

**Personal, professional and policy factors
within a community arts practice.**

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MA Cross sectoral and Community Arts

Goldsmiths University of London, 2008

Abstract

Personal, professional and policy factors within a community arts practice.

The aim of this study is to improve the knowledge base and therefore the practice of community arts through exploring the experience of a sample group of community artists based in London, in relation to personal, professional and policy factors. By identifying main factors that affect motivation within the field of community arts key recommendations for artists and policy are formulated.

Research methodology uses qualitative data from interviews of community artists, where the adaptation of a framework from a study by Herzberg et al (1959) is noted. An initial literature review finds a lack of research on the experience of community artists from the artists' point of view.

The study adds to the knowledge base on community arts, particularly concerning:

- A lack of adequate management in the field.
- A lack of recognition of the professionalism of artists, especially by social sector staff.
- Artists have a lack of clarity over official aims and can focus on personal aims.
- Artists have concerns over the instrumental aims of social policy.
- Artists find grouping people by funding criteria problematic.
- Artists have concerns over short term funding and lack of funded time allocated within projects.

A desire for a union to counteract negative managerial and financial factors is identified. The study also uncovers the importance of the self-actualisation effects of the work on the artists, particularly those linked with participants, as a major motivating factor.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all the artists who gave their time and reflections on their experience that made this study possible.

A special thank you to Dr Alvaro Alonso, Dr Judy Green and Paco Pozo-Martin for their feedback and encouragement.

Glossary

ACE	Arts Council England
ACA	Association of Community Artists
AiSfL	Artists in Sites for Learning Scheme
GLLAM	The Group for Large Local Authority Museums

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Fig 1: Likert scale data

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

While working as a community artist in an environment that is full of challenge, growth, frustration and insight I became aware of changes that occurred in my personal, professional and political thinking.

In conversation with other community artists the experiences shared resonated with my own and pointed to a range of impacts, both positive and negative, that push and pull the artists towards and away from engaging with their practice. I became interested in these impacts on artists working within the social inclusion agenda and how the work fits with their personal, professional and political philosophy.

There seemed to be commonalities of thinking and experience expressed by the community artists I encountered, however an initial literature review found little exploration of the impact of a community arts practice on the artist personally, professionally and politically.

I chose to embark on a research-based study, rather than undertake a final MA project after the literature pointed to a lack of research based skills and reflexivity within the field.

I hoped an exploration of the shared experiences and processes at work would

identify common themes within the field and lead to recommendations that would support the professional development of community artists and add to the debate on professional practice.

1.2 Research aims and objectives

The aim of this study is to improve the knowledge base and practice of community art.

The objectives of the study are to:

- Explore the experience of the practice of a sample group of community artists based in London in relation to personal, professional and policy factors.
- Identify main motivating factors within the field of community arts.
- Formulate key recommendations for artists, commissioners and policy.
- Identify areas for further research.

2 Methodology

2.1 Literature review

I found that the artist's voice is often used as an individual quote to underline a particular point in a project review. This often happens in dissemination through the press where space is limited and the aim is to state how well the project achieved its goals of social inclusion for the participants. This finding is confirmed in a report by the Arts Research Digest (2001) on a conference on the impact of education work on artists practice. It states that artists are seen as service providers and not as beneficiaries and are excluded from the research process. This has contributed to a lack of research on the impacts of educational work on artists and their practice.

When in an attempt to give a fuller account of the artists' experience whole transcripts of interviews are presented, I found very little analysis is usually present beyond an introduction. [1,2]

In evaluative research papers I did find analysis of the artists' voice but this is mainly focused on the evaluation of single projects rather than a broader evaluation of the field or the artists' perspective. In a report by Thomson et al (2006) on a Creative Partnerships [3] school residency, analysis of interviews with the artist is presented. The study was unusual in the literature as it focused on the conflict within a project that was seen to "fail". The report highlights the lack of time the artist had to discuss the project with the school, leading to

expectation differences, and a lack of management as the artist was left unsupported to work with the children. The different professional histories and training of the artist and teachers and the lack of communication around expectations were seen to lead to the conflicts that arose.

When a broader net is used in selecting artists the focus of the analysis tends to respond to cultural policy's need for evidence of the benefits of the arts. An example of this is the Voluntary Arts England's report by Devlin (2008) which contains case studies from a range of arts tutors and adult learners highlighting the benefits associated with participating in the arts. This can bring a lack of critique to reports.

A lack of rigorous evaluation data is a concern in the field. Thomson, P and Hall, C (2007), state that Creative Partnerships mainly focus on discussion of the positives and not on any potential difficulties within project evaluation. Jermyn (2001) gives a lack of internal capacity for such undertakings as a possible reason for a lack of an evidence base. This is backed up by research in the museum sector with The Group for Large Local Authority Museums Report (GLLAM) (2000).

Partheni's (1998) study of community arts in Britain in the 1990's states that the difficulty many practitioners have in contextualizing their work or their reluctance to justify their practice theoretically was an obstacle in the research. [4] One reason put forward for this was practitioners were found to be hesitant to expose

their personal influences as this instantly contradicted the main purpose of community art of giving priority to the public rather than the artist. Platform's [5] Jane Trowell (2003) states a need for socially engaged artists to be able to articulate who they are politically and artistically. If this is not done it can not only hinder professional debate but also render the artist suspect to the participants of a project.

Creative Exchange's study by Gould (2003) on practitioners' views in England on current issues in Arts and Social Inclusion found confusion among arts practitioners about what Arts Council England (ACE) means by Arts and Social Inclusion. Motivations of policy were also questioned, "*The fact that social inclusion is a central plank of government strategy, has caused practitioners to ask what both government and ACE wish to achieve: Getting people into the workforce? Having the resources to have the choice? Creating fodder for capitalism?*"

Artists felt that labelling specific communities and groups 'disadvantaged' or 'excluded', often to meet funding agency criteria, leads to negative identity within communities and acts as a barrier to advancement. Listening to and consulting with the community rather than setting targets and outcomes pre project was called for. "*Is it a control mechanism or a means of empowering and liberating people?*" they asked.

There was a perception that “*there is tons of money out there*”, however major concerns about the short-term nature of funding and its impact on sustainability were present in the study. Funding for research and development, training and continuing professional development was viewed as limited and unpredictable.

In the study evaluation systems and the development of an effective evidence base for arts and social inclusion was an issue in all regions of England. Artists stated a need to develop more appropriate systems of measuring the impact of arts and social inclusion activities, to make use of the data and advocate the evidence to promote learning.

Lack of recognition of the professionalism of artists, especially by social sector staff, was stated as a barrier to the work; however some good models of projects where social sector staff were built into project delivery were mentioned.

