

# **MEASURING THE IMMEASURABLE?**

**A critical response to the way arts funding bodies  
evaluate the work of arts organisations**

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of Philosophy

By

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## ABSTRACT

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The arts impact on all our lives. They play an important role in our spiritual and cultural well-being, but the creative industries also contribute considerably to our economy, and a significant investment in this sector is made by state funding.

The Arts Council of Wales and Arts Council England are charged with distributing state funding for the arts and this study examines the methods used by them to evaluate the arts organisations that they fund. Client evaluation is a key element in the relationship between funded and funder and a matter of considerable importance and sensitivity to both parties. Both artists and arts council officers were found to be dissatisfied with the current evaluation system, which has been in place for some twenty years. Among several important criticisms was the fundamental perception that it simply was not a suitable system for determining whether or not an organisation was doing a good job.

The study comprises eight chapters, the first two of which describe the evolution of the arts funding system in Britain and the manner in which governmental attitudes towards arts funding has changed over recent years.

The third chapter establishes the theoretical construct for the study. Firstly it examines the relationship between the funding body and the funded organisation within the context of Foucault's conception of Panoptic disciplinary power.

It then proceeds to consider the development of evaluation practice in the sphere of education. Education is an appropriate domain to explore, partly because there are many similarities between the fields of art and education, but principally because pioneering work in this domain has informed the development of evaluation practice in other fields.

The primary data gathered for this study, through observation and interview, is qualitative in character and is reported in Chapter 5.

Finally, following analysis and discussion of the field and desk data in Chapters 6 and 7, an alternative approach to client appraisal is proposed in Chapter 8.

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## PROLOGUE

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### ANECDOTES OF TWO GREAT ARTISTS

#### **Tyrone Guthrie**

Morison and Dalglish (1987: 9-11) describe how, one afternoon in the winter of 1961, in Rochester, Minnesota, a little to the south of Minneapolis, some of the city's most prominent and wealthy citizens had gathered in a large house for a cocktail party. The guest of honour was Sir Tyrone Guthrie, introduced to the assembled guests as 'the best-known director in the English-speaking theatre.'

The purpose of the gathering was quite straightforward – it was to raise money so that Guthrie could finance his dream – the establishment of a major, professional repertory theatre far from the influences of Broadway. Having visited several cities that were considered as potential locations, Guthrie and his colleagues had finally settled on Minneapolis – a city more or less equidistant from the Atlantic and Pacific oceans – for reasons that were later described by Guthrie as 'mostly hunch.'

Guthrie stood on the lower steps of the house's central staircase and described his vision to the standing guests. Guthrie himself was a large man – over six foot three – an imposing figure renowned for his charm and eloquence. His highly inspirational address conveyed his deep passion for the project and, at its conclusion, the guests applauded enthusiastically and gathered around the great man to ask questions. One of the potential donors had mentioned to Guthrie that Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* was his favourite play, so Guthrie announced that it would be included in the theatre's opening season.

The presentation was a direct, face-to-face appeal for money – a great deal of money – but there were no spiral-bound business plans, no long-range projections, nor budget spread sheets.

Guthrie was essentially saying to his audience, "I have a vision for a theatre in your city – trust me and give me your money." The guests bought into his vision and became patrons of the Tyrone Guthrie Theatre which opened two years later on May 7<sup>th</sup> 1963 with *Hamlet*.

### **Martha Graham**

In the mid-nineteen seventies in New York City, Adam Pinsker, a prominent arts management consultant, was seeking to secure a large, six-figure sponsorship deal from a giant multi-national corporation for the upcoming Broadway season of the celebrated Martha Graham Dance Company (Pate, 1998: 1) and had been summoned to present his case to some of the corporation's key decision-making executives. Pinsker was very experienced at these kinds of occasions and had prepared thoroughly, as was his usual practice. He was a charismatic, extremely articulate man who always liked to be on top of his subject; he presented the corporation's executives with an attractively laid-out proposal document, accompanied by a highly professional presentation with slides and video tapes, offering financial data, audience projections and other 'hard' details, and flavoured, he felt, with just the right amount of colourful and exciting illustrations of Graham's performances. Everything appeared to go without a hitch. At the conclusion of the presentation the atmosphere was convivial. Some further

clarification was sought and several of the executives declared their great interest in the project and their 'love' of Graham's work. There seemed to be a genuine 'buzz' around the room. Then, one of the senior executives asked, "Tell me, if we were to invest in this venture, how would it benefit us financially over the next twenty years?" Unfortunately, Pinsker's response failed to satisfy and the sponsorship did not materialise.

These two incidents tell the tale of one success story and one of failure. The contrasting outcomes could be put down to one or all of several factors: It may well be that Guthrie was simply better at persuasion than Pinsker. It could also be that Guthrie was better received because he was perceived as the authentic voice of the visionary. Who knows what would have been the reaction of the corporate executives had Martha Graham, herself, been present? It could be that individual philanthropists, in control of their own personal wealth, are more ready to dip into their bank accounts than executives charged with the stewardship of a corporation. It might also be the case that the citizens of Minneapolis, in the early nineteen sixties, felt the desperate need to establish a major theatre in their city and Guthrie came along at just the right time, whereas, in New York, Graham was simply one of many in a constant flow of major artists to appear there. But one thing is certainly the case: while the charismatic Guthrie could, in the informal atmosphere of an early sixties cocktail party, talk enthusiastically about his somewhat vague enterprise and ask individuals to trust his vision and give him their money, Pinsker, some dozen years later, had to deal with the hard financial reality of the corporate



boardroom. In other words, Minneapolis's millionaires had 'evaluated' Guthrie's venture in terms of their own reaction to the artist's vision, whereas those judging the Graham project, by the 1970s, relied on hard, measurable, bottom-line financial considerations. Mere vision was now having to stand aside and let business matters take centre stage.

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## INTRODUCTION

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The two anecdotes related in the Prologue demonstrate two extremes of the way the evaluation of artists' work can be approached. One responds to the artistic vision, the other places an overriding importance on financial matters.

In one way or another, we all make evaluative judgements on artistic works, whether it is in our preference for a particular song on the radio, an actor in a soap opera, or stating our views on the proposed plans for a new public building.

And in much the same way as the 'evaluators' in the prologue, we will probably have different approaches to making our judgements, although we may not necessarily find ourselves at the two extremes. Although some of us will confine our opinions to our reaction to the artistic and creative aspects of an opera or a piece of architecture, and others will place greater importance on their cost to the public purse, many of us may find ourselves positioned somewhere between these two poles, concerning ourselves with both issues, and possibly some others as well.

But apart from our own personal approaches to judging art, what about the approach of those who are charged with distributing state funding to the arts? Should they be concerned

with artistic vision or stick solely to financial matters? Should they consider the merits of the art itself, or confine their interest to scrutiny of budgets and the numbers of attendances?

It is within the sphere of state funded arts that this study is situated and it will examine the methods used by arts funding bodies to evaluate the work of the arts organisations they fund. As we shall see in the following chapter, this is a process that is at the core of the relationship between the two parties and is considered by them to be extremely important. However, as important as it may be to the parties involved, for it to have any relevance outside the world of arts practitioners and their funders, it will be necessary to broaden the context, and consider the importance of the arts sector to our lives in Britain.

Most people's lives are touched by the products of artists, whether they watch television programmes, view films in cinemas or on DVD's, read books and magazines, attend musical concerts or shows, go to the theatre, visit art galleries, or simply find themselves exposed to advertising in various media.

Many people also engage in the arts themselves as amateurs, whether it be as members of choirs, brass bands or orchestras, opera or drama groups, or as part-time painters or writers. Many also engage in recreational arts, such as dancing. We all, of course benefit indirectly from the work of artistic individuals, through the wide range of manufactured products that we use in our lives, whether they be clothes, drinks cartons, electrical appliances, or motor cars, all of which have required, at some stage, the input of creative designers. The products and by-products of artists, then, are a large part of our lives; it seems that

in our society, whether out of practical necessity, for recreational enjoyment, or for spiritual and cultural edification, the arts, in one form or another, play a significant role.

But the cultural industries in the UK have not generally been regarded as significant in business and economic terms. There are, however signs that attempts are now being made to gain a better understanding of their economic impact in our society. Sixteen years ago John Myerscough (1988) made a significant contribution to the task of drawing attention to the economic importance of the arts in Britain and, since then, several bodies have conducted various surveys and research projects associated with the arts' contribution to economic development.

In North America, the economic benefits that the arts can bring to a community have been recognised for some time: "...savvy municipal officials... are learning that supporting the arts is in their city's own best interest because, aside from the humanistic values, the arts have very pragmatic attributes that can help meet pressing urban needs" (Reiss 1989: 42). Reiss then lists some of these:

- ◆ The arts can be a major tourist attraction that brings visitors and income into a city
- ◆ A thriving arts base can help revive a flagging economy
- ◆ Cultural activity can be a factor in corporate relocation
- ◆ Arts centres and programs can make a significant economic impact on a city

- ◆ Cultural programs can project a favourable city image
- ◆ The arts can help keep a downtown alive; and
- ◆ Cultural amenities can be a factor in the site selection decisions of conference planners.

And in the UK, a tracking study carried out to monitor Glasgow 1990 (Glasgow's year as European City of Culture) revealed that it had, indeed, brought about significant economic and social benefits to the city, generating some 6,000 new jobs, and adding almost £15m to the local economy (Myerscough 1992: 332).

These efforts to demonstrate the economic impact of the arts appeared to generate little interest from the governments of the day in the UK but, in July 1997, the newly elected Labour government indicated its wish to "maximise the economic impact of the UK creative industries at home and abroad" and established a Creative Industries Task Force within the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS 1997) to examine and offer policy advice on a sector of activity which, in the DCMS's terms, encompassed:

"those activities which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent, and which have potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property. They include... the arts, music, fashion, design, media, film, information, publishing, software, travel, architecture and multimedia."

(DCMS 1997)

This definition is significantly broader than that which had been traditionally used by arts funding bodies in the past, for up until

recently organisations such as the arts councils saw their remit generally as confined to the mainstream art forms of Music, Dance, Drama, Visual Arts, Craft and Literature – those areas that would fall within the parameters of the 'arts' and 'music' in the DCMS's definition above.

The DCMS definition, encompassing, as it does, a broad range of commercial cultural industries, does, however, give an indication of the extent to which the creative industries in the UK touch our daily lives.

Six years on, some commentators believe that cultural activity "has rarely enjoyed a more central place in national life than it does today" (Ellis 2003: 1). In terms of sheer numbers, one can point to the thousands who visited the recent 'Aztecs' and 'Titian' exhibitions at the National Gallery in London, the sell-out audiences at the National Theatre for productions such as 'Jerry Springer: The Opera' or 'Henry V', the near movie-première-like crowds that accompanied the launch of the latest Harry Potter novel and its subsequent massive sales, the thousands of aficionados and international celebrities who are attracted to the Hay-on-Wye Festival of Literature or the hundreds of thousands who flock to Wales's week-long celebration of contemporary arts – the National Eisteddfod – each summer.

In the field of labour, McCall & Jones (1998) cite an Arts Council of England study (O'Brien and Feist 1995) which, drawing upon data from the Standard Industrial and Occupational Codes (SIC and SOC), estimates that 2.4% of Britain's population, or 648,900 people, work in the cultural sector. Although not all of these individuals will be engaged in creative aspects of the work (some

will, for example, be stage hands or box office workers), this is still a significant figure, the importance of which can be gauged by comparing it with other occupations:

- 310,000 secondary school teachers
- 393,100 administrative and clerical workers in the civil service and local government
- 391,900 sales representatives
- 72,800 solicitors
- 98,600 doctors
- 139,700 police constables

(McCall and Jones 1998)

By 2002 the DCMS, using its new, broader criteria, reported that 1.95 million people were employed in the cultural industries in the UK (DCMS 2002).

Not all of these cultural sector employees work for publicly funded organisations, but significant numbers do. In Wales in 2001/02 the Arts Council of Wales (ACW) awarded grants to 496 artists and arts organisations (ACW (a) 2002) and in England, the Arts Council of England (ACE) funded 683 artists and organisations (ACE 2002). And alongside the cultural professions, the Voluntary Arts Network states that over 50% of the UK's population engage in amateur arts practice (Brooks 2003).

In terms of finance, and not counting lottery arts awards, both arts councils, between them, distribute some £255 million in arts funding (ACW (a) 2002; ACE 2002) and when one adds to this

the further £12 million disbursed by the English Regional Arts Boards (RAB 2000)<sup>1</sup>, and the sum spent by local authorities in Wales and England on arts activity – estimated at over £1 billion (ALGAC 2000) – a picture emerges of an important sector, both in population and economic terms. When the distribution of lottery monies to the arts – although not part of Government funding – is taken into account, almost a further £180m (ACW(a) 2002; ACE 2002) is added to the monies awarded to arts organisations. Funding by the arts councils, then, is an important aspect of the arts economy in Wales and England.

Nowadays, governmental thinking, at UK, national and local levels, increasingly views the arts as a key factor – not to say a force for positive change – in such key thematic policy areas as economic development, urban and rural regeneration and social inclusion.

But there is also a growing concern in the arts world that, hand-in-hand with this newly-found prominence given to the arts, the policy makers have now largely come to see the arts and cultural activity purely in terms of numbers – their economic potential – and their use as instruments to further socio-political goals, to the neglect of consideration of their intrinsic value. Leaders of some of our greatest cultural institutions, “worry that the vocabulary of praise in the arts world has become entirely financial (how many came?) and social (is the work educational? is the audience diverse?). While recognising the importance of these measures, they seek a new language that will recognise the worth of a theatre or gallery has simply by existing” (Lawson 2003).

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<sup>1</sup> For an overview of the evolution of the arts-funding system in the UK, see Chapter 2.



In light of these concerns, the question of how we value publicly funded art was the theme of a seminar held in London recently, entitled 'Valuing Culture', under the auspices of the National Gallery and the National Theatre. The essential issue was summarised in a briefing note by Adrian Ellis (2003: 2): "The argument runs that British public policy with respect to the arts has become lopsided. Specifically, the strong emphasis in current policy on the actual and potential contribution of arts organisations to wider social and economic goals leaves underarticulated and, given an environment where there is a strong bias towards the quantifiable, undervalued the intrinsic worth of these organisations and their activities."

Previous research by the author into Business Practice in the Arts (Pate 1998), as well as many years working in the funded arts sector, has indicated that there has existed for some time, among the 'rank and file' of funded arts organisations, a great deal of dissatisfaction with the processes and procedures now employed to evaluate arts organisations' work (what the arts councils term 'client appraisal'). Recent governmental attitudes, which embody an, "increasingly output-oriented, contractualised, quantitative approach to public sector management" (Ellis 2003: 12) have heightened the dissatisfaction of artists, who have become increasingly vocal in articulating their concerns about how their work is evaluated by the arts councils from whom they receive funding. The 'Valuing Culture' seminar is a recent example which gained some public attention.

It is also clear, from interviews conducted with arts council officers and managers (see Chapter 5), that they, too, are dissatisfied with the current appraisal procedures, and wish to see them reviewed. There have been occasional attempts at modification over recent years, although these have generally amounted to little more than 'tightening up' exercises. Whereas (in line with successive governmental attitudes) there has been a consistent increase, over the past decade or so, in the quantity of statistical performance indicators demanded by the arts councils for evaluation purposes, the basic client appraisal system has remained largely unchanged for some twenty years.

Both Arts Council England and the Arts Council of Wales have undergone several episodes of major organisational restructuring in recent years and this has offered an opportunity for both these bodies to examine the processes used to evaluate the organisations that they fund. Both organisations separately and tentatively began looking into this issue. The Arts Council of Wales indicated to its clients that it would wish, in future, to adopt a 'lighter touch' with regard to client appraisals (see Chapter 5), and Arts Council England, in examining the possibility of adopting evaluative models from other fields, conducted a pilot Social Audit of one of its larger funded organisations (see Chapter 5).

However, during discussions with several officers, it became apparent that the disruption caused by restructuring, in both organisations, had caused any continuation of their appraisal systems reviews to be deferred. Furthermore, not only had the reviews of appraisal systems been put on hold but the operation of the appraisal systems themselves, in both organisations, had

effectively been suspended over the previous eighteen months or so, with only a handful of clients – those whose appraisals were already *en train* – undergoing appraisal during that period. The entire issue of client appraisal would have to await the evolution of the restructuring process, and would be revisited when the new structures had had sufficient time to 'bed down'.

Nevertheless, the issue of client appraisal will, sooner or later, need to be tackled. The (suspended) evaluation systems currently in place were designed and initiated whilst the Arts Council of Wales and Arts Council England were both part of the Arts Council of Great Britain<sup>2</sup> and, consequently, both appraisal systems are, essentially, identical. With both bodies now separate organisations, committed to reviewing their appraisal systems independently, the detail of the evaluation procedures eventually adopted by the two may turn out to be somewhat different. However, since both bodies are funded by the same government (albeit two different arms of that government<sup>3</sup>), both approaches will need to be broadly similar and of a nature that would satisfy their political masters. And the tenor of prevailing governmental attitudes will, no doubt, colour arts council thinking in this regard.

It is interesting to note that in other public sectors, such as education and health, some of the hallmarks of recent governments' evaluative practice have been brought increasingly into question. Many policy makers are now openly

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<sup>2</sup> For an overview of the evolution of the arts-funding system in the UK, see Chapter 2.

<sup>3</sup> The Department of Culture, Media and Sport in England, and the National Assembly for Wales in Wales.

challenging the 'what gets measured, gets done' posture that has seen increasing prominence given to quantitative performance indicators in public service evaluation over the past decade or so, stating that such indicators fail to present a complete picture of an organisation's performance and can even lead to a misunderstanding of that performance – what Raynard (1997) calls "judgement by anecdote."

In the past year The Welsh Assembly's Education Minister has scrapped the system of producing 'league tables' for schools. In England, The Chief Inspector for Schools has recently condemned the public sector's fixation on statistical data and the practice of setting 'targets' for schools and teachers as being counter to "the essentials of effective and broad-based learning" (Bell 2003), and ever more frequently one now hears government spokespersons referring to 'aspirational aims' rather than 'targets'. Indeed, the then Leader of the Opposition recently stated that, should his party gain power in the next general election, he would scrap, along with large amounts of regulatory red tape, the governmental setting of targets for public bodies (Clark 2003: 97; Duncan Smith 2003).

And the current Blair Government, in setting up the *Better Regulation Task Force* under the Chairmanship of Lord Haskins, is itself looking to see if there are instances where Government regulation can be less intrusive. Haskins argues that for regulation not to be counter-productive, it must be specifically aimed. A piece of business regulation could be perfectly appropriate for a large multi-national corporation but could be so onerous as to put a small, privately-owned enterprise out of business: "As much

as possible, regulation should be specific, flexible and reflect local needs" (Haskins 1999: 5).

Although this study is not concerned with governmental regulation, the arts councils themselves do have in place a number of rules, conditions and stipulations that they apply to their funded clients, and these generally apply to all, regardless of their size, geographical location, art form, or artistic nature. And these rules and conditions inevitably come into play when arts organisations are evaluated. Haskins advocates flexible regulation that reflects the particular situation in question. Similarly, arts organisations would be better served by an evaluation system that takes into consideration the nature and circumstances of their particular organisation. In other words, an evaluation approach that is what Eisner (1991: 102) calls "personally referenced" rather than "norm referenced."

It is against this background, then, that this study will be conducted. It will make a critical examination of the systems currently in use by the arts councils in Wales and in England to evaluate the works of its regularly funded organisations. It will seek to identify the weaknesses and strengths of these systems, and to determine what it is that those who have an active stake in the evaluation process (artists, funders and their political masters) wish to achieve from arts organisation evaluation. This will involve seeking out the views of arts council officers and the leaders and managers of arts organisations who have experienced the appraisal process, as well as attending actual appraisal meetings.

Since a major criticism of the current appraisal systems is that they tend to ignore the artistic work of organisations as a consequence of concentrating overly on financial matters and statistical indicators, the fundamental question to be addressed by this study, then, is: "Are the appraisal procedures currently employed by arts councils in Wales and England appropriate for the evaluation of the totality of an arts organisation's performance and, if not, what form, if any, should alternative methods take?"<sup>4</sup>

The study will begin by looking at the broad issues that surround the matter of client appraisal, and seek to identify the key areas of inquiry.

It will then give an outline of the arts funding system in the UK, showing how it has evolved since the Second World War and how government attitudes to arts funding have changed over that period. It will examine in greater detail the question of which kinds of arts organisations undergo formal appraisal and, in particular, describe the range of different arts organisations that receive grant-in-aid from the arts councils.

The review of literature will explore several areas that are deemed to be key to this field of investigation. Firstly, the relationship between the arts councils and the organisations they fund is considered. Shade (1999), in a study into the development of English language drama in Wales, drew

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<sup>4</sup>The researcher is well placed to address this question, for his practical experience in the field involves knowledge of both the funded and the funding sector, having first followed a successful career as a performing artist in the UK, continental Europe and the USA, before becoming a senior arts council manager, as head of one of its art-form departments.

attention to the power exerted by arts funding bodies over their clients, and this was echoed by several artists in pilot interviews for this study. It is felt, therefore that the relationship between the arts council and its clients can be viewed as one of an asymmetrical *power relationship* and hence the concept of institutional power is considered.

Secondly, the practice and theory of *evaluation* is examined, looking briefly at evaluation models used in commercial business but concentrating mainly on the development of evaluation in the field of education, highlighting some of the key evaluation models proposed in the mid- to late twentieth century. The education domain is felt to be important in respect of this study, partly because there are many similarities between the fields of art and education, but principally because pioneering work in this domain has informed the development of evaluation in other fields.

Thirdly, the review of literature looks at the important matter of making judgements, including that of coming to judgements about artistic work.

And, in discussing the research methodology, the case is made for adopting an approach that is qualitative rather than quantitative.

The findings of the research are then reported and analysed. In the final section of the study, conclusions are drawn and an evaluation model is proposed that, it is argued, is better suited to the task of appraising the work of arts organisations, sufficiently

flexible to accommodate the diverse range of organisations funded by the arts councils, and more meaningful to those individuals and organisations involved.

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## CHAPTER 1

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### GETTING TO THE 'ART' OF THE MATTER

Pate (1998) found that leaders of arts organisations were far more familiar with the managerial tools used in the commercial business sector than many would suppose and, in many cases, were far more *au fait* with such practices than, even, many of the officers of those funding bodies whose job it was to scrutinize their work.

They strongly criticised agencies, such as the arts councils, for requiring them to adopt seemingly inappropriate business practices for their organisations – practices that were often unsuited to their particular company's operation and imposed by bodies of individuals, they felt, who knew very little of the practicalities of the day-in-day-out running of an arts organisation.

As individuals whose daily work involved managing the complex process of transforming an artistic concept into a finished work placed before the public, arts managers were all too aware that management methods needed to be appropriate to the task at hand if they were to be of use in the effective and efficient running of their organisations. They resented the contention, consistently put forward by policy makers and officials, that the arts, like other areas in the not-for-profit world, must emulate managerial practice from the commercial business sector if they

are to operate in an efficient and responsible manner.

*"If I advertise that a particular show will take place at a certain time, on a certain date, with a certain ticket price, audiences know that, when they turn up at our theatre, they will see the show they expect to see, on that date, at that time, and tickets will be at the advertised price. We have to deal with a lot of private sector commercial businesses and, more often than not, the products or services that we purchase are late arriving, when we get them they're not exactly what we ordered, and the price is invariably higher than we expected. I'm fed up with being told that the arts need to be more 'businesslike' and emulate the private sector."*

(Manager of a small, publicly funded arts centre, pers. comm., 17/2/98)

In other sectors, too, those running small businesses (as well as academics and other specialists) have drawn attention to the inappropriateness of applying the 'mainstream' management concepts and techniques of big business and government to smaller organisations (Kay & Summerton 1998).

Artists' opposition to the imposition of unsuitable management techniques was accompanied by their equally passionate criticism of the significant, and increasing burdens caused, in their view, by unnecessary and time-consuming paper work that stemmed from the requirements of the funding bodies' own bureaucratic systems. But their loudest protests were reserved for the high degree of dissatisfaction with the methods used by funding bodies to evaluate their organisations' performance – systems that were also derived from those used in commercial business and were, they felt, inappropriate for arts evaluation.

As stated in the Introduction, the term used by the arts councils for evaluation of clients' work is *appraisal*. The term is, however, used by them in a specific sense. 'Client' is the word commonly used by arts council officers to denote an arts organisation or individual artists that is in receipt of funding; it does not usually refer to an organisation or individual putting in an application for funding.

As shall be seen later (see Chapter 2) there are several different kinds of client, and the clients that undergo *appraisal* are those that are in receipt of *recurring* funding, or what is sometimes referred to as *revenue* funding by arts organisations and their funders. This is funding that is awarded as a contribution to the establishment and programme costs of arts organisations on a year-on-year, recurring basis (as opposed to *project* funding, which is awarded, as the term suggests, as a contribution to the costs of time-limited, one-off activities).

The exact procedures of the appraisal system will be addressed later (see Chapter 5) but it is important at the outset to distinguish between the kind of evaluation that takes place when applicants – whether they be organisations or individuals – make applications for one-off projects, and the evaluation process that will be examined in this study, which involves periodic formal 'inspections' of organisations that the arts councils have previously undertaken to fund for an extended period. Clients that receive this kind of funding are often those institutions with which we are very familiar, including opera houses, theatres, ballet companies, orchestras and art galleries, but the client list will also include many organisations that may not be household

names, such as community arts organisations, theatre-in-education companies and touring theatre and dance companies.

For any arts organisation within the public sector, appraisal is felt to be a crucial procedure, as, artists assume, it feeds directly into the decision-making processes that culminate in the continuation of their grant-in-aid and has, therefore, to their understanding, a real bearing on the organisation's future viability. Unless the appraisal process is deemed sound, the entire grant-awarding system will be suspect.

Although there are formal appraisal procedures in place at arts councils in the UK, these are perceived – as we shall see later in interviews with artists and their funders – as cumbersome, time-consuming, morale-sapping, bureaucratic processes that are disliked almost as much by arts council officers as they are by artists. Other key funding bodies, such as local authorities, appear to have no uniform formal procedure for appraising the arts organisations that they fund. Senior managers at the Arts Council of Wales (ACW) and the Arts Council of England (ACE) acknowledged that the issue of appraisal urgently needed to be looked at afresh and more appropriate, and meaningful, procedures sought.

The current system employed by the arts councils places great emphasis on scrutinising financial performance, attendances, marketing, policies, and other managerial issues. Artists have pointed out that despite the fact that artistic production or presentation is the core competency of arts organisations, it

doesn't merit a mention in arts council's stated 'purpose of appraisal' (ACE 1994; ACW 1997). Matarasso (2002: 5) also points out that, despite the fact that the arts councils' Royal Charters charge them with promoting excellence in, and access to, the arts, he finds that, "there is still almost nothing stated about what quality or excellence in the arts might be." He adds, "I'm reminded of a saying which was current during the dangerous days of the French Revolution, 'Pense moult, parle peu, écris rien': think much, speak little, write nothing".

This, then, could lie at the heart of the dissatisfaction with the current appraisal system. If there is no clear concept of what constitutes artistic excellence, how is it possible to consider whether or not an arts organisation is producing excellent work? Is this lack of declared understanding the reason, perhaps, why there appears to be such a strong emphasis on matters other than the artistic in arts council client appraisal? But far more fundamental a question is whether it is possible at all to come to any definitive conclusions regarding artistic excellence.

Notwithstanding this essential, underlying difficulty, artists, although strongly supportive of the concept of public accountability, and of appraisal *per se* (Pate 1998: 127), have expressed strong misgivings for a system in which the funding bodies rely so heavily on the scrutiny of financial performance, managerial operations, and audience numbers to inform their decision making and in which diminishing importance is afforded those aspects of an organisation's work that *artists* count as important – creativity, innovation, boldness of vision, quality of artistic work, and so on.

This is an important criticism of such appraisals - that they have nothing to do with aesthetic judgement, that they understand the "merit or worth" (Guba & Lincoln 1981,1989) of the arts organisation primarily in terms of such matters as revenue generation, compliance with legislation and the organisation's attempts to market its work and bring in an audience.

But even in terms of good management practice, it would seem inadvisable to omit the artistic output of the organisation from the evaluation process, for aesthetic and creative considerations are just as much management issues as those of finance and audience figures. Without the artistic product, there would, essentially, be no need for the organisation to be established, let alone managed, in the first place.

On the one hand, it can be argued, however, that no evaluation system is likely to be able to tackle fully and satisfactorily the complexities of aesthetic arbitration, and it may be that it is best left outside the evaluation process altogether. But artists, on the other hand, maintain that it is absurd to make decisions on their future funding without fully recognising the aesthetic value of their product (Cohen & Pate, 2000).

In 1998, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review. The Department of Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS), in announcing its related proposals (DCMS 1998), indicated that the evaluation of arts organisations' performance would assume greater significance. The DCMS, with greater public accountability in mind, proposed to establish "a tough new watchdog" which would not only monitor and appraise the performance of bodies

in direct receipt of government funding (such as the arts councils) but also “second-tier funded bodies” (arts organisations). Informal conversations with officials of both the DCMS (re: ACE) and the Welsh Assembly (re: ACW) confirmed that evaluating the performance of arts organisations had indeed assumed greater importance.

In Wales, the Welsh Assembly has completed the process of conducting a thorough review of arts and culture funding in Wales which looked, primarily, into the structure, management and decision-making processes of ACW (NAfW 2000). The Assembly's review was implemented in response to an unprecedented level of protest by artists, politicians, the media and press, and members of the public, against a number of controversial decisions that were made by ACW to withdraw funding from several arts organisations, and which called into question the fairness and the integrity of ACW's evaluation practice. This pressure subsequently resulted in the resignation of ACW's Chief Executive and proposals for a radical restructuring of the organisation.

In England, the DCMS has now established its 'watchdog' – a body bearing the title 'QUEST' (Quality, Efficiency, Standards Team) and conversations with officials indicate that QUEST is primarily concerned with such matters as “financial efficiency, commercial innovation, and private and public partnership” (Seeney 1998), whilst the Welsh Assembly review is similarly interested in such matters as value for money, economic regeneration, control and monitoring of funded organisations (Sherlock 2000).

Such statements are unlikely to offer any comfort to artists, who wish to afford greater prominence to artistic considerations. For financial and managerial issues will, it seems, continue to be the main concern of appraisers. One could say that this is not altogether unreasonable, since the notion of seeking to evaluate the aesthetic quality of an artist's work in an objective, systematic way would appear to be fraught with all kinds of dangers. After all, if no two individuals will react to a work of art in entirely the same way (since individuals have different mentalities, knowledge and experience (Santayana 1896)), how is it possible to evaluate artistic work in a way that is fair? Usually the notion of fairness is equated with objectivity – a difficult equation when we consider that reactions to a work of art are necessarily subjective (Cohen & Pate, 2000). Consequently, funding bodies might wish to confine their appraisals to the comparative safety of quantitative measures, which are, after all, relatively easy to obtain, easy to use and can appear very authoritative (Matarasso 1996: 15).

