.

In other words, more 'heavy duty' social impact analysis should perhaps be reserved for large-scale, longer term well resourced policy endeavours and programs. These seem to be the only ones that can be designed to provide robust enough data to justify many of the claims currently made but largely unsupported by evidence.

6.2.7 A national workshop for further database analysis

To carry the process forward effectively we finally suggest that SWG convene a workshop of interested parties from around Australia to consider the present report and see how its conclusions can be used in relation to their principal, and diverse areas of interest. Participants could look at the database and search it for areas relating to their own centres of interest and use discussions at the workshop to devise the next steps in their own policy and program evaluation procedures as they relate to the areas of impact determined for this study or others of concern to them. They could compare experiences with different approaches in different circumstances as an aid to addressing common issues and learning from each other what works and what is less useful in terms of methodological approaches and data collection procedures.

7 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

7.1 Policy development in a changing environment

Policymakers in arts/cultural fields everywhere are seeking answers to the same social impact questions: what impacts does participation in arts and cultural activities have on other areas of individual and community experience, attitudes and actions and how can we achieve long lasting desirable results? The questions have arisen as the environment in which arts policymakers operate has changed to one where governments both seek to find new ways of approaching intractable social issues, such as poverty and social exclusion, and demand more accountability for public funds spent in terms of these issues. The present project did not find many studies which supply clear-cut and ready answers to the questions involved but the importance of the questions was clearly appreciated and most public and private organisations operating in the world of social interventions of all kinds are struggling to answer it.

In Australia, as elsewhere, there is great interest among policymakers in considering social as well as economic impacts when developing policies and programs for arts and cultural activities and in encouraging collaboration between arts fields and other social and economic initiatives in the pursuit of social objectives. Every organization consulted expressed such interest and many had been very active in seeking out information from elsewhere and in thinking about the issues. Several states have a focus on creativity broadly conceived as part of the development strategies for their jurisdictions and important economic components. These very broad programs, such as Creative Queensland and Creating Capacity (Victoria), cover a wide range of arts and industry development activities under the program umbrella. Similarly, in some states and territories current governments have strong commitments to making a social difference through the activities of many portfolios and the arts area has developed initiatives to contribute to these broad government objectives. Included in the social objectives are sometimes explicit references to the reduction of social exclusion, to community development, to improvements in individual self-esteem or educational attainment or health status. Other initiatives are particularly focused on sustainability (Western Australia) or regional development (Queensland) or Indigenous populations (the Northern Territory and some federal government). The Australia Council, too, has devoted attention to programs of community development with special reference to Aboriginal communities.

The study thus found widespread interest in and commitment to including social impact objectives in the development of policies and programs for the arts and cultural activities. There was a commensurate interest in discovering what had been tried and found elsewhere, both by their Australian counterparts in other jurisdictions and international experts and policymakers. Many respondents had made considerable efforts to learn from the experiences of others while retaining their own local priorities and areas of focus.

The interviews also suggested that the amount of interest and commitment, has not yet been matched by deep knowledge and understanding of the many issues surrounding evidence of the impacts of policies and programs in the social sphere. Most people interviewed were aware that they needed to be able to assess impacts and understand the mechanisms which may connect program design with desired

outcomes among the target groups so that they could both evaluate policies and actions and design more effective ones where needed. However, there also appears to be some confusion about what constitutes evidence and the level of rigour needed to justify focusing funds on programs with specific social impact aims and target populations.

This is not surprising given that the literature reviewed for the project suggested that successful evaluation activity in the international arena is very limited and mostly relies on anecdotal and non-quantitative evaluation methods.

Awareness of the topic of the social impact of participation in the arts and cultural activity is particularly high in the UK. The present government has had a specific interest in the reduction of 'social exclusion' and the different mechanisms by which this reduction could be effected. Interviews with Baroness Blackstone and with DCMS officials confirmed both the social impact emphasis of many programs and their concern with outcomes. In the UK, every relevant ministry is concerned with social exclusion issues and has policies and programs which seek to address them. There is increasing recognition in the UK that the evaluation of their impact in the very diverse and complex social arenas to which they are targeted is only in its very early stages. Hence, the literature available so far largely focuses more on what is needed than on successful model studies.