In Pringle’s (2002) study of artists taking part in Art Council England’s ‘Artists in Sites for Learning Scheme’ (AiSfL), which supports artist-led participatory arts projects in a range of cultural and educational settings, it is stated that there is little related published work on creative practices and pedagogic approaches of artists working in this area and where it does exist it tends to focus on outcomes for participants.

It was found that for many of the artists the increased policy initiatives and funding for community development through the arts was recognition of the value

of the work. However, concerns over expectations of addressing deep-rooted economic and social issues were also present. Forming partnerships with communities over the long term was seen as the only way to generate long term impact.

Artists in Pringle's (2002) study emphasised the non-didactic approach to engaging participants and seen themselves as co-learners without a fixed body of knowledge to impart. The teaching of specific art techniques was perceived as secondary to developing participant's individual creativity and encouraging critical reflection, and necessary mainly to enable the participants to better realise their ideas in visual form.

The artists considered that they had a responsibility to address social and political issues and to enable the participants to articulate issues that are of importance to them. There was no set career path that the artists followed, with their skills and knowledge being acquired through their individual creative and life experiences.

Twenty four artists were consulted by Keaney et al (2007) as part of the Arts Council England's arts debate on the value of the arts and the role of public funding. Although not focused on artists working within a socially engaged practice some findings within the study point to themes within this field.

- *Many artists who were involved in community arts or whose organizations made specific efforts to reach out to a broader population felt that audience and participant response was especially important.*
- *Respondents whose work had a specific focus on social benefit and widening access tended to believe that Arts Council funding is weighted towards traditional artforms, and felt that more should be targeted at inclusive arts.*
- *A few artists worked on community projects because they were required to by their employer, or because they needed to do so in order to attract funding, and they derived little satisfaction from it.*
- *Those involved in community arts, believed that any form of creative activity can be classed as art, and should be eligible for arts funding, because of the effect it produces in participants.*

Artists voices were found in industry publications such as the MAILOUT with Knight's (2008) regular articles discussing community art practice or Warr (2008) revisiting Kelly's (1984) critique on community arts, and in AN magazine, Elliot (2008) states that autonomy for artists within a socially engaged practice is not lost but given away through lack of engagement with policy.

Artists voices are also found on the internet, for example in New Work Networks

[6] online forum for artists with a socially engaged practice or artist David Patten arguing on Ixia's [7] web site that keeping artists removed from the project development process, sheltered by agencies, can add to the continuing ignorance and sense of unease over the artist's role.

Although no research was found that mapped and explored these debates found in print and online, it does suggest a need for community artists to share and debate issues around professional practice with other practitioners. It is these important issues I will identify and explore with a sample group of community artists in this study.

2.2 Research overview

The research employed a mix of quantitative and qualitative methodology but focuses mainly on the qualitative analysis of interviews with community artists.

2.2.1 Qualitative research

A series of semi structured individual interviews with community artists were undertaken, lasting from half an hour to one and a half hours. Artists also rated the importance of aspects of their work through a Likert scale [8] tick sheet. Averages were calculated to give an overall ranking of each factor then median and standard deviation [9] scores were found and are displayed in table format. All interviews were recorded and then transcribed. A thematic content analysis was used to identify emerging themes.

I used critical incident analysis within the interviews, in reference to Fernandez-Aroaz, C (2001). To uncover impacts, perceptions and values artists were asked for positive and negative experiences related to their practice and how they felt about the impact of policy in their work environment.

In reflection on my own experience, it was felt that exploring personal, professional, political factors would bring a breadth and depth to the study.

I adapted coding from a study by Herzberg et al (1959) on the motivation of middle managers in the USA. It was felt that this study offered a good model of an exploration of motivational factors in the workplace. I used variables taken from this study when coding positive and negative experiences and within the benefits and drawbacks of policy. I allowed themes to emerge for the other topics to let the data speak for itself. I coded the interview transcriptions and then analyzed the weight each coded variable had in each factor. In the findings the variables are discussed in order of weight. When referring to factors in the analysis I have underlined them to ease cross-referencing the data.

In the study by Herzberg et al (1959) factors that are related to supporting the work i.e. management, were labeled “Factors of Hygiene” and those that were concerned with the personal experience of the work i.e. achievement, were labeled “Motivation”. The study found that when supporting factors *“deteriorate to a level below that which the employee considers acceptable then job dissatisfaction ensues. However the reverse does not hold true. When the job*

context can be characterized as optimal, we will not get dissatisfaction, but neither will we get much in the way of positive attitudes. The factors that lead to positive job attitudes do so because they satisfy the individuals need for self actualization” [10] and are contained within “Motivation”. I use this grouping of factors for this study.

2.2.2 Quantitative research

While scaling the importance of factors related to their work on the Likert scale artists were asked about any prior training they may have had on that factor. Data was also collected on professional identity, age, gender, length of practice and percentage of work falling into the field of community arts.

2.3 Sampling factors

As the study was an initial exploratory research, a broad a perspective as possible within the constraints of time and budget was attempted. The sample purposively represents a wide range of artist practice and includes a mix of different demographic profiles, in terms of age, gender, ethnicity and cultural background.

2.4 The artists

Fourteen interviews were conducted, with seven female and seven male artists taking part. Ages ranged from 28 to 60 years old with an average of 38.3 years old. Although the artists were not asked to self identify cultural or ethnic status an attempt was made to include a range of perspectives. Five claimed nationalities

outside of England (Greek, Spanish, Scottish, American and Lebanese) and a range of cultural heritage was evident (Middle Eastern, Mediterranean, Afro-Caribbean, Asian and Western European). Although the study had a focus on artists practicing in a UK context, and specifically London, three had practices primarily based outside of the UK (Spain, Cambodia and Lebanon).

Length of time working in community arts ranged from 1 year to 25 years with an average length of time being 8.9 years. Most artists were viewed as being established in the field, with the exception of the artist with 1 year's experience, who was included as a comparison. Percentage of the artist's workload classified as falling within a community arts context ranged from 25% to 100% and averaged out at 63.8%.

Effort was made to include a variety of contexts within the study (activism, community development, criminal justice, cultural democracy, education, regeneration, health and spirituality). A range of artforms were also found within the study (visual arts, digital arts, drama, performance, video, sculpture, photography, printmaking, festivals), with many of the artists employing a mixture of artforms within their practice.

In the study I have used the term community artist when referring to a professional identity. It is acknowledged that this is not always the term that the artists themselves identify with and the term community artist is used to imply the range of professional identities stated by the artists. (*See appendix 9.5 for*

identities given by artists)

2.5 Confidentiality

All participants signed a consent form outlining the study and its purposes. The consent form stated that all interviews were to be anonymous to allow the interviewees to feel that they could talk about situations or projects in a critical manner.