So what of the artist's creative product? Should it simply be left outside the purview of the appraisal process because it is so difficult to assess? The Audit Commission, however, cautions, against limiting one's inquiry to that which is easily measurable:

*'The art of evaluation lies in ensuring that the measurable does not drive out the immeasurable.'*

(quoted in Thornton 1992: 18)

And as mentioned in the Introduction, earlier, increasing numbers of policy makers are beginning to give voice to views that reflect this assertion. And artists, in interviews for this study, consistently



expressed their lack of faith in an evaluation system that failed to take account of their core competence – their artistic work. For the arts councils' appraisals of arts organisations to gain the respect and enthusiasm of artists, it will need to incorporate some element of meaningful consideration of their artistic product. It will also need to be seen to be a fair. For, if artists perceive the appraisal system to be inherently unfair, there is a danger that they will cease to be convinced of its worth and regard it as yet another 'game' that they must play to satisfy their funders, as was found to be the case with the system currently in place (see Chapter 5).

It will also need to take into consideration the administrative burden involved, for ensuring greater fairness could possibly increase the burden. And if the process is felt by artists to place an inordinately onerous workload on their organisations, relative to the perceived benefits to be derived from that process, this will erode their confidence in it further. Conversely, however, an increased administrative burden – should that ensue – can be tolerated if the system is perceived to be fair, relevant and meaningful.

How, then, can the work of arts organisations be evaluated in a manner that is, on the one hand, sufficiently rigorous to satisfy the Government's demands for tough scrutiny of 'value for money' and managerial efficiency whilst, on the other, bringing into the frame an appraisal of their artistic product? Is this possible and, if so, can it be undertaken in a manner that is fair and not overly burdensome? And if the evaluators seek to establish whether or not arts organisations are giving 'value for money', how, indeed,

do they determine the value of artistic work? The question arises as to whether, indeed, evaluating the work of an organisation, in its totality, can be accomplished by using one evaluation method? Should consideration be given to using two different approaches – one to evaluate matters of finance, business and management issues, and another to address matters of artistic, creative and aesthetic import?

A great body of literature exists in the field of aesthetics in which philosophers since the time of Plato and Aristotle have sought to give insight into the nature of art, its role in shaping successive civilizations, and its effect on our society. Within this context, many have also sought to describe the value of art as an edifying instrument in people's lives.

There also exists a vast literature in the broad field of evaluation, ranging from academic writing on formal programme evaluation in an array of sectors, to techniques employed in businesses of various kinds to evaluate the effectiveness of production systems, management structures, organisational performance, quality assurance, and so forth.

Yet, although much has been written on the processes of evaluation in other sectors, little has specifically addressed the issue of formal processes for evaluating funded arts organisations. May Pettigrew (1996), in a brief article describing the extent and nature of evaluation in the UK, lists the various domains that make up the membership of the UK Evaluation Society (a good reflection of the make-up of the professional evaluation 'community') as 'Health, Science and Technology, Education and Training, Social Welfare, Criminal Justice, Economic and

Business Development, and Environment'. No mention of the arts. And, although written in 1996, this article still appears on the web site today, bearing the title 'Evaluation in the UK'.

These, then, are some of the issues that are the background to this investigation, which will look into the current appraisal practices employed by funding bodies, and ask what are their benefits and disadvantages. The study will enquire whether aesthetic judgement can be objectively employed in arts organisation evaluation, consider ways in which the value of an arts organisation's work might be established, and explore the appropriateness (or otherwise) of adapting evaluation models from other fields to assist in the appraisal of funded arts organisations. This study, however, will not seek to re-rehearse the age-old (and inconclusive) debates regarding whether or not it is possible to place a value on works of art in general or whether or not it is possible to measure that value. Some people (and some fields of endeavour) clearly believe that this is possible – one need only look as far as the lucrative, commercial fine art market as one obvious example. What this study will address is how these issues relate to the specific field of the evaluation of publicly funded arts organisations by their funding bodies in Wales and England.

Heron and Reason suggest that research should not result merely in "books and academic papers" but should offer creative actions to address matters that are important to those involved in the inquiry (Heron and Reason 2001:179). This study will, therefore, be mindful of the fact that to most arts organisations, and funders, evaluation is, above all, a practical matter. It is part of the process of running the company – it involves significant

amounts of time and energy and a great deal of effort. And although there are important theoretical issues to be examined, it is hoped that the study's conclusions will be able to go beyond the theoretical and offer practical solutions to the conduct of the evaluation of funded arts organisations.

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## CHAPTER 2

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### ARTS FUNDING IN BRITAIN

The main specialist arts funding bodies in Britain are the arts councils of England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales<sup>1</sup>.

The current devolved structure of the arts councils in the UK has been in place only since 1995. Prior to that, the Arts Council of Great Britain (ACGB) included 'regional' committees which, although technically sub-committees of ACGB, had become largely autonomous and were known as the Arts Council of Northern Ireland, the Scottish Arts Council and the Welsh Arts Council. The main body of the ACGB was also, in effect, the arts council for England. In 1995, they received their own separate Royal Charters and ACGB ceased to exist. The autonomy of the Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish Councils was now officially confirmed and the London body became the Arts Council of England. And in April 2003, the ten English Regional Arts Boards merged with the Arts Council of England and their offices and staff became the regional offices of the new body, Arts Council England.

It's worth looking, briefly, at the evolution of the arts councils since the establishment of the Arts Council of Great Britain immediately after the Second World War, as this serves to

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<sup>1</sup> Until April 2003, the Arts Council of England also had ten 'partner' funding bodies – the Regional Arts Boards. They were: Eastern A.B., Cambridge; East Midlands A.B., Loughborough; London A.B.; Northern A.B., Newcastle-upon-Tyne; North West A.B., Manchester; Southern A.B., Winchester; South East A.B., Tunbridge Wells; South West A.B., Exeter; West Midlands A.B., Birmingham; Yorkshire A.B., Dewsbury.

illustrate not only the cultural development of the funding system itself but, also, the gradual shift in governmental attitudes towards the arts over that period.

Throughout history, the arts have tended to be viewed, by artists and patrons alike, as different from other sectors of society and, as a consequence, have enjoyed a kind of freedom from the pressures of mundane life that has provided them with an environment that is particularly conducive to creativity and innovation. The arts have always depended on some form of patronage in order that they may flourish, whether it be bestowed by Royalty, nobility or, more latterly, the state. And patrons, too, whether for reasons of self-aggrandisement, status, glory, or social enrichment, have demonstrated their need to be associated with the arts. Artists and those in power, then, have a long, albeit sometimes uneasy, history of mutual interdependence.

One of the greatest bones of contention in this relationship has been the degree to which patrons should be allowed to 'interfere' with the artist's work, whether it be by seeking to influence its contents, or by placing restrictions upon its activities. From as far back as the 6<sup>th</sup> century, Welsh poets could not always compose as the muse took them, but were required to sing the praises of their patrons to earn their livelihood. From the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century – during the Commonwealth – there was an outright prohibition of all plays, followed by various forms of restriction, licensing and censorship of theatres. Amazingly, this state of affairs remained in place until as recently as the 1960s, when Walpole's Theatre Censorship Act of 1737 was eventually repealed (Pick 1985: 1).

Nowadays arts funders place increasing demands on artists to appeal to a wider public. Yet, even as early as the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century, Goldsmith was concerned that, with a trend towards greater popularity, "writing would become a trade rather than a calling" (Pick 1988: 30).

Gowrie, however, reminds us that perhaps England's best known artist of all time was also a businessman: "As well as being our greatest poet, dramatist and emblematic genius, Shakespeare was a businessman, an entrepreneur, a sharer or shareholder in a theatrical company" (Gowrie 1995: 2).

Lampert (1986: 137) informs us that one of the most famous sculptors of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, Rodin, was quick to capitalise on his popularity and "by 1895 Rodin was running a formidable business", employing craftsmen in several factories to produce hundreds of replicas of his most popular works.

There are clearly many instances of highly innovative artists who are also shrewd and capable businessmen and women, but on the whole, artists have tended to eschew the world of business, considering it to be a crass intrusion into their creative efforts. Promoting this view, the ideal situation, said Stravinsky, (paraphrasing Ezra Pound)<sup>2</sup> was that the artist should be in a

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<sup>2</sup> "...to make due provision, so that he can work as he likes, or waste time as he likes." (Canto VIII, *The Cantos of Ezra Pound*, 1975, London: Faber & Faber).

position where, "...he can work as he likes, or waste time as he likes, never lacking provision" (Craft 1962: 222). Similarly, Oscar Wilde (1890) placed great value on the contribution to society made by an artist's "dreaming" and "thinking" and was greatly saddened by society's misunderstanding of the significance of this to the extent that it expected artists to give "productive labour" to society (Cohen & Pate 2000: 4).

It appears, then, that patrons have always felt that they have had a certain right to lay down conditions on artists' output. Likewise, artists have long felt they should not be controlled in the same way as workers in other fields and have steadfastly sought to protect their creative freedom. Many would go further and hold that the arts are separate from society and are at their healthiest when in a state of conflict with society (Donohue 1982).

When the Arts Council of Great Britain (ACGB) was initially established immediately after the Second World War, its first Chairman declared that the artist was by nature individual and free, undisciplined, unregimented and uncontrolled. The artist follows where spirit and inspiration leads, "he cannot be told his direction..." (Keynes 1945: 31).

This first Chairman of the Arts Council, and the driving force behind its establishment, was the eminent economist John Maynard Keynes, a man who was passionate about the arts, who was convinced of their immense value to society, was an active member of the Bloomsbury Group (Felix 1999), and who viewed the arts as being *different* to other aspects of our life and, consequently, needing to be treated rather differently.



**CHANGING GOVERNMENTAL ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE ARTS**

Hugh Jenkins, Minister for the Arts, 1974-76, under Wilson and Callaghan, in an attempt to get the ACGB to display greater openness in its grant allocation procedures, made concerted efforts to get it to adopt an objective, transparent 'points scoring' system when considering grant applications. Delaying tactics were employed by ACGB to resist this, culminating in an eventual flat refusal by the then Chairman, Lord Gibson: "...artistic judgements cannot be measured" (Jenkins 1979: 189-200).

Most artists would concur, insisting that artistic work cannot be likened to commercial goods. But even with respect to those arts organisations that *are* commercial in nature – film and record companies, publishers, for example – Björkegren (1996: 2) distinguishes them from other commercial sectors,

*"But while industrial companies sell physical products, service firms sell services, and knowledge intensive firms sell knowledge, we could say that the firms which produce culture commodities are primarily in the business of selling aesthetic experiences. Aesthetic experience is a much more ephemeral commodity..."*

Furthermore, all arts organisations in the 'maintained sector' are not-for-profit in their constitution and their mindset. This is not manifested simply by a lack of profit motive but also in what such organisations do. Businesses supply goods and services and Governments implement policies that control our life. "The 'non-profit' institution," wrote Drucker (1990: ix), "neither supplies

goods or services nor controls. Its 'product' is neither a pair of shoes nor an effective regulation. Its product is a *changed human being*."

Although recent years have witnessed a growing trend in arts-bashing by the press and public, and what is perceived by artists as an increasingly philistine stance from recent governments – "Tough on the Arts, tough on the causes of Arts!" (Sedgemore 1998) – the fact remains that, since the establishment of the ACGB in 1946, as with its predecessor, the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA), the arts have been treated differently from other government provisions. "State involvement in the arts has always differed from bureaucratic efforts to enforce sanitary codes, to run railways, or to organise the coal industry " (Minihan 1977: x).

This view is reinforced in other studies of state patronage of the arts – (Baldry 1981; Gowrie 1995; Harris 1970; Hewison 1997; Jenkins 1979; Lewis 1990; Minihan 1977; Peacock 1993; Pick 1988, 1985; Pick & Anderton 1992; Rees-Mogg 1985; Sawers 1993; Williams 1971) – all of whom demonstrate that successive post-war governments have accepted that the arts have needed to be handled differently from other features of government activity.

This is perhaps best demonstrated by the establishment of the ACGB itself in 1946, as an independent body under a Royal Charter. At the time, most countries deployed state arts support directly through ministries of culture. The British Government, however, observed a principle that kept itself at arm's length

from the ACGB, thus acknowledging that the arts should be afforded freedom from political influence.

And the ACGB, in its early period, was indeed shielded from the vagaries of political interference by this sacrosanct 'arm's length principle'. ACGB, in reality, was accountable to no one but itself – what Jenkins provokingly calls “the irresponsibility of the Arts Council” (Jenkins 1979: 189). After all, ACGB was an independent body with its Council made up of the 'great and the good' appointed (some would say rubber-stamped) by the Government.

Anecdotes abound, from those early days, of how officers were given considerable freedom to act, to *initiate* exciting creative projects and to engage with artists in the development of the art forms. There are stories also of how departmental budgets often overrun (by as much as 100% in some cases!) but that it was 'no problem'. The ACGB culture, in essence, reflected that of the arts world itself: it was populated by people who were passionate about the arts, were free to experiment (and fail) and had the flexibility to grasp opportunities as they arose. Rather than operate within a paradigm of “the narrow accountancy of the sterile search for value for money” (Hewison 1995: 313), ACGB's culture could be termed as one of “money for values” (Hewison 1997: 314); it was held separate – at arm's length – from the thinking and control of mainstream government and the civil service.

Although this principle is still stated to be in place, there is little doubt that, as the successive Thatcher administrations of the eighties introduced stronger central government control over

public spending, so the monies distributed by the ACGB were put increasingly under the microscope. More significantly, perhaps, was how, in due course, this scrutiny was extended to examine ACGB's policies and practices – all in the name of public accountability. Individuals who espoused the government's thinking were appointed to the Council and, gradually, the notion that the arts were *different* ceased to be fashionable. "The qualities required for survival (of the arts) in this age will be the qualities of the age itself," wrote ACGB Chairman Sir William Rees-Mogg in 1985. "They include self-reliance, imagination, a sense of opportunity, range of choice, and the entrepreneurial action of small professional groups." (Rees-Mogg 1985: 8)

This was very much in line with the noises that the arts community were beginning to receive from the Thatcher Government of the day, that arts organisations needed to become 'leaner and fitter', be less reliant on state financial support, become far more populist in their outlook, and adopt an altogether more entrepreneurial approach. And these exhortations were matched by specific government policies to encourage such an attitude among arts organisations. In 1987, the then Arts Minister, Richard Luce, introduced the concept of 'Incentive Funding', whereby a portion of the arts councils' block grants were hypothecated for award only as matching funds to those organisations who could raise, through various 'entrepreneurial' means, significant sums of money themselves. This of course, was classic Thatcher, and it signaled, much to the dismay of artists, a considerable shift in official attitudes towards the arts.

*"The key shift has been to describe the arts no longer in their traditional language, which includes aesthetic*

*judgement, private satisfaction and spiritual benefit, but as a purely commercial entity, to be justified by its economic benefit."*

(Pick 1988: 90)

The two anecdotes related in the prologue reflect this attitudinal shift. Prospective financial backers judged Guthrie's vision in terms of its intrinsic merit, its spiritual and cultural benefit, bringing into play factors of private fulfilment and aesthetic judgement. The Graham proposal, however, was ultimately judged in respect of its perceived commercial potential.

There is no doubt that the increasing prominence of the arts sector (and the 'cultural industries' in general) in the 70s and 80s, and growing financial investment from public and private sources, were accompanied by demands for increased "efficiency, effectiveness, transparency, and accountability" (Fitzgibbon & Kelly 1997: 3). The gradual osmosis of this kind of language, the greater emphasis being placed on management issues, and the imposition of corresponding 'business' practices, was anathema to artists. It came not only from ACGB, but also from Local Authority funders who were, themselves, being placed under similar, but far more wide-ranging, impositions. It also coincided with the beginning of a period of ever-stricter cash limitations on grant-aid for the arts.

The arts, then, were being subjected to the same kind of treatment as were Health, Education and every other government operation; they were no longer officially perceived as warranting special consideration. They were no different from any other aspect of publicly funded activity and, very soon, this view was adopted enthusiastically by much of the popular press and a significant portion of the public.

### **BUREAUCRACY ENTERS FROM THE WINGS**

As official and public attitudes towards the arts shifted, so too did the arts councils gradually become more bureaucratic in their nature. This signalled a significant change in organisational culture and is worth examining briefly in light of the main concern of this study.

As the 1980s progressed, arts council officers began complaining that, whereas they formerly spent a high proportion of their time viewing artists' work and engaging in arts development activity, the recent emphasis on report writing, policy reviews, strategy documents and the like, left very little time for any meaningful attention to artistic matters. Artists, too, complained that they rarely saw arts council officers at their performances or exhibitions, but that meetings to discuss management and planning had increased enormously.

Gone were the days, it seemed, when they would be judged on their artistic merit, the norm now being that "they will be 'assessed' according to the ways they have exhibited their 'enterprise', 'maximised their resources' and 'met their targets'. They will now report on whether they have 'improved access' for the centrally targeted groups, through efficient 'marketing'" (Pick 1988: 84).

No doubt a key factor in this move away from the artistic agenda was the pressure being placed on all government agencies to measure and control outputs. But, as Lewis (1990: 6) suggests, "... (in the arts) public money is spent according to aesthetic judgements...Unlike most forms of public spending,

these judgements are almost impossible to measure – criteria of commercial success, value for money, quality or quantity of service simply do not apply." Consequently, it was necessary to shift the agenda onto that which *could* be measured and many artists contend that, by today, very few funding decisions are made on the basis of aesthetic judgement.

Pick (1988: xi) is rather more cynical in his analysis, seeing this shift as an effort to gain greater control over Keynes's 'free, undisciplined, unregimented and uncontrolled' artist. He sees the contemporary arts councils' view of the arts as "...a narrow little bureaucratic construct – a world which is no longer subject to genius, creativity, interpretation and criticism, but simply economics. Bureaucrats cannot recognise or control genius or creativity, and they fear criticism, but economic forces they can control."

One artist interviewed recently, in commenting on the great number of policy and strategy documents issued by the arts councils over recent years, offered a similar view:

*'I wonder if this becomes a power relationship with the Arts Council; in my deepest private thoughts I wonder if the purpose of these 'strategies', this 'cleaning up' and the increasing use of business terminology are actually to get rid of renegades, to get rid of the 'loose ends' because they're always problematic and it's always the 'problems' that don't fit with business practice and whether, indeed, in the end, the Arts Council, in a curious way, wants to look at arts organisations and just see a reflection of themselves.'*

(Theatre Director, pers. comm, 23<sup>rd</sup> October 1999.)

This view is supported in part by a gradual change in the kind of individual working for the Arts Councils. Whereas earlier tendencies had been to recruit from among arts practitioners, the 'new' officers, increasingly, have backgrounds in areas such as finance, marketing and public sector management. They may find it difficult to understand the nature of arts organisations and be unfamiliar with the language and the values of artists. There is also a tendency, echoing that which is taking place in the National Health Service, for there to be a general increase in the number of administrators and financial staff, at the expense of arts specialists.

This trend is illustrated in a recent ACW newsletter. In the section on staff changes over the preceding months, it reports that three arts development officers have left and three new ones appointed. It also reports that one administrative officer has left but that seventeen new administrative and finance personnel have been added to the staff (ACW(b) 2002). Pick (1988: 66) again asserts that, as arts funders have become increasingly bureaucratic, "...their managers, operations managers, systems analysts, development officers, and the like expect to deal with other bureaucracies." In other words, they could only handle arts organisations if they, too, assumed bureaucratic characteristics.

Arts organisations, in response, have begun to turn to specialist managers or arts management agencies to run their affairs. Trained 'Administrative Directors' are replacing 'Artistic Directors' in fronting arts organisations. Those in charge of the artistic side of the organisation are less likely to meet with funders nowadays,



with that now seen as more the function of managers. It's the Adam Pinskens who go to meet the funders nowadays, not the Martha Grahams! Cooke contrasts the specialist arts administrators of today with the traditional notion of arts managers as 'amateurs', whose prime concern was the artistic endeavour. He cites the famous impresario Diaghilev, who possessed a:

*"...consistent obsession with the art form to which he has dedicated his native shrewdness and organising abilities. It is the spectacle of the amateur in pursuit of his destiny rather than the professional in pursuit of a career."*

(Cooke 1997: 33)

No longer is it possible for charismatic artists, as Tyrone Guthrie did in the early 60s, to raise the millions required to build a major new theatre complex (the Guthrie Centre in Minneapolis) simply by holding a fund-raising cocktail party with potential patrons and talking enthusiastically about his dream. These kinds of 'amateur' approaches – such as Guthrie's, where his charm and vision was sufficient to persuade moneyed individuals, whom he had contacted personally, to provide financial support for his theatre – are no longer acceptable. Guthrie's "trust me and give me the money" approach would be unthinkable nowadays. Today, artistic visions have to be "xeroxable" and translated into long-range plans and budget forecasts (Morison & Dalgleish 1993: 11-16).

One could argue that it is all very well for government agencies such as the arts councils to adopt the bureaucratic practices necessary to fulfill the accountability demands of their sponsoring Government departments but that it is another matter altogether

for them to expect the arts organisations receiving grants to be required to change their nature also.

One might even argue that a *de facto* imposition of a bureaucratic culture on arts organisations will result in their demise as true artistic concerns. Baldry (1981: 65) makes the broad point that the mercurial nature of the arts makes them ill-suited to being subjected to cumbersome bureaucratic process: "...the arts are the quicksilver which registers most sharply that things are on the move." Artists, often seeking to race ahead to explore new forms and concepts are held back by the added weight of imposed bureaucratic administration.

And this, of course, relates directly to another feature of artists' dissatisfaction with arts council evaluation procedures: as a consequence of the current highly bureaucratic culture of the arts councils, the appraisal procedures make increasingly heavier time and paper-work demands upon the limited administrative resources of funded arts organisations.

### **WHO GETS EVALUATED?**

Access to Government arts funding in the UK is a complex affair that involves negotiating intricate pathways of schemes. At one level, moneys are distributed by the four arts councils through a range of different programmes. Until April 2003 funds were also administered through ten Regional Arts Boards (RAB's) in England<sup>3</sup> through their various schemes and further funding is allocated by local authorities, sometimes through specialist Arts, Culture, Leisure or Heritage departments but also, frequently, via

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<sup>3</sup> See footnote 1 above.

Education, Social Services, Tourism, Economic Development or Health budgets.

This profusion of schemes, however, falls into three broad categories of grant-in-aid: annual revenue grant-in-aid awarded on a recurring basis as a contribution towards the core running costs of an organisation - this can be as little as £1,372 (ACW(a) 2002) or as high as several millions of pounds for large institutions (ACE(b) 1999); project funding to either individual artists or organisations for one-off projects that are generally, although not always, relatively small grants that can range between £40 and £40,000 (ACW(a) 2002); and lottery funding, awarded for rather larger projects that can run over extended periods of time (up to 3 or even five years), and which are usually related to capital purchases (buildings, equipment, etc) or arts schemes and events associated with education or the improvement of access to the arts.

In most cases, project funded activities – from both grant-in-aid and lottery schemes – are not subject to a full appraisal process but undergo formal monitoring by the arts councils so as to determine whether or not they have complied with the terms of their funding agreements and delivered that which was set out in those agreements. Such monitoring is generally summative in nature but in the case of larger, particularly capital, projects a degree of on-going monitoring will take place.

Local authority funding for the arts is frequently undertaken in partnership with the arts councils or its regional offices (formerly RAB's), and in such cases, local authorities have generally, until recently, been content to accept the findings of arts council

appraisals as fulfillment of their evaluation requirements. But, since April 2000, all local authorities are legally required by the Government to adopt the 'Best Value' performance management framework in respect to all their services. Thus, Best Value Reviews must be conducted periodically and Best Value Performance reports published annually. This applies equally to any arts service provided (or funded) by local authorities, and the arts councils have responded by seeking to offer guidance to local authority officers in employing Best Value frameworks to the arts (ACE(b) 1999).

It is only those organisations in receipt of recurring revenue funding from arts councils (including those funded in partnership with local authorities) that are required to *undergo formal* appraisals and, consequently, this study will concentrate on the evaluation processes employed for this kind of organisation which, typically, includes such concerns as art galleries, dance companies, theatre venues, orchestras, drama companies, publishers, opera companies, arts centres and community arts organisations. This study will also be limited to arts funding bodies in Wales and England.

The formal appraisals conducted by the arts councils are, therefore, concerned with those arts organisations that receive recurring, year-on-year funding, and that is the area that this study will investigate. It will not inquire into the monitoring activities associated with one-off projects or lottery grants, nor will it be concerned with the decision-making processes relating to new applicants.

## **DIFFERENT KINDS OF ARTS ORGANISATIONS**

The exact nature of the appraisal system currently employed will be addressed later but at this juncture the nature of the arts organisations themselves will be examined. The kinds of arts organisations that undergo arts council appraisal vary considerably, yet the procedures currently used in the appraisal process do not acknowledge these differences. This 'one-size-fits-all' approach was criticised by the artists interviewed during the investigation and is an issue that will be addressed later. It will be useful at this point, therefore, to clarify some of these differences.

### **Art forms**

As seen above, an obvious distinction can be made between organisations operating in different disciplines – for example music, drama, visual arts, literature, dance. Each of these disciplines has different demands placed upon them (in terms of such things as resources, materials, employment practices, space requirements, audience expectations, and so forth) and has developed different practices and perspectives. And even within these art forms, there are distinct 'sub-disciplines' whose particular circumstances and requirements demand specific operational practices and conditions that have resulted in the evolution of differing art-form characteristics. Hence the operational structure and 'culture' of an orchestra, for instance, will be different from that of an opera company and worlds apart from that of a jazz quartet or a concert soloist. Similarly, painting and sculpture, classical ballet and contemporary dance, animated film and live-action film, and so on, all operate

with their own distinctive ethos. These are factors that will need to be taken into careful consideration when designing effective evaluation methods for arts organisations.

### **Scale**

Another important area to consider in the arts is the scale of the organisation, which can have a considerable bearing on their administrative capacity. Administrative capacity is a key element in the organisation's ability to absorb the significant workload and paper-work demands that are associated with the current appraisal process, without disruption to their everyday operation.

Those working within the arts frequently refer to organisations as either small-scale, middle-scale or large-scale. Everyone in the arts field seems to understand what this *signifies, even though* there does not appear to be any formal definition of these three classifications. Much in the same manner as most things within the creative arts defy absolute definition – with works of art, individuals and organisations in many ways being thought of as *sui generis* – perhaps the precise classification of organisational scale is not felt to be important. Scale, within the arts world, is not used as an exact form of measurement, then, but simply as another pointer to the organisation's character.

For this study, it will be useful to be clear about the size of an organisation and, therefore, it is necessary to gain a more accurate definition of scale for the organisations under investigation.

The 1985 Companies Act defines a 'small company' as:

"A private company which, during the current and preceding financial year, satisfies any two or more of the following conditions:

- i) Its turnover does not exceed £2.8 m
- ii) Its balance sheet total does not exceed £1.4 m
- iii) Its weekly average number of employees does not exceed 50"

(Mayes 2000: 163)

This definition is used, for example, to determine which of the Companies Act's accounting provisions apply to a particular organisation, and arts organisations will need to be acquainted with the act in order to ensure that their annual financial accounts comply with legal requirements. And in 1999 the Department of Trade and Industry published a consultation document that proposed to almost double the financial thresholds<sup>4</sup> (DTI 1999). Within the context of the Companies Act, all but a few arts organisations will fall within the thresholds of a small company, and, in any case, those that receive arts council funding are never constituted as private companies.

But, in other (non-accounting) contexts, other definitions of small businesses exist and, in general, these can be rather arbitrary, with different definitions being used, as appropriate, in different fields of commerce in relation to the objectives of the task at hand. Horner & Shipley (1988: 13), for instance, in discussing computer businesses, identify small businesses as "ranging from

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<sup>4</sup> Turnover: £4.8m; Balance sheet total: £2.4m

the smallest family concern to a company employing 200 people or achieving sales of £2 million per year." This is typical of the kind of broad definitions that appear frequently in the literature and it is not the kind that is helpful in the arts sector, for it would encompass all but a handful of organisations.

Bolton (1971: 1), reporting on the first ever comprehensive study of the small business sector undertaken in the UK, suggested that the key characteristics of a 'small firm' are that it "has a relatively small share of the market", and that it is "managed by its owners or part-owners in a personalised way". None of these are useful determinants of scale for non-profit, publicly funded, arts organisations, as these are never owned by their managers and determining their market share would be a complicated if not an impossible task.

Bolton does, however, very usefully suggest that different definitions might be applied in different circumstances, since some industries are, for instance, more labour intensive than others, and one would expect some types of businesses to have greater turnovers than others. Hence a small manufacturer would have more employees than a small retailer, whereas turnover, rather than payroll, might be a more appropriate measure of scale in wholesaling, which is relatively non-labour-intensive.

Siropolis (1994), Matthews & Mayers (1969), and many others acknowledge that any of several yardsticks can be, and are, employed to define the scale of a business, including total assets, owners' equity, sales revenue, market share, and payroll. Siropolis (1994: 4) suggests that Number of Employees (payroll) is



the most useful since it (i) is inflation proof, (ii) is transparent and easy to understand, (iii) allows good comparison, and (iv) is easy to get from businesses.

The European Commission (EC) also uses Number of Employees as its measure and has issued its own set of definitions for Small and Medium Enterprises (Stokes 1995: 7-8):

- Micro-enterprises: from 0 – 9 employees
- Small enterprises: from 10 – 99 employees
- Medium enterprises: from 100 – 499 employees

But Curran *et al.* (1991) warn against adopting such over-general definitions, since the small firm sector comprises an incredibly mixed bag of enterprises that cover an extremely broad range of activities.

Stokes (1995: 8), however, whilst conceding that the EC definitions oversimplify matters, feels that they can be useful, since "they do reflect the changing management environment of an enterprise as it reaches stages in its growth; businesses with less than ten employees rarely need a middle-management structure...".

Generally speaking, the various definitions found in the literature are not easily applied to small arts organisations. The number of employees in an arts organisation, for example, will vary as a result of factors other than scale of operation – e.g. nature of organisation, art form, number of performers in a particular production, etc. Again, depending on the nature of the organisation and the art-form, a large proportion of employees

might be dancers, musicians, actors or others involved in the production of artistic work. It is perfectly possible for a 'small' organisation to mount a large production, and *vice versa*.

As with other sectors, it is often far easier to identify large organisations than to define small ones. Simply by visiting some of our best-known arts institutions, one would immediately get the feeling of walking into a 'large' company, with corridor after corridor of offices, large rehearsal or storage rooms and lots of people evident. Organisations of this kind might include:

- Royal Opera House Covent Garden      550 employees
- National Museums & Galleries of Wales      400 employees
- Welsh National Opera      240 employees
- BBC National Orchestra of Wales      102 employees
- Theatr Clwyd      60 employees

However, were the EC definition to be applied to this short list, only Covent Garden would be considered larger than a Medium Enterprise. The list also illustrates another difficulty encountered: even within the arts sector, certain types of organisations would be expected to be more labour-intensive than others, with producers in the performing arts, for example, employing more people than their presenters. It is also known that certain arts disciplines have higher production costs than others: the cost of mounting an opera is clearly greater than that of publishing a volume of poetry. So, payroll and turnover, then, are not very appropriate indicators of scale in the arts sector.

