



Article

Positing a schema of measurable outcomes of cultural engagement

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Abstract

The cultural sector (arts, heritage and library agencies) receives increasing demands to articulate and evaluate outcomes of its work. These demands are challenging because of pervasive conceptions that the intangible nature of cultural activities makes them inherently unmeasurable, while their ‘intrinsic’ properties render them essentially valuable. This article addresses this challenge in positing a schema of measurable cultural outcomes of cultural engagement developed through literature analysis and an iterative Delphi-style stakeholder consultation. The outcomes are as follows: creativity stimulated; aesthetic enrichment experienced; knowledge, ideas or insight gained; diversity of cultural expression appreciated; and sense of belonging to cultural heritage deepened.

Keywords

cultural engagement, cultural sector, evaluation, measurable outcomes, outcome schema

Introduction

Policy and activities of government and other public actors are increasingly measured by impacts on the lives of citizens. This contrasts with earlier, less sophisticated, accountability approaches that acceded value to the dedication of resources and implementation of activities as endpoints. Thus, publicly funded activity generally, including allocation of resources, is more frequently assessed for its value in enhancing public good (Alford, 2016; Alford and O’Flynn, 2009; Moore, 2013; Mulgan et al., 2019).

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This growing requirement for outcome-focussed work, including the measurement of impact of funded activity, continues to prove problematic for the public cultural sector (defined here as individuals and organisations who operate publicly funded cultural activities, including arts, heritage and library agencies). This is because of pervasive views by stakeholders that cultural activities are essentially unmeasurable as a result of their intangible nature, at the same time as being uncontestedly valuable and deserved of public support. Such perspectives have resulted in lack of agreed approaches in articulating and evaluating the contributions of cultural investment and engagement. This dearth of suitable measurement of intrinsic, or what we are naming here as *cultural* outcomes of *cultural* activity, particularly limits the viability of arguments for its funding.

The lack of a suitable outcome measurement framework was identified by a group of senior leaders from local and national government cultural sectors in Australia as being a significant challenge for their work making decisions about public funding of cultural activities (Stevenson et al., 2019). This issue was identified during a 3-year national sector development project instigated by the Cultural Development Network, whose government-funded mandate was development of the cultural sector, particularly that within local government's purview. Stakeholders advised that they did not have a practice of use of outcome frameworks but were unanimous that the establishment of a set of agreed outcome measures would be beneficial for their work and likely to be a valuable resource for other cultural agencies nationally. No project partner was aware of any existing tool that would be suitable or was in use in other locations. An extensive literature review documented below also indicated no existing outcome schema that could be adopted or adapted for this purpose. This confirmed previous research by author Dunphy (2015) of similar challenges of outcome measurement for cultural agencies outside local government (Dunphy, 2015, 2013).

This article responds to this imperative from the sector initiative and earlier research findings, by positing a schema of measurable *cultural* outcomes of cultural engagement. These sit alongside measurable outcomes of cultural engagement from other domains – *social, economic, environmental* and *civic* (also systematised into a comprehensive outcome schema by the current authors) that are outside the scope of this article. The proffered schema is an advancement of an earlier version (Dunphy, 2015) that resulted from a literature search, empirical research and consultation process. While this article focusses on publicly funded cultural activities due to the responsibility of organisations to measure outcomes of their allocation of limited public funds, we propose that the outcomes presented are equally applicable to cultural activity that is undertaken under private impetus.

The sections to follow offer an overview of the literature on cultural measurement, which articulates the shortcomings of existing schema in addressing the purpose of the current project. This review is followed by the method used to conceptualise, substantiate and trial this proffered schema of cultural outcomes. Then the schema is articulated, including definitions and descriptions of the outcomes which are substantiated by evidence from the literature *that* these outcomes occur through cultural engagement, *how* they occur and the *difference they make in people's lives*. Finally, a discussion is offered about how the schema might be used and further work required to advance it, including additional validation and empirical testing.

Literature review

Definitions

We begin this section by articulating the understandings we are applying in this article. While there are many ways of conceptualising the term *culture*, for this article we are largely concerned with the funded *cultural sector*, that is, individuals and organisations engaged in activities in arts, libraries and heritage agencies that receive public funding. We also consider UNESCO's (2002) broader conception of culture as 'the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, (which) . . . encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs' (p. 4). We distinguish *arts* from *culture*, with *art/s* being considered a *manifestation of culture*: through the arts, we can express ourselves and therefore make, or manifest, our culture (Hawkes, 2001). Cultural activities we refer to include the range of artforms – performing, visual and literary, and combinations of these – and encompass the spectrum of professionalism from basic skill development through to expert public presentation. We consider cultural heritage to be the 'expression of the ways of living, developed by a community and passed on from generation to generation' (ICOMOS, 2005).

We identify a range of levels of *cultural engagement*, which includes participation, but also the engagement of those who have not formed a deliberate intention to engage: *ambient participants* – who may be engaged unintentionally by travelling past or into a cultural activity or experience; *receptive participants (audiences)* – who intentionally watch or listen to art-making but do not make art themselves; and *creative participants (creators)* – who are involved in the creative process, making something new, using creativity and involving self-expression.

Existing schema for measurement of cultural engagement

Approaches to measuring the value of engagement in cultural activity are increasingly being developed and utilised by governments, academics and practitioners internationally. However, these schemas have several limitations for the purpose identified in this project. Largely they do not measure *outcomes* of cultural engagement, but predominantly only *inputs* and *outputs*, and in some cases, also *quality* of activities. Another set of ubiquitous measurement approaches of cultural engagement do assess outcomes, but rather than the *cultural* (intrinsic) outcomes of cultural activity, they undertake proxy measures of this through outcome measures from domains outside the cultural. These issues are explored in more depth in the paragraphs to follow.