2.6 Constraints

The relative small sample size of fourteen artists means that the study findings can not be said to be universal. However, through efforts made to include a broad spectrum of artists and contexts within the sample the study can be said to point to main themes within the profession.

One major constraint, due to lack of resources, was that coding of interviews was undertaken by the researcher alone. To counteract this and confirm reliability I had the coding checked by my supervisor and Dr Judy Green from the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, an acknowledged expert in qualitative analysis.

The fact that I professionally, if not personally, knew a large number of the interviewees could be seen to bring both positive and negative effects to the study. [11] It is of note that even after being told that everything would be anonymous four of the artists asked for any details that could link them to what

was being discussed to be omitted from the study. This may show that they were willing to discuss feelings and thoughts that they would not normally make public. However, the negative effects of peer review on the artists must be taken into consideration. Through a presumed shared knowledge, or feelings that professional status was under scrutiny, artists might have excluded or exaggerated important factors.

3 Findings

The findings are grouped into the three main areas I was interested in: personal, professional and policy factors.

3.1 Personal factors

“There will be something in their background, including my own, that makes it very important to them that they work with this specific group or this kind of group”

I was interested in any relation to personal background as motivation for working in the field of community art. However, I did not question the interviewees directly about personal background. It was felt that within a single interview broaching personal matters that may be sensitive could have been counterproductive. The factors in this section were allowed to emerge from the data. Although this section did not generate a large number of factors, which could be put down to the lack of direct questioning, there were two strong factors that emerged.

Within personal factors Empathy is the largest. Half the group referred to something that gave them a sense of empathy with the participants coming from personal background. Often the references were reflections on seeing connections with the artists' own childhood and the young people they work with. *“I like working with young people. It makes you think about how I was when I was young“*. There were also instances where the interviewees spoke of empathy

through ethnic background, *“that was part of my reason to become a photographer in the first place. It meant I was involved as a parent, in my community, being part of the black community”,* or they spoke of coming from communities dealing with similar issues to the ones they work with *“I have a lot of friends in those kind of settings. Somehow if I wasn’t doing what I was doing I would either be in prison or in some mental health institution.”*

The next factor that emerged was Not fitting in. These were examples where the artist expressed feelings of being different. This factor again gave a sense of empathy but emerged as separate due to the strong sense of alienation from the mainstream in the artist’s background. Ethnicity was mentioned, *“I’m darker than what people associate Indian people to be. Our visual perception is so powerful and that’s where I think photography is a really powerful tool and I like to create images that challenge people’s perceptions”,* however, it was instances referring to childhood that again were in the majority. *“My rebellious nature would fit well if the inclusion you are talking about is sulky, alienated teenagers because I was one of them too. I’m used to being on the outside, so I like working with people who are on the outside.*

A personal background of having an Engagement in art was surprisingly only mentioned by one artist *“Being dyslexic at school, one of the things I was good at or praised for was art.”*

Within the Likert scale tick sheet maintaining a professional distance with

participants was ranked as a low priority. This can be seen as highlighting the personal nature of the work for the artists.

3.2 Professional factors

3.2.1 Skills perceived as important

“It’s an attitude to change you have to have”

Within the interviews I questioned the artists on what skills they thought were important. To explore skills further I also asked the artists to fill out a Likert scale questionnaire rating how important different topics were to their practice.

The skills that were perceived as important to the work through the interviews were Interpersonal, Approach, Managerial and Creative skills.

Interpersonal skills were by far the largest skill and were prioritised by twelve of the artists. Communication skills with participants was regarded as the most important with *“listening”* and *“tuning in”* being perceived as major factors. *“It’s like an anthropologist when you go on an estate, you study young people, hear what they do, listen to what they say”*. Although the focus was on participants, interpersonal relationships at an organizational level and with other staff were mentioned but this was at a low level.

For eight of the artists Approach to the work mainly revolved around being responsive to the environment the artists found themselves in and being flexible to change. Managerial was seen in the sense of self management with time management and being *“super prepared”* and organised being perceived as vital.

Six of the artists talked about practical arts based skills, however Creative skills were rated relatively low.

Results from analysis of the Likert scale data confirms those obtained from the interviews. When we look at interpersonal, management and creative skills the same pattern of ranking emerges. These high rated topics returned low standard deviation results and point to a strong consensus by the artists.

Topic	Artists responses														Median	Mean	Standard Deviation
	1 = least important, 5 = Most important																
Knowledge of history of community arts	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	5	3	3.00	0.87
Professional distance with participants	1	1	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	5	5	3	3.14	1.96
Knowledge of social inclusion agenda	1	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	5	5	3	3.35	1.01
Career development	2	2	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	4	3.85	1.20
Knowledge of arts funding	2	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	4	3.85	0.98
Salary	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	4	4.00	0.76
Peer Support Network	2	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	4	4.07	0.98
Relationship with personal practice	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	4	4.07	0.68
Knowledge of cultural diversity	1	1	3	3	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4.5	3.92	2.06
Practical arts based skills	3	3	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4.50	0.57
Self evaluation	3	3	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4.57	0.56
Project management	3	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4.64	0.39
Personal satisfaction	3	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4.64	0.39
Facilitation skills	3	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4.71	0.36
Ability to work with groups	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4.85	0.12
Communication/negotiation skills	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4.92	0.06

* Artists ticked a box to state they had training in these topics while competing the Likert scale

Fig 1: Likert scale data

3.2.2 How skills are gained

“It’s about getting started, doing and seeing how someone else runs their sessions”.

I questioned the artists on where they had gained the skills they perceived as important.

Work related learning was viewed as the main source of gaining skills by all the artists. Actually doing the job is perceived as the best way to learn, alongside watching and talking with other community artists.

Formal training was referred to mainly in terms of arts based training before beginning to work in community arts. A high level of education was present with thirteen artists stating having degrees and six an MA. Formalised community art training was perceived as lacking real world significance by some artists, *“If you have a PhD in youth arts you may have to de-role, put a different hat on or approach it much much more different to what your beliefs are at the moment. You are coming into a field that is live in the here and now”.*

For thirteen of the artists Non formal learning concerned learning from mistakes and self reflection as well as gaining skills through talking with and learning from other people or through literature.

A sense of a Natural ability was expressed by nine of the artists. Being *“a people*

person” or having “a very good eye” was seen as being an innate ability that came from within. There was also a sense of Uncertainty as to where skills had originated with views such as “I’m not sure how I picked those skills up” being expressed by five of the artists.

3.2.3 Perception of artist’s role

“Human interaction and how that can make someone feel inspired or makes them look outside of their world in a different way”

Within the interviews I asked the artists how they perceived their role as a community artist.

Mirroring skills perceived as important, Interpersonal elements of the artists role was viewed as the main factor by all the artists. Facilitating, supporting and helping participants was mentioned but it also included “being curious about people” and “having fun” alongside participants.