In Australia, there may be fewer programs with explicit 'social engineering' intent that target participation in the arts and cultural activities than in the USA or the UK as they have developed more recently. This situation has been changing quickly over the last few years, however, as our interviews and studies of agency websites showed. The very useful work carried out by or for the Australia Council in particular over the last few years and more recently by other institutions is the beginning of more serious attempts to come to grips with the issues, to provide baseline data and to ensure that the statistical parameters required are available. Evaluations in a number of different fields, such as museums and other cultural institutions, are beginning to appear.

7.2 Approaches to evaluation: constraints and good practice

One of the key problems for policymakers seeking to achieve social impacts, in Australia as in the UK, is that the issue itself is complex and multi-dimensional and it is extremely difficult to separate out the effects of one program or activity. This applies both to those arts programs aimed at affecting social shifts (behaviour or attitudes) and also museums and other public cultural institutions seeking to show that they have identifiable social roles.

The literature reviewed for the present project provided evidence of the broad range of approaches recently and currently used to assess the social impacts of participation in arts and cultural activity. Many impacts are difficult to measure and much discussion concerns the quality of evidence around claims of impact made. The major issues arising concern the choice of appropriate indicators, proper matching of aims and approaches, definitions of terms, both by program designers and those evaluating projects, scale of study and the short rather than longitudinal nature of the evaluations carried out.

More specifically, few evaluations are designed from the beginning of the project or tailored to the specific elements of a project which distinguish it from others.

Conversely, where specificities have been emphasised, they may make it difficult to generalise results. Most studies lack control groups or other elements critical to experimental design, making it difficult to demonstrate effects of participation in the arts or cultural program *per se*. Case studies are often selected with little thought about the theoretical framework which could give them validity. Some of the larger studies reviewed gave no information on samples, timing, theoretical or methodological framework which guided their choice of case studies or the focus of interview or survey questions. Baseline data are often lacking, especially for more complex projects. Overall, it was found that there was general agreement on the elements to be included in a useful evaluation, but few examples of rigorous evaluation, with results subject to peer review.

Some studies provided models of good practice. Notable among these is a longitudinal study of 25,000 American high school students over a period from 1988 that examines the extent to which and the ways in which participation in arts and cultural programs during high school positively affected educational attainment in all cohorts, all social classes and all intellectual levels. The study was conducted by Dr John Catterall and has been reported in many places, including *Champions of Change*. This study is well known to Australian policymakers and needs further evaluation for its use to be maximised in Australian circumstances. Other examples include the meta-analyses conducted for the REAP project and are discussed in the body of the report and in comments included in the searchable database produced for the present project.

7.3 Gaps in research and priorities for action

There are many programs in the arts and cultural fields and increasing numbers of them are being evaluated. What may be seen as gaps in research as reported in the literature often relate to approaches to the evaluation rather than the field of research itself. In particular, there is increasing recognition that the ‘theory’ side of evaluation where the aim is social change must be taken seriously and the causality implied in the theories accepted as part of the context. Policies are always ‘theories’ in that they expect that if ‘x’ is done ‘y’ will follow and evaluations need good theoretical grounding. There is little current evidence of adequate theoretical grounding if they are to be meaningful.

The international trend in the field of using the arts and cultural activities as a means of achieving broader social goals suggests also the importance of looking at the *cumulative* effects of participation in arts and cultural activity. Where programs have been targeted to specific groups with, for example, the aim of improving community cohesion or reducing disadvantage in selected communities, it is likely that any one program will not be the sole intervention. Little specific account seems to be taken of the accumulation of activity impacts in the literature reviewed for this project.

One related gap in the research worth underlining here is thus the investigation of the cumulative effect of such participation on individuals as well as on their communities.

In relation to the impacts of arts programs targeting children, for example,

Sara Selwood suggested in the interview carried out in 2003 that it is the package of experiences that is critical. Thus, children may be involved in visits to dinosaur exhibitions, see a program on dinosaurs on TV and take part in a school activity of

dinosaur modelling that together rather than singly get them interested in a field, an interest that they later pursue by further museum visits or even later by taking their children.