Many existing schemas focus substantially on inputs (investment made), with measures including government and private sector financial support or assets purchased (see, for example, Statistics Working Group, n.d.; Voss et al., 2017). This approach is problematic in its assumption that expenditure is a measure of value. Such a relationship cannot be assumed (Van Den Hoogen, 2014), with the causal pathway from investment to desired outcome only realised if appropriate activities and processes are undertaken.

In approaches that go beyond measurement of inputs, assessment of the contribution from cultural engagement has largely stopped at assessment of outputs. Historically, arts and cultural organisations, impelled by requirements of funding agencies, have counted number of activities and attendees as metrics of achievement (Yazgin and Dunphy, 2014; see, for example, Artsfund, 2018; Australia Council for the Arts, 2017; Local Government Association,

2017). However, a causal relationship cannot be assumed here either, with value not necessarily being created because activities occur or people attend. The task of evaluation is to explicate outcomes that result from the implementation of activities, in addition to knowing how many activities were undertaken and how many people were involved.

A further approach to evaluation utilised in the cultural sector involves assessment of the *quality* of artworks (see, for example, Blijlevens et al., 2017; Radbourne et al., 2010; Throsby, 2001). One schema developed to assess aesthetic pleasure (Augustin et al., 2011) articulated a set of attributes (including beautiful, incomprehensible, fascinating, ordinary and overwhelming) for viewers to use in assessing artworks. While this process offers a judgement of the artwork, it does not prompt a participant to consider how they might have been affected by viewing or participating in this activity. A causal relationship might be considered between engagement with art products judged by a viewer or participants to be of high quality and the impact on them, but this cannot be assumed.

More sophisticated evaluation schema measure *outcomes*, that is the value that accrues to stakeholders or participants of any activity or intervention, rather than amount of resources invested or number or quality of activities undertaken. Initiatives to implement outcome-focussed measures for cultural activity include those of the Arts Council England (2018), Brown and Novak-Leonard (2013) and the Canadian Urban Institute (2011). However, despite stated intentions, these initiatives largely only assess provision (input) and participation (outputs) of cultural activities. Some also incorporate documentation of *processes* (how change occurs in the participant), but do not extend to the final point of evaluation of *outcomes*.

The next significant challenge for understanding the value of publicly funded cultural activity is that where outcomes of cultural engagement have been assessed, this has consistently been through the use of proxy measures from other domains, rather than those that would measure the intended *cultural* purpose of the activity. These are known in the sector as instrumental measures (Belfiore and Bennett, 2008; Reason and Rowe, 2017) because they come from other domains (social, economic, environmental or civic). They include the amount of economic return, social wellbeing or civic engagement catalysed (see, for example, Allan et al., 2013; Artsfund, 2018; Australia Council for the Arts, 2020; Crossick and Kaszynska, 2016; Hadley and Gray, 2017; Jackson and McManus, 2019; Mulgan et al., 2019; O'Brien, 2010; Stern and Seifert, 2017).

This practice is at odds with recommendations that the most useful evaluation addresses the principal objectives of activities and involves collection of information that is most relevant to stakeholders (Crossick and Kaszynska, 2016). This is also discordant with the intentions of the majority of individuals and agencies producing cultural activities who are not driven primarily by social or economic imperatives, but rather undertake art-making and other broader cultural activities for reasons including provision for their audiences or participants of aesthetically enriching, inspiring or provoking art and arts experiences, and stimulation of cultural belonging. If enrichment, inspiration or provocation is intended outcomes, then an evaluation schema needs to focus on those outcomes in what is measured.

The articulation of a separate cultural domain of public policy (Hawkes, 2001) sparked new thinking about the function and purpose of cultural engagement. Hawkes posited a specific endpoint of cultural engagement, that of cultural richness and vibrancy, which is separate from any contributions of cultural engagement that might be made to social, economic or other agendas. In this development, it became apparent that the application of outcome measures from other policy domains to cultural engagement abrogates its intrinsic, or cultural, value

(O'Connor, 2015). This abrogation is problematic in that intrinsic benefits are the fundamental purpose of cultural activity and therefore the prime motivator for engagement (McCarthy et al., 2004). Intrinsic benefits are also claimed to be causal in the realisation of other instrumental benefits (McCarthy et al., 2004). Thus, it might be presumed that social or economic benefit cannot be gained through cultural participation, if cultural outcomes are not first attained, and that understanding of this causal chain from intrinsic (cultural) outcomes to instrumental outcomes requires measurement of both types of change.

New approaches to measuring shared outcomes across agencies and sectors

In the contemporary technology-supported world, data and evaluation initiatives that facilitate agencies, governments and sectors working towards shared achievements are increasingly being established. These include collective impact programmes, which emphasise common measurement and data-driven decision-making (such as Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2017; Educate Texas, n.d.) and data sharing and linking projects across sectoral and institutional boundaries that enable new insights such as multiplier effects (World Economic Forum, 2019).