In seeking to find a suitable yardstick for arts organisations in this study, consideration was given to using the capacity of venues

as a determinant for presenters. One could think of theatres with capacities of 300 seats or less as being 'small', and, by extension, the performing companies that appear in them as being small also. The companies that perform in larger venues could be thought of as 'Medium' or 'Large'. But this is not workable in practice. For instance, large organisations such as the Welsh National Opera perform one night in large theatres and the next in much smaller village halls. And such a yardstick simply wouldn't apply at all to arts galleries or publishers. Another approach is needed.

Stokes's assertion, quoted above, that organisations with fewer than ten employees are unlikely to require middle management, offers a possible solution. It has been suggested above that one of the critical elements in an organisation's ability to handle the workload demands of an appraisal is its administrative capacity. By extending Stokes's assertion, it could be argued that if the operation of an organisation is of a sufficiently large scale that its senior management can delegate certain responsibilities, decision-making and administrative duties to a tier of middle-management, then that organisation ceases to be 'small'.

Conversely, organisations without a middle-management structure, although the numbers of their employees and budgets may vary depending on the nature of their work, are likely to operate under the leadership of one director, or as a co-operative team, or as an ensemble or within some other form of 'flat' hierarchy and their administrative capacity will, consequently, reflect such an uncomplicated structure.

Consequently, for the purposes of this study, a 'small arts organisation' is defined as one that is of such a scale of operation that it does not require a layer of middle-management to conduct its affairs, and it must be recognised that its administrative capacity will be limited.

### **Producers & presenters**

Overriding these art-form and scale characteristics is the need to distinguish between the producers of art and those organisations which present art. We have theatres that present the work of drama and dance companies before the public, art galleries that exhibit the work of painters and sculptors, presses that publish the work of poets and authors. There are also arts centres that present a range of art-forms and, further, community arts organisations which generally work in more than one discipline and can, at any given time, be either producers or presenters of art, and, at other times, function as both at the same time. And what of publishers? They neither produce nor present. The creation of the work is carried out by the author and the volume is then sold to the public by booksellers.

The purpose here has been to demonstrate the wide range that exists among the organisations funded by the arts councils and the significant differences between them. These differences belie the notion, frequently articulated in government and media circles, that there is such a thing as a cultural industry. Clearly, if the arts can be considered in terms of *industry* at all, they must be considered in terms of many diverse industries, and management practice will need to take cognisance of this diversity. Similarly, the distinctive characteristics of these types of organisations suggest that any model adopted for the

evaluation of arts organisations will also need to recognise the range of differences that exist within the arts world and will need to be sufficiently flexible so as to cope with a wide variety of organisational types.

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## CHAPTER 3

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### POWER & EVALUATION: THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The importance of evaluation in the arts funding system was indicated earlier: to the arts organisation, the outcomes of an appraisal are perceived to have a bearing on the level of grant-in-aid it will receive from the funding body; and, to the funding body, appraisal not only enables it to claim a commitment to public accountability but is central to the relationship between the arts councils and its funded organisations (it's so-called 'clients'). It has been argued that the current nature of this relationship, and appraisal in particular, is a manifestation of the arts councils' exercise of a controlling power over its clients (Pick 1988; Shade 1999).

The review of literature undertaken for this study, therefore, will begin by examining the notion of power relationships, drawing on the writings of Michel Foucault, in particular, and also on a study of the development of theatre practice in Wales, conducted recently by Ruth Shade.

The review will also encompass selected literature on the development of evaluation practice. Models of evaluation and analysis in public and private sector business will be looked at briefly, but the review will concentrate largely on developments in the field of education, much of which has subsequently

informed the development of evaluation in other domains. Key authors in this aspect of the study are Yvonna Lincoln and Egon Guba, Elliot Eisner, and Michael Scriven.

And finally, relevant literature on arts evaluation itself will be reviewed, focusing on the work carried out in recent years by François Matarasso.

## **POWER**

The concept of power in society is a complex one that has been the topic of a great many disputes by philosophers, sociologists and others. It is considered to be at the heart of the subject of social stratification. Social classes were, of course, at the hub of Marxist thinking, which asserts that political authority and power is dependant on the possession of economic control. Hence the class struggle, between the bourgeoisie and the workers in a modern capitalist society, forms the basis of Marxist analysis.

The founder of modern sociology, Max Weber, however, whilst acknowledging that the development of social classes could be a consequence of the differential distribution of economic resources, maintained that this was not the only factor in the distribution of power. He argued that, in a modern society, which is characterised by the maturity of reason (as exemplified by advances in scientific knowledge), power is fundamentally a social relationship and he therefore placed great importance on the concept of status within society.

Within this context, Weber (1978) defined power, in broad terms, as the probability of individuals or groups asserting their will even when opposed by others. In Weber's modern political sociology,

few groups base their power on force or violence (as was the case, for instance, in the middle ages) but, instead, seek to make their power legitimate through the adoption of 'enlightened' practices. One by-product of this, argued Weber, and an exemplification of political control, was the evolution of a rational but depersonalised system of bureaucracy (McHoul & Grace 1993), and extolled "its purely technical superiority over any other form of organisation" (Weber 1964).

Extending both the Marxian and the Weberian conceptions, Michel Foucault asserts that modern society is characterised, above all, by new 'mechanisms' of power. These are new means of consolidating power and of ensuring the efficient management and administration of society and people's lives. In medieval times power was exercised in an absolute manner largely through sovereign authority employing either the threat or actual use of violence. In modern society, power is organised quite differently:

*"In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, we have the production of an important phenomenon, the emergence, or rather the invention, of a new mechanism of power possessed of highly specific procedural techniques, completely novel instruments, quite different apparatuses, and which is also, I believe, absolutely incompatible with the relations of sovereignty. ...It is a type of power which is constantly exercised by means of surveillance rather than in a discontinuous manner by means of a system of levies or obligations distributed over time."*

(Foucault 1980: 104)



The term used by Foucault (1977) for this kind of power is 'disciplinary power' and can be exercised by a great number of instruments and techniques. Although most obviously used in penal establishments such as prisons, such devices can be used by any institution, including schools, hospitals, military centres, psychiatric institutions, administrative apparatuses, bureaucratic agencies, and police forces (McHoul & Grace 1993: 66).

As a metaphor for disciplinary power, Foucault uses Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon, a conceptual architectural structure devised by him in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century as part of a proposed programme of penal reform. The Panopticon was an inspection house comprised of a circular, ring-shaped structure of open cells, built around an observation tower, allowing the continuous surveillance of all prisoners. This simple, clean design was intended by Bentham as a much more economic and efficient alternative to the brutal, dungeon-like prisons of old. These depended on violence, force and cruelty to impose discipline, whereas the Panopticon, because inmates are always conscious of being visible, imposes a form of internal discipline on the observed prisoner, the consequence of which is that it "trains, individualizes, regiments, makes docile and obedient subjects" (Macdonell 1986: 102).

Panoptic power functions through the application of "structures and hierarchies", "inspections, exercises" and "methods of training and conditioning" (Foucault 1980: 155) and individual prisoners become entangled in an impersonal power relationship, the consequence of which is that the observed

subjects discipline themselves:

*'Hence the major effect of the Panopticon: to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power. So to arrange things that the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its actions; that the perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise unnecessary; that this architectural apparatus should be a machine for creating and sustaining a power relation independent of the person who exercises it; in short, that the inmates should be caught up in a power situation of which they are themselves the bearers.'*

(Foucault 1977: 201)

Ruth Shade (1999) offers a persuasive argument for employing Foucault's concept of disciplinary power (and its exemplary mechanism, the Panopticon) to understand the import of the arts councils' use of rules, classification, training and regulation to create a climate of docility and self-discipline. Foucault himself opens the door to the development of her case:

*"Whenever one is dealing with a multiplicity of individuals on whom a task or a particular form of behaviour must be imposed, the panoptic schema may be used."*

(Foucault 1977: 205)

And in her analysis, Shade refers to three important features of the Panopticon that lend themselves to ready comparison with the workings of the arts councils: the creation of "an archive of rules", the formulation of a range of disciplinary procedures

('panopticism'), and systems of testing and inspecting the consequences of panopticism through 'micro-analysis' (Shade 1999: 60).

When we examine arts councils' functioning, particularly in respect of their relationship with their clients, we can see that it is characterised by procedures that reflect Shade's analysis. Arts councils employ systems of categorisation for almost all aspects of their operations (clients, schemes, art forms, scale of organisations, amateur/ professional, capital grants/ arts grants, social policy, and so forth) and such strict categorisation is accompanied by sets of regulations and procedures ('archive of rules') which must be adhered to and which act to 'discipline' the clients, to place them into a certain category. This often forces them into adopting ways of working in which they are not comfortable, to become different kinds of organisations than those they were originally intended to be.

Arts organisations that were forced at one time, for instance, to constitute themselves as educational entities, were subsequently obliged to change tack and to think of themselves as businesses – converting from an educative, research and development ethic to one of income generation. More recently a new focus has been imposed upon them – that of social inclusion – so that they now have to see themselves as agents for economic development and urban (or rural) regeneration. "The trouble", said one artist recently, "is that it is the same group of people, who initially thought of themselves as educationalists, or researchers, now having to take on board veneers of business

practice which, actually, we have no proof are still going to be 'in place' three years down the line." (Theatre Director, 23<sup>rd</sup> October 1999, pers. comm.)

That this is a means of exercising 'disciplinary power' (panopticism), and not simply the inadvertent by-product of 'clear policy' or 'sound strategic thinking', is evident by the fact that these categories and 'rules' change at fairly regular intervals. Artists view this periodic shifting of the goal posts as a classic technique for imposing disciplinary power. Inability to conform, they believe, can ultimately result in the loss of livelihood through being excluded from the funder's 'client base' and thus suffering a loss of grant-aid.

Underpinning this regimen are the 'inspection exercises' - the appraisal procedures, the collection of *statistical performance* indicators and the various forms of on-going monitoring - that enable the arts councils to carry out the 'micro analysis' of its clients.

### **Resistance to Power**

Earlier, it was noted that Max Weber (1978) broadly defined power as the probability of individuals or groups asserting their will even *when opposed by others* (my italics). Foucault, however, goes further, by stating unequivocally that, "Where there is power, there is resistance" (Foucault 1978: 95). He further asserts that where there is no resistance, the relationship cannot be viewed as a power relationship: "Their [power relationships'] existence depends on a multiplicity of points of resistance" (Ibid: 95).

As stated earlier, in Foucault's conception, Panoptic power instils in the subject a form of 'internal discipline', as a consequence of that power being ubiquitous (Danaher *et al.* 2000: 80). This, in turn, ensures that, as well as power being 'internal', the subject is also "always 'inside' power, there is no escaping it" (Foucault 1978: 95). This ensures that resistance to power "is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power" (Ibid: 95).

The 'multiplicity of points of resistance' can take various forms, depending on the complexity of circumstances that surround the relationship. "These play the role of adversary, target, support or handle in power relations. These points of resistance are present everywhere in the power network" (Ibid: 95). Hence, not only is it impossible to pinpoint the location of the 'ubiquitous' power, but the same pertains in the case of the resistance to the power. "Hence there is no single locus of great Refusal, no soul of revolt, source of all rebellions, or pure law of the revolutionary" (Ibid: 96). Consequently, resistance is at its most effective when it is directed at the 'technique' of power, rather than at power in general (McHoul & Grace 1993: 86), and much as power is always accompanied by resistance, "a strategic manoeuvre must be countered by an opposing manoeuvre, a set of tactics must be consciously invented in opposition to the setting in place of another" (Ibid: 84).

As we shall see later, those arts organisations interviewed for this study were highly critical of the arts councils' appraisal system (one of the techniques of the ACs' power) and sought various ways to effect their resistance to it. Some objected formally, and periodically sought to convince the arts councils of the appraisal system's deficiencies. Others sought ways to circumvent many

of the demands of the process, and others paid lip service to it by appearing to the funders to participate seriously in the system, whilst, in reality paying little heed to it, seeing it merely as a nuisance that disrupted their work but that they appeared to tolerate in order to maintain the relationship with their funders. This resistance was not a co-ordinated campaign, rather different organisations resisted different elements of the process as they affected their own circumstances: "There is a plurality of resistances, each of them a special case" (Foucault 1978: 96).

Scott (1990) concludes that within a power relationship, both parties are constrained in their behaviour. The behaviour of both the powerful and the powerless, in the presence of each other, maintains the dominant/ deferential language and rituals of the master and slave that the encounter demands. Their behaviour, when not in each others' presence, however, is quite different. When in the company of peers, the less powerful person will mock the powerful party, by, for example, relating stories that seek to place the powerful in a humiliating light: "Thus slaves and serfs ordinarily dare not contest the terms of their subordination openly. Behind the scenes, though, they are likely to create and defend a social space in which offstage dissent to the official transcript of power relations may be voiced" (Scott 1990: xi).

The powerful, on the other hand, when in the presence of colleagues, will seek to overplay the difficulty encountered in controlling the powerless and the efforts required in maintaining the steely exterior demanded by their role. This latter phenomenon is one that I have frequently observed during my previous employment as an arts council officer, and the former was clearly evident in the observations and interviews

conducted for this study. In meetings with arts council officials, the demeanour of clients was one of cordial and 'friendly' deference, yet in subsequent interviews, the artists were not only critical of the arts council and its appraisal procedures but, occasionally, of the officers themselves, even calling into question their competence.

"How do we study power relations," asks Scott "when the powerless are often obliged to adopt a strategic pose in the presence of the powerful and when the powerful may have an interest in overdramatizing their reputation and mastery?" (Scott 1990: xii). He suggests that both parties develop, what he calls a 'hidden transcript', and that when considering power relationships, one must take into account this 'hidden transcript' as well as the public performance.

The constant presence of resistance in the face of power, the multiplicity of points of resistance and the lack of a 'locus of great Refusal', the tactical invention of one set of strategic manoeuvres to counter another, and the 'hidden transcripts' that characterise power relationships, suggest that the very complexity of power relationships would limit their effectiveness for the powerful. And, indeed, one of the important principles insisted upon by Foucault is that power never achieves what it sets out, or claims, to do" (Danaher *et al.* 2000: 77). In other words, "he [Foucault] sees power relations as largely unsuccessful, as not achieving the goal of total domination" (Mills 2003: 47).

This, too, is how many artists perceive the power relationship with their funders, particularly in respect of the appraisal process – the

inspection exercises. For, in their view, appraisals are unsuccessful in that they fail to touch upon that element of their work that they feel is of paramount importance – their art. The power of the arts council, therefore, as manifested through client appraisal, in failing to consider the totality of their operation, thus fails in the primary aim of appraisal – to determine whether or not clients are doing good work. And further, since client appraisal does not consider an organisation's artistic work, it is also largely unsuccessful in the *imposition* of the arts councils' power, in that it has no effect on its clients' art, which is, after all, their 'core competency'.

Foucault's concept of disciplinary power, with its exemplary mechanism, the Panopticon, and the assertion that in any power relationship there exists resistance to power, is, therefore, an appropriate theoretical framework within which to view the workings of the arts councils. When examined within this context, it can be argued that current appraisal methods implemented by the arts councils seek to reinforce their disciplinary power over their client arts organisations. Apart from any of their evaluative outcomes, the appraisal process is, therefore, a powerful component of the arts councils' relationships with the organisations they fund. Although appraisals may enable the arts councils to claim fulfilment of their duty of public accountability, they can also be seen in terms of formal, micro-analysis inspections, underpinning the archives of rules that perpetuate the system of panoptic disciplinary power which permeates all aspects of the arts councils' dealings with its clients, and, in turn, generates various manifestation of resistance to that power.



## EVALUATION

Given the importance of evaluation in the relationship between arts organisations and the arts councils, it is surprising, therefore, that, apart from a few policy documents and guidelines on procedure, very little indeed has been written on the evaluation of arts organisations by their funders. A great deal, of course, has been written on the topic of aesthetic judgement and the field of arts criticism is, itself, vast, with a long tradition and history. Arts funding bodies, too, generate countless documents that report on the evaluation of arts organisations, but literature examining the processes and procedures employed by arts funding bodies is very limited indeed.

The largest body of literature in the field of evaluation originates in the United States. Weiss suggests, however, that the first enquiry that was evaluative in nature can be attributed to a French statistician, A. M. Guerry, in an 1833 study that sought to demonstrate that education did not reduce crime (Weiss 1998: 11). But in the US, the practice of what might be termed modern professional evaluation can be traced back to the turn of last century and the educational work of Joseph Rice, who, in his report 'The Futility of the Spelling Grind' (Rice 1897) sought to demonstrate that over-emphasis on the basics, such as spelling, was not justified educationally and if less time were to be spent in the classroom on such activity, then more time could be devoted to more edifying areas, such as art and music.

Both these pioneering studies were concerned with the field of education, and educational evaluation continued to be the driving force behind the development of evaluation practice in the US in the first half of the twentieth century. Subsequently, a

great deal has been published, both in books and in a broad array of professional journals representing a range of specialized interests within the evaluation field. Much of what is now regarded as groundbreaking work in the field, by such influential figures as Lee J. Cronbach, Michael Scriven, Robert Stake, Michael Q. Patton, Elliot Eisner, Yvonna Lincoln and Egon Guba, focuses primarily on evaluation in education – student evaluation, institution evaluation, curriculum evaluation and programme evaluation. But the theoretical and practical work undertaken in the education field also informed evaluation practice in a range of other domains, including government programmes in such areas as defence, economic development, health, social services, and environment.

It's interesting to note that even though models or processes for arts evaluation are hardly mentioned, some theorists, notably the eminent Stanford professor, Elliot Eisner (1975; 1976; 1985; 1991), advocate the adoption of practices from the field of arts criticism to enrich evaluation practice. Since the subjects of education evaluation are complex and multi-faceted, he encourages his evaluation team members to adopt the rich descriptive narrative style of literary and theatrical critics when writing their reports, thus incorporating, he asserts, 'the art of perception that makes the appreciation of such complexity possible' (Eisner 1975: 1).

Eisner's statement, together with the absence of literature on arts organisation evaluation, might lead one to conclude that there is no call for a systematic approach to evaluating the arts, that it is far too complex a field to be handled by mainstream evaluation models and that it might be best, after all, to leave such an unfathomable and difficult area to 'the art of perception' of the

specialist arts critics. But arts critics do not regularly view the work of all funded organisations (particularly those that operate outside the main conurbations) and there already exists a system whereby these organisations do get evaluated by their funding bodies. Thus it is incumbent upon this study not only to examine the system currently in use by the arts funding bodies but also to see if lessons can be learned from practice in other domains.

### **Evaluation in business organisations**

There are, today, many different approaches employed, particularly in the world of business, to assess the performance of organisations. Many of these, however, are used to analyse 'business problems' or to analyse such factors as market strength, market penetration, strategic direction, organisational efficiency and the like. Two popular business analytical models of recent years are *Soft Systems Analysis* and *The Balanced Scorecard* and it is perhaps worth pausing briefly to look at these two models as examples.

Soft Systems Analysis (SSA) is used in business for, "taking purposeful action to change real situations constructively" (Checkland and Scholes 1995: 5), and this will involve shifting, "to the world of management thinking" (Ibid: 15). SSA is also used to judge whether or not the transformation of input into output has been successful or unsuccessful in terms of the three 'E's': Efficacy (does the means work?), Efficiency (the amount of output divided by the amount of resources used), and Effectiveness (is it meeting the longer term aim?) (Forbes and Checkland 1987). Although the 'three E's' in themselves are as relevant to arts organisations as to any other company, both the language of SSA and its stated aim of seeking to transform them

into management thinkers, might make artists uncomfortable with the SSA approach.

The Balanced Scorecard is now widely used in commercial business and, "provides management with the instrumentation they need to navigate future competitive success" (Kaplan and Norton 1996: 2). Further, "The goal of the Balanced Scorecard project" is that "the measurement framework in the Balanced Scorecard should be deployed to develop a new management system" (Ibid: 272).

An adaptation of the Balanced Scorecard is the 'community scorecard', through which "community groups can assess for themselves the extent to which progress has been made in achievement of quality of life outcomes in local areas" (Bovaird et al. 2003: 1047-1048). The community scorecard can also be used to assess, at local level, issues that relate to local governance (Ibid: 1048). Bovaird et al. state that the assessment of 'quality of life' matters (including "the arts and other leisure pursuits") is best conducted by the stakeholders themselves, and that this will partly involve subjective and qualitative measurement and could encompass several varied dimensions. They submit that the community scorecard enables this form of assessment (Ibid: 1048). Could the community scorecard, then, be further adapted to evaluate the work of arts organisations?

The purpose of the community scorecard, as advocated by Bovaird et al., suggests that it is better suited to the assessment of such matters as local authority service delivery than it would be to the evaluation of an individual arts organisation's work. But in a situation where a local authority funds a local arts organisation

to deliver a particular artistic service for a local area, then delivery of that particular service could, indeed, fall within the purview of any 'scorecard' assessment of the local authority's services. Even though the community scorecard acknowledges the importance of stakeholders and of their subjective and qualitative views – aspects which artists also are likely to consider to be important – it is less likely that they would feel comfortable with a system which would seek to 'score' or measure their work, and which would, in essence, tend to view them in terms of how they delivered services.

There are an array of other popular evaluation models used in the commercial business world – Porter's (1985) Value Chain Analysis, Competitive Forces Analysis (Porter 1980), Boston Consulting Group's Product Portfolio Matrix, Cultural Web Analysis (Johnson & Scholes 1993) are among the most well known, but at a fundamental level – and this was expressed in interviews with artists, as we shall see later – the central goals of commercial business are essentially not those of artistic endeavour. The analytical and evaluation models designed to improve or change business management systems are generally incompatible with the aims and aspirations of artistic organisations. Artists are not primarily concerned with notions of competitive success, market share or developing management systems. Their main energies and efforts are devoted to developing their creative and artistic concepts.

Madaus *et al* (1983: 36) contend that evaluators may encounter considerable difficulties if the agenda of the investigation being undertaken differs from those of the client or audience. In terms of arts organisation evaluation, then, the method of evaluation,

and the agenda of the evaluation, will need to be compatible with the perceptions the client have of their organisation's aims.

One approach to evaluation that is now gaining ground in the world of commerce and in the non-profit world is that of Social Auditing (sometimes referred to as 'social and ethical accounting, auditing and reporting'). Aware of the inadequacies of current arts evaluation practice, arts funding bodies, particularly the Arts Council of England (ACE), have begun to look at whether the appraisal process can be improved by use of this method, and the Arts Council of England, in 1998, commissioned a pilot Social Audit of one of its larger clients. This pilot will be discussed later in Chapter 5 but, at this point, the Social Audit method itself will be considered.

Social Auditing regards an organisation within a broader social and economic perspective than the traditional, financially-based audit. It seeks to assess "the social impact of an organisation, relative to its own aims and those of its stakeholders" (Visser 1998). It reaches beyond the organisation itself to examine its social and economic impact upon its stakeholders – that is, those who affect the conduct of the organisation and those who are, in turn, affected by its operations – including attention to many variables which may not be amenable to quantification or measurement in statistical and monetary terms (Geddes 1992).

Social Auditing is gaining momentum, even amongst businesses that are conducted for profit. Although the first organisations to embrace Social Auditing tended to be non-profit organisations with explicit social objectives such as Traidcraft and Shared Earth

(Pearce *et al.* 1998) and private sector businesses with stated social agendas such as the Body Shop and Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream (Johnston 1996), more recently some of the world's largest corporations have issued Social Audit accounts alongside their financial accounts. These include Royal Dutch Shell (Corzine 1997) and British Telecom (Raynard 1997).

The increasing popularity and importance of Social Auditing are exemplified by the fact that major accounting firms, such as KPMG, are now offering Social Auditing services to their clients (Zadek 1997). It has been said that Social Auditing offers organisations a way of reporting which discloses more than mere financial viability and which reflects the organisation's own objectives (Pearce *et al.* 1998: 3) and a Social Audit is, typically, submitted alongside the organisation's financial accounts. It, therefore, does not so much replace the financial accounts as present a more complete picture of the organisation's effectiveness in meeting its objectives and satisfying its stakeholders.

Since Social Auditing, then, seeks to determine whether an organisation succeeds in satisfying its various stakeholders, and since no two organisations will have the same structure, objectives, stakeholders or environment, the exact parameters of a Social Audit will be determined by a responsive process and tend to differ from organisation to organisation. Consequently, the key initial stages in the process of Social Audit entail, firstly, an identification of an organisation's stakeholders.

Secondly, consultations with the identified stakeholders are used to establish their "claims, concerns and issues" (Guba & Lincoln

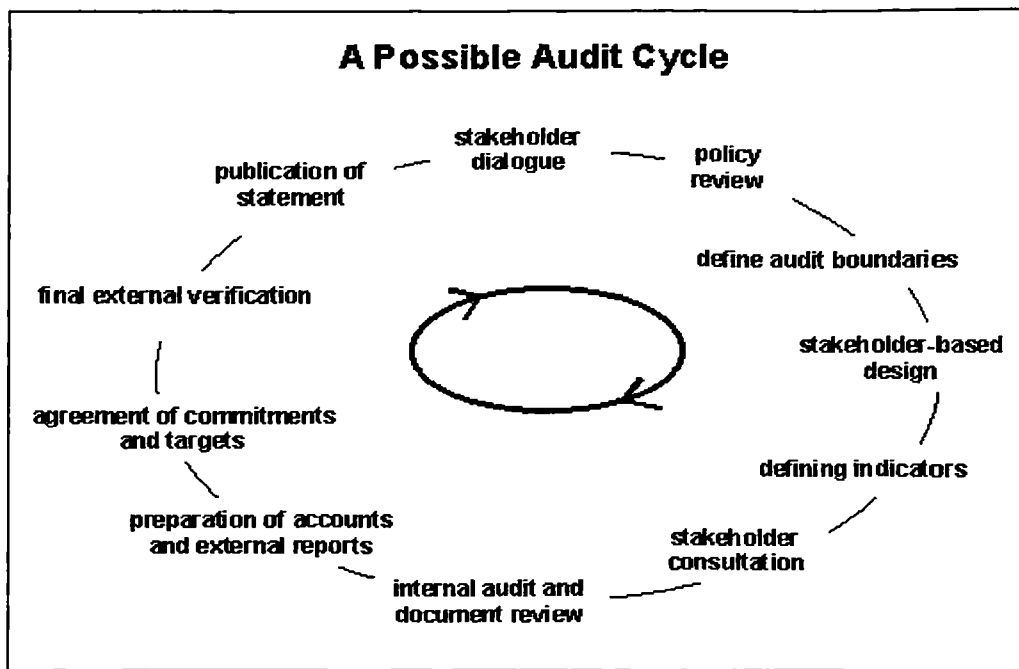
1989: 42) which are then taken into account when drawing up a full list of the organisation's objectives.

Following from this, the process then tries to determine, again in conjunction with those stakeholders, the indicators by which the organisation should be measured (see examples in Appendix 1). This so-called 'scoping' exercise can be a lengthy and complicated process in itself, as can be seen from the examples in the appendix, which are the results of scoping for the Arts Council of England's pilot Social Audit.

This sets the stage for the audit-proper which involves such elements as further stakeholder consultation (focus group meetings, interviews and questionnaires), internal and external document review, data analysis, preparation of social accounts, writing of reports, external verification, and then publication. A possible audit cycle is shown in Figure 1 below.

The stakeholder-focused approach of the Social Audit suggests that, since it would take into account the perspectives of the evaluand – the arts organisation – it might be more compatible with the arts world than the business evaluation models mentioned earlier and that adopting an SA approach to develop a system of 'Arts Audit' could offer several benefits to arts organisations. It could, for example, enable evaluation of those aspects of an organisation's performance that are not amenable to quantitative measurement through a process of 'arts book-keeping' and 'arts accounting' which, like financial book-keeping and accounting, would be an on-going activity conducted by the organisation itself.





(Source: New Economic Foundation © 1998)

Figure 1: A Possible Social Audit Cycle

This, it is claimed, (in various personal communications from SA practitioners) would ensure that both the artistic and financial performance of an organisation are taken into account during the process of evaluation. And, like financial accounts, a Social Audit can be made subject to verification by one or more persons with no vested interest, and would be subject to disclosure.

### **The development of evaluation practice during the 20<sup>th</sup> century**

In looking at evaluation models in other areas of practice, the field of education seems a logical place to start since, essentially, that is where the development of evaluation practice and thinking itself began in earnest.

There are also a sufficient number of broad similarities between the world of education and that of the arts to make education evaluation a helpful starting point in reviewing literature. Among these are the belief that both education and the arts are edifying forces for the good of both the individual and society. Eisner himself (1976: 139) likens education to art: "Teaching is an activity that requires artistry; schooling itself is a cultural artefact; and education is a process whose features may differ from individual to individual, context to context" and Matarasso (2002: 3) states directly, "Evaluating arts activity has much in common with evaluating teaching."

Although some aspects of educational and arts programmes are not difficult to quantify, many are not only very difficult, but often impossible to do; the 'product' of an educational programme, to paraphrase Drucker (1990: ix) is not a manufactured article but a *changed human being* and the same can be said for an arts experience; many of the essential consequences of the arts and of education are intangible or difficult to pin down; and there is a high degree of subjectivity in ascertaining the outcomes of both education and the arts.

Bearing in mind, also, that the theories and practices of education evaluation have been used (or adapted for use) in other domains, education evaluation literature might offer valuable insights into the possibilities for arts organisation evaluation.

Evaluation practice in the United States, developed initially in the field of education, stems largely from the circumstances surrounding the development of governance in the US.

Traditionally, and particularly prior to the early twentieth century, government spending in the US was confined most notably to education, civil infrastructure and defence. It was only in the second quarter of the twentieth century that government became more seriously involved in areas such as health and social programmes. There was, of course, as in other countries, a long tradition in schools of testing schoolchildren in their mastery of 'facts' that they had been taught in school courses and Joseph Rice, in his research (Rice 1897), depended on such test scores for his data.

Madaus *et al* (1983) trace the history of evaluation in chronological order, dividing the various stages of development, as they see them, into ages. Hence the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which saw, in Victorian Britain, concerted efforts at reform in the fields of education and public health, they call 'The Age of Reform' and was typified by an evaluation practice that was "informal and impressionistic in nature" (Madaus *et al*. 1983: 4).

The years 1900-30 – a period in which scientific management was not only a powerful force in industry but had begun to gain influence in educational circles – they call 'The Age of Efficiency and Testing' (Madaus *et al*. 1983: 6). Great emphasis was placed on systemisation, standardisation and efficiency and this was reflected in the evaluation procedures of the time, which were scientific in method and based on quantitative testing that gathered normative data which enabled direct comparison of one programme, one school, one system with another.