For eight artists to Challenge participants, “I like to push people out of their comfort zones“, and policy was seen as a large part of the artists role, “We are being sanitised slowly by funding and that kind of inclusion policies, funding policies, and I think that that needs to be challenged”. To be Creative and create a space for things to happen was also rated highly by seven artists, “Creating situations, projects or space” where participants can “realise their creative voice”.

Management roles mainly concerned project co-ordination and organizational issues. Four artists expressed Uncertainty over role, with statements such as *“there are hundreds of different flavours isn’t there. Education, political, advocacy, therapeutic”* and *“it changes a lot depending on who I am working with.”* This highlights a shifting perception of the artist’s role in differing contexts.

It is of note that none of the artists described their professional title as a “community artist”. In fact there were thirteen different professional titles given. Artists mainly referred to their artform or development specialism when constructing a professional title.

3.2.4 Positive experience

“We are just learning, learning, learning. The women, all of us just learning all the time, we are so nourished by it.”

I explored main motivating factors for the artists by asking for examples of positive experiences within their practice.

Positive growth stood out as the factor that brought the most fulfillment for all the artists. By the high number of examples within the coding this factor was viewed as important enough to further analyze by looking for sub factors.

The main sub factor of Artist growth focused on the benefits for the artist *“it gives you real confidence in yourself”, “I personally feel much more realized and*

rounded and I like that". Both Participant growth "Its really very pleasurable seeing people discover their inner resources" and Shared growth "it's a thing that can transform peoples lives, and your own life" were also voiced in terms of the artist gaining from the experience, "I think I share in that in a sense...Every time someone makes a journey where they have a road to Damascus experience".

Achievement was enthusiastically talked about by eleven of the artists in terms of overcoming challenges with or because of the participants, "It made it fun and enjoyable and challenging. I like challenging projects" "most of them were like I hate writing I am not going to write anything, and it was just the fact that we found a different way of getting them to do that". Producing a final product that was of a high standard was also evident within this theme, such as "Making this [film] product that is now an educational resource for drug and alcohol workers".

Relationships with participants was the next important factor for all the artists. Statements such as "that was a particularly fond memory just because it was so much fun. We are very affectionate with the girls and it was such a nice time" and "it's just nice to not feel uncomfortable or not feel judgmental about people" points to satisfaction and personal development for the artist being linked with participants.

For eight of the artists Recognition mainly came in the form of personal feedback from participants "The moments when someone comes up to you and gives you a hug and says oh you know I have enjoyed this project so much, I am really

going to miss you.”

Personally witnessing and recognizing the power of the work also emerged within this factor *“You can see the work you are doing effecting the change in real time, its extraordinary, to see someone going from crying and feeling awful and having been raped to leaving walking on air and feeling great”*. As did recognition from organizations and management, although this was evident to a lesser extent, *“the fact that then the prison decided to put some serious money into the printing and distributing of it [magazine], so that’s extremely satisfying”*.

For five of the artists Relationships with peers was rated as a minor but important factor, *“a lot of the people I work with become my friends, are my friends”, “You become part of a community, don’t you, which is part of how you identify yourself”*

Calls for artists to work with whole environments and involve all the people within it were made, *“also staff in arts activities”, “staff at every level, the cleaner up to the consultant”*. Feelings that everyone *“benefits from feeling creatively involved or fulfilled or given some sort of creative voice”* were stated.

Finance, Management, The work itself, Working conditions, Relationships with superiors, Responsibility and Status were all mentioned but at very low levels.

Factors from the study by Herzberg et al (1959) that did not rate by the artists

were Advancement and Job security.

3.2.5 Negative experience

“Who looks after the carers?”

By asking about negative experiences within their practice I hoped to uncover main concerns for the artists.

The largest factor of Negative growth was solely around the direct impact on the artist and was rated by nine of the artists. *“It’s so hard on you emotionally and physically”, “A lot of pressure and I don’t know how to deal with that”*. Some of the impacts reported were severe, *“I sometimes get very distressed”, “My drinking stepped up”, “I became very withdrawn”*.

Methods of dealing with negative impacts mainly concerned personal support networks of family and friends. *“You can go home and dump it on your partner or whatever, and I’m sure I have been guilty of that”*. The idea that *“you become very cynical”* about funders and commissioners motivations was also raised repeatedly.

In the next highest rated factor of Finance complaints were voiced by seven artists about the perceived worth of artists and the lack of time available on projects, *“instead of paying me properly they wanted to get it cheap”, “more consideration should be given to what the artist actually needs in terms of prep*

work and prep time.”

The lack of resources available did not allow artists to have the time and space to complete a project to the best of their ability. Artists stated that they were making up this perceived deficit of time on projects by working unpaid, *“The funder hasn’t allocated enough funds for something to be done properly. So you are given a choice about whether you continue to do it properly, as to your conscience, or you leave a group”, “I find that’s very challenging, and I have always finished the project in my own time and always been really cross about it”.*

There were solutions for this lack of remuneration stated. A need for a supporting body was voiced who would *“get some kind of protection for us. Pay, pensions, all those kinds of aspects, put that into our working conditions.”* and lobby *“at a level of policy, maybe if they even came out and said you will not pay artists less than this”.* There was a call for community artists to have a unified voice in this matter, *“If everyone said no I am not working for that then they would have to put the prices up because that is just economy isn’t it”.*

In Management which looks at managerial issues we find sub factors within the data. These might go some way to explaining the negative relationships with peers found in the following factor.

General Lack of management support was the highest rated sub factor. Seven artists reported just being expected to do the job without support in place with

statements like *“there is no one within miles to help you should you need it”*. A lack of communication and planning involving other support staff was mentioned, *“You sort of expect that there would at least be some ground work prepared before you arrive and you find out [when] you turn up with your bags of art materials no-ones got a clue why you are there”*.

Artists also talked of disinterested managers, such as the *“project manager who wasn’t doing their job basically and they were just sitting at their desk away from everyone”*.

Bad management emerged as a sub factor, but to a lesser degree, with seven artists reporting statements such as *“this project really went out of control. I think mainly because of bad planning”*. This affected the artist’s relationship with peers as *“they don’t plan enough time for us [co-workers] to work together and know what we are like and how we work”*.

In Relationship with peers, peers were taken to be other community artists as well as surrounding support staff, often in social services, not in a direct managerial role over the artist. Again it was felt that further analysis might uncover meaningful data.

For six artists Difference between peers was stated as, *“people having different ideas about team working. I worked with one person and I thought we were working as a team but the person always stepped out in front in a kind of*

leadership role and never asked me if that was ok” or “the officer whose role it was to usually oversee found my presence there very problematic” there was “suspicion” “and that left a bad taste in my mouth”.