A further development among public agencies is the establishment of outcome frameworks which enable consideration of the contributions of separate projects or agencies towards shared understandings of what is important. Such schemas are being used by regional and national authorities with diverse portfolios to enable the measurement of achievements of whole sectors towards mutually agreed goals. Examples include departments of health in Australia (State Government of Victoria, 2016), environment in Canada (Environment and Climate Change Canada, 2016), children in New Zealand (Oranga Tamariki Ministry for Children, n.d.), social services in Wales (Welsh Government, 2016) and early childhood services in the United States (Head Start Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Centre, n.d.).

The cultural sector's need for a system of indicators that are agreed between stakeholders to enable substantiation of value claims was recognised as compelling a decade ago (Scott and Soren, 2009) and addressed in recent volumes including MacDowall et al. (2015), Reason and Rowe (2017) and Meyrick et al. (2018). However, in the cultural sector to date, where outcome evaluation has been conducted, it has most frequently been a bespoke practice, with agencies developing unique sets of measures for their own work or projects (Dunphy, 2015). Reason and Rowe's volume (2017) offers a collection of individually created evaluation schemas for specific agencies or populations that includes no initiatives that might be applicable sector-wide. Such a practice increases the non-productive work each agency must do independently to devise a schema and measures and limits sector-wide knowledge from such data, including possibilities for comparison or learning between projects, approaches, artforms or contexts. In addition, such bespoke practices are not feasible for small- and medium-sized organisations who are unlikely to have appropriate specialist expertise, with evaluation systems that are suitable for organisations of all capacities and sizes most needed (Planas and Soler, 2011).

Our search found little evidence of outcome frameworks for cultural engagement. One schema developed for UK local government was found (Local Government Association, 2017), but this incorporated all the limitations discussed above. While its purpose was to measure *outcomes* of cultural engagement, it recommended use of measures only to *output* level (participation numbers) and outcomes not from the cultural, but only the social domain,

such as social connection. It also recommended that specific measures be developed by each agency independently. Brown and Novak-Leonard's (2013) careful work developing a set of measures for intrinsic impacts of arts attendance (captivation, intellectual stimulation, emotional resonance, spiritual value, aesthetic growth, social bonding) comes close to schema suitable to measure cultural outcomes. However, because this was intended only for receptive engagement rather than the full spectrum from receptive right through to creative participation, it does not enable a complete measurement of outcomes. Nor was it substantiated by existing empirical literature.

Relevant concepts from international policy and previous research

In beginning the process for development of a comprehensive outcome framework, significant international cultural policy statements can be considered. These include UNESCO's (2002, 2005) Declaration on Cultural Diversity and Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, and policy documents of the Committee for Culture of the international peak body United Cities and Local Governments, *Agenda 21 for Culture* (UCLG, 2015) and *Culture: The Fourth Pillar of Sustainable Development* (UCLG, 2010). Elements of culture from these statements that *could underpin an outcome measurement schema* can be distilled as creativity, beauty, knowledge, diversity, heritage and memory.

This section has documented the limitations of existing schema for evaluation of outcomes of cultural engagement, particularly the absence of appropriate measures of the *cultural* or 'intrinsic' outcomes of cultural engagement that are agreed broadly. The sections to follow present a schema of outcomes that are definitively sited in the cultural domain and the method applied to articulate this.

Method

Literature review

This schema's development began with a set of cultural outcomes offered by current author Dunphy (2015) that had been informed by theory, particularly (Brown and Novak-Leonard, 2013; Throsby, 2001), cultural policy statements, other published studies and an earlier empirical study (Dunphy, 2013). This comprised six outcomes: sense of connection to past, respect for diversity and difference, aesthetic pleasure experienced, knowledge generated and shared, expression of communal meanings, creative stimulation engendered and opportunity for creative or symbolic expression.

Then a broad literature search was undertaken to gather material that might substantiate, expand or challenge that list. The search focussed particularly on empirical outcome studies, but also encompassed theoretical pieces on cultural practices and grey literature. A list of search terms was developed and used to source references:

- From the diversity of artforms (arts, music, visual arts, dance, theatre, play, drama, painting, writing, etc.);
- From the engagement continuum (ambient, receptive, active, creative, participation engagement, audience, artist, expression);

- Evaluation practice (evaluation, measurement, outcomes, impacts, benefits, public value, framework, schema, beneficiaries);
- Outcomes identified from the literature in the original schema (creativity, stimulation, aesthetic enrichment, experience, senses, emotional response, emotional reaction, awe, spiritual, spirituality, joy, escape, beauty, captivation, challenge, wonder, pleasure, flow, development, understanding, ideas, intrinsic, insight);
- Associated with cultural heritage (heritage, history, community, connection, traditional, cultural, Indigenous, belonging, identity);
- Associated with diversity across different contexts (diversity, ecological, biological, society, social, cross-cultural).

Snowballing referencing was also utilised, where relevant references that appeared in other articles were followed up, along with articles recommended by project participants. The search eventually compassed literature from fields including aesthetics (psychology, empirical), arts participation and creation, bio-cultural diversity, business, cognitive aesthetics, cognitive sciences, cultural engagement, cultural policy, culture and society, education, ethnomusicology, heritage, history, neuroscience, philosophy, psychology, sociology and tourism. A total of 554 potential sources were located, of which 97 provided relevant material, marked in the reference list with *.¹

Thematic analysis

We applied a thematic analysis (Guest et al., 2012) to material gathered. Each article was analysed to provide information to assist in articulating definitions, evidence or contra-indication that such an outcome occurs and substantiation of causal pathway from cultural engagement to the outcomes. This material was integrated into the document to create a stronger substantiated schema.

Field testing

The schema was then tested with cultural sector stakeholders to invite their reflection on its suitability and relevance for their context.