'The Tylerian Age' (1930-45) was dominated by the concepts of Ralph W. Tyler, who saw evaluation not as the comparison of one

subject with another but as the comparison of a subject's intended outcomes with its actual outcomes (Madaus *et al.* 1983: 9) and was followed by what the authors term 'The Age of Innocence (1946-57)', a period of unprecedented wealth and optimism in the United States, during which resources were plentiful and there was very little call for evaluation.

At that time, many educational evaluators were also finding it difficult to marry many of the requirements of scientific experimental design to the educational setting. They found that the *sine qua non* assumptions of the scientific paradigm – constant treatment, uncontaminated environment, stable study samples, single variables, etc – were nigh impossible to guarantee within a school context. Since the spirit of the time required all serious evaluations to adopt scientific method, these problems were, at the time, simply accepted as being insurmountable (Madaus *et al.* 1983: 11).

However, the comparative evaluation inertia of the 'Age of Innocence', and the difficulties posed by the prevailing influence of scientific experimental design soon led to a call for educational evaluation to be re-conceptualised and for these difficulties to be addressed. The call was for it to broaden its role from simply that of determining winners and losers to something that could be of use to educationalists in improving and developing their programmes. Several new approaches were offered that were radically different to previous thinking in the field. Lee Cronbach, in the early 1960s, for example, was the first to suggest that item reporting of test scores would be far more useful to teachers than aggregate total scores (Madaus *et al.* 1983: 12). Michael Scriven (1967), Robert Stake (1967), and

Daniel Stufflebeam *et al.* (1971), and others all proposed evaluation models that extended the parameters of evaluation by advocating the need to engage in more than the mere *post hoc* scrutiny of test results and to examine the processes of implementation and delivery, the goals and the outcomes of programmes. They asserted that evaluators should come to judgements as to the merit and worth of that which they evaluated. This Madaus *et al* (1983: 12) term 'The Age of Expansion, 1958-1972'.

By the early 1970s, following the various initiatives of the previous 'Age', the field of evaluation had become fragmented and unfocused: "Evaluators faced an identity crisis. They were not sure whether they should try to be researchers, testers, administrators, teachers or philosophers. It was unclear what special qualifications, if any, they should possess" (Madaus *et al.* 1983: 15). Indeed, many of those conducting evaluations at the time were untrained individuals or research methodologists trying their hand at programme evaluation (Guba 1966). But out of this free-for-all emerged some key developments, including such concepts as goal-free evaluation (Scriven 1973), responsive evaluation (Stake 1975), the Connoisseurship Model (Eisner 1975; 1976; 1985; 1991), and naturalistic evaluation (Guba & Lincoln 1981). This period, which saw great strides in both the theoretical and practical aspects of evaluation, Madaus *et al* (1983: 15) call 'The Age of Professionalisation, 1973- 83' and can be thought of as a time that saw the coming of age of modern educational evaluation.

**Evaluation: the key issues**

This chronological outline of Madaus *et al*'s 'ages' of evaluation development is useful to gain a historical perspective but another overview of the key developments in evaluation practice in the US in the latter part of the nineteenth and in the twentieth century is offered by Guba and Lincoln (1981; 1989) and Lincoln and Guba (1985) who look at the subject from a slightly different angle by concentrating on the human and societal aspects that influenced evaluation thinking. They see the development of educational evaluation less as a linear, chronological process, and more as a steady, organic phenomenon. They view this progress as a series of 'generations'. Each generation is seen by them as offering new insights into evaluation concepts and practice and, consequently, the key issues identified and addressed by each generation provide a useful framework within which arts evaluation may subsequently be examined.

The 'First Generation' of evaluation practice (Guba & Lincoln 1981), from Rice's time until the 1930s, was characterised by six features, the first of which was an extensive reliance on measurement. Indeed, over that period, the terms 'measurement' and 'evaluation' were virtually interchangeable. A second feature was that evaluation was inextricably linked to the scientific research paradigm, which had achieved wide recognition following the work of such influential figures as Darwin. Third, evaluation during this period was typified by a strong focus on individual differences. Consequently, the fourth feature was that evaluations concentrated on measuring the performances of individuals and not of programmes or curricula.

Measures by themselves, it soon became apparent, were of little use unless there was some standard by which they could be interpreted, and the fifth characteristic was that evaluation rapidly began to be oriented towards standardised measures that were norm referenced. The sixth trait echoed the prevailing management phenomenon of the time, that of scientific management. This was the period that saw the advent of Henry Ford's conveyor-belt manufacturing innovations, of time and motion studies and of the famous Hawthorn experiments. In keeping with this ethos, education evaluation acquired not only the jargon but also the spirit of scientific management. Eisner later commented on the negative and restrictive nature of this mind-set:

*"Intimation, metaphor, analogy, and poetic insight have little place in such a view. For example, instead of talking about children, we are urged to talk about subjects. Instead of talking about teaching, we must talk about treatments. Instead of talking about aims and aspirations, we must talk about dependent variables, performance objectives or competencies."*

(Eisner 1976: 138)

With senior school officials now becoming known as 'superintendents', and students referred to as 'raw material' to be 'processed' (Guba & Lincoln 1989: 25), evaluation was, essentially, an exercise in comparing the measurement statistics of one school or programme against another, irrespective of the

context or circumstances in which they operated<sup>1</sup>.

The 1930s in America had witnessed an unprecedented growth in the numbers enrolling in secondary schools with the intention of continuing to college level. Schools at the time were ill equipped to accommodate both the numbers and the diversity of these students and, in an attempt to address this shortcoming, new curricula – more responsive to the needs of the changing schools' population – were being developed in some schools. To determine whether or not the new approach was successful in tackling this problem, an Eight Year Study, headed by Ralph Tyler, was launched in 1933, charting the progress of a cohort of students through four years of secondary school and four years of college (Guba & Lincoln 1989: 27; Weiss 1998: 11).

Tyler's study was essentially to determine whether these newer, untraditional curricula were working or not and to refine, revise and develop them and to this end he organised his evaluation around their stated objectives (Guba & Lincoln 1989: 27). He measured performance against objectives but he also gave descriptions of activities, aspects of the programmes, their strengths and weaknesses, and the evaluation activities of the study. Although still adhering to the then dominant scientific tradition, Tyler insisted that measurement was but one tool among several in the conduct of evaluation. Tyler's foremost role in the development of education evaluation was to assert that

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<sup>1</sup> As early as 1938, the celebrated Welsh author, Saunders Lewis, lamented the fact that, increasingly, education was being seen by those in power less for its cultural and educative value than for its vocational and economic utility: "...education ceases to be an instrument of culture and is converted into a preparation for the economic war. A school is judged, as a factory is judged, by its commercial usefulness" (*my translation*). ("... paid addysg â bod yn offeryn diwylliant a throir hi'n baratoad i'r rhyfel economaidd. Bernir ysgol, megis ffatri, wrth ei defnyddioldeb masnachol" (Lewis, S. 1938).



evaluation had to be conducted in respect of identified programme objectives and that the evaluators, whilst still retaining their scientific rationale, should also assume the role of describers. Tyler achieved widespread recognition after publication of the Eight Year Study report – he later became recognised as the 'Father of Evaluation' (Joint Committee 1981) – and inspired the 'Second Generation' of evaluation (Guba & Lincoln 1989: 28), which was characterised by the description of activity based upon stated objectives.

As important as Tyler's methods were in advancing the development of modern evaluation practice, they also had serious failings. First of all, they led to no clear judgement of merit or worth (Guba & Lincoln 1981: 6), that is, no guidance was offered regarding how the data should be interpreted for such purposes. And secondly, the model did not include a procedure for evaluating the objectives themselves. Thirdly, the model did not provide a means of deriving standards by which any gap between objectives and performance could be measured. Guba and Lincoln (1981: 7) further point out that a model that insists on the *a priori* setting out of objectives is particularly unsuited to creative situations – such as curriculum development, technological innovation (and, one might add, the arts) – for this can lead to the premature closing off of emerging creative paths. Once objectives have been formally recorded, one becomes limited by them and it will be extremely difficult to disregard unhelpful objectives or to add more useful ones.

This emerged as a particular problem in the 1950s and 60s as the 'space race' (with the USSR) gathered momentum and evaluations were required of various US Government scientific

projects. Evaluators, following Tyler's model, insisted on establishing programme objectives at the outset. The project developers (practicing scientists and researchers) demurred, maintaining that objectives in their situation were irrelevant as they would inevitably limit their creativity (Guba & Lincoln 1989: 29). Furthermore, they saw no merit in an evaluation which would only deliver results when the project had been fully developed, when it was essentially too late to make a difference.

Adding his voice to the critics, Lee J. Cronbach (1963) challenged key aspects of Tyler's model and proposed changes that were to herald another step in the development of evaluation practice. He argued that, rather than testing programme performance against objectives, it would be far more useful to concentrate on the decisions involved in developing the programmes: Who makes the decisions? What kind of decisions do they have to make? What criteria do they employ in making those decisions? Consequently, and importantly, Cronbach declared that evaluation would be most useful in the development of programmes if it focused more on those programs' particular performance characteristics rather than on seeking to compare them with others.

In order to aid the improvement of programme development, Cronbach, echoing the concerns of the NASA scientists mentioned above, also highlighted the need to enable refinements and revisions to take place *during* the development process, "Evaluation used to improve the course while it is still fluid contributes more to improvement of education than

evaluation used to appraise a product already on the market" (Worthen & Sanders 1973).

A decade later, Cronbach (1985: 2) asserted that, "An evaluation of a particular program is only an episode in the continuing evolution of thought about a problem area," suggesting that an evaluation should not be considered as the final, definitive word on a given project, but, rather, a basis for discussion and reflection: "What is needed is information [from the evaluation] that supports negotiation rather than information calculated to point out the 'correct' decision" (Cronbach 1985: 4).

Another criticism levelled at Tyler's, by then widely accepted, *evaluation model*, was made by Robert Stake (1967) who pointed out that description – a crucial feature of Tyler's method – was not sufficient and called for *judgement* to be included as an essential element of evaluation. This appeal heralded, in Guba and Lincoln's terms (1989: 30), the third generation of evaluation and was soon followed by others in the evaluation profession. Scriven echoed the call for evaluators to render judgements (Scriven 1967) and made a clear distinction between evaluation and the plain assessment of goal achievement<sup>2</sup>. He further maintained that evaluation has to go beyond the question of whether or not the goals have been achieved and should determine whether the goals themselves were worth achieving. In practice, Scriven found that in many cases programmes delivered unintended achievements that

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<sup>2</sup> Twenty years later, Scriven criticised those who demonstrated a failure of nerve by shying away from declaring whether the subject of the evaluation was of value or not, terming this behaviour "valuephobia, the irrational fear of evaluation" (Scriven 1986: 116).

were as beneficial, and frequently more so, than those of originally intended objectives and often rendered the programmes successful, even when intended objectives had not been achieved (Guba & Lincoln 1981: 17). He began to question the need to distinguish between intended and unintended effects, preferring to focus instead on determining what were the effects of the programme, no matter if they were intended or not. Consequently, Scriven concluded that evaluation should be 'goal-free', being organised around effects rather than goals (as Tyler had advocated) or decisions (as Cronbach had asserted) and that these effects should be evaluated against a profile of needs.

Scriven's model, however, left several questions unanswered: it failed to indicate how, in practice, goal-free evaluation should be conducted. It contained no clear guidance on how to perform a needs assessment; it gave no indications of what effects to look for, nor how to identify them, suggesting that good evaluators would simply know them when they came across them; nor, despite asserting that evaluators should take on the role of making judgements, did Scriven tackle the important question of how judgemental standards should be determined (Guba & Lincoln 1981: 18).

Nevertheless, despite such practical deficiencies, Scriven's goal-free evaluation model had far-reaching influence that revolutionised evaluation thinking, demonstrating that evaluation could be conducted even in the absence of any knowledge of objectives and leading evaluators to look more closely at all the possible effects (intended and unintended) of the programmes under consideration (Guba & Lincoln 1981: 18).

Another of the 'judgmental' models to emerge from the 'third generation' – the 'Connoisseurship Model' – was put forward a few years later by Elliot Eisner (1975) and he has continued to promote it until the present day. The Connoisseurship Model is a radical departure from the conventional evaluation models in that great store is put in the "authoritative, learned eye of the evaluator" (Kushner 2000: 114). The evaluation is carried out by a specialist – a connoisseur –, someone who is "informed about the qualities" of the evaluand, who "is able to discriminate the subtleties" of the subject, who draws upon an experiential "memory against which the particulars of the present may be placed for purposes of comparison and contrast" and who is then able to cultivate "an awareness and understanding" of what has been experienced (Eisner 1976: 139-40). S/he has "the ability to make fine-grained discrimination among complex and subtle qualities" (Eisner 1991: 63) and "by virtue of his background, is able to 'appreciate' the characteristics and qualities of phenomena that he encounters to a better degree than is a less sophisticated observer" (Guba & Lincoln 1981: 19). The connoisseur, then, brings to the evaluative process an astuteness of perception that enables a broad appreciation of the subject under observation. Perceptions, according to Dewey (1934: 298), supply the material from which judgements are constructed.

Eisner likewise claims that the knowledge, experience, awareness and understanding of the connoisseur provide the basis for making informed judgements (Eisner 1976: 139-40). Later Eisner (1985: 360) stressed the importance of connoisseurship, since in it rests a significant onus of responsibility. In the field of education, for instance, "The procedures and

criteria used to evaluate students, teachers, and school administrators have profound effects on the content and form of schooling." This is not a task for generalists and amateurs.

The other leg on which the Connoisseurship Model stands is that of criticism. "If connoisseurship is the art of appreciation," said Eisner, "criticism is the art of disclosure" (Eisner 1976: 140). The role of the arts critic is to articulate those qualities of an artistic phenomenon that are difficult to nail down and describe, in a language that brings them to life so as to enable others, not possessing such a level of connoisseurship, to enter into the experience (Ibid: 140). This echoes an anecdote told about Berthold Brecht, "Somebody had criticised art as only being for connoisseurs and Brecht had said, "That's absolutely right, what we have to do is expand the number of connoisseurs" (Theatre Director, 23<sup>rd</sup> October 1999, pers. comm.). That is, as Eisner put it, to render a private experience in the form of public disclosure (Eisner 1976: 140). This is no easy task, of course, for as Eisner (1991: 86) later said, "One can be a great connoisseur without being a critic," and then added, "but one cannot be a critic of any kind without some level of connoisseurship."

So how is this achieved? "How is it that what is ineffable can be articulated? How do words express what words can never express?" (Eisner 1976: 140). Eisner (Ibid: 140) suggests that the task of the critic is to "adumbrate, suggest, connote, render" by the use of metaphor, analogy, suggestion and implication". The purpose is not to provide definitive accounts of truth or reality but, rather, to share one's connoisseurship, to develop astute perception in others, and to use this as the basis for informed critique (Kushner 2000: 114).

Eisner's approach sought to fill a void in educational evaluation. He saw that, even though educational practice was being subjected to critical techniques, there was no acknowledged field of educational criticism, as there was arts criticism. He urged the establishment of such a field (Eisner 1976: 140) and advocated borrowing and adapting the forms of expression that enabled art, theatre, music and literary critics to give rich and evocative portrayals of events and people (Eisner 1991: 89; Kushner 2000: 114). This was not so much an insistence that evaluators should simply embellish their reports with passages of rich description but a contention that the purpose of an evaluation should be to provide the reader with what Least Heat-Moon calls "a deep map" (Least Heat-Moon 1991).

Consequently, evaluators working for Eisner were required to adopt both the techniques and functions of arts critics. Not only were they required to accomplish the descriptive task of the critic but also to fulfill the critic's interpretive and evaluative role (Eisner 1991: 89; 1976: 143).

"The task of the critic", wrote Eisner (1991: 86), "is to perform a mysterious feat well: to transform the qualities of a painting, play, novel, poem, classroom or school, or act of teaching and learning into a public form that illuminates, interprets, and appraises the qualities that have been experienced." Since such qualities have no literal linguistic equivalent *per se*, he sees criticism, not as an act of mere translation but, essentially, as an act of reconstruction, in written form, of what the critic has experienced. And the critic must do so with perception – in other words the critic must make sense of it. Eisner goes as far as

to propose the techniques that his evaluator/critics should employ:

*"They must then create in written form a structure that will carry meanings forward through descriptive prose. Doing so requires artistry in the treatment of narrative language, and.... this achievement means shaping text, hearing its cadences, selecting just the right word or phrase, employing apt metaphor, and on rare occasions creating neologisms that do some epistemological work. The 'trick' in writing, often taken for granted, is to create in the public world a structure or form whose features re-present what is experienced in private. The sense of discovery and excitement that pervades a classroom is not simply a set of words; it is a set of qualities, including a sense of energy, that must somehow be made palpable through prose."*

(Eisner 1991: 89)

Another important skill of the critic is that of interpretation, what Eisner calls "accounting for" (description being "giving an account of") (Eisner 1991: 95). This will involve putting that which has been described into context and "illuminating the potential consequences of practices observed and providing reasons that account for what has been seen" (Eisner 1991: 95). This element, too, requires considerable knowledge of the field – connoisseurship.

And like Scriven and Stake, Eisner condemned evaluations that failed to arrive at any judgement of value: "To describe a student's work, or the processes of classroom life, without being able to determine if this work or these processes are miseducational, noneducational, or educational is to describe a



set of conditions without knowing if those conditions contribute to a state of educational health or illness" (Eisner 1991: 99-100). However, Eisner suggests that the most appropriate approach to evaluating, for example, a student, is not that which is "criterion referenced" or "norm referenced" but in a manner that he calls "personally referenced evaluation" (Eisner 1991: 102). This will involve, "comparison to the student's past and present performance, not to others or to a fixed criterion. ... The aim is not to mold (*sic*) a child to a fixed image or to turn out a product that meets a set of specifications: the model is not an industrial one. It is rather to gain a sense for the organic or biological direction of the student's work and make appraisals on the basis of what the work is trying to become" (Eisner 1991: 102). This approach, asserted Eisner, enables the evaluation to take into consideration the fact that the students are individuals whose circumstances, abilities and personalities are peculiar to themselves. Their uniqueness needs to be taken into consideration in the evaluation. Each student is capable of "productive unpredictability" which cannot be measured against standard norms. "Productive unpredictability – creative thinking – is not characterized by conformity to a predetermined standard" (Eisner 1991: 103).

In the Connoisseurship Model, then, data collection, analysis, interpretation and evaluation occur within the mind of the evaluator. In other words, the instrument of measurement is a human being (Guba & Lincoln 1981: 19) and Eisner's concept of evaluation does, indeed, rest on the presupposition that humanistic considerations are more important in the evaluative process than scientific concerns (Scriven 1991: 91-2). Moreover, Eisner (1976: 138-9) proposed his model whilst asserting that the methods of evaluation employed at the time were based upon

"largely unexamined assumptions that are basically scientific in their epistemology, technological in their application, and have consequences that are often limited..." and that these assumptions had several detrimental consequences.

Firstly, scientifically oriented inquiry will seek out "law-like generalizations" and has the effect of treating the uniqueness of a particular situation as an unwelcome disturbance in the pursuit of broad tendencies or overriding effects. The consequence of this is an oversimplification of the particular in a reductionist process that will often attempt to represent a complex phenomenon in the form of straightforward tables of scores. Quality thus becomes converted into quantity and is presented as a set of aggregated statistical data (Eisner 1976: 136-7).

Further, the scientific paradigm encourages a strong focus on "some future state", often to the disregard of coming to an understanding of the present. A preoccupation with objectives, Eisner claims, is to be concerned with things that are always out of reach, goals that we work towards, targets that we continually aim for. To place such great importance on the future leads us to neglect the significance of the present. "The present is sacrificed on the altar of tomorrow" (Eisner 1976: 137).

And a mindset that works to objectives whilst also elevating the importance of quantitative statistics inevitably leads to the utilisation of standardised tests as the predominant means of data collection (Eisner 1976: 138) and precisely because the tests are standard, the personal and the individual achievement – the instance of "productive idiosyncrasy" – is relegated to a position of in consequence.

Thus, Eisner asserted (1976: 146), it was becoming increasingly apparent that the scientific paradigm that had, for so long, dominated research and evaluation methodological thinking, was bounded by limitations which, "in the long run, exclude more from our understanding than they include". He advocated the adoption of a paradigm that was constructivist rather than positivist in nature, relied more on qualitative perception than on quantitative data and placed greater store in humanistic considerations than in scientific concerns.

The very fact that Eisner's method seeks to include within the scope of an evaluation "the ineffable" and the inexpressible – what the Audit Commission would call "the immeasurable" – and that it seeks to provide 'deep maps' of the subject, offering evaluative judgements that rely on the qualitative appreciations of knowledgeable and perceptive specialists, and which allows for the consideration of 'productive unpredictability' and 'productive idiosyncrasy' would suggest that the Connoisseurship Model, although proposed by Eisner for education evaluation, would be of great interest to artists. Eisner himself (1991: 63) makes the point that, "connoisseurship is the art of appreciation. It can be displayed in any realm in which the character, import, or value of objects, situations and performances is distributed and variable." The Connoisseurship Model seeks to address, after all, the very same issues that are at the heart of artists criticism of the 'hard', managerial appraisal methods currently employed by Arts Councils.

Eisner looks to the arts to provide a paradigm for educational evaluation. One could say that, in Eisner's terms, the arts world

need look no further – that it has techniques and methods of its own that Eisner feels are exemplary. Could it be that, in seeking to propose an evaluation model for education, Eisner has inadvertently provided artists and arts organisations with the motivation to champion those evaluation techniques which are traditional and integral to their world – art, theatre, music and literary criticism?

The main criticism of Eisner's model, however, is that which makes it so unique. Guba and Lincoln argue (1981: 20) that "it places too high a premium on the competence of the evaluator", and that there is an elitist flavour to the very notion of a connoisseur. Kushner (2000: 118) believes people tend to be suspicious of those who claim expert status. Both these criticisms raise the issue of the validity of evaluations conducted using the Connoisseurship Model. Who is to say that one person's perception is to be trusted? And if one is suspicious of the 'expert' making the evaluation, then one will surely question the conclusions of the evaluation itself.

### **The question of objectivity**

The question of why we should trust the opinions or perceptions of one particular individual as opposed to another, lies at the heart of any discussion regarding evaluation. However, this is not an issue that is confined to Eisner's model alone. One only has to recall legal actions where the 'expert witness' of one party draws from identical evidence a completely opposite conclusion to the 'expert witness' of another. So why is there such concern about subjective opinions? The scientific paradigm, for so long the predominant influence in the fields of inquiry, has led us, in its quest for generalisable laws –

"statements of enduring truth value" (Guba & Lincoln 1981: 58) – to believe that the only conclusions that we can trust are those that are perceived to be objectively derived. But can individuals come to *objective* conclusions or make *objective* decisions?

Recent research into managerial decision making concludes that very few individuals gather all the facts, stand back and coldly and calmly reach 'objective' decisions. Not only are individuals limited in their knowledge of any situation by the 'bounded rationality' condition (Simon 1957) but they are also strongly affected by their own points of view and vested interests. "Nor can they help bringing in their biases, a product of their histories and present circumstances, to the task of interpreting information" (McCall & Kaplan 1990: 110-1). Decision making, then, is not a cool mental act but a product of "hot cognition" (Janis & Mann 1977). Even those individuals claiming objectivity will, to a degree that they themselves may not fully appreciate, be influenced by their own predispositions.

So perhaps we should accept that, despite our claims to objectivity, no individual can be entirely objective in his or her outlook and that any evaluation, or criticism, is, to a greater or lesser degree, an expression of the subjective opinion of the author. That arguments still rage about whose opinions should be allowed to govern the conduct of an evaluation (that is, who's values are valid?), is perhaps of itself testament to the fact that there is no such thing as true objectivity where individual judgements are concerned. If the adoption of a particular evaluation methodology were itself sufficient to ensure objective validity, then we needn't worry about whom it is that employs that methodology.

Eisner himself sought to tackle the issue of validity by suggesting that, in his model, validity can be strengthened by incorporating into the interpretive and evaluative phases of the process the concept of 'structural corroboration' (Eisner 1976: 146). Structural corroboration is the process of supporting the validity of one's conclusions with a set of facts or situations that can be built up as the investigation proceeds, much like a detective building up a case to reach a conclusion. The pieces of the jigsaw puzzle are collected and are pieced together to provide the complete picture. Structural corroboration can demonstrate that the story – or the evaluator's conclusions – hangs together, that the pieces all fit.

Nevertheless, the question of the validity of individual values in evaluation will not go away. As mentioned earlier, individuals have different mentalities, knowledge and experience (Santayana 1896) that give them differing predispositions. Bourdieu (1984: 16) contends that individual aesthetic values and "taste" are, above all, dependent on an individual's social upbringing and class and compiles a taxonomy that ascribes what he calls "legitimate taste" to the "dominant class that are richest in educational capital" (the *bourgeoisie*), assigns "middle-brow taste" to the middle-classes (the *petite-bourgeoisie*) and "popular taste" to the working classes. In Bourdieu's terms, then, even the social class of an evaluator would have a bearing on the assumptions, predispositions and prejudices that they bring to an evaluation exercise.

Reason and Rowan, in advocating 'New Paradigm Research' see the subjective values of the researcher or evaluator as a

distinctly positive force that brings to the inquiry an element of "critical subjectivity" that ensures that the knowledge gained is alive and related to the real circumstances of the phenomenon under scrutiny (Reason & Rowan 1981: xiii). Reason describes critical subjectivity as "a quality of awareness in which we do not suppress our primary subjective experience; nor do we allow ourselves to be swept away by it; rather, we raise it to consciousness and use it as part of the inquiry process" (Reason 1988: 12). A responsive approach such as this, as shall be seen later, is central to Guba and Lincoln's proposals for the Fourth generation of evaluation.

### **Failings of the first three generations of evaluation**

Guba and Lincoln (1989: 31-2) maintain that issues associated with the matter of individual values is one of three major failings of all the evaluation models of the first three generations. The first is what they call a tendency towards managerialism, the second, alluded to above, is an inability to accommodate value-pluralism, and the third – also one of Eisner's arguments – is an over-commitment to the scientific paradigm..

Managerialism, in Guba and Lincoln's terms, refers to the tendency, in Third Generation models, for evaluators to defer to the wishes of managers (who are, after all, the commissioners of the evaluation) when it comes to such matters as setting the parameters and boundaries of the evaluation. This "cosy relationship" is highly advantageous to managers, as it allows them, whilst still maintaining overall control of the evaluation, to deny any responsibility in the case of any adverse or negative conclusions. Such a relationship also, effectively, disempowers the evaluator, since the manager has the final say over what

kinds of questions the evaluation will tackle, how responses will be gathered and interpreted, and the final audience for the completed inquiry report (Guba & Lincoln 1989: 32-3).

Managerialism, in this sense, can be seen as being another example of Foucault's concept of disciplinary, panoptic power. It can also, of course, compromise the integrity of the evaluation.

As for value-pluralism, an appreciation of the extent of its importance in society has come about only relatively recently, and it is therefore not surprising that this understanding was lacking in the earlier evaluation models. The 1960s witnessed an unprecedented broadening of social attitudes and tolerances in western societies, and the idea that there existed prevailing socially accepted norms, that applied to one-and-all, ceased to hold currency. Whereas *political* differences had long been accepted in democratic societies, the 'freedoms' exercised by the generation of the 'swinging' sixties began a process that brought about the gradual recognition of a further diversity of values that were inherent in a multiplicity of cultural, ethnic, gender and generational groups. The question of 'who's values' were to prevail, then, gained added relevance.

To those who adhered unquestioningly to a scientific paradigm, this was a non-issue, for they claimed that scientific methodologies were value-free.

But even in the physical sciences, the concept of value-freedom is one of dispute. In the field of quantum mechanics, for example, Heisenberg, in the early twentieth century, contended that researchers are limited in the degree of accuracy that can be attained in measuring certain phenomena associated with



electrons (Mautner 1997: 578), thus bringing to the findings a degree of uncertainty and obliging any theories to be reliant, at least partially, on the researcher's own propensities.

Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle not only implies a rejection of determinism but also that any scientific claim is at least partially influenced by the beliefs and opinions of the scientist making the claim (Mautner 1997: 578).

Guba and Lincoln (1989: 66) cite the Complementarity Principle proposed by the physicist Niels Bohr in 1927 that argued that the results of all studies depended on the interaction between the inquirer and the object being studied. In other words, an inquiry's results depended, *not only on the intrinsic properties of that object, but also on the kinds of questions asked and the sequence in which they are posed*. They go on to argue, that where human inquirers are involved, the existence of interaction is inevitable, and where there is *interaction* there will be *reaction*. Moreover, the notion that human researchers can somehow forget their human-ness and disregard their values, their beliefs and their own predispositions, is fanciful (Guba & Lincoln 1989: 67). Hence, any findings will be the result of interactions between investigator and investigated and different interactions will reach different conclusions, all tinged, or influenced, by the values of the investigator.

In the field of the arts, Cooper and Tower (1992) assert, the usefulness of qualitative research is dependent on the abilities of the researchers who conduct the study and interpret the results. Values enter into the investigation as a consequence of the personal choices made by the inquirer and if, as implied earlier, the evaluator is working closely with the commissioner of the

evaluation (cosy managerialism), then the personal values brought to the inquiry are a potent force indeed. Different values (as we saw above in the reference to expert witnesses) can lead to different findings with the result that knowledge is constantly changing and is constantly being revised<sup>3</sup>. In the same way that all theories previously espoused have been found, sooner or later, to be imperfect, so every theory that we currently accept will, too, prove inadequate (Hesse 1980). The notion that evaluators can reach objective, value-free conclusions that can prevail and claim to be the final word on an evaluand, is extremely fanciful.

The third failing of the Third Generation evaluation models, according to Guba and Lincoln, is an over-emphasis on the scientific paradigm. This, as we saw earlier, was also an argument made by Eisner. The deleterious consequences of this are five-fold: firstly, it leads to context-stripping, that is, studying selected variables of an object or phenomenon under carefully controlled conditions (such as in a laboratory) without paying attention to the context in which it normally occurs. This is presumably undertaken in the belief that factors other than those in the newly designed environment are a distraction from the particular phenomenon being examined and with the conviction that this controlled environment will then enable the researcher to reach findings that are generalisable (Guba & Lincoln 1989: 36). However, in the field of evaluation, generalised findings are so often found to be largely irrelevant

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<sup>3</sup> In recent years cosmologists have even cast doubts on one of the basic precepts of 20<sup>th</sup> century physics – Einstein's General Theory of Relativity – declaring that the basis upon which it was expounded – that the speed of light is constant – can now be shown not to be the case and that as the speed of light has changed over billions of years so too have the laws of nature itself (Albrecht & Magueijo 2000).

(Guba & Lincoln 1989: 37). Education establishments, as arts organisations, will only find evaluations relevant if they pertain to their particular localised situations and circumstances.