Active Sabotage by peers was also stated by six artists, *“In more cases than not it’s been prison officers sabotaging my project and I am powerless”.* Examples were also reported in youth arts *“the youth worker tried to pit the kids against me and tried to make out all kinds of strange things about me. It was very uncomfortable”* and also in community development *“the specialist sat in the workshop at one point with a scarf wrapped around her head and her eyes closed while I tried to facilitate everything. It was monstrous”.*

A lack of Recognition of the working methods added to the artists’ frustration with *“people that want to... not control what you are doing but they kind of don’t understand the process and you find yourself put in a compromised position”.* Outcomes of the work were also seen to have a lack of recognition with *“the guy who was talking about it being distractive therapy and all this sort of stuff, it was like he fundamentally didn’t understand what was going on”.* This can lead to feelings of *“a complete disregard for the thing that you are trying to do”.*

Relationship with participants is stated as a negative aspect for six artists when *“sometimes quite extreme things happen and I am not really necessarily equipped to deal with it”* or *“you just feel that they are not engaging, they don’t want to be here”.*

Achievement, The work itself, Working conditions and Job security were also mentioned but at low levels.

Factors from the study by Herzberg et al (1959) that did not rate by the artists were Advancement, Status, Relationships with superiors, and Responsibility.

3.2.6 Career path

“What is a career as a community artist?”

I was interested in how artists seen their career path and questioned them on their future plans.

There didn't seem to be a consistent future career path envisioned by the artists with a fairly even split between Uncertainty, Developing community art practice, Management and Developing personal art practice. General Fulfillment and Time out were present but at a much lower level.

Seven artists had Uncertainty around the future and the concept of having a career came across as something that was not planned. *“I don't ever see things in terms of career”, “that's a funny idea, an artistic career”*. A strategy of responding to opportunities when they arose seemed to be the norm.

Seven artists were keen to continue with their Community art practice and to *“find myself in situations where I am challenging myself, challenging perceptions”*, and

to be *“a little bit more experimental, explorative”*.

The development of seven of the artists community arts practice seemed to lead in the direction of Management. A desire to move into Management was not in reaction to bad management and feelings that they could do better but was seen as an opportunity to have more control over the content of the work. Where they could have *“more work that is directly related to projects that I am initiating myself”* through being able to *“actually set up your own agenda as a community arts organisation.”*

The pressures of the work meant Personal arts practice seemed to take a back seat. However, for five of the artists there was a strong sense that this was an important ongoing element in the artist’s creative life. *“I do badly need to get back to my own work”*.

While four of the artists talked about general Fulfillment *“I just want to do interesting work”*, two of the artists were at cross roads in their career path, through either moving location or job, and expressed a desire to take Time out to reflect on their future.

3.3 Policy factors

I was interested in how artists engaged with policy and funding and asked the artists about the official aims of the projects they worked on.

3.3.1 Perceptions of official aims

“I suppose there are other agendas as well for people that are running the projects and what they actually want”

Most artists found it difficult to discuss issues of policy and showed a lack of engagement with the higher driving forces around the work, *“there is so much theory and conferences and all sorts of things I have not engaged with at all”*. This lack of engagement was also evident in the relative low amount of data in political themes compared to professional.

Although Social aims stood out for all the artists as the main official focus of the work, a lack of engagement showed up for nine of the artists in the high Uncertainty around official aims, *“A lot of the time I’m unaware of what the official aims are”*. For eight of the artists this uncertainty was filled with the Artists own aims. *“There are always two sets of objectives anyway because there are the official objectives for each project and then there is my own objectives”*.

Practical and Creative issues were felt to be a minor factor for funders and policy with some low level resentment appearing in concerns about projects being

Funding driven for Political aims. *“I think there is definitely a tension between the people who are on the ground actually having to talk to the young people and negotiate with them and actually carry out the project and produce something at the end of it and the layers of management above and what they want to get out for their figures and their funding to show people”.*

3.3.2 Benefits of policy

“If there hadn’t been that focus on the social inclusion of that particular group they might have never got the opportunity to do it so in that sense it can be a good thing”

To gain a sense of where policy is enhancing the artists practice I questioned artists on the benefits of policy and funding.

Eight of the artists viewed policy’s Relationship with participants as being the main area of benefit. The benefits for participants were perceived as *“bringing groups together”* and allowing access to opportunities as they are *“provided with more activities. With more options”*. The results were seen as *“bringing down walls”* which *“allows people to see people for who they are and not for the stereotypes or prejudices that they hold”*.

With six artists discussing Finance this factor was rated as the second highest. It concerned more funding being available for projects to be realized with all the *“great ideas that are now being funded”* and *“money available for places with*

social problems". There was also a hint at a cynical viewpoint held within this factor with statements such as *"you can get funding for projects through calling up a social inclusion agenda"*.

The amount of funding and policy initiatives was seen as "Recognition that this is a very potent way of working".

Funding was also welcomed by five artists as it brought more Job security, *"It does mean that you can find work because money is given to those projects"*. The variety of funding streams in differing contexts has added to this sense of security as artists now *"don't need to depend on a gallery, or a museum or fine art schools"*, *"There is so much work out there. In schools, prisons, colleges, hospitals."*

For three artists Growth was again linked to participants with *"people discovering their creative voice for the first time and having equipment where they can realize that"*.

Factors from the study by Herzberg et al (1959) that did not rate by the artists were Advancement, Management, Achievement, The work itself, Relationships with superior, Relationships with peer, Status, Working conditions and Responsibility.

3.3.3 Drawbacks of policy

“Its simplifying groups of people, lumping people in together and also assuming that one particular group will always think the same”

To gain a sense of where policy is inhibiting practice I questioned artists on the drawbacks of policy and funding.

Policy’s Relationship with participants came out as the highest concern for twelve of the artists, *“The way people are lumped together and identified as communities. I am deeply cynical and skeptical about that”*. There was also resentment at the monitoring of participants *“I really object quite strongly to telling the Arts Council or anyone else how many women in my group are black and how many are white”, “they wanted to know what the sexual orientation of the kids was. What the hell is that about? I wasn’t even prepared to ask that question”*.

Co-opting participants into a government ideal was a concern *“The first thing that strikes me when people talk about inclusion is inclusion on whose terms and why?” “Inclusion seems a little like co-option to me”, “It’s almost like trying to make all communities the same and there is no room for difference”*. Artists felt that this should be challenged *“I think we need more excluded persons in society because it means that society is going to be more rich. There is going to be more margins and then we are not going to have one or two centers”, “It might be more interesting if people were talking about the rights that you have”*.

Cynicism of organizational motives for working with particular client groups was evident, *“a particularly organization I was working with who I felt were quite cynical in the way they were deciding on what group to work with for their organization to get this funding”, “you have senior managers trying to find disabled people, trying to find people that live in specific wards, trying to find black minority ethnics”*.