In terms of the research, there remain areas where research has so far been less intensive, at least in Australia. These relate notably to improvements in health status and crime prevention. In most countries the focus has been rather on educational attainment and community development.

7.4 Coordination across jurisdictions

Federal state and territory governments in Australia do not all give the same emphasis to particular arts and cultural activities and the relations between these and areas of social impact. The present report thus suggests that each jurisdiction define its own priorities for action. It would be useful nonetheless for them to coordinate evaluation activities where possible so as to obtain a better database and allow more jurisdictions to share more common areas of focus. Policymakers could therefore gain valuable information from each other. The Cultural Ministers Council seems well suited to encouraging such close cooperation and could develop mechanisms for the systematic sharing of learning in the field.

A wide range of information was available in terms of the types of programs addressed, the type of participation addressed, the social impacts, and the country in which this was occurring. It was found during the interviews that in Australia and elsewhere a lot of work is underway in the field, much of it as yet unpublished. This means that within a relatively short time there will be much more information available, many more approaches will have been tried and the results reported.

7.5 Implications for social change

One important issue that has arisen in a number of studies, and that the DCMS officials interviewed for this project also now recognise, at least informally, concerns the role of arts and cultural activities as a tool of social change. There seems to be increasing recognition that in many cases programs of arts and cultural activities should not usually be expected to achieve desired social change effects as stand-alone interventions; rather, it seems, they often are most effective as part of broader policy packages which target underlying social problems directly. The social issues addressed are complex. These include poverty or mental health, and result from several causes. These problems cannot be fixed by one arts or even several arts or cultural programs but need a range of policies and programs of which an arts program can be one part. As Sara Selwood suggests, for example, it is often packages of activities and exposure in the arts field that make an impact and policymakers control only some elements of these packages. Interviews with arts and cultural policymakers in Australia indicate that in many places the need for partnerships is well understood and projects are being developed in that perspective.

7.6 Other trends

A report to DCMS reminded readers that it is perhaps disconcerting that so much of the cultural provision for young people in particular seems to be validated by the extrinsic benefits that it provides. It should be remembered, the authors say, that

culture, in its widest sense, improves the quality of life. It refreshes and expands the capacity of the mind and body and provides intrinsic benefits, which go a long way towards providing the rights of citizenship which in themselves encourage active and responsible citizens (Long *et al.* 2002:60). Thus, while the challenges identified with respect to arts social impact evaluation include research design, logistics/resources, and philosophy (Katsonis 2002) and may in time be overcome, several observers have begun to comment on the degree of current interest in evaluation as perhaps too strong, suggesting instead that 'The arts are not a cure-all for the latest social crisis—an answer to a problem. They are, rather, an entitlement and opportunity for individuals and communities to have a positive voice in a democratic society' (McEvoy 2003:7).

Taking account of these comments, which were echoed by several policymakers and administrators interviewed in both the UK and Australia, it would seem worth suggesting that, while expecting the arts to have a desired social impact is an important policy goal, many uncertainties remain in terms of the establishment of clear links between participation in the arts and other cultural activity and the social impacts desired by policymakers. Not only are links not clear but the mechanisms for establishing those links are poorly understood.

In contrast, there seems to be much evidence that such participation, whether it be receptive or creative, increases the quality of life and the richness of experiences available. It may be wise therefore to think carefully about the degree to which justification of investment in arts policies and programs is made on the basis of their social impacts. Winner and Cooper, authors of one of the REAP project reports, conclude in relation to education and the arts, in the following terms.

As soon as we justify arts by their power to affect learning in an academic area, we make the arts vulnerable...Were we to test whether math learning transfers to other subject areas, we would most likely find that it does not. But no-one would use such a finding as a reason to cut mathematics from the curriculum...Any evaluation of the educational outcomes of arts education should be based on learning in the arts. We evaluate the outcomes of the study of math by determining the most important kinds of math understanding that we want our children to possess. Similarly, we should evaluate the outcomes of the study of the arts by determining the most important kinds of arts understanding that we wish to instill.