Secondly, the scientific paradigm depends overly on quantitative measurement, placing its claim to rigour on the gathering of 'hard', quantifiable data (Guba & Lincoln 1989: 37). The implication is that whatever cannot be measured quantitatively, is not worth knowing! As mentioned earlier, current thinking, even among the most rigorous of the 'hard' school of assessors, would find this unacceptable: "The art of evaluation lies in ensuring that the measurable does not drive out the immeasurable," stated The Audit Commission (in Thornton 1992) and this assertion both underscores this particular concern of Lincoln and Guba's and also supports Eisner's contention that evaluation should consider "the ineffable" and the inexpressible (Eisner 1976: 140).

Thirdly, the long tradition and prevalence of the scientific paradigm inquiry has led it to claim a certain authority for quantitative findings (Guba & Lincoln 1989: 37; Matarasso 1996: 15) – what Hannah Arendt (1963) calls "coercive truth". This leads to the fourth consequence of the over-commitment to the scientific paradigm, for the presence of this 'coercive truth' will act to block out other ways of considering the object under study, closing the path to the possibility of the legitimacy of alternative conclusions (Guba & Lincoln 1989: 38).

And finally, since the scientific paradigm maintains that it is value-free, it effectively relieves evaluators of any moral responsibility for their findings and conclusions. If their findings

claim to demonstrate 'the truth' – that is, come to the only conclusion that could possibly be reached without any value judgement perspective – then the evaluator is simply the messenger that delivers that conclusion, not the originator of it. Guba and Lincoln (1989: 38) hold this to be a major ethical problem that is not addressed by any of the Third Generation models.

### **Evaluation – the fourth generation**

In seeking to address the deficiencies of the first three generations of evaluation practice, Guba and Lincoln (1989: 38) propose an alternative – what they call Fourth Generation Evaluation. Their approach is described by them as “responsive constructivist evaluation”. “Responsive” is the term used to denote a mode of operation that is characterised by employing an altogether different way of focusing on the evaluation. In the models of the first three generations, the specification of parameters and boundaries were set out up front, generally by a process of negotiation between the evaluator and the commissioner. The responsive mode, first proposed by Stake (1975) to counter what he called, “preordinate evaluation”, takes on board the legitimate concerns of the broader constituency of interests in the evaluation and establishes such matters as parameters and boundaries by way of an interactive procedure that involves all “the stake-holding audience” (Guba & Lincoln 1981:23). As a consequence, the evaluation itself, unlike the *a priori* design of preordinate evaluation, is organised around the “claims, concerns and issues” that have been identified by the stakeholders themselves and the design of responsive evaluation is emergent in its nature (Guba & Lincoln, 1981: 30, 1989: 39). The emergent nature of the design also

enables issues that are newly identified, as the evaluation progresses, to be brought into the evaluation.

The term "constructivist" is here applied to the methodology that Guba and Lincoln (1989: 43-44) propose as an alternative to the scientific inquiry method that so dominated the conduct of evaluation over the first three generations. The proposition to place their methodology within the constructivist paradigm is supported on three counts: in ontological terms, the constructivist paradigm rejects the concept of objective reality, insisting that reality is a construct of human beings and society. Epistemologically, the constructivist paradigm denies the "subject-object dualism" and supports the concept that the findings of any study exist precisely because they are a product of the interaction between the evaluator and the evaluated, and it is that interaction that literally creates what emerges from the inquiry. And as a consequence of the ontological and epistemological suppositions above, the constructivist paradigm, methodologically, embraces, instead of the manipulative ways of science, a dialectic practice that capitalises on the process of interaction that takes place between the evaluator and the subject (Guba & Lincoln 1989: 43-4).

It is interesting to note that some four years ago, the Arts Council of England conducted a pilot evaluation using a model that, consistent with Guba and Lincoln's Responsive Constructivist approach, places great emphasis on the views of a range of an organisation's Stakeholders. This model – Social Auditing – is one that we shall look at in the following chapter, when we look at current practice in arts council evaluation. Responsive Constructivist Evaluation, therefore, addresses the three key

deficiencies in the methods of the first three generations – the tendency towards managerialism, the failure to accommodate value pluralism, and an over-commitment to the scientific paradigm of inquiry.

The sequence of Guba and Lincoln's Fourth Generation Evaluation is reproduced in Figure 2. The process – or its flow, as they term it – is broken down into twelve procedural steps. As can be seen, both the responsive and constructive elements are present throughout the process. The approach demands a constant awareness of different circumstances, claims and concerns of the various stakeholders, a responsiveness to them and the perpetual feeding and re-feeding of data into the process in order to enable construction of that which will be reported and negotiated.

The process is cyclical in nature and one that would, no doubt, take considerable time to accomplish and would be undertaken at no small cost. These two factors, in particular, will need to be taken into account if the this model in its entirety, as set out here, were to be considered for use in arts organisation evaluation. However, many of its features would appeal to artists. Chief among these is the principle that the evaluation is organised around the claims, concerns and issues identified by various stakeholders, and not simply around those of the evaluator and the commissioner of the evaluation. (In the case of the evaluation of funded arts organisations, the evaluator and the commissioner are one and the same – one of the arts councils.)

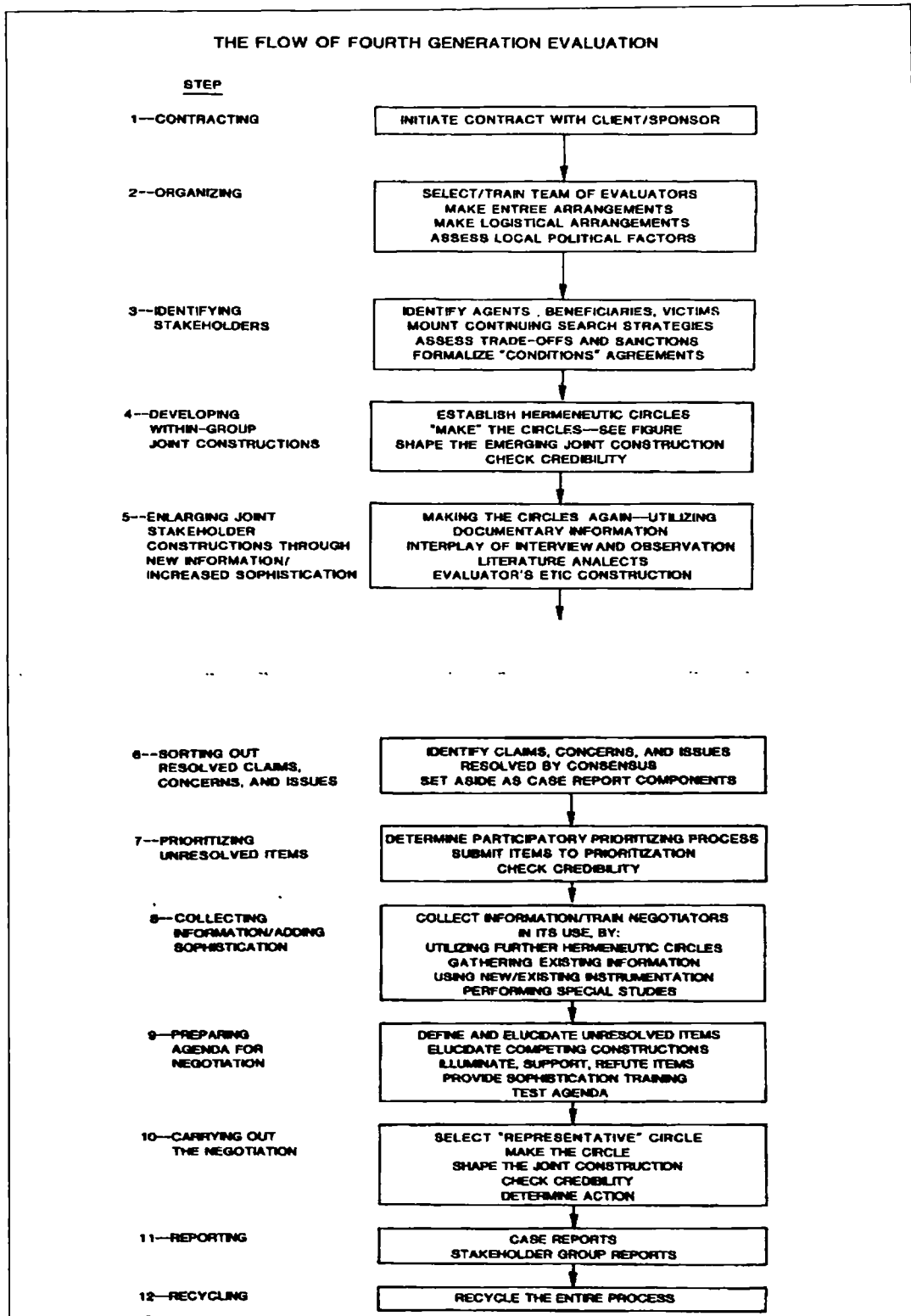


Figure 2: The Flow of Fourth Generation Evaluation (Guba & Lincoln, 1989: 186-7)

Another appealing feature appears in Step 9 of the process, where claims, concerns and issues that have been, or can easily be, resolved are set to one side and the evaluation focuses on those matters that are more difficult to resolve. One criticism of the current arts evaluation practice (as shall be seen in Chapter 5 later), is that a great deal of time and energy – and this too, of course, has cost implications – is utilised in going over and over routine matters, ostensibly just for the sake of adhering to correct procedure.

### **Making judgements**

As Guba and Lincoln remind us (1989: 62), *value* is at the very root of *evaluation*, and they contend (as did Stake, Scriven and Eisner) that it is the obligation of evaluators to come to value judgements and, indeed, they define evaluation as "a process for describing an evaluand and *judging its merit and worth*." (my italics) (Guba & Lincoln 1981: 35).

The twin concepts of 'merit' and 'worth' are key to Guba and Lincoln's thinking on judgement making, for they use these terms to distinguish between two kinds of value that can be attributed to the subject of the evaluation. They are terms that are now commonly used in the field of evaluation (Scriven 1991: 227, 382). On the one hand, the evaluand will possess a value of its own that is implicit, inherent and which exists independently of any possible application. This intrinsic value they term "merit" (Guba & Lincoln 1981: 39). On the other hand, something may have value within the context of a particular use or application. To this context-determined, or extrinsic, value they apply the term "worth" (Guba & Lincoln 1981: 39).



They suggest that merit can be determined by establishing the degree to which it conforms to certain standards that have been agreed upon by a group of experts (what they call "absolute merit evaluation") or, alternatively, by comparing the subject under consideration with other subjects within the same class, which they call "comparative or relative merit evaluation" (Guba & Lincoln 1981: 45).

Worth, however, is determined by comparing the impact or outcomes of the evaluand with a set of external requirements, such as the findings of a needs assessment or context evaluation. The criteria against which the comparison is made are drawn up, not by professional experts but by a range of the evaluand's local stakeholders. Hence the subject's 'merit' criteria will, on the whole, be reasonably stable whereas its 'worth' criteria will vary according to the context of the group in which it is being assessed (Guba & Lincoln 1981: 46).

Hence Guba and Lincoln propose that the *merit* of an evaluand should be determined by experts, whilst its *worth* be considered by an array of stakeholders. Convening two separate groups to evaluate a subject based on two different sets of criteria may not be practical within the budget constraints of the arts world but Guba and Lincoln's call for value pluralism could point to a way forward, with evaluation teams comprising both specialists and lay persons being able to address both issues of value.

Even then, if the evaluation of arts organisations is to include forming judgements regarding their artistic work, reaching any consensus about the value of a particular work – whether it be its merit or its worth – is likely to be highly problematic. No two

individuals will react to a work of art in exactly the same way (Santayana 1896) and an individual's aesthetic values and "taste" are dependant on that individual's upbringing and class (Bourdieu 1984). And (Leavis 1986: 277) asserts that a judgement can only be valid if it is subjective, "I cannot take a judgement over; that is, I cannot have my judging done for me by someone else. Either I judge for myself, or there is no judging."

Kaspar points out that, in the mid-eighteenth century, the Scottish philosopher David Hume had noted that, "when it comes to deciding the value of a particular work of art, disagreement is bound to arise" (Hume 1757).

Immanuel Kant (1790), similarly, stated that every man's aesthetic judgement is suffused with the humanity he has in himself, and posed the question of how, therefore, can the aesthetic judgement, in which subjective feelings are made known, become a collective or 'common' judgement?

Opinions put forward in philosophical discourses, however, are not always readily assimilated into the work of professional evaluators on the ground. The long-lasting influence of the principles of scientific management still ensure the broad popularity among the profession of demonstrating success or failure in terms of quantifiable outcomes. At a recent conference, one of the keynote speakers stated that when confronted with the assertion, 'You can't really measure what I do,' her response is, "Just you watch me! If you can see it, smell it, taste it or feel it, I can measure it!" (Philliber 2002)<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> One wonders why 'hearing' was left out of her cycle of the senses!

Twenty-five years after Eisner (1976: 136-7) criticised the reductionist processes that resulted in the oversimplification of complex phenomena by seeking to represent them in the form of statistical measurement, there is clearly a constituency that places a great deal of store by this approach<sup>5</sup>. Despite Philliber's assertions, one finds it difficult to see the advantage of putting a quantitative measurement on the 'creativity' or the 'boldness of vision' associated with a work of art.

Matarasso (2002), whilst not advocating the use of quantitative measurement in areas where qualitative data is more appropriate, does, however, argue that it *should* be possible to draw up qualitative criteria for the judging of art. He points out that even though the arts councils' charters charge them with promoting excellence in the arts, "there is still almost nothing written about what quality or excellence in the arts might be" (Matarasso 2002: 5). One of the problems in judging art, Matarasso asserts (2002: 3) is that there are several different aspects to consider and, in addition to different individuals having different tastes and opinions, they may also be taking into consideration different aspects of any given work of art. Matarasso (2002: 3) therefore suggests that arts evaluation should be conducted in respect of four elements:

- ◆ *Quality of execution: how well the activity is done*
- ◆ *Quality of experience: how the activity is received*
- ◆ *Quality of outcome: the impact that the experience produces*

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<sup>5</sup> The attractiveness, in the public sector and in politics, of using quantitative information in respect of phenomena which are not easily quantified, is discussed in Matarasso (1996: 15- 16).

- ◆ *Artistic quality: the intrinsic value of the work as an artistic creation*

To evaluate the quality of execution – an area that would be concerned mainly with matters of technical competence – Matarasso (2002: 3) advocates comparison with current best practice and proposes that for this purpose “we can turn to other artists or professional bodies for guidance on what might be considered a good standard.” This echoes Guba and Lincoln’s (1981: 45) concept of “relative merit” evaluation.

The assessment of the quality of experience, asserts Matarasso (2002: 3-4), although essential in terms of public accountability, is particularly difficult. It will be necessary to find out how the audience responds. He does not suggest a method for this part of the evaluation but highlights some of the innate problems associated with it. He points out that apart from the fact that what we conclude regarding the audience’s response will depend considerably on “what you ask, of whom and when”, people also change their minds over time. Individuals who might initially find a particular artist, art form or genre unappealing the first time they encounter it, sometimes grow to like and appreciate it after experiencing it several times: “it is not uncommon for work which was initially disliked by audiences to become loved and appreciated in later years, or for a work which is well-received to fall out of favour” (Matarasso 2002: 3).

The third element relates to the non-artistic outcomes – or impact – of the work. Such outcomes are many and varied, “from building individual skills and inclusion to promoting tourism or attracting inward investment” (Matarasso 2002: 4). Different

organisations may well be funded with different strategic outcomes in mind, depending on their art form, geographical location, whether they are a presenter or producer of art, and so forth. In order to evaluate the outcomes of a given work or organisation, it will be necessary to have clear "goals, delivery processes, assumptions and values" but, Matarasso claims, such clarity of outcome goals has not always been present in arts evaluation practice.

With regard to the matter of artistic quality, Matarasso (2002: 6) acknowledges that, again, there is a considerable potential range of audience responses to a work, and different individuals will be struck by different aspects of artistic quality. Clarity is again called for, so that one can be certain about what exactly it is one is evaluating. He calls for explicit criteria to be drawn up and cautiously suggests the following five against which works could be assessed: "technique, originality, ambition, connection, and magic" (Matarasso 2002: 6). These seem reasonable enough, but one could equally have opted to include such criteria as 'creativity', 'vision', 'integrity' or several more.

But difficulties would still persist. To take, as an example, the first of Matarasso's criteria – technique –, it might be fairly straightforward to assess the technical standard of a classical ballet company or an Indian Bharat Natyam dancer, since there are recognised, strict technical rules which govern these kinds of performance. But what of the choreographer who deliberately wishes to rebel against these long established techniques?

It took Martha Graham, who created a new choreographic vocabulary that she felt would be more appropriate for

expressing the subject matter of her dances, several decades to shake off the label of someone who 'had no technique' and 'couldn't dance properly' although she subsequently become recognised as one of the greatest, innovative and influential choreographers of the twentieth century.

In the nineteenth century, the Impressionists similarly suffered widespread rejection at the hands of critics, academics and other painters before being accepted as artists who, in seeking to find the appropriate means of depicting new kinds of subjects, brought excitement to their art through revolutionary new techniques of applying paint and using colour. But initially, judged against the accepted classical painting techniques of the time, they were considered as mere daubers.

And the other problem, yet again, is that even with these five criteria we are still faced with the issue that will not go away – that making judgements in respect of each and every one of these five elements will always involve the subjectivity of individual taste and opinion. Matarasso himself (2002: 6) urges caution in this regard, "The problem with talking about the quality of a book, a performance or an exhibition, is that one person might be more interested in the technique of the artist, or the social connection of the work, while another might judge it on whether they felt moved or engaged by it. The result is not even like comparing apples with oranges: it's more like comparing apples with rain, or oranges with furniture."

Furthermore, and particularly when dealing with the issue of a work of art's merit, not only do tastes vary – even among connoisseurs (or perhaps especially among connoisseurs!) – but

they also change from place to place and from age to age. As Eaton (1998: 84) points out, "One of the characteristics of art that strikes both experts and non-experts is not simply that tastes and preferences differ between individuals but that the works valued most universally in one place and at a particular time lose their status when moved spatially or temporally. ...The story of the artist who lives 'ahead of his or her time' is common. There are also art forms that go in and out of fashion."

Similarly, Verdi (2000: 11) points out that "the so-called anarchists of 'extreme relativism' – Kuhn, Feyerabend and Foucault – consider any type of knowledge that can be institutionalised as an evil in itself. They deny the possibility of any kind of 'objective justice' and espouse concepts of cultural non-commensurability and non-shareability: in other words, they assert that it is impossible to transform the values of one cultural space and time into those of another culture."

One need only remind oneself that only some fifteen or twenty years ago such art forms as rock music or video were considered to be outside the arts councils' purview, yet today the development of 'Arts for Young People' – of which these two disciplines are important constituents – is now one of the arts councils' key strategic priorities (Hewitt 2003). Wolff (1983: 18), too, points out that "The history of art.... is also the history of fluctuations in taste and evaluation."

As well as artists who were ahead of their time, these fluctuations in taste will see works that are applauded and acclaimed at one particular point in time, but later largely forgotten. As a member of a radio forum recently put it, "The nature of the reception of

the piece has very little to do with the quality of the piece" (BBC(a) 2001). Perhaps the contributor was making the point that even though the *worth* of a work may be considered to be high at a particular time and place, it need not necessarily assure its *merit* for all time. Indeed, perhaps the best judge of the quality of a work of art is the passage of time, for as Hume (1757) maintained: "It is easier to determine quality over time, because judgements of what art is truly great converge." Hume (1757) takes this point a little further by stating that since certain works of art, particularly over time, appear to assume broad acceptance as being great works, this suggests that judgements are being made against some universally understood standards and suggests further that there need to be experts in the field to make those judgements: "For instance, one must have a wide experience of art works, comparing them to one another, to develop a good sense of what is beautiful and to develop what he calls 'delicate taste'. Such critics are invaluable to society because they can point out subtleties that would otherwise be lost to the rest of us." This, of course, is similar to the argument made by Eisner over two centuries later on behalf of connoisseurship.

It is often stated that the best kind of experts in the field of the arts are artists themselves. Indeed, the system of 'peer review' (evaluation of artists by other artists in the same discipline) has been practiced by arts funding bodies in North America for some decades and is common practice in the UK and other European countries in academic circles for such processes as reviewing research applications, papers submitted for conferences, or articles submitted for inclusion in journals. It is currently being talked about rather enthusiastically in arts



funding circles in this country and it can be thought of as an approach similar to that employed in Guba and Lincoln's Fourth Generation Evaluation for determining 'comparative or relative merit evaluation' (Guba and Lincoln 1981). The problem with peer review within the relatively confined space of the UK arts world is that artists will either complain that they are being evaluated by individuals who are not in *exactly* the same discipline as them (and don't *really* understand their work) or, that they are being assessed by artists who are their rivals for scarce funding.

Matarasso makes a strong case against the use of artists as evaluators of art, claiming that history suggests that they have a sorry track record in that regard,

*"There isn't much evidence that artists make better judges of their fellow artists than anyone else. It was artists who refused the impressionists access to their Salons, and a critic who invented what he hoped would be a derogatory name for their school. Who today reads Spitteler, Gjellerup, Pontoppidan or von Heidenstam despite their Nobel prizes granted by committees of writers and professors? How many composers of the calibre of Charpentier or Hildegard von Bingen still await rediscovery? The artists unions who controlled cultural life in communist eastern Europe are another unhappy example. No, I think it would be hard to show that artists have consistently been better judges than the rest of us when it comes to assessing the value of contemporary artistic life."*

(Matarasso 2002: 6)

In continuing his argument against artist assessment, Matarasso (Matarasso 2002: 7) also notes that in ancient Athens, drama was often a competitive activity and that the year's best plays were chosen by a jury of five ordinary citizens, themselves selected by lottery. He falls short of suggesting that that procedure should be revived in contemporary Britain, but he does imply that it is worth bearing in mind when considering arts evaluation.

But Matarasso, whilst arguing against the idea of artists evaluating the work of other artists, makes no mention of the role of artists in the evaluation of their own work. And even though we shall note in a later chapter that Reason (1988: 1), in his proposals for *New Paradigm Research*, advocates "research that is *with* and *for* people rather than *on* people" we have not entirely dispatched the notion that appraisal is something carried out by the arts councils on their clients.

Pringle (2002), however, urges us not to forget the role of artists themselves as "critical evaluators". Much as Mintzberg (1987) saw the strategic manager in terms of the craftsman whose plans emerge from her practice<sup>6</sup>, so Pringle asserts that practicing artists are constantly evaluating and re-evaluating their art as part of their work process and explores the role of artists themselves as 'critical evaluators'. She cites the artist/photographer Roz Hall, who maintains that, "The creative process can be understood as an ongoing evaluative process, whereby artists make evaluative decisions with every mark made, rather than a process which might have evaluation imposed upon completion. The creative process is dependent

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<sup>6</sup> "No craftsman thinks some days and works others. The craftsman's mind is going constantly in tandem with her hands" (Mintzberg 1987: 69).

upon ongoing evaluation as it informs the development of both the outcome and the process" (Hall 2002). And Pringle (2002: 3) then comments that she (Hall) "has recognised that the creative process is as much about critical reflection as spontaneous expression."

There are, of course examples of *de facto* arts evaluation practice in today's society that offer contrary experiences.

Perhaps one of the best-known contemporary arts competitions, The Academy Awards – The Oscars – is judged by a large panel of connoisseurs, the members of the American Academy of Motion Pictures. Yet, one of the most widely publicized television phone-in polls of recent times – the poll that selected Robbie Williams as the greatest musical artist of all time – was judged by the votes of huge numbers of the general public.

When all is taken into account, it is difficult to perceive of groups of individuals, whether they be artists, other connoisseurs or lay people, or a mixture of all three, being able to come to judgements on works of art that can be said to be unanimous<sup>7</sup>.

In Wales, our traditional cultural life features the convening of

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<sup>7</sup> On a personal level, I have sat on panels that select works by young choreographers to be showcased at a high profile venue. I can attest to the fact that, on a panel of four or five selectors, not only did we encounter great difficulty in arriving at agreed selections but also at even the most basic criteria for selection, in the first place. Only in relatively few instances would we agree unanimously on our choices of choreographers. Of, say, a dozen selections, two or three might be agreed upon by all as being clearly worthy of inclusion, another five or six would be decided by long discussion and haggling ('OK, I'll agree to your choice of 'X' if you agree to my choice of 'Y') and the remainder made up by seeking to provide a balance of style, dynamic or technique to the overall programme.

*Eisteddfodau*, festivals of competitions in poetry, prose, music, dance, drama and the visual arts. For the most part, these competitions are adjudicated by small panels of judges. And, much as in the boxing ring, winners can be determined by either unanimous or split decisions. A common refrain among those seeking to console a losing competitor is, "Never mind, it was just down to the adjudicators' taste." And even an institution as steeped in tradition as the *Eisteddfod* – the first is said to have taken place in Cardigan in 1176 – acknowledges in its main ceremonies, the 'crowning' and 'chairing' of the winning poets, that the verdict of the adjudicators is a product of collective subjectivity and can be open to contention or, even, controversy. Consequently, an important (and climactic) ritual in the award ceremony, occurs when the several thousands of assembled poets, aficionados, and spectators are asked, "Shall there be peace?" to which they respond by shouting, "Peace!" to signify that they will accept the adjudicators' verdict, even if they do not agree with it.

The question, therefore, of how to make judgements about art, of how to come to conclusions regarding its *merit* and *worth*, is likely to remain problematic. In much the same way as individual tastes vary, it is almost impossible to predict how an individual will react to a work of art at any given instance and, consequently, in any formal evaluation process. Thus, guaranteeing that an artist's work is given fair play by ensuring it is evaluated by the 'appropriate' individuals, is probably unachievable. "There is a sense in which, in matters of aesthetic evaluation, the question 'Who decides?' may be ultimately unanswerable" (Kaspar 1998: 136).

**SUMMARY**

This chapter opened by depicting the link between arts councils and their funded clients as one of a power relationship. The nature of this power was likened to Foucault's conception of 'disciplinary power' in modern society, which, he asserts, is exercised through various means of surveillance. He employs the metaphor of the Panopticon for this form of surveillance-based power and it is suggested here that this is an appropriate theoretical framework in which to place the arts councils of the UK.

Foucault asserts that the Panopticon system features three main characteristics: the maintenance of an archive of rules, the exercise of disciplinary procedures, and the employment of systems of testing and inspection through micro-analysis. All three are in place in the arts councils and the third of these is exemplified by the evaluation (or appraisal) processes conducted by arts councils on their clients.

But Foucault also asserts that, "Where there is power, there is resistance" (Foucault 1978: 95), and this resistance is characterised (as we shall see later) by the range of criticisms of the appraisal system made by artists, the 'strategic manoeuvres' they adopt to counter the system, and the 'hidden transcripts' that are characteristic of power relationships and that cause artists to behave in a deferential manner in the presence of the arts council personnel but who then are disrespectful of them when not in their presence. Similarly, the powerful will seek to over-dramatize their power over the less powerful when amongst their peers. And finally, Foucault insists that power relationships are largely unsuccessful, in that the powerful never achieve total

domination over the less powerful. In the case of arts council appraisals, they largely ignore the organisation's artistic output and hence have no influence over it.

The chapter then proceeds to consider the topic of evaluation. Methods of evaluation used in the world of business were discussed briefly, including Soft Systems Analysis, one of whose aims is stated as creating a shift to the world of management thinking (Checkland & Scholes 1995: 15), and the Balanced Scorecard, whose goal is to enable an organisation to develop a new management system (Kaplan & Norton 1996: 272). It was felt that neither the language nor the objectives of such evaluation methods were compatible with the essential nature of arts organisations, whose primary aims are the creation or presentation of art works, and, consequently, were not explored further. As Maddaus *et al.* (1983: 36) asserted, difficulties are bound to arise if the purposes of the evaluator (and the evaluation method) differ from those of the client.

The method known as Social Audit was considered in more detail, partly because it had already been used in a pilot evaluation by the Arts Council of England of one of its clients. But also because it has several features that are compatible with the nature of arts organisations. SA is intended to consider the social impact of an organisation (Visser 1989) and seeks to look beyond mere financial viability (Pearce *et al.* 1998: 3). It is conducted in a responsive process that places great stock in the concerns of the client's various stakeholders.

The work of evaluators working in the field of education in the US is particularly highlighted, since their work has been seminal in

nature and has had a profound influence on evaluation practice in other fields of endeavour. In this context, this chapter draws upon the works of Egon G. Guba & Yvonna S. Lincoln, Michael Scriven and Elliot Eisner in particular. Furthermore, in the absence of any significant body of literature on arts organisation evaluation, it was felt that many of the issues encountered in the field of educational evaluation have resonance for the evaluation of arts organisations.

This chapter gave an overview of the development of education evaluation in the US during the twentieth century, drawing attention to several of the key issues that have confronted evaluators during that time. Foremost among these was the advent of objective based evaluation (Ralph Tyler), which was later called into question because it was deemed to close off creative and emergent possibilities, and thus deemed by Guba and Lincoln to be unsuited to evaluation in creative situations. Subsequently, Michael Scriven proposed a goal-free model, organising the evaluation around the effects of the subject under scrutiny rather than its goals, thus allowing for any emergent or unintended achievements to be included and considered. And in order to enable evaluation to contribute to the improvement of the subject under consideration, Cronbach advocated that evaluation should take place during its course, criticizing *post hoc* evaluation as being too late to be of use.

Eisner's Connoisseurship Model was discussed at some length, since it proposed adopting the rich descriptive techniques of arts criticism to offer the audience a 'deep map' of the subject being investigated, and argued that the most appropriate individuals to conduct evaluations were experts in their field (or

connoisseurs). The role of the evaluator, said Eisner, was not to offer definitive accounts of truth but, rather, to share one's connoisseurship so as to develop astute perception in others so that they, too, can enter into the experience.

Eisner proposed that the task of the evaluator – as it was that of the critic – was to transform the qualities of a phenomenon (whether it be a work of art or a school course) into a public form that brings to life, for the evaluation report's audience, those qualities that were experienced.

Eisner criticised an approach to evaluation that was 'criterion referenced' or 'norm referenced' and advocated that, when arriving at judgements of value, evaluation should be 'personally referenced', enabling consideration of that which was unique about the phenomenon – what Eisner called 'productive unpredictability' or 'productive *idiosyncrasy*'.

Some theorists criticised Eisner's model for the fact that a great deal of authority was vested in the evaluator and that it, therefore, compromises the notion of value pluralism. It is felt, however, that elements of Eisner's approach, despite its weaknesses, might be of interest in developing a model for arts evaluation.

Some of the earlier evaluation models were criticised by Guba and Lincoln for not requiring the evaluator to come to judgements of value. Eisner had sought to tackle this issue by proposing that evaluators should be connoisseurs, asserting that



their knowledge, experience, awareness and understanding of the subject would provide the basis for making informed judgements.