Participants. Project participants comprised members of the cultural sector, including policy staff, managers and other senior leaders from government and non-government cultural agencies, cultural researchers and practitioners in countries including Australia, New Zealand, Europe, Korea and Indonesia. This comprised 22 original project stakeholders, senior managers of government of cultural agencies nationally; and a further 344 participants engaged either in specific consultations held with key agencies, or cultural sector development activities offered by the Cultural Development Network between 2015 and 2018. These professionals included arts and culture programmers (festivals, libraries, galleries, museums) and policy staff and managers from local, state and federal government; cultural researchers and practitioners; and regional development leaders (details available at Stevenson et al., 2019).

Recruitment. Participants were recruited to contribute as part of their engagement in either the initial national sector collaboration initiative, or in the course of other cultural sector

development activities offered by the Cultural Development Network including cultural planning training and consulting services.

Data gathering process. Data were gathered in focus groups held at each of these events, including the bi-annual meeting of the sector development initiative, specific consultations arranged with government agencies or as one activity during cultural planning training.

Questions to participants. Participants were invited to comment on the draft outcome schema, considering

- Its alignment with outcomes they perceived of their work, including its comprehensive-ness in covering all cultural outcomes that they recognise;
- Its appropriateness for their context including artform/s they practice or support, type of organisation, participants and beneficiaries, cultural context and geographic location;
- The clarity and specificity of language used;
- Additional suggestions for inclusion or clarification of concepts.

Utilisation of data gathered. After each consultation, the schema was revised in a Delphi-style process (Adler and Ziglio, 1996) clarifying the language, strengthening the concepts and expanding the substantiation as recommended. The revised version was circulated to each focus group's participants after the session to progress towards consensus, with further comments and suggestions invited. Any additional comments were considered and incorporated as appropriate. The penultimate version of schema was presented to the initial stakeholder group at its bi-annual meeting where it was endorsed as a comprehensive framework suitable for application in their contexts.

Findings

This section presents our findings from the literature review and research process, in the form of a schema that comprises five distinct cultural outcomes resulting from engagement in cultural activities. These are as follows:

- Creativity stimulated;
- Aesthetic enrichment experienced;
- Knowledge, ideas or insight gained;
- Diversity of cultural expression appreciated;
- Sense of belonging to a shared cultural heritage deepened.

Each outcome is presented below with a definition and description supported by evidence, elaboration of the causal relationship between cultural engagement and the outcome and its potential significance in participants' lives.

Creativity stimulated

This outcome is about how engagement in cultural activity can *stimulate the creativity* of the participant. Creativity can be defined in terms of its material outcomes, as in the use of

imagination or original ideas to create something new and worthwhile (Sternberg and Sternberg, 2011), that might be novel, surprising or compelling (Sternberg, 2017), or more humanistically, as ‘the capacity to find new and unexpected connections, new relationships and therefore new meanings’ (Karkou and Sanderson, 2006: 53). Stimulation is considered here a process through which an individual is aroused, kindled, excited, inspired or motivated.

Creativity is considered as the vehicle of human self-expression (Paul and Kaufman, 2014). A person with high intrinsic creativity is able to draw on their own ideas and intuitions to imagine, and then produce, novel and useful outcomes (Csikszentmihalyi, 2013; Nisula and Kianto, 2018). Creativity is understood to involve three ways of thinking: generation of new ideas and connections between them, analytical or critical thinking and practical ability (Sternberg and Williams, 1996).

Creativity is an attribute that can be developed, through processes of awakening and enabling (Kelley and Kelley, 2012; Styhre and Sundgren, 2005). It is influenced by the person’s inner processes, including senses, emotions, intuitions, passions and subjective experiences, as well as information from the environment and other people (Amabile, 1996; Csikszentmihalyi, 2013). It is stimulated through shared processes, with interactions among group members often more potent in kindling creativity than the inner mental processes of an individual (Sawyer and DeZutter, 2009). This finding is echoed in acknowledgement of types of shared creativity: collective creativity (Vygotsky, 2004), group and collaborative creativity (Littleton and Mercer, 2012) and communal creativity (Burnard, 2012; Lapidaki et al., 2012).

While it might be considered evident that creativity can be stimulated by engagement in cultural activities, especially the arts, this is more often an implicit understanding than one substantiated by evidence (An and Youn, 2018). However, empirical support for this perspective is found in arts education literature, where artistic engagement is understood to foster creativity (Davey, 1989; Guetzkow, 2002). Arts-exposed students outperformed others on creativity-related tasks of creative thinking, idea expression, risk-taking and imagination (Burton et al., 2000); while improvisational arts activities of dancing and acting increased divergent thinking (Sowden et al., 2015). The creativity of elderly institutionalised women was enhanced by use of existing works of art as an inspiration for drawing (Wikström and Sandström, 1994).

Arts experiences are seen to stimulate creativity by catalysing openness to new experiences and widening of perspectives (Berthoin Antal and Strauß, 2014; Eriksson, 2009; Katz-Buonincontro, 2008). This premise is supported by the finding that experiencing works of art stimulated creative behaviours (An and Youn, 2018). Art is also recognised as a tool for generating creativity and innovation in business contexts (Berthoin Antal and Strauß, 2014; Styhre and Eriksson, 2008; Van Den Broeck et al., 2008). For example, training in artistic improvisation stimulated creativity in businesspeople by breaking down individual barriers and increasing openness to novelty (Nisula and Kianto, 2018).