The arts are at a distinct disadvantage compared to academic areas when it comes to evaluating learning outcomes because, while the arts teach measurable skills, they also teach experience and outcomes that are inherently difficult to measure and quantify (Winner and Cooper 2002;67).

The field of arts and cultural policies is a fast-changing one and new evidence of different kinds of impact will emerge in the coming years. For the moment, our study suggests that it is prudent to recognize both the opportunities for desired social changes in which the arts can play a role—and our interviews indicate a broad willingness of arts administrators and policymakers to accept that the arts can play useful instrumental roles in social development—and the limitations on our current understanding of how and why they do this.

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APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE



Invitation for stakeholders to participate in new research

Dear [Insert name],

We are seeking your involvement in a Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts funded study on the **‘The Social Impacts of Participating in the Arts and Cultural Activities’**. The study is to compare the theory and current state of knowledge on the topic and how this relates to current practice in government agencies responsible for the arts and cultural activities. The questionnaire below is designed to provide a picture of the policies, definitions, indicators and views of your department on this issue.

The findings from the questionnaire and the results of the study will benefit the Australian arts and cultural industries by contributing to policymaking and appropriate indicator development.

The interview will concern issues relating to the position of your department in terms of policy planning, definitions of key terms, any baseline data that your department already collects and appropriate methodology for determining the social impact of arts projects. Some more specific questions will be asked to help us with thinking about models of best practice and appropriate indicators.

AEGIS, the Australian Expert Group in Industry Studies specialises in the analysis of industry innovation and on providing independent policy advice to public agencies. It is an independent research centre, with no commercial ties to companies in this or other fields. For more information about AEGIS see our website www.aegis.uws.edu.au.

Please contact Professor Jane Marceau, Director of AEGIS email: j.marceau@uws.edu.au or Kate Davison, Research Assistant (The Australian Expert Group in Industry Studies), email: k.j.davison@uws.edu.au for further information on the project.

Jane Marceau, BA Hons (London School of Economics), PhD (Cambridge), is the Director of AEGIS. She specialises in the analysis of innovation and strategies for the development of industries. Jane has published widely on industry, technology and research policies and on technological and organisational innovation in different industries. She is perhaps currently best known for her leadership of the team, which produced *The High Road or the Low Road? Alternatives for Australia's Future* (1997).

Each member of the research team is committed to the principles that guide reputable research. All research will be undertaken with care and respect for the respondent's welfare and the quality and validity of the research report/result. All information on individual firms will be treated in strictest confidence, and no individuals or individual firms will be identified in the research result. We will ask you for your contact details if you would like to receive a copy of the report. You are free to withdraw at any time without repercussions and you may request that your contributions be removed from the project. Thank you for your participation.

NOTE: This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee. The Approval Number is HEC 03/210. If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Research Ethics Officers (tel: 02 4570 1136). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

AEGIS QUESTIONNAIRE

We have seen the policies and programs that your department has developed as they are reported on your department's website. Are there any programs that you have added to your portfolio recently which would be relevant to examining the social impact of participating in arts and cultural activities?

What do you see as your most significant program in terms of social impact? In which areas?

What were the principal reasons for developing these particular programs?

What definitions does your department have for:

The arts

Cultural activities

Social impact

What has been the most important element(s) you have had in mind when devising arts and cultural policies which you wish to have social impact? For example, have you been looking at the international research in the field for inspiration there? Have you built any elements into your policies which you have seen used in other countries, notably the UK, the USA or Canada?

What issues, if any, do you see with the current methodologies employed in researching the social impact of participating in the arts and cultural activities?

What do you consider appropriate indicators for determining any social impact(s) of your state's arts and cultural programs? Have you already used these in your evaluations?

Do you think you have had more impact in some areas than others (eg participation in arts policies and educational success)?

To what extent do you think users should be involved in evaluation of policies which aim to achieve social impacts(s)? Have you involved any external consultants in researching social impact(s)?