The issue of value judgement is a complex one that is, ultimately, at the root of all evaluation practice and issues pertaining to 'value' and, in particular, *who's* value should prevail, were at the heart of what Guba and Lincoln saw as the three main flaws that pervaded mainstream evaluation practice. These were:

- The tendency towards 'managerialism' where the manager who commissions the evaluation is in control of the project and whose values, therefore, tend to colour the content, conduct and conclusions of an evaluation.
- Failure to accommodate 'value pluralism', where judgements are passed on the basis of the evaluator's, or the commissioner's, own values without reference to the values of those who affect, or are affected by, the work of the evaluand.

and

- An over-commitment to the scientific paradigm of enquiry, which can lead to 'context-stripping' (where the environment of the study is manipulated or sanitized), to an over-dependence on quantitative measurement, and to a (questionable) claim to a certain authority, which can often result in the closing off of alternative ways of considering the subject of the evaluation.

The assertion, often made under the banner of the scientific paradigm, that for the outcomes of any investigation to be valid,

they had to be arrived at in an objective manner, was discussed, concluding that the notion that human beings were capable of reaching objective judgements was, at best, fanciful.

In order to address these faults, Guba and Lincoln propose a 'Responsive Constructivist' model of evaluation in which the evaluator rejects the preordained, *a priori* design conventions of the scientific paradigm of inquiry and organises the investigation around the claims, concerns and issues of the various stakeholder groups in a responsive, iterative manner. The evaluation consequently adopts a constructivist methodology, whereby 'reality' (truth) is deemed to be a construct of human beings and society (and not an objective reality as perceived in the scientific paradigm), where findings are the product of an interaction between evaluator and evaluated, and where studies are conducted through the adoption of dialectic practice and not manipulative procedures, as they assert is the case in scientific enquiry.

This chapter also considered the issue of 'value', which is now widely accepted as a concept that embraces two kinds of value. Firstly, 'merit' is an entity's inherent, intrinsic and implicit value that is context-free and exists independently of any of that entity's potential applications. 'Merit', Guba and Lincoln suggest, is established either by a group of experts (absolute merit) or by comparison with other similar entities (comparative or relative merit) and will, therefore be governed by relatively stable criteria. 'Worth', is the term used to describe the entity's value within a particular context of application and can be determined by comparing the impact or outcomes of the evaluand with a set of external requirements, as drawn up by a

variety of local stakeholders, and will therefore be subject to highly variable criteria, which will depend on the context in which the evaluation takes place.

This overview of the development of evaluation practice and thinking within the field of education in the US highlights issues that have resonance for the practice of arts organisation evaluation. In particular, the emergence of Fourth Generation Evaluation provides an excellent context within which arts organisation evaluation can be considered. The responsive constructivist approach enables the identification of the 'claims, concerns and issues' of the key players in the evaluation process – a crucial requirement in an extremely sensitive process that is at the heart of the relationship between the funding body and the funded organisation. It also provides an appropriate theoretical framework within which field research can be conducted and from which, it is hoped, will emerge an arts evaluation model that can be of benefit to both arts organisations and the funding bodies which evaluate their performance.

The matter of making judgements about these values was also discussed, and it was noted that deciding on the merit or worth of a work of art is extremely problematic, depending, as it does, on the subjective views of individuals. But aesthetic taste not only varies from person to person but from age to age and from place to place, ensuring that any judgement in respect of a work of art can never be definitive or final. The incorporation of the concept of value pluralism into arts organisation evaluation was, therefore, felt to be extremely important.

Matarasso's framework for arts evaluation was discussed. He proposed it should revolve around four elements – quality of execution, of experience, of outcome, and artistic quality. For the latter he offered five criteria against which works could be assessed: technique, originality, ambition, connection, and magic. But, it was concluded, even with these criteria, as broad as they may seem, problems would still persist, due largely to the matter of the subjective propensity and predilection of the evaluator.

But who are the best judges of art - artists, connoisseurs or laypersons? Hume, in the eighteenth century – as Eisner had two centuries later – advocated the importance of connoisseurship in arriving at judgements, as connoisseurs will have developed what he called 'delicate taste'. Guba, Lincoln, and Kushner, however, argued against involving connoisseurs, because, they felt, people will tend to be suspicious of experts and the elitist air they might bring to the exercise.

Matarasso argued strongly against the use of artists as evaluators of art, suggesting that their track record, throughout history was a sorry one indeed. But Pringle argued equally strongly in favour of the role of artists themselves as critical evaluators of their own work and urged greater appreciation of the significance of the artist's own 'critical reflection'.

The question of who conducts the evaluation, then, is one of the key issues to be addressed in drawing conclusions from this study.

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## CHAPTER 4

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### METHODOLOGY

#### AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

As stated in the introduction to this paper, the aim of this study is to gain an understanding of the procedures currently employed by arts councils to evaluate the work of arts organisations in Wales and England, to determine whether or not these procedures are appropriate and, if deemed necessary, to propose a model that may be better suited to the task at hand and more meaningful to those individuals and organisations involved.

The purpose of the research, then, is to discover information that will contribute to this aim and is encapsulated in the following question:

“Are the appraisal procedures currently employed by arts councils in Wales and England appropriate for the evaluation of the totality of an arts organisation's performance and, if not, what form, if any, should alternative methods take?”

This chapter will demonstrate the rationale behind drawing up the following research objectives:

- Review relevant, current literature pertaining to the fields of arts funding, arts management, evaluation models, aesthetics, and cultural policy.

- Perusal of documents, both internal and in the public domain, relating to selected arts organisations and arts funding bodies, including policy documents, appraisal reports and funding applications.
- Conduct a series of pilot, exploratory interviews with artists, arts managers, leaders of arts organisations, and officers of arts funding bodies in order to identify specific issues that need to be investigated.
- Conduct in-depth interviews with key individuals from sixteen arts organisations, which will serve as mini case studies.
- Interview key individuals from public bodies involved in arts funding.
- Conduct case studies of two 'client appraisals' undertaken by the arts councils.
- Analyse the findings of the above process with a view to drawing conclusions from the investigation.
- If appropriate, propose an alternative model for arts organisation evaluation.

### **NATURE OF INFORMATION SOUGHT**

With the knowledge only that there was a matter of substance to be researched, there were no preconceptions of what conclusions were to be drawn, no theories to be proven or disproven. Lincoln and Guba (1985: 235) suggest that the 'conventional enquirer' usually approaches a study, "knowing what is not known" and advocate an alternative posture of, "not knowing what is not known." It was this, latter approach that was adopted in this study and, in order to gather the relevant information, the research process, therefore, needed to be inductive. The approach taken likened to the *Grounded Theory* described by Glaser and Strauss (Glaser and Strauss 1967), in as

much as the data gathered is the source of understanding and explanation of the phenomena being studied and not merely a source of information to support (or disprove) a theory.

The perusal of documents has provided information regarding the past and present conduct of the organisations and funding bodies being studied and included internal material such as budgetary documents, policy documents, appraisal reports, and funding applications. Where possible, external documents have also been sought – press reviews, sponsorship packs, promotional material, and so forth. ACW and ACE have provided access to their internal documents relating to guidance and policy on client appraisal and a range of documents and reports have been acquired from the National Assembly for Wales, the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, and the Quality, Efficiency Standards Team.

In all cases, a certain amount of caution was in order, with attention being paid to the authors of documents, the period and circumstances in which they were written, the purpose for which they were produced and for whose eyes they were originally intended.

Prior to embarking on data collection, and throughout the period of the study, a review of current literature was undertaken, relating to the fields of arts funding, arts management, small businesses, entrepreneurship, evaluation models, aesthetics, and cultural policy in order to gain an understanding of work already carried out in these fields (See Chapter 3).

In the event, the review of literature has become a very important element of the study, in particular the work of Guba and Lincoln, Michael Scriven, François Matarasso, Reason and Rowan, and Elliot Eisner, in relation to developments in evaluation practice, and material provided by Comedia and the New Economics Foundation, regarding the evaluation of artistic quality and to Social Auditing.

My experience of working in the arts sector has enabled a significant degree of observation over an extended period of time and non-participant observation continues to be essential. As American baseball legend Yogi Berra once said, "You can observe a lot just by watching" (Fitzhenry 1986: 208).

This project involves the study of professional practice and, therefore, in large part, entails gathering data from people who consider themselves to be specialists in their field. One might assume, therefore, that these individuals will hold strong views that may have been developed and rehearsed over a long period of time and that they are also highly articulate and would be able to present their views cogently. I am also aware, having worked in the arts in a number of functions over many years, that there exists between the two main sectors being investigated – the funded organisations and their funding bodies – a certain inherent level of distrust. This, to a degree, is inevitable within the context of the Foucaultian relationship of panoptic disciplinary power that exists between the two.

Understanding the attitudes and perspectives of these people will be crucial to the research and the study will need to penetrate beyond their prejudices by gaining an in-depth



understanding of their fundamental attitudes. It will be more important to achieve "depth rather than breadth" (Blaxter *et al.* 1996: 60), and this will require entering into the field situation, to "gain a 'holistic' overview of the context under study" and "to capture data... 'from the inside', through a process of deep attentiveness, of empathetic understanding..." (Miles & Huberman 1994: 6). The world of arts funding is, to a significant degree, one that is foreign to those not part of that world. Berg and Smith (1988: 25) suggest that when conducting research in such situations, it will entail "participation in the social system being studied, under the assumption that much of the information of interest is only accessible to or reportable by its members" (Berg and Smith 1988: 122). Again, my personal experience in the field will offer opportunities for me to enter into the 'social system' of arts-funding.

Since this requires "... a direct concern with experience as it is 'lived' or 'felt' or 'undergone'" and "has the aim of understanding experience as nearly as possible as its participants feel it or live it" (Sherman & Webb 1988: 7), that is, seeking the views, opinions and experiences of the participants, the majority of the data gathered will be qualitative.

Besides seeking to reach beyond the prejudices of those individuals from whom qualitative data will be gathered, it will be important to take into consideration the subjective biases of the researcher.

The question of objectivity and subjectivity was discussed earlier in the literature review, concluding that a degree of researcher subjectivity is inevitable in any research, whether it be within the

scientific paradigm or the naturalistic or responsive-constructivist paradigms. Rather than seeing this as a problem, Reason and Rowan (1981) see this as a distinct asset. The dominant scientific paradigm, they argue, with its claims to objectivity and its reliance on experimental set-ups that strip the evaluand of its context, "kills off everything it comes into contact with, so that what we are left with is dead knowledge" (Reason & Rowan 1981: xiii). The inherent subjective values brought to an inquiry by both the researcher and other participants, they claim, ensures knowledge that is alive and related to the real circumstances in which the phenomenon under scrutiny is located. This is a positive force that, together with the researcher's acute awareness of this issue, enables an approach to research that they term "objectively subjective" (Reason & Rowan 1981: xiii).

In later works Reason and Rowan prefer the term "critical subjectivity" and describe it as "a quality of awareness in which we do not suppress our primary subjective experience; nor do we allow ourselves to be swept away by it; rather, we raise it to consciousness and use it as part of the inquiry process" (Reason 1988: 12). This contains resonance of Eisner's Connoisseurship Model of evaluation, discussed earlier, in that the values and experiences brought to the study by the researcher are not seen as a drawback but that the knowledge, experience, awareness and understanding of the connoisseur provides the basis for making informed judgements (Eisner 1976: 139-40). In other words: critical subjectivity. It is felt that my past experience of working in the arts field (both as a funder and a practitioner), together with the fact that I am no longer actively part of that world, will enable me to approach this research with a deal of critical subjectivity.

Reason and Rowan advocate a 'New Paradigm' for "co-operative experiential enquiry: research that (is) *with and for* people rather than *on* people" [authors' italics] (Reason 1988: 1; Heron and Reason 2001: 179). They describe this as a research paradigm in which all those involved contribute both to the creative thinking that goes into the investigation and the action that is being researched. The emphasis of this kind of participatory research is on a dialogue between the researchers and those with whom they are working in order "to discover and realize the practical and cultural needs of those people" (Reason 1988: 2).

What Reason describes here strongly reflects the requirements of this study. It will need to gather the views and opinions of concerned parties and gain their assent to observing them in highly sensitive situations, such as appraisals, that are normally closed to outsiders. It will be essential to discover their 'practical and cultural needs' for any evaluation method employed will not only need to achieve the requirements of the evaluation procedure itself but will need to be practically feasible and, in order to engender trust among all interested parties, to address their deep held concerns.

Reason (1988: 79) states that this 'New Paradigm Research' is a multidimensional form of inquiry that "tends to be co-operative rather than unilateral; to be qualitative rather than quantitative; to be holistic rather than reductionist; to work in natural settings rather than in artificial laboratories" and, as such, contains strong echoes of Guba and Lincoln's 'Fourth Generation Evaluation', discussed earlier in the review of literature, and which champions value pluralism, seeks to avoid managerialism and

rejects the scientific paradigm. The New Paradigm's experiential, participatory research is, essentially, a close cousin to the responsive constructivist evaluation proposed by Guba and Lincoln. If the study is seeking to investigate evaluation practice within the theoretical context of Fourth Generation Evaluation, it will be sensible to conduct research within a compatible paradigm. The conduct of this study will, consequently, be in keeping with the participatory, experiential approach of Reason and Rowan's New Paradigm.

### **RESEARCH DESIGN**

Where the area to be researched is new or where existing theory seems to be inadequate, the case study method is considered to be particularly well suited (Eisenhardt 1989: 548-9). Further, this study is seeking to determine, to the extent possible, the real issues surrounding arts organisation evaluation and, as stated above, to penetrate beyond long-held prejudices and identify fundamental attitudes. Consequently, the case study approach is again considered appropriate as it is "strong in reality" (Cohen & Manion 1989: 146).

Although case study research has fairly recently been viewed as "something of a boom industry" (Cohen & Manion 1989: 122), the case study as a legitimate research method is not always fully accepted, with some noted academicians believing it only to be "useful in exploratory research" leading to "insights that could be in turn studied as research hypotheses" (Frankfort-Nachmais & Nachmais 1992: 142).

Others have also considered the case study to be a research technique that is insufficiently rigorous and which fails to provide

a strong basis for scientific generalisation to the same degree as does, for example, a scientific experiment. But Yin points out that this is no more nor less true for the case study than for the experiment. He maintains that both are appropriate methods for achieving certain aims but not for others: "Case studies, like experiments, are generalisable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes" (Yin 1994: 10). In other words, neither should be seen as representing 'samples' but can be used effectively for analytic generalisation but not for statistical generalisation. In this study, the purpose of the research is to expand and develop theories through analytic generalisation and not to generate statistical projections. The case study method is, therefore, once more, considered to be appropriate.

Again, on the issue of academic rigour, Eisenhardt (1989) contends that, although it is a common stereotype of case study researchers that they "find what they want to find", very often it is, in fact, the opposite that occurs, that case studies can act to open up the mind to find realities that are contrary to expectations and preconceptions, and enable the development of emerging paths of enquiry or the drawing of unanticipated conclusions (Cassel & Symon 1995: 213).

A variant on the 'case study' approach is the 'multiple case study.' Yin (1994) and Ghauri *et al.* (1995) suggest that conducting multiple case studies, with the research design similar for each case, could produce more persuasive conclusions. The "multi-case, replication design", states Yin (1994: 48), can offer "sufficient 'replications' to convince the reader of the general phenomenon."

The starting point of the research design, then, was to take the decision that the most appropriate method of gathering the relevant information for this investigation was to conduct case studies of two arts organisation evaluations undertaken by the arts councils.

It was felt that studying two evaluation procedures enabled the research to take account of the diverse natures of arts organisations, as was discussed earlier in Chapter 2. The organisation appraisals selected for observation enabled the study of both a performing arts and a visual arts organisation, a producer and a presenter, a smaller and a larger organisation, and one each in Wales and in England.

The evaluation process, of course, consists of more than simply the appraisal team visit; for both client and funder there is a significant preparation period, with preliminary meetings, meetings about meetings and Management Board meetings (for the appraisee) and team briefings (for the appraiser). There is also a process of debriefing and dealing with the consequences of the completed appraisal, as well as reporting back to Boards of Directors and committees. With each appraisal involving a time scale of between eleven and eighteen months (ACE 1994: Annex 1 (i) & 1 (ii)), the arts councils' cycle of client appraisals is spread over several years. Consequently, it was felt that seeking to study more than two appraisals, within the time scale of this investigation would have been impractical.

In order to identify the broad issues to be explored, unstructured interviews were conducted with several acquaintances in the arts world. These, then, informed the creation of a framework for

semi-structured interviews, which were subsequently conducted with leaders of sixteen arts organisations.

This number was not predetermined, although it had been thought at the outset that the study would require interviews at between a dozen and twenty organisations, given the time scale of the inquiry. Initially, the selection of these organisations involved the identification of a core through informal discussions both with artists and with officers of ACE and ACW. The selection was also informed by the researcher's own personal knowledge and experience of the field of study. Subsequently, as data emerged from interviews with the initial organisations, these data were used to guide the selection of additional organisations, as well as to formulate the agenda for the additional interviews.

As it eventually became evident that a consistent picture was emerging from the data, it was deemed that the sixteen organisations interviewed had provided sufficient data for analysis and the drawing of conclusions.

The sixteen organisations interviewed will not be described individually here (see 'Confidentiality' below) but have the following aggregate profile:

- 7 Drama organisations
- 2 Dance organisations
- 2 Music organisations
- 3 Visual Arts organisations
- 1 Multi-art form organisation
- 1 Literature organisation
- 9 Producing organisations

- 6 Presenters
  - 1 Multi-function organisation
  - 12 Small organisation
  - 4 Medium sized organisations
- 10 Organisations from Wales
  - 6 from England

As mentioned above, it was essential to gain the interviewees' trust and it was necessary to conduct some of the interviews within a context of informality, sometimes in a social milieu, engaging in what Kahn and Cannell (1957: 149) call "a conversation with a purpose".

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Another important matter in the conduct of the research was that of confidentiality. As stated earlier, the evaluation (appraisal) process is a critically important one which can have a significant impact on the financial (and general) health of an organisation. And, as was proposed in Chapter 3, the association between the arts councils and the funded organisations is one of a panoptic power relationship. Both these factors, together with the actual circumstances of any individual organisation and the broader context which may surround any particular appraisal, render the subject of this study, therefore, one of high sensitivity to the participants. In order to gain the trust of all parties interviewed or observed in this study, it was necessary, therefore, to give an assurance in writing, firstly, that the study was purely academic in nature and not undertaken as



part of a government or arts council sponsored consultancy and, secondly, that a code of strict confidentiality would be observed:

*'The information gathered in interviews will be used purely for the purpose of academic research and will be regarded as strictly confidential. If used in any subsequent academic paper or thesis, the source of the information will not be identified nor will it be attributable to any individual or organisation.'*<sup>1</sup>

Even this was insufficient assurance for the parties of one client appraisal, the circumstances of which were regarded by them to be so sensitive that consent for the researcher to be present at meetings was withdrawn at the last moment.

Consequently, none of the participants in this study will be identified in this document and, indeed, all efforts will be made to mask their, and their organisation's, identity throughout.

### **DATA ANALYSIS**

With the bulk of the important information sought being qualitative, great care had to be taken during analysis. A particular pitfall associated with processing qualitative data is that it is interpretative in its nature, and, as has been noted earlier, can be subject to researcher bias. Furthermore, analysing qualitative data will often require "interpretations of the interpretations" (Miles & Huberman 1994: 9), increasing the opportunities for analysis to be influenced by researchers' values.

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<sup>1</sup> Written communication from the researcher to individuals interviewed or observed.

But, as mentioned above, one cannot take one's self out of the research equation. The best we can do is to be fully aware of this risk and, in the interest of collecting data that is 'alive', engage in a process where the researcher, to use Reason and Rowan's term, is critically subjective.

In general, the pattern of analysis will follow that of a typical *Grounded Theory* approach (Glaser & Strauss 1967) which:

*"... works by collecting data, generalising findings into statements about possible relationships involved and checking out these statements by further data-collection to a point to which you can categorize types of result..."*

(Jankowicz 1997: 103)

In keeping with the co-operative experiential approach (Reason 1988) (and, indeed with the responsive mode (Guba & Lincoln 1989) the analysis of the qualitative data was formative and began as soon as the data collection itself began, and thus acted to inform and develop the direction of the research process.

Interviews were transcribed onto a word processor and analysed using The Ethnograph v5.0™ software. Throughout these transcriptions, tape counter numbers are used as references to indicate where on the tape the dialogue is located. In the following chapter, where the findings of the fieldwork are reported, and due to the confidentiality imperative indicated above, quotes from interviews will be identified only by coded references. A single letter (e.g. 'J') will refer to the particular interview and this will be followed by a number, which will refer

to the line number as it appears in *The Ethnograph™* transcription. Hence, the reference following a quote will appear, for example, as follows: (J145). If, at any point, it is necessary to check a reference contained in this thesis, the reference code will enable it to be traced to *The Ethnograph™* transcript, and the tape counter number given in the transcript will further enable it to be traced to the original tape recording. It is felt that this will allow for accurate traceability whilst, at the same time, honouring the assurance of confidentiality.

The full fieldwork research sequence is shown in *Figure 3* below:

- 1) Informal interviews with acquaintances in the arts world to identify broad areas for investigation.
- 2) Based on 1) above, draw up framework for semi-structured interviews.
- 3) Select 16 organisations for further interviews.
- 4) Conduct interviews with individuals from 16 arts organisations.
- 5) Conduct interviews with key individuals from ACW and ACE.
- 6) Conduct, through non-participatory observation, case studies of two client appraisals undertaken by ACW and ACE.
- 7) Analyse findings.
- 8) If appropriate, propose an alternative evaluation model.

**Figure 3: Fieldwork Research Sequence**

## **CONCLUSION**

The topic of this study is an important one that addresses an issue that is currently of concern to a great many arts practitioners and their funders. The conclusions drawn could well have an impact on the future conduct of the evaluation of arts organisations in the funded sector and it is important, therefore, that they are based on valid data.

The process outlined above was intended to ensure that the information gathered was that which was required for the completion of the study to a standard that can be accepted as reliable and valid.

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## CHAPTER 5

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### **“DOING EFFECTIVELY THAT WHICH SHOULD NOT BE DONE AT ALL”: FINDINGS OF THE DESK AND FIELDWORK**

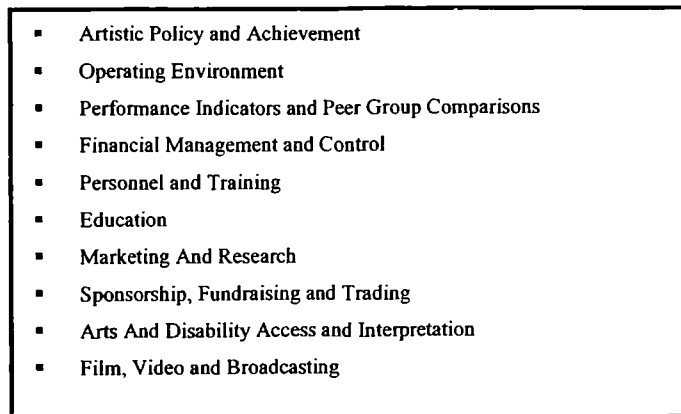
#### **OVERVIEW OF CURRENT ARTS COUNCIL APPRAISAL PROCEDURES**

Current arrangements for the appraisal of arts organisations are set out in handbooks of appraisal guidelines (ACE 1994; ACW 1997) and typically involve periodic visits (roughly once every three years) to the organisation, each lasting between one and three days. The visit is performed by an appraisal team which usually consists of arts council officers and members (usually 'lay people' or generalists), a representative of any local authority funding partners (again, usually non-experts in the arts), and sometimes outside consultants who may be needed to provide particular expertise - such as "management consultants, those with expertise in disability matters, architects or engineers" (ACW 1997).

In preparation for the visit, the arts organisation is required to submit comprehensive review and planning documentation which covers six areas: Artistic Programme, Marketing, Financial Performance, Management, Education/Outreach, and Equal Opportunities.

In addition, the organisation must submit a "record of income and expenditure during the last three years and a forecast of the same for the next three years" (ACW 1997; ACE 1994).

The actual appraisal process subsequently evaluates the organisation's work in respect of ten areas, which are contained in an agenda listed in Figure 4 below.

- 
- Artistic Policy and Achievement
  - Operating Environment
  - Performance Indicators and Peer Group Comparisons
  - Financial Management and Control
  - Personnel and Training
  - Education
  - Marketing And Research
  - Sponsorship, Fundraising and Trading
  - Arts And Disability Access and Interpretation
  - Film, Video and Broadcasting

(ACW 1997: 4 - 8)

**Figure 4: Arts Council of Wales 10 Areas of Appraisal**

Of the ten areas listed in Figure 4, only the first ('Artistic Policy and Achievement') deals directly with the organisation's artistic programme, and this is itself broken down into ten sub-agenda 'checklist' headings (see Figure 5 below), only three of which relate to the quality of the work performed. The other sub-agenda headings relate to matters of general policy, cultural diversity, arts and disability and public access.

1. Review quality of what is done: selection, ambition, range.
2. Assess future potential of current artistic direction.
3. Report on any key changes needed to improve potential.
4. Assess the extent to which the organisation is committed to new work and to developing new artistic talent.
5. Review/ assess commitment to Wales's art and artists.
6. Report on the use of the two languages of Wales.
7. Review opportunities for presentation of culturally diverse work.
8. Report on and review those policies aimed at broadening public access to the arts organisation's work, including distribution of its product, e.g. exhibitions, touring, broadcasting, etc.
9. Report on what developments in an international context the arts organisation is developing, and review what potential there might be for future development.
10. Report what developments in the context of arts and disability work the organisation is developing, and review what potential there is for future development. (Should include discussion of the following: Outreach work - taking workshops/ performances/ exhibitions, etc. to non arts venues; Ensure that artistic criteria apply to work undertaken; Question policy re: integration and segregation: Disabled people's art: Action Plan Statement).

(ACW 1997: 4)

**Figure 5: Appraisal Checklist – Artistic Policy & Achievement**

The stated 'purpose of the appraisal' (ACW 1997; ACE 1994) includes such objectives as: "to assist the organisation in reviewing the effectiveness of its operation", "to provide an authoritative document useful in discussions with other sources of finance", "to assist in demonstrating proper accountability for the use of public funds", and to ascertain to what extent the organisation has enabled the funding body's "own strategic objectives to be achieved". Evaluation of the artistic work is conspicuous by its absence from this list.

The agenda for this appraisal procedure is more than simply a means of guiding the conduct of the appraisal visit; it clearly sets out the areas in which the organisation was expected to have engaged during the years prior to the appraisal and as such displays the unmistakable characteristics of an explicit 'archive of rules' associated with Foucault's Panopticon. And, of course, the appraisal procedure itself is clearly part of the testing and inspection process associated with Panoptic surveillance.

In terms of evaluation practice, it exemplifies several of the criticisms levelled by Guba and Lincoln at older, 'third generation' models: the design of the evaluation is generally objective based, with the objectives, in effect, being those of the funding body, which is also the evaluator. The arts organisation, if it wishes to receive financial aid, has to adopt its funder's strategic objectives and then be judged by *determining the extent to which it has furthered those objectives*. This is also a form of 'disciplinary power' that is exercised by the funder over the arts organisation. Nor is there any mechanism for challenging these strategic objectives, to determine whether or not these objectives were worth pursuing in the first place.

In terms of the evaluation's design, it is clearly preordinate, leaving limited scope for the pursuit of issues that lie outside the parameters set out in these 'guidelines' or that might emerge from the appraisal process. There is little attempt to accommodate value pluralism, since the opinions that will matter will unmistakably be those of the funder's appraisal team and, as suggested earlier, since the 'commissioner' of the evaluation and the 'evaluator' are one and the same, the entire process is



vulnerable to accusations of 'cosy managerialism'. Midgley (1996: 69) states that there is often "no clear dividing line between evaluation and other methods of intervention", suggesting that within the context of this kind of 'managerialism', it is difficult to conduct *bona fide* evaluations since the evaluators are privy to information (such as constraints on future budgets, for example) that will colour the conduct of the evaluation. Some arts council clients have often suspected the arts councils' appraisals of being, in reality, little more than pretexts to justify freezing, or even cutting, grant in aid – "to get rid of the renegades, to get rid of the loose ends" in the words of the theatre director quoted in Chapter 2. Such suspicions could indicate the beginnings of resistance points that are characteristic of the Foucaultian power relationship.

Since these 'guidelines' are intended to apply to all organisations undergoing appraisals – no matter what their art form, scale of operation or particular circumstances (a sort of one-size-fits-all approach) – this design also effectively strips the organisation of its own particular context, limiting its ability to present itself in the manner it would choose and, thus further sowing the seeds of resistance.

Reports from such appraisal tend to fall into the Tylerian mould, offering description and very little judgement. Reading many of the reports, one is certainly struck by the incidence of what Scriven calls 'value-phobia' (Scriven 1986: 116). The report issued following the appraisal meeting in the first case study (reported below) is an example of this and in the interviews with arts organisations (also reported below) several interviewees also refer to the rather anodyne nature of the appraisal reports that

frequently did little more than reproduce the information that was submitted to the arts council by the client in the first place.

These appraisals, as befits exercises which give prominence to evaluating performance in such areas as revenue generation, compliance with legislation and the organisation's attempts to market its work and attract audiences, tend, as mentioned in the introduction to this paper, to rely heavily on statistical measures to generate performance indicators and generally skirt around those issues that are difficult to measure quantitatively or which require aesthetic judgement.

But it is not only arts organisations that have concerns about forms of evaluation that rely heavily on quantitative performance indicators; even large private sector organisations are beginning to feel that such performance indicators do not tell, either in social or in economic terms, the full story of their performance. They also fear that such headline messages as are often derived from data supplied by quantitative performance indicators may lead to a reductionist "judgement by anecdote" (Raynard 1997: 16) and hence "crass calculations" (Blake *et al.* 1976: 42). Perhaps the greatest problem with performance indicators, from the artist's point of view, is that they are generally based on data that speak very little of that which is important to the artist – creativity, innovation, boldness of vision, and so on. Instead, these indicators tend to measure the market response to the artist's work rather than evaluate the artistic qualities of the work itself. And although, as stated earlier, artists in receipt of public monies acknowledge the importance of public accountability (Pate 1998: 127), they also feel that any appraisal procedure

should take into consideration the imperatives of the creative process and the aesthetic qualities of the art they generate, which they produce in response to creative forces rather than market forces. To artists, "cultural production is not seen as a process of commodity exchange at all" (Lewis 1990: 141).

It could also be said that, in Pierre Bourdieu's terms (1993: 114), the artists' objection to performance indicators is a reaction against "the emergence of the work of art as a commodity". As Cohen and Pate (2000: 110) point out, historically there has been a strong tendency for the arts to be regarded as concerned with the non-material and the spiritual, "(looking) beyond machinery" (Arnold 1869: 209). It is possible to assert, however, that, nowadays, if artists were to reject appraisal on the grounds that it did not reflect their aesthetic concerns, their best interests might not be served. That many artists may recognise this, is suggested by recent research by Pate (1998) which discovered that most artists have a profoundly pragmatic approach to the maintenance of their livelihood and, so, will generally (although often grudgingly) comply with the 'archive of rules' and the 'micro-analyses' that are imposed upon them in order not to jeopardise their future security, thus perpetuating the 'self-disciplinary' 'training' that is at the heart of the panoptic schema.