Creativity has been important in human existence for evolutionary reasons, as well as its clear relationship with human flourishing. Throughout history, humans’ access to creativity has enabled quick adaptation to changing environments (Simonton, 1999). This function is still salient in the harnessing of pre-existing knowledge and skills to solve new problems that creativity facilitates.

Creativity is considered fundamental to progress in every human endeavour, from the arts to science, business and technology (Paul and Kaufman, 2014). It has been shown to enhance life experiences because it engages the whole person (Gordon and O’Toole, 2015). This encompasses the ability to analyse (mental aspect); the ability to associate seemingly disparate

items/events (emotional aspect); the ability to manifest (physical aspect); and intuition (related to subtle sensings) (Gordon and O'Toole, 2015). The emotional self was found to be enhanced for children involved actively in creative activities (Witkin, 1974).

Creativity also works by enhancing and amplifying experiences, bringing to awareness things that were previously hidden and promoting experiences of heightened consciousness, even ecstasy (May, 1994). It contributes to the most significant human experience in its enhancement of life meaning, enabling people to feel recognised for who they are and to experience a sense of belonging and agency to express themselves (Gordon and O'Toole, 2015). Creativity is also generative: the increased wellbeing it generates is also found in turn to facilitate further creative activity (Conner and Silvia, 2015).

Aesthetic enrichment experienced

This second outcome is about how cultural engagement can result in the *aesthetic enrichment* of participants. *Aesthetic* is defined here as an experience of the senses, in any or all of the sensory domains (Schifferstein and Hekkert, 2013; Shimamura, 2014). An aesthetic response can be catalysed by an object or any other stimulus, including abstract ideas (Hekkert, 2014). *Enrichment* is considered here as a process that makes an experience more significant, meaningful or valuable.

The term *enrichment* is used here rather than the more frequently applied term of (aesthetic) *appreciation* (such as discussed by Leder et al., 2019; Mastandrea and Crano, 2019; Skov, 2019) because the focus here is the internal experience of the participant resulting from their engagement (Van Maanen, 2009), rather than the qualities of the artwork or cultural activities that they might appreciate, such as plot in literature or melody in music. *Enrichment* is used also because it encompasses a broader experience than the more commonly used terms of *aesthetic pleasure* or *beauty*. It refers in this context to the more frequently expected pleasurable emotions of joy, wonder and awe (Keltner and Haidt, 2003) arising from perceptions of beauty, for example, as discussed by Johanson and Glow (2017), but also incorporates the full breadth of emotional and cognitive experiences that are evoked through perceiving and processing artworks and activities. These might range from awe and fascination to bewilderment and sadness (Frijda, 1989).

These experiences of aesthetic enrichment can be as trivial as a sense of escape from daily life or captivation in the moment, to deeper feelings of being moved or intensely engaged. They also extend to the most profound experiences of flow state (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), transcendence or access to the other-worldly realms of the numinous or spiritual. For example, music can induce a flow experience, both for performers and audiences (Chirico et al., 2015). This response is evident in group singing, for example, because it accesses participants' 'underlying unity of experience and goals' (Csikszentmihalyi and Gilbert, 1995: 14). Likewise, improvisational dance has been shown to enable optimal experience and flow state in school students (Frichtel, 2019).

Aesthetic enrichment is evoked by aesthetic qualities perceived or experienced in the artwork or activity (Moshagen and Thielsch, 2010; Reber et al., 2004) including beauty, harmony and form (Throsby, 2001). These qualities operate to catalyse inner emotions and thoughts of the viewer (Vartanian and Skov, 2014). The evocation of diverse responses can be a deliberate intention of the artist, for example, in paintings that are created to catalyse reactions from pleasant to unpleasant (e.g. Cupchik and Laszlo, 1992; Leder and Nadal, 2014). As well as qualities

of the artwork, this outcome is also influenced by characteristics of the participant that are shaped in the relationship between the person and artworks (Blijlevens et al., 2014). These characteristics include preferences for openness and experience seeking (Feist and Brady, 2004); current circumstances (Skov, 2019); gender, ethnicity and artistic experience (Cleridou and Furnham, 2014); and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 2010; López-Sintas et al., 2012).

Reason and Reynolds (2010) offer a rich description of aesthetically enriching experiences reported by audiences of dance, involving

enjoyment of the ‘wow’ factor that virtuosic dance affords; the pleasure of imagining dancing oneself; . . . sensual responses that engage with the effort, the strength, and the sweat of dance; escapist responses that relish the gladdening and up-lifting feeling of graceful movements; multisensory responses that seek concord or discord across stimuli; and embodied responses where the spectator’s breathing, posture, and energy are altered by the process of watching. (p. 71)

Aesthetic enrichment can result from participation in cultural experiences that are familiar, a process described as aesthetic validation, or unfamiliar, also described as aesthetic growth or challenge (Brown and Novak-Leonard, 2013; Hekkert et al., 2003). Pleasure arises from the reward stimulated by new experiences and solving of dilemmas or challenges through contemplation (Armstrong and Detweiler-Bedell, 2008). Audiences have been found to be more appreciative and emotionally responsive to artworks they find ambiguous and therefore challenging (Muth et al., 2015).

Knowledge, ideas or insight gained

This third outcome is about how cultural engagement can lead to the attainment of knowledge, ideas or insight by participants. *Knowledge* and *ideas* are defined here as information received and thinking provoked by that information. These may lead to *insight*, a deeper understanding (Graham, 1997) or capacity to see things afresh or in a different way, elicited by a stimulus or situation (Rothmaler et al., 2017).