Again Finance was ranked as the second highest factor with five of the artists discussing this factor at length. *“There is something repulsive because you know art has to be justified in order to get the money, its kind of instrumentalised”*. A gap between what funding states it intends to do and what happens on the ground is perceived, *“I done a lot of reading of big government reports and got really excited about what was being said and then realised that that is just words and there needs to be money there and its not there”*.

Artists with no interest in a socially engaged practice being led into community art work because of funding was a concern, *“In terms of the last twelve years there has been an emphasis on encouraging artists to work in this kind of field as a form of revenue, it is a revenue stream for artists and I think people should be really upfront about that” “Ok so this year there is money for disabled people lets see how we can get a share”, “I think those tensions are always there, you accept the money and you do what you say you are going to do, you accept the money and you spin it or you accept the money and you fake stuff and you have to make your own choices with that loop”*.

Recognition of the artistic value and of the impact of the work came across as a concern for seven of the artists, *“There is a tendency to go, Oh its just children”* or *“There are certainly people within the NHS who even though the money doesn’t come from the NHS who would possibly object if they knew exactly what we are doing”*.

The way work was designed to *“make people fit into a mould that they [policy makers] created and not recognising that that mould might be too small or too big for some people or some communities”* also concerned the artists, *“often they [policy makers] have all these ideas but when you come to do the project that particular group don’t want to do that project”*.

Evaluation that didn’t recognize the human value of the work and focused on quantifiable and budgetary concerns was an issue for five of the artists, *“specific quantifiable numbers and measurements, really gives me a lot of headaches”* and in *“the effectiveness of creative activities for inmates... The evaluation was deliberately a budgetary evaluation”*.

In Achievement demoralisation for five artists as to what the effects were and why they were doing the work was evident in relation to policy. *“Its one thing having some think tank and policy coming up with these wonderful ideas but then you the artist have then got to go out and do these things and you can become quite cynical about, first of all, does it make a difference? Can you succeed? And if so who am I succeeding for?”* There were feelings expressed that *“there should*

have been provision for these things in the first place” and “sometimes in the past I have felt used as a social band aid”.

Management where policy makers and funders *“are very heavy handed in taking the lead in terms of what should happen and when it should happen”* points to a wish for four of the artists for policy to be less directive. The artists *“have been on a lot of projects that have been funding driven and they just want numbers through the door and heads. It’s all about box ticking”*. A strong feeling that *“it should come from the bottom up not the top down”* was present.

Artists stated that they needed a stronger voice within policy and felt a union of community artists would do this, *“I think we should have a union, for sure. I think that we are not protected enough as a group”, “we are being used sometimes. I think the only reason why that is happening is the fact we don’t have a greater body of people to protect us”. “We need to have some kind of trade union, some kind of legal space in which we can advocate and ask for our rights”*.

Themes of cynicism and demoralisation were continued in The work itself with two artists stating feelings of *“sometimes I think I’m more of a social worker than an artist”*. Artists also criticized working methods being dictated by policy, *“People set up a way of working and then everyone copies it and it has to be done in that way. And sometimes that is imposed... I don’t think that is necessarily a good thing”*.

Factors from the study by Herzberg et al (1959) that did not rate by the artists were Advancement, Job security, Growth, Relationships with superior, Relationships with peer, Status, Working conditions and Responsibility.

4 Discussion

I will now go on to discuss the main themes arising within the data.

4.1 Skills

Practical creative elements of the work are rated low by the artists in their perception of their role and in the skills that are perceived as important. There is a feeling that arts based skills are a prerequisite for a community artist but it is not what makes a good one.

For most of the artists work based training was perceived as the best way to learn. With some artists perceiving formal academic training as not giving skills that are applicable to real life situations, especially concerning interpersonal skills.

Being responsive to the participants and working environment is perceived as a major skill; however this leads to hesitancy by the artists to set fixed methodologies and difficulties in defining practice. This could add to the lack of understanding and acceptance of working methods by other sectors. Development of the capacity to define and contextualize the work would benefit the field as a whole.

In the three highest rated topics in the Likert scale, all of which are interpersonal related, half don't state training, or half do depending on your point of view. This means that half of the skills training for these factors have been learned in work

related or non formal training situations. This may add to the uncertainty by artists where skills originate from and the difficulty in agreeing a consensus of practice methods.

When rating Personal satisfaction in the Likert scale, several artists expressed a desire for training in this area and all rated it as highly important. However, only one artist stated that they had had some training around this issue. As we have seen in the findings, the self-realisation and growth possibilities within the work for the artist are, although little discussed, of major importance. Acknowledging this fact and bringing this concept into active consciousness would enhance the personal satisfaction of the work for the artists.

4.2 Relationship between positive and negative findings

One of the most interesting findings was when comparing the factors within positive and negative experience I discovered there is an inverse relationship. The greater the importance of a factor in positive experience the lower it is in negative experience and vice versa.

4.2.1 Positive and negative experience

It is of note that the factor in the data that disrupts a direct inverse relationship between positive and negative experience is Growth. Growth rates as the major factor in both positive and negative experience and noticeably stands out in positive experiences by its high rating when compared to the rest of the factors.

We will leave growth, for the time being, and go on to discuss the other factors in the positive and negative experience of the artists.

In comparing the study by Herzberg et al (1959) to the study of the artists, around a third of the factors are empty, or hold 1 instance of coding in the positive and negative experiences of the work. In the discussion on policy two thirds of the factors are empty. This points to the study by Herzberg et al (1959) containing the data but only describing it up to a point.

Relationships with peers, Management and Finance all rate highly in the negative and low in the positive experiences of the artists. These surround and support the actual work. They need to be in place for it to happen but are not the actual work itself and are what Herzberg et al (1959) labels “factors of hygiene”.

Achievement, Relationships with participants and Recognition rate highly in the positive and low in the negative experiences of the artists and are concerned with the subjective experience of the work. These are what Herzberg et al (1959) labels “Motivation”.

4.2.2 Benefits and drawbacks of policy

In the investigation of policy Relationships with Participants, Finance and Recognition rate, in the same order, as the three most important factors in both the benefits and the drawbacks of policy. In relation to policy these factors can be seen as major concerns for artists.

4.3 Factors of hygiene

We will now examine the higher rated factors concerned with the elements surrounding the work which Herzberg et al (1959) labeled "Factors of Hygiene".

4.3.1 Management

Management rated highly in negative experience and tells of a general dissatisfaction on the way artists and projects are managed. The reported lack of or bad management points to where capacity needs to be strengthened.

A lack of support for artists engaging with participants, especially those with high needs, was seen to lead to some severe negative personal impacts on the artists. The fact that artists actively engage with the participants at an individual level, identify and personally empathize with participants and rank having a professional distance with participants as low, all add to the possibilities for a negative personal effect on the artists.