Does your department collect any baseline data for longer term evaluation of social impact?

Do you have any suggestions about future work either in the arts policies for social impact field or in terms of evaluating the impact of existing policies?

How much do you consider broader social impact when thinking about arts and cultural policies?

How appropriate do you feel it is for cultural institutions to act as agents of broader social change?

Any other comments about what works or doesn't work in terms of the social impact of arts and cultural policies?

APPENDIX 2: EXAMPLES OF STUDIES THAT USED A VERY GOOD METHODOLOGY

The Centre for Arts and Humanities in Health and Medicine (2003). *Arts and Adult Mental Health Literature Review. Addressing the evidence base from participation in arts and cultural activities. A report to the Social Exclusion Unit.* Durham: University of Durham.

Department for Culture Media and Sport (1999). *Efficiency and Effectiveness of Government-sponsored Museums and Galleries.* London: Department for Culture Media and Sport.

Everitt, A. and R. Hamilton (2003). *Arts, Health and Community. A study of five Arts in Community Health Projects.* Durham: University of Durham.

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The Arts Education Partnership and The President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities (1999). *Champions of Change. The impact of the arts on learning.* Washington, The Arts Education Partnership and the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities. Also reported by J. Catteral as 'Involvement in the Arts and Success in Secondary School', *Americans for the Arts Monographs* .Vol 1, Number 9.

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APPENDIX 3: GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED TO CLASSIFY METHODOLOGIES USED IN THE LITERATURE REVIEWED

Where possible, the definition of the methodology or type of research was taken directly from the report or paper reviewed and put into the database. Most reports included specific information such as the number of interviews, and the date of the research. In cases where no definitions were given in the original documents, relevant following terms were used as follows:

Baseline data: Initial collection of data to which other data are compared.

Case study: Summary of a program that had been run. Involved describing the program, participants' reactions to it, and opinions about long-term and short-term outcomes. No formal evaluation was carried out.

Conference summary: summary of proceedings of a conference.

Evaluation Guide: Guide for institutions and individuals as to how to carry out evaluation of programs. Usually in the form of steps to take in the process.

Historical review: Review of the main elements of the history of current policies concerned with the arts.

Ideas/personal views: One person's opinions about the issue.

Interviews: Formal interviews with participants in the program.

Focus groups: An event where researchers meet potential or actual participants or users of a program to plan how to tailor it more effectively to the populations targeted in current or future programs.

Literature review: Summary of the key issues emerging from a number of completed studies.

Longitudinal studies: Studies, usually surveys on a national scale, carried out on the same target population several times over a number of years, using the same approach or methodology, to assess trends and longer term post-intervention experiences or attitudes and behaviour change.

Meta-analysis: Analysis of data from a number of independent studies of the same subject (usually published but sometimes unpublished) to determine overall data patterns, conclusions and significance.

National surveys and government data: Surveys carried out on a national scale, usually using statistically representative and/or random samples and reported in combination with other data collected by the governments.

Review of cultural indicators: Summary description of indicators that could be used, their effectiveness and how they could be measured.

Review of policies and programs/program review: Summary of government policies relating to programs used as examples/summary of program(s) including author's conclusions as to its effectiveness.

Self-evaluation and further examination: Participants' or organisers' reports, without any prompting as one would find in an interview or questionnaire, on their opinions about programs.

Surveys/questionnaires: A formal and standardised list of questions by which information is sought from a selected group, usually for statistical analysis. May be large or small scale but when the term 'survey' is used the data collected usually indicates larger scale.

APPENDIX 4: LIST OF ORGANISATIONS INTERVIEWED/CONTACTED NOVEMBER – DECEMBER 2003

Australia Council for the Arts – five interviews

Arts ACT – did not participate for lack of time. Accessed website instead.

NSW Ministry for the Arts – one interview

Arts NT – one interview

Arts Queensland – three interviews

Arts SA – three interviews

Art Tasmania – two interviews

Arts Victoria – two interviews

Western Australian Department of Culture and the Arts – four interviews

State Library WA – one interview

Department of Communications, Information and the Arts – four interviews