### **ACE'S PILOT SOCIAL AUDIT**

In Chapter 3, it was noted that the Arts Council of England had, in 1998, commissioned a pilot Social Audit of one of its clients. The client was a large producing and presenting theatre and the procedure followed for the Social Audit was essentially that

which was illustrated in Figure 1 and was conducted by a single, professional social auditor. Firstly, the stakeholders of the organisation were identified, and these are shown in Figure 6 below.

- **Audience.**
- **Community & City:** schools, universities and colleges, youth & community groups, voluntary organisations, city council departments, day centres, community centres, libraries, the Cathedral & religious groups, local media.
- **Professional:** local & visiting theatre companies and arts organisations, freelance artists, actors, designers, arts & media training, arts marketing organisations, agents, Equity & professional institutions.
- **Financial:** *Local Authority Leisure Services, Regional Arts Board, commercial sponsors, charities, ABSA, the EU*
- **Internal:** staff, board members, access group, Friends' Association.

(Source: Unpublished pilot social audit undertaken for ACE)

**Figure 6: Examples of the Theatre's Stakeholders**

Secondly, consultation with the stakeholders was used to establish their "claims, concerns and issues" (Guba and Lincoln 1989: 42) which were then taken into account when drawing up a list of the theatre's objectives, shown in Figure 7 below.

- Arts**
- Produce high-quality, diverse theatre appropriate to the city
  - Produce work which expands horizons and changes people's perceptions
  - Act as a flagship for the arts, promoting excellence and the value of creativity

**Arts** (continued)

- Provide support for professional and community-based theatre groups and individuals
- Link the international with the local, valuing both
- Remain open to all kinds and means of expression

**Community**

- Advance personal and community development through its work
- Support the involvement of schools and young people in theatre
- Include disabled people, ethnic minority groups and others throughout its work
- Work to eliminate barriers to access of all kinds
- Work with local companies to promote social responsibility

**Partnerships**

- Consult widely, give people a voice and listen to what they say
- Build good relationships with all kinds of groups and organisations
- Be good custodians of the reputation of the theatre's partners
- Be open and honest about its policies and decisions
- Demonstrate its trust in the people it works with, and its trustworthiness

**City**

- Welcome large audiences from across the whole community
- Provide leadership in local cultural development, and represent the city nationally
- Support local economic development and the business community
- Encourage a sense of local ownership by local people
- Celebrate and promote the achievement of the theatre and its partners

(Continued...)

<b>Overall standards</b>
▪ Manage its affairs efficiently and effectively
▪ Be a good employer and promote training
▪ Make people feel confident of its operation
▪ Provide consistency in its contacts with its partners

(Source: Unpublished pilot social audit undertaken for ACE)

**Figure 7: Examples of the Theatre's Stakeholder-derived Objectives**

These objectives were then used, again in consultation with the previously identified stakeholders, as a basis from which to determine the various indicators against which the organisation should measure its performance.

And following this 'scoping' process the audit-proper was conducted and involved a range of techniques that included further stakeholder consultation (focus group meetings, interviews, and questionnaires), internal and external document review, data analysis, preparation of social accounts, writing of reports, external verification, and, subsequently, publication of the report.

As indicated in the introductory chapter, arts funding bodies have acknowledged that the appraisal systems currently employed are not entirely satisfactory and are seeking ways of improving this important process. ACE has yet to come to a decision as to whether the Social Audit pilot was a success or not, although the individual commissioned to conduct the Social Audit, claims it was and advocates its continued utilisation. In the meantime, the majority of appraisals conducted by the arts councils follow the traditional procedures outlined at the beginning of this chapter.

## THE FIELDWORK

As described in the previous chapter, the fieldwork consisted of two components: the non-participatory observation of appraisals undertaken by the arts councils of two of their funded organisations, on the one hand, and, on the other, a series of interviews with key figures from a variety of funded arts organisations and with officers from funding bodies.

The interviews were the main source of primary data for this study. The interviewing period spanned some two and a half years in total, yet after only a relatively few interviews with artists, it became evident that, even though the interviewees came from a broad range of arts organisations in greatly differing situations, *the themes that arose during interviews bore a striking similarity*. Apart from one or two cases, the points that interviewees wished to make were largely identical. In discussing the arts councils' current evaluation practice, not only were they critical of the same issues but also tended to identify the same positive aspects. And as the schedule of interviews progressed, this continued to be the case. However, there were varying nuances of intensity and passion in the attitudes of individuals and, indeed, some were more insightful than others in their analysis of the arts councils' appraisal process and of their own organisation's relationship with their funders. Some had very strong views regarding the *status quo* and offered, in some cases, quite radical alternatives, many of which, in keeping with the Grounded Theory approach, it was then possible to feed into subsequent interviews to seek others' opinions in their regard.

Many of the issues raised by interviewees corroborated those which had been observed in actual appraisals and, in that

respect, the data gathered during the appraisal observations and the interviews were mutually reinforcing.

The consistent nature of the primary data obtained during both aspects of the field research, then, has led to a feeling of confidence that these data provide a fair reflection of the opinions and feelings of those studied – their ‘claims, concerns and issues’ (Guba and Lincoln 1989: 42) – and that the information generated is reliable and a sound basis upon which to draw conclusions.

The appraisal observations were conducted prior to the majority of the interviews so that, in addition to being an important source of data, they also served to inform the conduct and content of the interviews, and to provide a background against which the interviews were performed.

### **APPRAISAL MEETING OBSERVATIONS**

Appraisal meetings, by their very nature, are considered by the participants (both appraiser and appraisee) to be occasions of some considerable sensitivity, and the consent of both parties had to be obtained in order to attend. Indeed, one appraisal that was on the list to be observed was, eventually, felt to be too sensitive and permission for me to attend was ultimately withdrawn. However, once consent was given for my attendance, all parties were *fully co-operative and I was given* copies of all the documentation used for the meetings some two weeks prior to their taking place. In arranging to attend the appraisal meetings, assurances were given, in writing, of strict confidentiality and, consequently, the two organisations involved, as well as the specific arts councils, will not be



identified. It is sufficient to say that one of those appraised was a performing arts organisation and the other a visual arts organisation. One was appraised by the Arts Council of England and the other by the Arts Council of Wales. Both meetings took place in the client organisation's premises.

There was one fundamental difference between the two meetings: one was conducted by a team of two art-form officers and lasted no more than a few hours, whereas the other was a much more formal affair, involving an appraisal team consisting of two 'members' (one the Artistic Director of a theatre and the other a producer and an arts management consultant) supported by four arts council officers – a touring officer, a finance officer and a director and an officer from the art-form department. This meeting lasted an entire day, from 9:00 am until about 8:30 pm. Despite the difference in scale and demeanour, the accounts given below will show that, to a large extent, the tenor of both meetings, and the underlying suppositions, were very similar indeed. These accounts will not seek to reproduce the detail of the matters discussed or of the written submissions but will, rather, reflect the broader issues of agenda, general content and demeanour of the appraisal visit.

### **Appraisal 1: Performing Arts Client**

The day began with the team members and officers joining the organisation's key employees for refreshments. This took place in the cosy, comfortable setting of the general office, which had clearly been 'spruced up' by the staff and decorated with cut flowers. The welcome was friendly, with coffee, tea, juices, fruit and pastries on offer. One detected a somewhat forced

bonhomie with overtly 'luvvy' behaviour – hugs, kisses and anecdote swapping – very evident. Was this 'public performance' one facet of the dual demeanour of the 'official' and 'hidden transcript' (Scott 1990: xii)?

The appraisal meeting proper took place in the rehearsal studio – a large, rather stark, functional space with a conference table in the centre. At a stroke, therefore, the ambiance transformed from one of low-key cordiality to that of a rather formal, austere remoteness.

Proceedings began with a short meeting of the appraisal team behind closed doors, essentially to carry out introductions (the team members had not previously met some of the officers) and to determine the logistics of the meeting – who would take the chair, protocol for the meeting's conduct, and so on. The meeting would take the form of a sequence of sessions, during which various members of the organisation's staff (individually and in various combinations) would meet with the team to go through a previously agreed agenda. One of the appraisal team's members – an intended third member – had been unable to attend at the last moment and there was a certain amount of rejigging that needed to be undertaken.

About a fortnight prior to the meeting, the team had received a pack, prepared by arts council officers (including those who were in attendance), 189 pages long, that contained the following:

- ◆ General briefing paper, prepared by arts council officers, for the team

- ◆ Briefing paper, prepared by officers, on the organisation's finances (derived from the organisation's financial submissions to the arts council, and audited accounts)
- ◆ The organisation's appraisal submission
- ◆ The funding agreement between the organisation and the arts council
- ◆ The organisation's audited financial accounts
- ◆ A dossier of comments from touring venues
- ◆ A dossier of show reports from the previous six years
- ◆ The report of the last previous appraisal (1995)

*General briefing paper:* Two pages that outlined the organisation's Background and History; Touring; Marketing; Management; Training; and a Summary paragraph that referred briefly to the quality of the organisation's work and set out the key issues to be discussed as: Management Structure, Risk Assessment, Project Planning and Management, Strategic Alliances, Financial Structure and Development, and Sustainable Planning and development.

*Financial briefing paper:* Five pages of background and analysis beginning with the organisation's legal status and its 'Mission Statement'. This was followed by sections on Financial history and current position; Financial controls; Financial reporting; Budget process; and Comparator analysis. This latter section was the most detailed and included text and tables which, in turn, compared:

1. The organisation's results over the 3 years 1997-2000, highlighting Earned Income, Artistic Expenditure, Overhead Costs, Total Expenditure, and number of performances

2. Trading History and forward planning over the 5 years 1999-2004
3. Balance sheets for 5 years 1995-2000
4. Comparison of several of the organisation's statistical indicators with those of two other performing arts organisations over the three years 1997-2000. The key indicators were: Subsidy % of total income; Earned income as a % of total income; Contributed income as a % of total income ; Artistic expenditure as a % of total expenditure; Marketing expenditure as a % of total expenditure; Staff and overhead expenditure as a % of total expenditure; Attendance per performance; Subsidy per performance; and Subsidy per attendance.

*Appraisal Submission:* A fifty-five page document prepared by the organisation in the format required by the arts councils.

Sections were:

- ◆ Statement of current policy
- ◆ Review of achievements during 1998-2001
  - Artistic
  - Marketing
  - Finance
  - Management & Board Development
  - Training & Education
  - Equal Opportunities
- ◆ SWOT Analysis
- ◆ Progress achieved towards stated objectives

- ◆ Plans for 2001/2 – 2003/4
  - Artistic
  - Marketing
  - Finance
  - Management & Board Development
  - Training & Education
  - Equal Opportunities
- ◆ Key Strategic Issues
- ◆ Income and Expenditure records & forecasts 1998-2004
- ◆ Equal Opportunities Policy
- ◆ List of productions 1995-2001
- ◆ Board of Directors
- ◆ Summary notes of management consultation [commissioned by the organisation and completed just prior to the appraisal]
- ◆ Interim Business Plan 2000-2003

*Funding Agreement:* Sixteen pages of *pro formae* copied from a thirty-five page funding agreement between the organisation and the arts council. These consisted of tables of statistical data and tick boxes in respect of analyzing such matters as: Location, Type of Activity, Employment (Permanent, Contractual, Volunteer, Staff development), Disability, Cultural Diversity, Income and Expenditure, Activity, Touring, Education Activity, Participation Activity.

*Audited Accounts:* Formal financial accounts prepared by a firm of Chartered Accountants and Registered Auditors

*Comments from touring venues:* A dossier of letters, e-mails and notes from telephone conversations from nine touring venues

*Show reports:* A dossier of twenty-seven one-page, *pro forma* show reports from the previous six years [submitted by a number of the AC's advisors']

*1995 Appraisal report:* A thirty page document giving the formal report following the last previous appraisal.

The team had taken their seats around the table, leaving empty seats at one end for people to come and 'give evidence' – as in a hearing. (Indeed, the subsequent formal report of this meeting uses the term "taking evidence.")

The first session involved both the Artistic Director (AD) and the General Manager (GM) and lasted from 9:45 until 11:20. The first half-hour was taken up by presentations from both. The AD immediately identified the key issue for him as one of seeking to re-establish the 'artistic imperative' as the *raison d'être* of his organisation. Socio-political agendas, he complained, had gradually taken over as the driving force behind the company. However, very little was said at this point about the work itself.

The GM talked about the strength of communication between him and the AD and how the discussion of artistic matters was important to the running of the company. There was then a brief discussion about the company's artistic policy and the AD's artistic vision. The discussion turned rather quickly to consider the place of the organisation within the arts council's strategic view. The AD then sought to elicit from the appraisal team the reason

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<sup>1</sup> The arts councils maintain an informal and fluid 'bank' of individuals (artists, arts administrators and lay arts enthusiasts) who attend arts events the length and breadth of the country and complete short, *pro forma* reports on the events they attend.

for the arts council's funding – was it because of the company's success in furthering certain aspects of the arts council's socio-political agenda or was it because of the excellence of its work? A member of the team stated that it was much easier for the arts council to fund an organisation that addresses its socio-political policies (it was easier to measure) than it was to fund a particular artist or a creative vision.

There was a brief conversation about the need for more discussion about the artistic work but there was, in fact, no discussion of the work at all.

There then followed a brief discussion on the respective roles of the AD and the GM and how the two worked together.

Following a coffee break, the next session (11:30-12:45) dealt with management issues. Initially with the AD and the GM, then at 12:00 the AD left the room and at 12:20 the Administrator (Ad) and the Administrative Assistant (AA) joined the session. This session was characterized by a rather rambling, unfocused discussion that included a range of inter-related management matters: management structure, roles of personnel, issues of job fulfillment and job design, logistics, communication between the management and the Board of Directors, and day-to-day administration issues.

Following the departure of the AD and the arrival of the Ad and the AA, the discussion shifted to that of financial controls. The GM explained the systems employed for dealing with cheque signing and petty cash, including some changes in procedure that he intended to implement, and outlined the procedure for

periodic scrutiny of management accounts by the Board. The GM then tabled some updated management accounts but they were not looked at nor was there any discussion of them whatsoever.

When the AD rejoined the meeting at 12:45, the next session considered the issue of touring. The discussion centred around the organisation's relationship with venues: good and bad practice, balance between middle- and large-scale venues, the booking process, who is responsible for booking the company's tours.

The AD and the GM explained that the relationship with venues is different in each case and that practice differed from venue to venue – there was no one pattern nor one way to conduct these relationships. The balance between large- and middle-scale venues was dependant on the artistic nature of the production being toured and varied from season to season.

At 13:50, the meeting adjourned to the general office for a buffet lunch which was attended by the team, the officers and the organisation's staff. The morning's sessions had dealt with four inter-related areas of the organisation's operation – Artistic matters, Management/Administration, Finance, and Touring. In summary the discussions could be characterized as follows:

*Artistic:* Discussion centered around the processes involved in developing artistic policy. The AD, on more than one occasion, emphasised the need for the 'artistic imperative' and artistic considerations to replace socio-political issues as the driving force behind the company. Some discussion about the need to



discuss the artistic work, but no actual discussion of the work and nothing that would contribute to evaluating the company's artistic work.

*Management/Administration:* Discussion of roles, structures, job satisfaction, job design and staff training but no discussion of the effectiveness, or otherwise, of the management and administration.

*Finance:* Discussion of the broad issues of financial controls, staff and Board responsibilities but no discussion of the budgets. None of the issues in the financial briefing paper touched upon.

*Touring:* Discussion of relationships with venues. Many 'on the road' anecdotes from both sides of the meeting but no discussion of the effectiveness (or otherwise) of touring strategy or practice.

Following lunch, the meeting reconvened with the team, the AD and the GM joined by the Ad, a free-lance marketing consultant (who had worked with the company on one of its tours) and a part-time educational outreach worker. This session lasted 50 minutes and dealt with Marketing, with the consultant explaining some of the mechanics and techniques that he had employed. There was some discussion of marketing strategies.

The outreach worker, employed on a project-by-project basis by the company, described her work and some of the processes and techniques she employed.

The following 35 minutes concentrated on Education and Training but, bizarrely, the Educational Outreach Worker left before this session began. The AD and GM described various projects established to give experience and exposure to directors, designers and musicians and outlined a recently introduced mentoring scheme. The GM presented a brief case-study of a recent education project in schools.

At this point the AD, GM and Ad left the meeting and a 10 minute session was held with a company manager who had toured with the latest production. She gave anecdotes of 'life on the road'.

Following her departure, 10 minutes were spent by the team (alone) discussing the income generating potential of the organisation's premises.

Following a coffee break, an hour-long session was held between the team members (without the arts council officers) and the AD and GM to discuss the organisation's relationship with the arts council officers. On the whole this was deemed to be good but the company had to deal with more than one department and relationships with some departments were better than others and sometimes dealing with several departments proved to be complex, with procedures, demands and requirements of each being different.

The next 45 minutes (17:40 – 18:25) was devoted to the team and officers meeting with three members of the organisation's Board of Directors. The team wished to know what skills and experience the board members brought to the organisation. They explained

that, between them, they had Marketing, Fundraising and Legal expertise and that they had been able to assist in these areas when required. However, they explained, apart from their statutory duties as company directors, they also felt it was their duty to assist in developing the organisation's artistic vision and direction and that this was regularly discussed at Board level.

The Board members departed and at 18:25 the final session began. This was an *in camera* session for the team members and officers to sum up among themselves and give their impressions of the day. They listed the key areas to have emerged from the day as:

- ◆ The relationship between the administration and the Board of Directors
- ◆ The Role of the Board of Directors
- ◆ The relationship between the organisation and the arts council
- ◆ Contract procedures/ human resource issues
- ◆ Rights and royalty issues
- ◆ Booking of tours
- ◆ Relationship with peers (other artists)
- ◆ Risk analysis required for non-core projects
- ◆ Relationship with local authority
- ◆ Quality and maturity of the relationships between members of the core staff
- ◆ The organisation was felt to be a part of the arts council national strategy
- ◆ The need for the organisation to be open to advice on certain specialist areas (e.g. drawing up contracts)

The meeting ended at 19:10 and the team and officers invited the AD, GM and Ad to join them for drinks and light food at a nearby establishment.

The afternoon sessions had dealt with five areas: Marketing, Education and Training, Touring Practice, Relationships with the arts council, The Board of Directors, and could be characterized as follows:

*Marketing:* One of the team clearly had a background in Marketing and this discussion with the marketing consultant dealt with real issues surrounding the marketing of the company and sought to identify examples of both good and bad practice.

*Education and Training:* This discussion looked at some of the processes and techniques used by the company. The GM's presentation described one project in schools. Essentially this outlined the administration and mechanics of the project and the nature of the work.

*Touring Practice:* This was essentially an opportunity to meet someone from outside the permanent staff, enabling her to give her opinion of how the company's touring operated. It undoubtedly gave the team a somewhat fuller picture of the company's activities, although little new information was gleaned.

*Relationships with the arts council:* Although this was deemed to be generally good, this was a useful session in which some practical issues were discussed.

*The Board of Directors:* An opportunity to meet some members of the Board. Mostly a courtesy session, it no doubt reassured the team that the organisation's Board was fully informed, active, energetic and standing four-square behind the company's work and its personnel.

The formal appraisal report was completed just over six months after the visit. It was thirty pages in length and was broken down into the following headings:

- ◆ Summary
- ◆ Recommendations
- ◆ Purpose of Appraisal
- ◆ Appraisal Team
- ◆ Appraisal Process
- ◆ Company History
- ◆ Artistic Policy and Vision
- ◆ Artistic Planning and Productions
- ◆ Touring
- ◆ The Role of the Company in the Wider Theatre Ecology
- ◆ Marketing
- ◆ Training
- ◆ Management
- ◆ Staffing
- ◆ Financial History and Current Position
- ◆ Financial Controls
- ◆ Financial Reporting
- ◆ Budget Process
- ◆ Three Year Plan 2000 – 2003
- ◆ Comparator Analysis
- ◆ Premises

There are five key recommendations in the report and twenty other recommendations. The key recommendations relate to administrative and management matters, save for one, which recommends that the company, with regard to an upcoming production, allow more time for artistic development than has been possible in the past.

Of the other recommendations, all are in respect of management and administrative issues. Some are matters which the company raised themselves in the meeting, for example: The need to impose limits on the size of cheques that staff members can sign as single signatories, and the need to review the job descriptions of staff members.

There is one section which refers to the company's artistic work – short quotes are reproduced from the show reports that were included in the team's pack. There are six quotes in all, and as the report states, they are "varied, but all recognize the strength of the work".

This sentence, indeed, is the only place in the report that offers any statement of judgement about the company's work. There is one sentence in the summary that refers to "...this positive Appraisal", although the tenor of the report is neutral and anodyne. Much of the content reiterates information and data that was contained in the organisation's original submissions.

It is interesting to note, in light of that which is said later in this chapter by interviewees, that the section of the report that comes under the heading of "Comparator Analysis" contains

only one sentence, stating that it had been decided not to include comparators, as there were no other funded organisations of a similar nature – this despite the fact that in the briefing papers used in the meeting, statistical comparisons with two other organisations had been included.

### **Appraisal 2: Visual Arts Client**

As indicated earlier, this was not as elaborate a meeting as the one described above in respect of the performing arts client's appraisal. The meeting is officially described as an 'Annual Review' meeting and, as this title suggests, differs fundamentally from the meeting described above in that it occurs annually and not on a three- to five-year basis. However, there was no doubt that, from the client organisation's perspective, this was considered in every other way a formal meeting between the arts council and one of its clients to appraise its performance and programme over the past twelve months.

As stated earlier, the visiting 'team' comprised two arts council visual arts officers (one of which was the Senior Officer) and they met with the client organisation's Director alone. The team arrived at the organisation's premises in the early afternoon and the meeting was held in a well-lit but rather untidy gallery/workroom which was clearly currently being used for art workshops, as it was cluttered with art materials, children's bags, satchels and coats. Indeed, after about an hour, the meeting was interrupted for about ten minutes when about fifty schoolchildren, of primary school age, came to collect their belongings. One suspected that, in contrast to the performing arts organisation, who had smartened up their premises in preparation for the appraisal team's visit, this organisation had

perhaps deliberately dressed down for the occasion and arranged for the meeting to take place in a working section of their premises in order to emphasise the bustling, active nature of their operation.

There was clearly a good relationship between the team and the Director and the atmosphere was low-key and relaxed. The Director, who had several year's experience in dealing with the arts council, seemed full of confidence and both parties behaved in a cordial, business-like manner, as if to say, 'It's good to see you again but let's get down to business as we've all got plenty of other things to do today.'

In preparation for the meeting, the Director had received a two-page letter from the Senior Officer to explain the purpose of the meeting. In general, it was "about the finalising of the funding agreements between the arts council and your organisation." In particular it would involve agreeing targets for the coming two years and to review the programme of work undertaken during the current year.

The letter also indicated the intention to employ, in future, a "lighter touch" in respect of clients. In this regard consideration was being given to "reducing the number of monitoring meetings", "placing more trust in the client's board of management", and "placing more emphasis on monitoring activity, e.g. attending events, performances and workshops".

Attached to the letter were two blank *pro formae* which the organisation were required to complete prior to the meeting.



The first of these related to "Output Statistics" for three years in respect of seven indicators, including such categories as number of events *per annum*, number of attendances, number of workshops offered, and attendances at those workshops.

The second was for "Financial Information" and was a one-page income and expenditure summary sheet for the same three years.

Also enclosed with the letter was a copy of a ten-page 'Annual Review and Application Report' document. This was a formal document prepared and signed by the Senior Officer (and counter-signed by his superior) reporting on the previous year's meeting. This report contained the following headings:

- ◆ Rational for Support
- ◆ Checklist of eligibility criteria
- ◆ Comment on quality of activity
- ◆ Comment of outputs and trends
- ◆ Organisational effectiveness
- ◆ Comment on financial management
- ◆ Comment on figures and trends
- ◆ Marketing
- ◆ Self-evaluation and monitoring
- ◆ Pursuit of equal opportunities
- ◆ Development of artist-presenter relationship
- ◆ Effectiveness in progressing relevant arts council programme objectives
- ◆ Relationship with the arts council
- ◆ Summary of requirements [targets, conditions of grant aid following the meeting]

Coffee and biscuits were brought in and the meeting began with the Senior Officer, who led the meeting throughout, indicating that, although the meeting would not be conducted in a formal manner he would structure it around the following agenda:

- ◆ Forward Planning
- ◆ Funding agreement
  - Financial outturns
  - Finalise targets
  - Conditions of grant
  - Needs analysis

The discussion that followed was fairly perfunctory – using as a check list the statistical *pro formae* submitted prior to the meeting – and covering, in turn, financial figures, workshop figures, exhibition figures, costings.

The question was raised as to how one could best evaluate the success of schools workshops and there was a brief discussion about this but no conclusions were drawn.

The organisation had recently been awarded an Investor in People certificate and this was considered briefly.

The rest of the meeting covered the following issues (in order):

- ◆ Exhibition schedule planning
- ◆ Exhibition programme
- ◆ Logistics of mounting exhibitions
- ◆ Balance of programme content (2-dimensional, 3-dimensional, craft, art, etc)

- ◆ Fixed term funding
- ◆ Number of shows per year
- ◆ Publications
- ◆ Promotional material
- ◆ Outreach work and methods of recording statistics for outreach activities
- ◆ Staffing complement
- ◆ Workload capabilities
- ◆ Management accounts
- ◆ Financial dealings with local authority
- ◆ Cash-flow
- ◆ Board control over finances
- ◆ Board members' financial training
- ◆ Staff training budget
- ◆ Financial software package employed by organisation
- ◆ Condition of grant – organisation must formulate written marketing strategy
- ◆ Arts council attendances at Board meetings

The Director raised the question of the need to talk about art and the Senior Officer acknowledged that very little is discussed about art in annual review meetings. (Indeed, there was no such discussion during the entire meeting.)

The rest of the meeting was devoted to assessing the needs of the organisation. The matters discussed related to future funding, staffing, exhibition spaces, touring, career opportunities for artists, and the arts funding system in general. Under this last point, the Director stated the imperative, in his view, for the funding bodies to employ art-form specialists. It was essential, he said, for the

arts funders to have strong art-form voices and he feared the trend of employing generalist officers.

The meeting lasted a total of two hours.

No report was ever received by the client from this meeting. The Director did say, however, several months later, that the meeting had been very helpful. He suggested that, even though it would have been useful to have a report ('for the files') the real benefit of the meeting had been the opportunity to sit down and talk over issues with the funding body.

He had learned to 'live' with the fact that in such meetings one was obliged to endure a deal of perfunctory box ticking and some irrelevant items, together with the fact that one never seemed to have the opportunity to discuss the artistic work. Nevertheless, the meetings did offer the opportunity to gain a certain clarification as to the funding body's current thinking and its expectations of his organisation (R9).

It is interesting to note that the broad agenda for both meetings was essentially the same, even though the two organisations operated within two completely different art forms, budgetary scale, and overall circumstances. In the first case, of course, the agenda items were discussed in greater detail and depth but the topics that predominated in both instances were management issues. Indeed, to a casual observer, the second meeting could almost have been taken for a senior management team meeting, although there was present, throughout, a similar kind of underlying tension to that which was present in the first meeting observed.

In both instances, discussion was almost entirely devoid of any consideration of the organisations' artistic work – a point that was itself raised by both organisations during their respective meetings.

These two issues – the one-size-fits-all approach to appraising organisations no matter what their particular individual circumstances, and the lack of explicit consideration of their artistic work – were also to emerge, as we shall see below, as key issues raised during the interviews with artists.

### **THE INTERVIEWS AT ARTS ORGANISATIONS**

As stated earlier, in addition to undertaking non-participatory observations of two arts council appraisal meetings, interviews with key individuals from arts organisations were also undertaken. All, apart from two, were conducted in the interviewees' place of work and each lasted about an hour or a little longer.

In order to uphold the confidentiality assurance given to interviewees, the referencing system for interview quotes, as described in the previous chapter, comprises a letter (interview code) followed by a number, which indicates the line reference in The Ethnograph™ transcription.

As was indicated earlier, many of the interviewees made similar points during the course of their interviews. However, due to the semi-structured nature of the interviews, these points did not emerge neatly, in the same order or in the same form in all the interviews. Consequently, the subheadings that appear in the report below are intended to enable various strands from the different interviews to be drawn together. Some of the

subheadings correspond to coding themes that emerged from the data themselves, while others were created in order to add coherence to the issues raised.

### **Positive experiences from Arts Council client evaluation**

All interviewees had undergone some form of arts council evaluation (appraisal) in recent years and, despite the fact that every one of them expressed varying degrees of criticism and misgivings of the appraisal practice currently in place, they all held the opinion that appraisal, *per se*, was an extremely important part of their relationship with their funding body. As the director of a music festival said, when asked if the very notion of appraisal by a funding body was appropriate, "It's not only legitimate, it's absolutely essential" (I203).

Several reasons were given for this. At the most fundamental level, all believed that where the allocation of public monies was concerned, accountability for those monies was proper. Said one art centre manager, "... if you're using public money to undertake some activity, then I see that there's no reason why that shouldn't be evaluated and accounted for" (G39). And a gallery manager added that the discipline imposed by regular evaluation was important, "I think you have to have some form of appraisal, I have to say. It's very easy to be given public money and actually just spend it...." (F110). And a theatre company director, " I think they [appraisals] impose a discipline, which is good. I mean we would all like an easy life..." (A130).

It was clearly well appreciated that the funding bodies themselves were also accountable to their respective sponsoring government departments and that this necessitated certain

obligations that then filtered down to clients: "I understand that they're accountable to the government, so they've got to ensure that they're evaluating clients and all the rest of it and getting information..." (A133).

Alongside the view that appraisal was proper in terms of public funding accountability, the majority also saw appraisal as an important component in the process by which the arts councils sought to confirm that their funds were being deployed appropriately. "From the arts council point of view, I know it's not a huge amount of money that they give us every year, but I understand that they have to be constantly checking who they're giving the money to, to make sure it's going to the right place.... They have to, somehow or other, however flawed the method is, have some basis on which they can make their decisions" (D45).

And this was consistent with the position of the arts councils themselves. Although not stated in their own policy documents (ACE 1994; ACW 1997) officers stated that appraisals were key elements in the process of re-confirming their decisions to fund organisations in the first place, "The arts council has to ask itself the question why it funds a company; has a company found a new life, is it invigorated, why do we keep putting public money into these things? So it's time for the arts council to qualify why the funding is given – and to be sure about it" (H45).

The part played by appraisal in the process of public accountability and of its role in the arts councils' funding process was, therefore, widely appreciated and supported by clients but beyond that, many felt that undergoing appraisal had other

positive benefits to their organisation. At one level they felt that during the period of preparation for the appraisal, there had been useful consequences, in that they had, essentially, been forced to sit down as a team and clarify what it was they were doing: "We prepared a draft document which we took to the Board and we then had an away day with the Board. The first part of that – staff only – was extremely good; helped develop ideas in a very clear, coherent way for us" (E16); "The process leading up to it had been a positive, useful one for the company" (E58), and, "I think it does help you to focus and that is a positive thing, it does make you take stock...."(L56).