There were no professional protocols around the way these personal impacts should be dealt with evident in the study, apart from general offloading to family or friends or sharing concerns with other artists. Although there are many guiding principles around the approach to the work, there is a lack of recognised standards within the profession of community arts.

Artists see managerial elements within their role as being minor and mainly in terms of self management. However, they rated managerial skills as important

and viewed moving into a managerial role as a valid future career path equal to continuing their community arts practice. This was seen as bringing more autonomy to the artists practice. If supported this transition could fill the reported lack of capacity within low level cultural management.

A lack of engagement with policy issues was found and high levels of cynicism in regards to policy are evident. This is most noticeable in discussion around participants. Cynicism about the funding driven motivations of the management of some arts organizations wanting to work with certain groups was also stated.

The instrumental aims of policy, alongside evaluation criteria focusing on quantifiable and budgetary outputs is seen to limit opportunities for growth and personal satisfaction for artists, as there is not space within projects for risk and exploration. The potential for co-opting participants rather than focusing on citizen rights with real community development is a main concern. Artists questioned the idea of inclusion and what participants were being included into and embraced the idea of difference within society.

Artists are frustrated at the lack of recognition of the work and sometimes feel like social workers under a different name that are being used to deliver top down instrumental social policy, or as a mask to hide social ills. This could be a contributing factor for the lack of engagement with policy. Problematic elements within policy could lead artists to reject engaging with policy as a whole.

The idea that artists should come together under an umbrella organization to have influence on how they are managed and effect working conditions was raised. A union of community artists that would lobby and set national standards was called for repeatedly. This is viewed as stemming from a lack of recognition within policy and managerial controls, and from professional isolation through a perceived lack of acceptance of working methods from other sectors.

In the Likert scale, it is of note that a knowledge of the history of community arts is rated as one of the least important topic for the artists. An understanding of the development of the field is vital as a new generation of artists, with no first hand memory of past events, continues to negotiate and develop the practice of community arts.

In the late 1960's and 1970's a growing number of social activists and artists responded to the establishment's lack of recognition and support for the work by formalizing into groups and organizations, such as The Artist Placement Group (APG) [12] or The Association of Community Artists (ACA). [13] These organised voices both challenged the establishment and lobbied for support.

A common criticism in the literature of these first attempts at forming what defines a community art practice, in dialogue with governmental funding bodies, is that the aims and objectives of the manifesto were made so loose and interpretable to ensure fundability that they were formed to suit governmental aims and objectives. [14]

It can be argued that this has led to the feelings of policy instrumentalism and artist as social band-aid expressed within the study of the artists. However, Harding (2005) takes a more balanced view of the motives at play when summarising recent ongoing professionalisation in the field with “*spontaneity becoming formalised due to economic necessities, dissemination or replication. Encroachment of managerial concerns may imply compromise or reflect maturity in a practice that has adopted professional terminology*”. [15]

The artist’s uncertainty of official aims, found in the literature and in the interviews with the artists, needs to be discussed and aims defined by the field as a whole, within the context of the history of the field, before any formation of a national lobbying body or community artists union could precede. This would go some way in preventing the same process of cooption of aims by governmental funding bodies that the initial attempts experienced and raise the understanding of working methods by other sectors.

4.3.2 Peers

A community of community artists came through as being of importance and can be seen as supporting and forming the professional identity of the artists. This strong sense of community and a shared understanding of experience between the artists again led to calls for professional standards and a union for community artists to advocate and lobby on their behalf.

However concerns over problematic work relations were also expressed.

Differences are often put down to managerial issues, with a lack of preparation and planning time to allow a consensus to emerge. Differences could be enhanced by the fact that none of the artists identified as a community artist when asked for professional title and either relied on the artform they use or their specialism within the field of development. This underlines the different concepts and contextualization within the study group and possibly in the field as a whole.

The lack of standardization within the field, although seen as an asset while the artists are interacting on an individual basis with participants, does mean that non arts based staff are uncertain and suspicious of the artists working methods. Within discussion on peers, differences between the artists and social service staff was prominent, especially with artists working within the criminal justice system. This led to detrimental effects on projects and in extreme cases active sabotage by peers and points to an area where interpersonal management skills need to be developed.

Working holistically with all the people that inhabit an environment or institution came through as an important issue, not just involving the client group but also staff at every level was recommended. This could help to dispel some of the suspicion and uncertainty over working methods by non arts based staff.

4.3.2 Finance

In the Likert scale it is of note that the only topic that no artist stated having had training in was salary. Finance was also the second highest rated factor within

negative experiences and points to an area that artists would benefit from being informed and confident in negotiating in.

In the study by Herzberg et al (1959), it was found that salary was linked more with levels of dissatisfaction rather than as a reward or motivating factor. When it was referred to as a motivating factor it came with advancement and recognition of achievement rather than focusing on financial gain.

The artists voiced complaints about the low level of financial reward for the work and its practical impact on the artists' everyday life. However it is the lack of funding available to complete a project to professional standards that is of major concern. This can be seen as limiting the artists' potential for achievement.

There is a perception by the artists that the amount of work needed to deliver a project successfully was not being recognised. Artists claimed that they are often put in a dilemma as to whether they continued to do the work to perceived professional levels by filling in funding gaps with their own time. The artists viewed the lack of financial resources as a barometer of how the work is valued and recognised by others and is seen to have a detrimental effect on moral, leaving the artists feeling resentful and undervalued.

Within the study artists have an uncomfortable relationship with policy and funding. Artists recognize the importance of the funding structure in supporting the creation of new work and have a general consensus on the aims of the work

improving society. However, concerns around instrumental aims, set evaluation outputs and short term funding are also present.

There were possible solutions to this lack of remuneration given. Again a need for a supporting body or union was voiced, something that would lobby at policy level. Challenging the political environment is seen as part of the role of the artist and begins to highlight a reaction against social policy. As we saw in the findings, this challenge may be in the form of taking the official aims and replacing them with the artists own. In Partheni's (1998) study it was also recognized that artists are skilled at introducing their own agendas to the work while being seen to be delivering official aims. [16]

4.4 Motivation

We will now look at the themes that are concerned with the artist's experience of the work which Herzberg et al (1959) labeled "Motivation".

4.4.1 Participants

For all the artists relationships with participants brought a sense of growth and personal development as they shared in the discoveries and achievements of the participants. Artists also stated that they gained a sense of achievement from overcoming the challenge of engaging with participants.

In the study by Partheni (1998) it states that for most community artists, *"they redefine art as empathy and propose empathy as a basis of society where*

democracy... will become experienced in everyday life".[17] This can be taken to point to artists seeing the work as an extension of their lived experience and a blurring of professional and personal lines.