Insight can result from a mental re-organisation that leads to new interpretations that were not previously apparent (Kounios and Beeman, 2014), or cognitive advancement in which hitherto overlooked or underemphasised features, patterns, opportunities and resources come to light (Elgin, 2002). While it may seem to appear suddenly, insight may actually be the resolution of a long-standing problem or issue that has previously been difficult to process. It can be the ‘aha’ moment connected to a feeling of pleasure, when ideas related to a problem are recalled with sudden ease, accompanied by the sensation that the solution is correct (Topolinski and Reber, 2010). The concept of cognitive insight is the capacity to come to considered opinions as a result of reassessing one’s thoughts and beliefs (Van Camp et al., 2017).

Knowledge generated through cultural engagement includes the intellectual stimulation or cognitive traction (Brown and Novak-Leonard, 2007) created by a performance for its audience. Cognitive growth occurs when individuals focus attention on a work of art, developing perception and intellectual stimulation to make sense of what they see and hear (McCarthy et al., 2004). The outcome of insight can occur in the moment of the cultural activity when a person is moved to an emotional response or reflection on their own experience. For example, art participants reported a desire to cry at a point where they ‘experience disappearance of a barrier, solution to a problem or transformation of a previously held worldview’ (Pelowski, 2015: 3).

Participants report a range of insights that arise after engaging with artworks they experience as ambiguous, including new understanding of the context, their own perception processes or reactions (Muth et al., 2015). The attainment of insight can include immediate feelings, ranging from understanding to the extreme of epiphany which can be accompanied by intense emotional response, to longer term expansion of understanding of self and others that occurs through development of empathy, perspective-taking and practice mentalising (Sherman and Morrissey, 2017).

Forms of cultural engagement reported as inducing insight about people with different life experiences include museum visits, which have been found to elicit understanding of the lives of previous generations (Hoge, 2003) and fiction reading (Oatley, 2016), through its stimulation of readers' empathy for characters (Mar et al., 2011). This empathy can lead to cognitive growth (McCarthy et al., 2004) which might be presumed to enable further insight. For example, readers of Rowling's novels who identified with the main character, Harry Potter, were found to gain new insight after observing his positive attitude and behaviour towards stigmatised groups. This identification resulted in behaviour changes in readers, with them exhibiting more favourable attitudes towards stigmatised groups, perhaps as a result of taking on the perspective of that group (Vezzali et al., 2015). Other fiction readers were found to change their attitude towards norms of male–female relationships after reading novels concerning the female experience, in showing less acceptance of practices that limited women's wellbeing (Oatley, 2016).

The act of producing art has also been seen to lead to greater self-reflection and then insight, for example, through re-contextualisation of anxieties and effecting of positive change (Walmsley, 2016). Engagement in performance poetry enabled young people to gain insight by sharing negative emotions and re-contextualising them (Weinstein, 2010), while dance afforded participants experiences of self-discovery in overcoming inhibitions and identifying habitual movement patterns (Deasy, 2014).

Diversity of cultural expression appreciated

This fourth outcome is about the *appreciation of diverse forms of cultural expression* that can result from cultural engagement. *Cultural expression* is defined here as the different ways that people express themselves depending on their cultural backgrounds, life experience and interests. Thus, forms of cultural expression might be related to ethnic, linguistic, religious or national heritage, but also in identification with others who share expressive interests. This might include the affiliation of people who have a common experience of disability that they seek to express, or expertise in a particular type of cultural expression, such as spoken word, Bharatanatyam dance, hiphop or oil painting. Appreciation is defined here as the enjoyment, celebration or treasuring of the value and quality of different forms of cultural expression.

The importance of diversity has been identified in a range of systems. In the natural world, diversity is considered vital to the health of ecosystems, for example, with plants and organisms in diverse ecosystems more efficient in using resources (Cardinale et al., 2011). Just as ecological diversity is essential to healthy ecosystems, cultural diversity is also recognised as important to societies, with the aesthetic, intellectual and emotional abilities that it nurtures being fundamental (Harmon, 2002). An interconnection between biological diversity and cultural diversity is noted (Blanc and Soini, 2015; Maffi, 2005).

Diversity is essential to healthy communities as it allows for new ideas to be accepted. Clammer (2015) argues that ‘monocultures are rarely creative, find it hard to accommodate alternatives . . . and are simply less interesting and give rise to fewer imaginative possibilities than multicultures’ (p. 107). The importance of cultural, as well as biological and linguistic diversity, is noted in the essential task of maintaining and furthering knowledge and the adaptational strength that is essential to human survival (Maffi, 2005).

The total amount or percentage of cultural diversity is not the endpoint of this outcome, but the appreciation of existing forms of cultural expression and new forms that can be generated when diverse cultures come together. An appreciation for diverse modes of cultural expression is significant because of the possibilities it enables for evolution of existing forms, or new forms of expression, that can further enrich the cultural life of societies and their citizens. For example, during the Greek empire, the introduction of Hellenic cultural rites to the Gandhara region in present day Afghanistan led to an explosion of artistic output (Brancaccio and Liu, 2009).

More recently, the development of the dance form tango has been linked to cultural intermingling that occurred in Buenos Aires. Unlike more common settlement patterns, new immigrants who came from many different European groups to that city did not settle in culturally exclusive enclaves, but lived among African, native Mexo-Americans and native-born peoples. This circumstance enabled a sharing of dance and musical traditions including instruments that eventually resulted in the development of the entirely new expressive form of tango (Juzefovič, 2016). The experiencing of diverse cultures is seen to be linked to greater creativity, perhaps because the contrast between cultures can spark a mind-set that is more receptive to different ideas (Leung et al., 2008; Leung and Chiu, 2010).