As we saw in the findings, a personal background that brings empathy with participants is often referred to. This can enhance the shared feeling of growth with participants but may also increase the likelihood of negative emotional impact on the artists while working with high needs groups.

This is an important point as artists are often commissioned and seem to find interest in working with groups outside of the mainstream. However artists felt that it was not their role to bring participants into the centre of mainstream thinking. One reason for this may be the artists' own sense of not fitting in that emerged in the data on the artists' background.

Although artists found discussing policy problematic, cynicism around categorizing participants into manageable groups by funding criteria, for instance as "disadvantaged", was a recurring theme. The artists see communities as made up of individuals and perceive the work on an individual by individual basis. This may explain a lack of engagement with larger policy concerns and hesitancy at defining methodology and aims.

4.4.2 Recognition

In the concept of the artists' role we see interpersonal elements rated as the

highest factor with a focus on relationships with participants. A relationship between professional identity, personal fulfilment and participants is evident. Participants give direct feedback to the artists, acknowledging and recognising the benefits of the work and the importance of artist's role.

There are mixed emotions around the recognition of the value of the work by government policy and funding. The increased amount of funding available was seen as positive but the lack of recognition of the amount of work needed, particularly preparation time, led to demoralisation.

Recognition of working methods by other social sector staff was highlighted as lacking and was seen to lead to conflict within projects. Increased capacity to enter into dialogue across sectors would go some way to counteract project conflicts.

4.4.3 Growth

We will now return to the highest rated factor in the experience of the artists, the factor of Growth. As we observed in the findings, growth is strongly linked with participants, whether through a shared experience, professional achievement or recognition through direct feedback from participants.

Statements of confidence in own ability, and gaining insights into people and the world, points to a potential for personal development for the artist. The self-actualising effect of the work on the artists themselves seems to be a common

but unrecognised factor. The choreographer Liz Lerman points out that *“observers immediately recognise the social good of this practice, they never conceive of the possibility that my work was also good for me as a person, as a teacher and as an artist and ultimately not only good for me but good for the art form as well”* [18]

In Herzberg et al's (1959) study Advancement, which covers a change in status or position within a company, was rated highly in the positive discussion. It was noted that *“the power of a promotion to increase job satisfaction is often related to feelings of growth”*. [19] However Advancement stands out as not rating anywhere in the study of the artists.

Future plans tell us that the artists' career paths are perceived as being uncertain with limited options. Artists feel they can develop their community arts practice and may gain more responsibility or recognition but do not perceive many options for career advancement. They can move into management to gain more control over the content of the work, but therefore away from direct contact with participants, and so a main method of gaining fulfillment.

I would argue that the positive personal growth artists experience through the work and the opportunities for self actualisation, particularly those linked with personal interaction with participants, can be said to counteract the negative elements contained within career advancement, management, relationships with peers and finance.

5 Recommendations

Based on the findings in this study I will now give recommendations for artists, commissioners, policy and funding bodies and further research.

5.1 Artists

The findings of this study, in the hands of community artists, will hopefully contribute to improving the practice of the artists. This is particularly relevant to the following recommendations.

- As part of their practice artists should be more deliberate and pro-active about the documentation of their work and consider that the information they gather could contribute to an evaluative evidence base and be of value to people inside and outside of the field.
- Artists need to develop capacity to speak across sectors and engage staff from non arts backgrounds, particularly those in social service roles.
- Artists need to develop an engagement and understanding of policy and the history of community arts. This would increase the capacity of artists to contextualize their practice and enter into dialog with policy and other sectors. This is particularly important when new developments in the field occur, for example the establishment of a union.
- Artists should insist on having a contract, specifying artists obligations,

hours, salary, and managerial support.

- To enhance the experience of their practice artists should be more conscious about identifying and recognizing the skills gained from practice based learning and the personal self actualizing benefits for the artists themselves. These learning's should be brought to the field as a whole through forums for professional discussion and continued professional development arenas.

5.2 Commissioners

The findings of this study, in the hands of those who commission artists, will hopefully contribute to improving the working environment for community artists and so the delivery of the commissioners objectives. This is particularly relevant to the following recommendations.

- To enhance impact and ownership, artists and participants should be involved in the project process at the earliest opportunity.
- Appropriate support structures to be discussed with artists and contractual obligations drawn up, specifying obligations, hours, salary, and managerial support.

5.3 Policy and funding bodies

The findings of this study, in the hands of policy makers, will hopefully contribute

to improving the work environment for community artists and so the delivery of social inclusion policy. This is particularly relevant to the following recommendations.

- Funding should make provisions for preparation, documentation, data collection, and cross-sectoral engagement of non arts based staff as part of a community artists' workload.
- Enhanced support and training for low level cultural management, with pathways opened for community artists to bring their knowledge of grass roots working to management positions.
- Listen to and include artists and participants in the policy making process by supporting dialogue flowing up from the grass roots.
- Artists to be supported in the long term to work with wide ranging life skills rather than predetermined issue-based work, allowing the artists to engage in and develop a dialogue with the client group.

5.4 Recommendations for further research

- Explore the perceptions of social service staff on the field of community arts and how collaborations with artists can be facilitated to ensure productivity.

6 Conclusion

This study contributes to and expands on the data about the experience of community artists found in the literature review. This is particularly relevant concerning the lack of standard methodologies and a practice that responds to the individual and their surrounding environment. This is seen too add to a lack of recognition of the professionalism of artists, especially by social sector staff, and the possibility for project conflicts.

Artists have major concerns over the instrumental aims of social policy and find grouping people by funding criteria problematic. This is seen as contributing to the artists' lack of engagement with policy, which brings uncertainty and a lack of capacity for dialogue around official aims. This can also lead the artists to focus on personal aims. The uncertainty around official aims by the artists and the unpredictable nature of gaining skills is also seen to add to the confusion and suspicion of other sectors as to what artists actually do.

A lack of adequate management in the field enhances the possibility for detrimental personal impacts on the artist when engaging with participants with high needs. Lack of managerial capacity coupled with short term funding and lack of funded time allocated for the artists within projects inhibits project delivery and sustainability.

A main finding is that the study uncovered the importance of the self-actualisation

effects of the work on the artists, particularly those linked with participants, as a major motivating factor. A desire for a union to counteract negative managerial, policy and financial factors is also identified.

In exploring the experience of community artists, I have identified main motivating factors within the study group of community artists and formulated key recommendations for artists, commissioners and policy. The study also identifies artist's relationship with staff from other sectors as an important area for further research.

7 References

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- 5 For over 20 years, PLATFORM has been bringing together environmentalists, artists, human rights campaigners, educationalists and community activists to create projects driven by the need for social and environmental justice.
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- 11 Green, J and Thorogood, N (2004), *Qualitative methods for health research*, Sage publications, London, pages 90-91.
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