Sense of belonging to a shared cultural heritage deepened

This fifth outcome is about a sense of belonging to cultural heritage, a relationship to one’s experience of cultural identity and values shared with others that can be deepened by cultural engagement. Cultural heritage is defined here as ‘expression of the ways of living, developed by a community and passed on from generation to generation’ (ICOMOS, 2005), while sense of belonging is considered as meaning a sense of fitting in or feeling like one is an important member of a group.

Cultural heritage includes tangible elements such as artefacts, buildings and historic places, and associated intangible elements including practices, representations, expressions, knowledge and skills. It is considered ‘a representation of the past in the present’ (Nikielska-Sekula, 2016: 98) and provides greater understanding of the present by offering a sense of continuity between these two time periods (Throsby, 2001; UCLG, 2015). It is through understanding of the past that we can imagine the future we might seek (Hawkes, 2001), with art theorised as playing a crucial role as a collective vehicle for self-reflection and shared source of cultural identity (Donald, 2006).

The notion of belonging involves a range of concepts such as the feeling of connection to a place, being part of a community or identification with a group. Belonging is promoted through cultural engagement by the meanings and values embedded in heritage (Park, 2011), and the memories, insights and understandings these provide (Hawkes, 2001). Conversely, a sense of belonging as generated through cultural engagement is seen to be significant because it contributes to the meaning people make of their lives. The greater the sense of belonging, the

greater the meaning promoted (Lambert et al., 2013). Shared memory also provides the basis for the creation of cultural and national identities (Park, 2011). Finnish Christmas singing festivals, for example, enable construction and expression of Finnish identity and celebration of Finnish ideals (Hebert et al., 2012).

This connection to heritage is especially significant for communities who experience difference from the mainstream. The Creole population of Louisiana, USA, who live amid the dominant Cajun culture, enjoy trail-riding festivals that retrace traditional journeys as a way of manifesting their identity and strengthening belonging to their past (Giancarlo, 2016). Likewise, cultural heritage may also be central to the forging of shared identity in settler countries. Maori performing arts practices in New Zealand have diverse functions that include keeping cultural knowledge alive (Dunphy, 1996; Manatū Taonga Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2014), articulating cultural distinctiveness to the world and bringing New Zealanders of Maori and other cultural heritages together (Sibley et al., 2008).

Community performances and festivals provide Indigenous Australians with highly valued and enjoyable connections to ancestors and traditional culture (Patrick, 2015; Treloyn and Martin, 2014). This is evidenced in the sense of cultural belonging activated through participation in the Milpirri festival, which enables Warlpiri people to feel ‘human again and not a shadow, . . . like we have a voice and are not just a background people’ (Patrick, 2015: 8). Cultural practices likewise strengthen the sense of cultural belonging to Turkey for Turkish people living in Norway (Nikielska-Sekula, 2016). Cultural activity can also promote a sense of belonging to groups that are defined differently than national and ethnic communities. For example, engagement and identification with grime music enabled young people in London to consolidate a sense of belonging to the particular social class of that place (Dedman, 2011).

Discussion

Having posited the five outcomes of cultural engagement and offered definitions, descriptions and empirical support for them, we now explore the relationship of these outcomes to each other, how they might enable measurement of the value of cultural engagement and recommendations for development of the schema.

Relationship of outcomes to each other

The outcomes were presented here in the sequence in which they might occur. We posit that one of the first three outcomes needs to be elicited before the last two can occur: *creativity* needs to be stimulated, *aesthetic enrichment* experienced or *insights* gained, before *diverse cultural forms* can be appreciated or *cultural belonging* deepened. The first three outcomes are also alike because they are about individuals’ internal experience and relationship with themselves. They can occur without any connection or relationship with other people and thus distinguish how each individual’s experiences might be unique.

In contrast, the fourth and fifth outcomes, *appreciation* and *belonging*, are about a person’s relationship with others and the world around them. These relationships do not have to be physically or virtually experienced for connection to occur. For example, it is possible to experience a sense of belonging to ancestors and their culture without actually meeting those people. The fourth and fifth outcomes also contrast to the previous three in elucidating the ways an individual might identify with others, rather than having a unique internal experience.

While these outcomes are presented here as distinct concepts, we identify that there are also complex interrelationships between them and causal pathways to and from. For example, appreciation of works of art (*enrichment*), including viewing paintings and reading poetic song lyrics, was shown to bring about inspiration (*insight*), which in turn enhanced creativity (*stimulation*) in the workplace (An and Youn, 2018). Conversely, arts engagement, through viewing of abstract paintings in museums, was reported as first catalysing *insight*, which then resulted in an *aesthetically enriching* experience (Pelowski, 2015).

The relationships between the outcomes are also evidenced in the different ways individuals are impacted by their engagement, including personal predilections and experience. For example, greater openness to aesthetics (*enrichment*) is reported as being highly predictive of engagement in creative pursuits and interests (*stimulation*) (Griffin and McDermott, 1998). Those seeking out arts engagement tend to be more intrinsically creative, open to new experiences and have greater capacity for imaginative and divergent thinking (*stimulation, insight*) (Feist and Brady, 2004; McCrae and Costa, 1997). Attitudes towards the arts and experience of participating also influence their impact, with people who have more positive views about participation reporting greater creative stimulation from it, as do those with more experience (An and Youn, 2018). Personality types are also influential in people's responses of impact. For example, those more open to new experiences were more likely to report feeling euphoric after listening to music than those with high neuroticism, who experienced more feelings of sadness and depression (Cotter et al., 2018).

While the five outcomes are not exclusive to cultural activity (e.g. as one may experience aesthetic enrichment from an encounter in the natural world), we suggest that they are most likely to be intended outcomes of cultural activities. Such a framework therefore also offers potential for assessment of the achievement of cultural outcomes from activities that are outside the cultural domain.

Measurability of the outcomes

We posit that these outcomes, while intangible and subjective, are also measurable. This is so because they are defined distinctly from each other and are presented as intended change that is specified through the use of a qualifying verb: creativity is *stimulated*, aesthetic enrichment *experienced*, insight *gained*, diversity *appreciated* and belonging *deepened*. This articulation of the type of change that is sought offers the potential that these subjective experiences could be measured quantitatively. A participant could be invited, for example, to respond to a question of whether their creativity was stimulated or their sense of belonging deepened through specific engagement experiences and then potentially to rate the amount of change. This would offer the possibility of measuring amount of change from none to maximum conceivable, thus enabling empirical understanding of both positive and potentially neutral or negative impacts of an activity. Preliminary results from trial applications of this schema (reported in coming publication) indicate that participants are able to respond to such questions and find the reflection rewarding.

Application of the schema

This outcome schema is posited as being valuable because of the real world change it might effect, in providing cultural sector actors an appropriate evaluation tool that they can apply regularly and consistently, and thus promulgate evidence-based decision-making. The process

of developing it with a sector stakeholder group was intended to increase its usability and take up by that sector.

In the use of agreed measures across contexts, the schema also expands possibilities for larger scale research. This would be a significant change for the cultural sector which has had few population level interventions or research studies to date. While these outcomes are conceptualised in terms of change at an individual level, the use of an agreed schema also enables assessment of change at a community or population level, through aggregation of data from individuals into a larger sample (Lavine and Latané, 1996) potentially across sites and contexts. This will allow for understanding of how public cultural interventions and activities impact on communities, enabling comparison of outcomes between activities, for example, such as between different artforms or genres within them, or arts and heritage, with their different affordances able to be understood and considered in planning.

The schema may also be used to address issues relating to equity of access, such as barriers faced by people from diverse socio-economic circumstances. Results may indicate if the attainment of desired outcomes differs between groups, and factors affecting attainment. Consideration may then be given in planning stages to factors which facilitate outcome attainment for different groups in the community.

Future developments

The current article has offered explication of this schema, supported by theory, empirical studies and results from a consultative process. Additional steps required for it to be applicable include the devising and trial of a set of questions to operationalise the outcomes. Then research is needed to formally test the validity of the schema and associated questions, although the processes undertaken for this research stage indicate support for two aspects of validity. Substantive validity (whether the theory underlying the construct is sound) is indicated for the schema in the evidence provided for the outcomes, while the potential for face validity (the extent to which the schema is viewed as covering the concept it purports to measure) is supported by affirmative responses from participants in the development phase that it covers outcomes of the work they support or lead.

Conclusion

This article responds to an imperative from cultural sector agencies who seek to better understand the outcomes of their endeavours. It posits a schema of five measurable outcomes of cultural engagement: creativity stimulated; aesthetic enrichment experienced; knowledge, insight or ideas gained; diversity of cultural expression appreciated; and sense of belonging to a shared cultural heritage deepened. We argue that these outcomes are the contributions of cultural engagement towards what might be considered the endpoint of all public policy, the flourishing of human beings in their lives.

These outcomes are suggested as being comprehensive of all cultural outcomes and relevant to all modes of cultural engagement (from ambient to creative) and three aspects of funded cultural activity (arts, libraries and heritage) and all artforms. They have been developed to complement measures more commonly used for cultural engagement: inputs (resources invested), outputs (number of activities and participants), and quality (how good the activity was). The schema also precludes the cultural sector from needing to use proxy outcome

measures from other policy domains such as social inclusion, economic viability, civic engagement or environmental responsibility.

This schema was developed through a wide review of literature relevant to cultural engagement and broad set of consultation processes with sector experts. In having articulated what are regularly identified amorphaously as the ‘intrinsic’ outcomes of cultural activity, this schema enables cultural practitioners and those who manage and support them to measure what really matters as a result of their activity. That is, how individuals’ cultural life may be enhanced through their engagement, and therefore, how the cultural richness and vibrancy of communities may be affected collectively. It also enables understanding of the potential different contributions of cultural practices, including different artforms.

This schema affords the cultural sector the vital possibility of responding to demands for evidence-based outcome-focused practice in work that is funded by limited public resources. It also facilitates the possibility of aggregation of cultural outcomes data at a sector, national or international level for the first time. Yet it does not require abrogation of the fundamental ‘cultural’ purpose of the work, nor stop short at measuring only the steps required to achieve those outcomes, as many current practices do. The schema has been developed to facilitate evaluability of cultural engagement, with each outcome conceptualised such that quantitative assessment of a qualitative concept could be made. The article concludes with recommendations to advance the schema including validity testing and empirical research to determine that outcomes posited do occur through cultural engagement and are effectively measured by it.

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Note

1. Relevant material that appeared in other articles, along with articles recommended by project participants are identified in the reference list below with *.

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