It was interesting to note that several interviewees felt that such positive experiences were the result of their preparation work for appraisals – a kind of indirect benefit – and not one derived from the appraisal process as a whole: "There was a kind of increasing clarity on the part of the organisation. It helped us to underpin our own thinking. So it was a kind of validation that came out of the process. But I think it was a spin off of the appraisal process rather than being an integral part of it" (P425).

Nevertheless, whilst appreciating the benefits derived from devoting significant periods of time to a process of thought and reflection about their work, there was also the admission that, due to the pressure of work, it was highly unlikely that they could allocate such extended spells to this kind of activity on a regular basis, "I would imagine that without the imperative of knowing that there is an appraisal on such-and-such a date and that the arts council needs the document two weeks beforehand or whatever, without those deadlines we would be in danger, in



two or three years' time of saying, 'Oh, we must do another one of those; so, OK, let's do it after this and let's do it after that and actually it sort of dissipates and doesn't happen...." (E94).

### **It's good to talk....**

Others felt appraisals were important in that they gave them a rare opportunity to sit down with their funders to discuss their work. "They're flawed but actually they can be very useful points of contact both for the organisation and, obviously, for the funding body," (C72) and, "I think it was good to be able to talk to our officer at the arts council..." (L109) – the implication being that such opportunities arose all too infrequently. An important aspect of the relationship between arts organisations and their funders, then, appears to be the need on the part of the organisation to have far more regular contact with the arts councils. Such communication serves partly to offer the opportunity to discuss one's work and to gain approval (or otherwise) of one's efforts but also to provide opportunities for the arts councils' officers and members to keep abreast of what is going on in the field, something that many interviewees felt they were increasingly failing to do: "Well, they're useful in as much as they give you one afternoon a year where you and the arts council are talking about the same thing – and so they focus us on what the arts council wants from us and, hopefully, they focus the arts council on what we're doing" (J16).

One feels also that this desire for more contact with the arts councils on the part of the organisation (even whilst, almost in the same breath, condemning, as shall be seen later, their incompetence and practices) may be a consequence, as well

as a facet, of the Foucaultian 'internal discipline' (Macdonell 1986) brought about by the arts councils' panoptic power over the artist. The life of an arts organisation can be a lonely one of long hours spent in studios preparing and producing work and further, in some disciplines, of long touring days on the road. In such circumstances, contact with an established acquaintance that has neither the fickleness nor the detachment of audiences and presenters, can be relatively comforting, even though, as a general rule, one is at pains to characterize that same body in decidedly negative terms.

### **Negative experiences**

Positive comments about appraisal, however, were few and far between. The acknowledgement by arts organisations that appraisal by the arts councils was, in itself, 'a good thing' and that it should occupy a position of key importance in the relationship between the two parties was, in almost all instances, the sole positive feature of their opinions about this matter. The general endorsement of the notion of appraisal notwithstanding, the procedures employed by the arts councils to undertake the appraisals were severely criticized. Indeed, the overwhelming tenor of the interviews throughout was one of intensely negative attitudes towards the appraisal processes currently employed. Specifics will be looked at shortly but the general view following appraisals was, at best, a feeling of opportunities missed – "...actually a very significant anti-climax, almost like a non-event..." (E155), "It seemed really irrelevant" (F261) – and at worst, "...a complete waste of time, from our point of view" (D82).

Artists saw appraisal as a potential opportunity for advice in moving the organisation forward, for constructive criticism, for support, for discussion of their work, and so on, but found, in practice, appraisal to be an exercise that satisfied very few of these expectations and left few positive impressions. "I have to say I was rather disappointed, I think because we felt we had put in so much work to prepare for the appraisal and then get through the appraisal and then you get back something that comments on what you've done and you sort of feel, well is that it?" (L352). This was echoed by another interviewee who cited the experience of a sister organisation, "[They] just found it not at all helpful. They had spent a lot of time on the process and at the end of the day, they have not got anything back from it" (D57).

And a similar comment was given by a gallery administrator, "...I mean, the appraisal does need to lead to something that's really worthwhile, and I don't think we saw anything back from our appraisal..." (F301).

A drama company manager suggested that, due to the inadequacies of the arts councils' internal reporting procedures, any information gathered during appraisals was not used to further the councils' knowledge of the client. She gave as an example her recent experience. Her organisation, during a formal process of appealing against a recent arts council funding decision, requested the opportunity to put its case to the fully assembled board of the council, "One of the things that I was very shocked about when we went to speak to the Council of the arts council at the time that they were talking about

cutting us – we made our own presentation directly to Council – was the ignorance of Council as to what we did and who we were, and considering we'd been revenue funded for 12 years by then... this has also to be [because of] the officers' advice to Council and the quality of discussion... Critical debate is important..." (Q248).

And this was an underlying sentiment in a great number of the interviews – that appraisals took up a significant amount of time, effort and energy but that there was very little to show for it afterwards. In most instances the appraisal reports reproduced much of the information that the organisations themselves had presented in their submissions and gave very little by way of helpful feedback: "Of course it's using a lot of the information we'd given [them]... It was good to get the feeling of, 'Whew, we're on the right track' but I don't think there was anything that was a blinding revelation that was going to help us ... there was nothing in it that we didn't know...."(L361). One theatre company manager, when asked if her company had received any positive feedback from appraisal process, broke out in laughter at the suggestion, "I don't think they really told us anything we didn't know ourselves. I think the most positive recommendation from them was that I change my title...ha, ha, ha, ... from Administrator to General Manager..."(D12).

The trouble with this reaction to the evaluation process is that it reinforces the view that arts councils' appraisals may, in fact, be something other than a straightforward attempt to evaluate a funded arts organisation. Putting its clients through a lengthy process involving a tremendous amount of work and hoop jumping (not to mention a deal of anguish) – particularly when,

from the appraisees' point of view, they appear to receive very little in return – can be seen as characteristic of the “testing and inspecting [which are] the consequences of panopticism through micro-analysis” (Shade 1999: 60). It leads funded clients to feel that appraisals are of very little constructive use but merely another instance of the funding body exerting its ‘disciplinary power’ (Foucault 1977) over the artist.

We shall return to the arts organisations' perception of the power exercised by the funders over them in due course. But one of their most immediate concerns was alluded to above: the inordinate amount of time and effort that was associated with the appraisal process.

### **Workload**

Almost all those interviewed complained of the great deal of time it took them to prepare for the appraisal. This largely involved gathering and collating data for presentation in various stipulated documentary formats. These consisted of financial returns and other statistical data but also included various ‘action plans’ required by the arts councils in respect of addressing socio-political issues such as social inclusion, multiculturalism, disability, equal opportunities, educational outreach, and so forth. Not all complained about addressing these issues *per se* – in fact, with some exceptions, most acknowledged their importance – but they were highly critical of the fact that the particular formats in which they were required to submit the action plans were extremely time consuming. Speaking of one of these documents, one interviewee said, “I have to say I look upon it as a dreadful burden – well, it shuts you off for a few days” (F43). And other contributors echoed this in referring to

others of these documents, "It probably takes a week..."(J93); "It did take a LONG time to generate that document" (L43); "But this equal opportunities plan can take me a day a year and it's a standard format and it's a nightmare ..." (A154) and "...putting those action plans in place was extraordinarily time consuming for a small organisation" (M30).

Appraisals created a similarly heavy workload for the funding bodies. An arts council officer, who frequently conducted appraisals, also stated that the administration of appraisals was very time consuming for her and her department (H15). Another officer gave a similar opinion, "Yes, it was a commitment and we had to put other work aside for it – concentrate on it – and, of course, it took time" (S8). But, he added, "It took about the right amount of time," (S11), stating that he was all too conscious of the need to approach appraisals seriously, "You were aware of the work the client had to commit to prepare for it and so you felt quite a duty to deliver your side of it" (S18).

However it was not simply the amount of time involved that was the cause of discontent among artists but the fact that it disrupted normal working practice and took staff away from their customary work. Some accepted it as something that had to be done, despite the disruption it caused "Well, we just had to do it on top of what we were doing, really – it was a big busy time; we had a production that was on tour at the time..." (L135). One artistic director suggested that, since they had just completed a tour, it was more of a distraction than a disruption: "I wouldn't say it was disruptive but it became a preoccupation for the company for a period of time" (E47). But another manager

maintained that appraisal preparation caused severe disruption: "I don't think that we did any normal work for about eight weeks prior to the appraisal..." (P280) and cited the director of another company who said that even the performers had been affected by preparing for the appraisal: "Ironically, something that is assessing the performers – everything went on hold, programming went by the board..." (P289).

One part-time festival director, who leads a successful free-lance career as a composer, felt that many artists found the amount of time involved in preparing appraisal information was excessive and unreasonable: "It's very striking for me as a self-employed professional, because if I work like that [respond to all the arts councils' requests for information] I won't eat tomorrow, basically" (I61). He maintained that many organisations had learned ways to 'manage' this and related his own recent experience. He had been asked by an arts council officer, as part of a strategic review of festivals being carried out, what his festival would do if they were to have a substantial increase in funding and how much funding would be needed. "So my immediate question to the arts council was, 'Is this something that's going to happen or is it just a request for information?' And he said, 'It's not going to happen, it's just a request for information.' I said, 'In which case tell them we need 40%...' Well, it wasn't a frivolous suggestion but it was one that I didn't spend a lot of time doing the back-up documentation!" (I71).

One gallery manager had come to the publicly funded sector from a private sector gallery and commented that she had been surprised at the extent of what she called the 'paper chain' – "...a lot of paper for very little in return" (G24). She felt very

strongly that the private sector would not tolerate such inefficiency in managers' time and effort: "... they're wasting 90% of their time on things that they don't want to do, so there's a fundamental waste of resource there ... I could employ one person here just to fill in the forms and I know from my own time that I could actually be doing far more benefit to the public than doing a lot of form filling" (G263). One orchestra marketing manager stated that the documentation for their appraisal had amounted to, "...two box files of documents that were submitted to the arts council – literally two big box files of documentation" (P603).

### **Lack of relevance**

Related to the issue of excessive paperwork was the opinion that a great deal of the information that organisations were required to provide was irrelevant to both the appraisal process and their own effective management. The majority of those interviewed stated that, had they not been required to do so for the appraisal, they would not normally produce much of the documentation, as it could not be used as a management tool. Said a theatre company administrator, "I think that the process we went through to complete the appraisal – we could have done without having to provide or source as much information" (L206). Likewise a dance company director, "It was very lengthy and involved a huge amount of documentation, some of which wasn't material that we would normally be preparing – it was quite onerous" (P20). And a music festival director, "...it is scarcely relevant to the work or the type of organisation" (I22). A gallery manager made a similar point, "There's reams of paper – and a lot of it is quite irrelevant to us..." (F316).



Some of the information requested from organisations required them to submit three-year forward programmes of activity and, in some cases, particularly if they were small organisations, they were not in a position to predict their programmes of work so far in advance. Sometimes this would lead to administrators, in a sincere attempt to fulfil the arts councils' requests, resorting to little more than honest speculation. One director of a small touring drama company was clearly uneasy with this practice but felt he had no alternative: "Well, we were extremely concerned ... that we didn't have the resources to be able to really project in any detailed fashion the third year – you know, it was just guesswork" (M35).

A more experienced administrator, however, viewed this as standard practice, "... three-year projected budgets – what were we going to be doing in three years' time? We were just making it up!" (D32), whereas another, regarding the matter rather more cynically, viewed the entire process more or less as a ritual that had to be performed to maintain the relationship: "My overall impression is it's like you're producing sets of figures.... we've been told we've got to do this annual report, basically we're going through the motions...." (I157).

One might say that one would, of course, expect the organisations to express their resentment of the workload involved in preparing for appraisals and view the amount of paperwork requested as excessive, but one can also see that the arts councils might, nevertheless, genuinely require this information in order to be able to evaluate all aspects of the arts organisation's operation. However, the conduct of appraisals, as observed during this inquiry, confirms that a significant amount

of the documentation produced was not discussed in either the meetings with the visiting team nor in the subsequent reports. One individual interviewed had previously sat on one of the arts councils' appraisal panels and found the amount of documentation to be so great as to be virtually impossible to digest and, more importantly, not germane to the task of appraising the organisation: "...[for] the appraisal that I was on the panel for last year, I got a package of information six inches high and a lot of it was completely irrelevant to the process of actually saying, Is this organisation doing a good job?" (P516). The gallery manager who had had previous experience of the private sector also felt that much of the paperwork did not add to the rigour of the evaluation: "...actually I found that I used to be much more tested in privately funded organisations with much less paper work than through the public system with a lot more paper work, a lot more form filling...." (G26).

### **One size fits all**

A related complaint, heard time after time during interviews, was that the *pro formae* that had to be submitted and the formats, stipulated by the arts councils in respect of other required documentation, were generalist in their nature and not necessarily appropriate for the particular organisation being evaluated. This has a significant effect on the organisation from the point of view, again, of workload. The organisation would need to 'translate' its own data from the format which it employed internally, into the 'one-size-fits-all' format required by the arts councils, involving a great deal of extra work in the process. "One of the time-consuming things is transferring, particularly the financial information that we generate, into the

format of the arts council..." (L219), said one theatre administrator, and added, "with their financial data [format], particularly because it's not designed, for example, for a touring theatre company, lots of re-jigging of figures..." (L235).

The formats required by the arts councils are the same for every organisation, whether it be an art gallery, an orchestra or a drama company, whether it be small, medium sized or large – "... the same procedures for a festival, a revenue funded Theatre in Education Company, an opera company, a three person arts collective that gets £35,000..." (I286), complained a festival director.

Many of those interviewed had developed management accounting systems that were designed specifically to address the requirements of managing their own particular company. They also produced financial accounts to conform with the requirements of Company Law, that were sent annually to Companies House. The arts council accounts were in a different format again.

A second consequence of the one-size-fits-all format, many felt, was that the requirement to convert data – particularly financial data – into a standard format, did not allow the organisation to reveal its true nature, stating that an organisation's financial accounts should reflect the nature and size of their operation.

But this insistence on a standard reporting regime went beyond mere financial accounting, it also, claimed a dance company director, signalled the arts council's lack of understanding of running an organisation by implying that they should all follow

the same management practices: "There is no one way to organize businesses, so why try to impose one way to organize arts organisations" (N252).

They felt that the arts councils' insistence on uniform financial formats caused difficulties when trying to demonstrate to the appraisal team how they deployed their financial resources: "The big problem with general formats is that they don't give you a clear picture of the company's finances and activities, it gives you a distorted picture..." (A83). And said a gallery manager when referring to the categories and budget lines contained in the arts councils' formats, "... the objectives that we have in educational terms or exhibition terms just haven't slotted into the kind of brackets of analysis that the arts council wanted..." (F32), and, "I think the terms of the [arts councils'] statistical information are quite wide, they may not fit, so what we have to do, I suppose, is argue how it fits and how we're addressing those particular elements of it - I think in a way it's just cumbersome and really irritating" (F60).

Another interviewee, the manager of a community theatre company, had long argued for the arts councils to drop its requirement for standard format reporting, "... the way that we do our budget in-house is very particular in our case because we are part of the county council structure. I developed those so that they are appropriate for the county council, and I also think they're very logical in the way that those have been developed. I then have to adapt the information that I have on those budgets to their [the arts councils'] format, so there are adjustments and some of those adjustments are not necessarily

straightforward.... and that takes time and I guess what I've been arguing for is a much more individualistic approach towards companies" (A65).

Another manager said much the same about other kinds of statistical data, stating that the arts council formats were so inappropriate for her organisation that it rendered much of the data itself unreliable: "And the audience figures that I produce every year for the arts council are just complete rubbish. And every year since I've been here, I've had this conversation with them that says, 'Look, your forms, your statistics do not have any bearing on the sort of work that we do...' And they go, 'Oh, we'll look at that - yes, that's a good point.' And every year exactly the same form comes back again" (D100).

A theatre company administrator related a similar experience, and had thought she had been given an undertaking by the arts councils to do away with standard formats: "...because it is too broad, in terms of all the issues it's dealing with that don't even involve this company, and under the particular headings it wants too much - 'the current situation, objectives of plans for change and development, the action needed, the target dates...', I'm sorry but, you know, this is classic bureaucracy, and I think it can be done a different way and I thought that they were getting it right because they wanted a progress report in equal opportunities, and that's fine, and then they just attach the same old document they had before and it hasn't really moved it on. It's as if that's what they refer to and that, for their bureaucracy, is what they want, and I would argue that that is a bit of a waste of time" (A159).

### **Bureaucracy**

A great deal of emphasis has been placed by recent and current governments on the concept of *transparency*, particularly in respect of governmental and non-governmental public services. This, however, is not a recent phenomenon, and, as mentioned earlier in Chapter 2, even as far back as the mid-nineteen seventies, the government had attempted unsuccessfully to put pressure on the Arts Council of Great Britain's then Chairman, Lord Gibson, to adopt an objective, transparent, points-scoring system for the allocation of grant-aid (Jenkins 1979: 189-200). But there is no doubt that the prominence given to the notion of openness and transparency has increased significantly since the election of New Labour to government, particularly with regard to the work of local authorities and the newly devolved governmental institutions in Wales and Scotland. The underlying reasons behind this, putatively, is to ensure that public funds and services are seen to be deployed in a fair and even-handed manner.

In order to achieve consistency and fairness in their duties, employees of public service bodies will need to function with 'uniformity of decisions and actions' and this, of course, is generally regarded as one of the key characteristics of classic bureaucracy (Blau and Scott 1966).

The notion of bureaucracy can evoke widely differing feelings in people. Weber maintained that the standardization of work practices achieved in bureaucracies contributed to 'its purely technical superiority over any other form of organisation' (Weber 1964). Others are highly critical of bureaucracy and one of the strongest critics, (Argyris 1964), claimed that it restricts the

psychological growth of the individual employee. Taking this criticism a step further, Merton (1968) claims that the zeal for 'uniformity of decisions and actions' leads to the development of a fixation on rules and a lack of adaptability as an unintended consequence. This subsequently results in a tendency to 'goal displacement', where the means become ends in themselves and the procedures originally set in place to achieve consistency and fairness acquire a greater importance than the original goals.

*A common perception among those interviewed was that much of the information requested for appraisals was included simply for the sake of including it, because it was deemed, by the arts councils, to be what is required of a thorough, systematic evaluation process. In other words, arts council officers felt that they had to demonstrate – perhaps to their political masters, but possibly simply to themselves – that not only was there transparency but also a rigour to the process of establishing their accountability for the funds they distributed. Thus there was a strong feeling that much of the appraisal agenda was constructed as a result of this bureaucratic fixation on rules that required 'uniformity of decisions and actions'. The consequent 'lack of adaptability' created a process that, on occasion, amounted to little more than 'ticking the boxes', and was of very little real use in evaluating the performance of the organisation: "They expect us to have equal opportunity, health and safety [policies], all those sorts of things. And we do have an equal opportunities and health and safety policy in the drawer, which nobody ever looks at from one year to the next, so I feel that they have boxes to tick which are hoops that we have to jump through" (D209).*

This feeling was echoed by a publisher when referring to the arts council officer with whom he dealt, "...you get a slight feeling of box-ticking – I've had the feeling for the last four or five years that he's doing this because he has to..." (J112).

And a theatre company manager, "I do feel that you're sending stuff into a big black hole where, quite possibly, no one will ever read it – it's only the fact that you've sent them. Oh, we've had arts council people saying things to me like, 'Oh you haven't sent back such-and-such, and I just need to be able to tick your box off to say that you sent it back,' and you think, 'You're never going to read it...'" (D377).

As with the issue of standard reporting formats, appraisal checklist agendas were adhered to, even if they were not wholly relevant to the *particular organisation being evaluated*. When asked what she thought the goal of the appraisal team had been during their recent visit, a drama company administrator was in no doubt: "I think the first thing is fulfilling check-list requirements. Even though I may argue that [a particular item] is not applicable to the company in terms of the way it works ..." (A212).

And an art gallery administrator made a similar point, "Well, I do think that there's a certain amount of irrelevance that comes into the appraisal system and it's frustrating" (F251).

A drama company director gave examples from a recent appraisal. Although not particularly time-consuming, these examples all contributed to the feeling of frustration at the trifling



nature of much of the appraisal process: "[Mimicking an arts council officer] 'Oh well, yes, you do have the right amount of board meetings, and from what I see that comes out of the papers and the ones I've attend they're fine, yes you are in constant touch with the Chair' and, you know, all those kind of things. ... you know, it's very tedious, it almost doesn't need to be looked at..." (Q224).

As Drucker once said, "There is nothing so useless as doing efficiently that which should not be done at all" (Fitzhenry 1986: 4).

Coupled with the view that a deal of the appraisal process was procedural box-ticking that generated a lot of extra work but did little to advance the business of evaluation, was the frustration – indeed exasperation in some cases – of having to repeat the same agenda on each occasion: "... then when you have to appraise what you've done last year and then come again with the next three years' worth of plans... do your SWOT analysis yet again and there is a degree to which we're sort of saying, "But this is just what we wrote last year, and the year before and the year before, so why are we doing it?" (D92).

### **Performance indicators**

Much of the form filling required by the arts councils is related to financial data and statistical performance indicators, and the discussion of performance indicators evoked strong negative comments. There was a generally held feeling amongst interviewees that statistical performance indicators (PI's) had assumed too great an importance in the broader appraisal

process and there were two aspects to these views. On the one hand, the concept of statistical PI's *per se* was questioned, claiming that, at best, they gave an unbalanced picture of an organisation's activity and, at worst, distorted the picture completely. A drama company manager offered the example of her small touring company arriving at a venue, where they had been booked to perform in the studio theatre, to find that the demand for tickets had been so great that the venue manager had switched the performance into the larger main theatre. Although this had accommodated a larger audience, what had been a 'full house' for the studio had become a 'half-full' attendance in the main house. "The returns will say that, in terms of ticket yield, it could have done better; and I say, 'We did – it did achieve the best it could'" (A202).

A similar point was made by a gallery manager: "I've always had a problem with the emphasis there is on statistics. My point, as I brought up, and continue to bring up, with the arts council, if you produce four publications one year and you produce three the next, the measures that they use suggest that your outputs aren't as good. In real terms, it depends on the ambitions of those published items and the problem is that there is no analysis of the nature of the particular items that are being produced and, in a sense, you can't really get a good idea of what's going on..." (C77).

In a similar vein, a dance company director felt that the arts councils' preoccupation with statistical indicators was often pursued blindly whilst failing to consider the fundamental artistic outcomes: "In our last appraisal, the arts council asked us about

a particular venue: 'Why are you performing in this venue? It's too small [seating capacity] for you.' So I asked, 'Has anyone from the arts council been to see us performing there?' – 'No' – So I said, 'Well you come and see the happiness on peoples' faces, you'll like it!'" (N300).

A gallery manager raised exactly the same point, maintaining that despite the collection of great amounts of statistical data, she was unaware that this data was used to answer meaningful questions: "I spend a lot of time filling out forms in this organisation, which are quite nice as a record but are pretty meaningless and very often just get put on a shelf and very rarely are questions asked. That's the difference with an audit, where at least the auditors are saying, 'Why is this happening?' or 'What's the meaning behind that?'" (G71).

And this issue leads to the second aspect of artists' criticism of the undue emphasis placed on statistical indicators, that once these PI's have been submitted, they are seriously concerned with how they are then interpreted by the funders. They fear that the statistical data is used in a simple, crass manner to determine the degree of output that an organisation 'delivers' in respect of its grant aid: "... it's back to that problem of statistical analysis of what you do, in as much as if we're putting on exhibitions which are appealing to a very broad range of people – exhibitions which are popular – then it's assumed that our output is actually very useful; and we, of course, do a range of exhibitions, some of which are very popular and some which are catering for a much smaller interest. So, the question of outputs is difficult because

one assumes that public accountability is to do with popular delivery, whereas we don't fall comfortably within that framework" (C137).

The concern that very little meaningful analysis of figures is undertaken, was widely held. Furthermore, if one accepted – and all those interviewed did – that arts organisations were largely *sui generis* in their nature and in their operations, it was felt that there was often very little opportunity to consider these statistics within any appropriate context. A senior officer in one of the arts councils identified this as a serious drawback: "Take a company such as 'A'. Because we're supposed to do comparators – I think that's what the pink book<sup>2</sup> says – we tried to look at who we could compare it to. Now the truth of the matter is we tried three, four other companies and none of them were comparable. So, you use a [appraisal] document like that as a public document and you're compared with Company 'B'... which might be quite different, so it's absolutely unuseful" (H124).

And the same point was made by a manager who had been, at different times in her career, both the manager of an organisation which had undergone appraisal and a member of an appraisal team "I'd say that a lot of the standards were inappropriate – and I think they still are – because organisations are very, very different. I mean, I've recently been part of an appraisal team for a dance agency and the world of a dance agency is very different to the world of a dance company – equally that's very different to the world of something like an organisation which is servicing at a national level; and yet the

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<sup>2</sup> ACE 1994, *Appraisal Handbook*, London: Arts Council of England.

same basic indicators are used, the same basic checklists are used, and, you know, you can't compare apples, pears, bananas, whatever, they're very different things" (P162).

Allied with this dissatisfaction with use of PI's in the appraisal process were two other concerns. Firstly, there was a broad lack of knowledge among interviewees of the use to which they were being put. And secondly, as alluded to above, concern regarding the emphasis being placed on PI's in the appraisal process.

The perception among those interviewed was that the arts councils were, perhaps under pressure from government civil servants, now placing more and more importance on the gathering of PI data from funded organisations. There is anecdotal evidence to suggest that this is the case.

When making arrangements for interviews at one of the arts councils, I contacted the senior manager whose brief included the overview of the client appraisal system. After a brief conversation in which the manager stressed how important client appraisal was to the arts council, I was told that the matter had been delegated to an administrative officer, who, the manager proudly declared had recently been appointed especially to review the appraisal system. When the interview with the said recent appointee took place, she informed me that, in fact, she was an officer in the finance department and that her involvement was confined to 'looking at the kinds of statistical PI's that we should require from arts organisations.' The suggestion from this small encounter is that, at least for one senior

arts council manager, the notion of appraisal equates to little more than the gathering of statistical PI's.

### **Why do they want to know this?**

Since PI's, seemingly, were assuming greater prominence in the appraisal process, artists presumed that this was for a purpose. They complained, however, that they were not sure what this purpose was. It was a cause of anxiety that if, for instance, the PI's were being compared to some kind of standard or benchmark, they had not been informed of what that was: "Quite how they assess, I don't know..." (J96) said a publisher, and "I think what's most frustrating about any of the appraisals is that you don't really know the basis on which the appraisal's being made. ...there's no real up-front declaration of what meaning the statistics or the other manner of appraisal is having..." (F345), said a gallery manager, and the same point was echoed by a dance agency director: "Just to give a specific example of that – where they wanted to know how many local authorities we'd worked with and, quantitatively, what those relationships had generated, in terms of dancer/hours and workshops, and so forth. And I was never sure, I suppose, what the benchmark was that they were assessing against" (P69).

This could lead, in effect, to the appraisal process developing, at least for the arts organisation, a measure of tactical second-guessing, that could tend to obscure the supposed purpose of the appraisal process: "Actually, the appraisal was being carried out, in a sense, in a bit of a vacuum, because nobody was going to say, 'Well, that's good or that's bad against what we'd expect.'... there was never a feeling that we were being

assessed against anything tangible.... you get the feeling that some of the indicators and some of the things that are being assessed in appraisals, are being weighted more than others but that's never really made clear.... so you end up second-guessing – 'Why do they want to know this? What is it that they're trying to measure here? What is it that they're trying to assess here? So you're doing a kind of double-think all the time" (P124).

A theatre director with many years of experience of working with arts council funded organisations and a veteran of several appraisals suggested that part of the reason for this lack of clarity was not as sinister as some supposed. Statistical measurement is rather a recent phenomenon in the arts and, as suggested in Chapter 2, the arts have, historically been treated rather differently to other aspects of state provision.

He felt that the arts world – even arts bureaucrats and professional arts administrators – did not have the cultural mindset – the current buzz words of 'best value' and 'benchmarking' notwithstanding – to operationalise evaluation criteria in any meaningful way. Speaking, initially, about the way things were not so long ago, he said, "There were no criteria for assessment, there were no indices apart from the fact that we appeared to be doing things for the common good and we appeared to be doing them fairly regularly and that was fine" (K46). But in recent years: "And then suddenly things did change ... and that's when I suddenly felt that there were indices and criteria of assessment in train but I couldn't identify them. Time after time I tried to get the arts council to make them explicit but they wouldn't – they couldn't – and the point at which they were in a position where they had to, the only criteria that they could

resort to were how many performances you were doing and how many people saw them, full stop" (K53). In the final analysis, they were simply unable to evaluate the arts within an imposed system of statistical measurement and benchmarking which, culturally, belonged to another tradition – that of commercial business.

A similar point was made by a dance agency manager, "I'm not sure that they actually knew what they were trying to get at. I remember feeling at the time that it was like 'digging around' all over the place to see what came out, as opposed to, 'Now we've got there... we now know what we needed to know'. I'm not convinced that they knew what they needed to know" (P301).

#### **Performance indicators vs. art**

The other concern, as indicated above, related to the increasing emphasis being placed on statistical PI's in the appraisal process. There was a widespread feeling that the imbalance between the attention paid to statistical measures compared to that shown to artistic matters was considerable: As a festival director put it: "You've only got to look at what an arts organisation provides in the way of documentation for its annual revenue grant, to see what the balance is and it's got to be about one page arts stuff to twenty pages of other stuff and that would also be the focus of the meeting because it's much easier to talk about that stuff. It's much easier to evaluate, well, how many 'x' did you have?, How much have your ticket prices gone up?, Do you have disabled access? – you know..." (I127). And he added, "It's much easier to do all that stuff than to decide whether the work's actually interesting!" (I142).



A gallery director made the same point: "... It's all to do with balance and in fact that [number crunching] should be a very small part of the agenda, it shouldn't dominate and, increasingly, that type of agenda has been dominating" (C194), and "It's becoming increasingly more away from artistic appraisal to very much management appraisal..." (C206).

One theatre manager noted that of twenty-two recommendations made in the arts council's report of their last appraisal, not one was in relation to their artistic work: "There was nothing in the key recommendations that said, you know, 'The arts council recommends that the company sits down and looks at its work and sees whether it's good enough.' ...and there's nothing in here [the report] that actually says anything about the artistic stuff. So that is quite sad isn't it? I suppose, on the one hand, you could say that presumably it means they're totally happy with the quality and the direction of our work or you could say they've just become a load of bean counters..." (D225).

In fact, time and time again, the key point regarding the substance of arts council appraisal was the lack of attention to the artistic work:

Publisher: "I mean the quality of the writing isn't usually discussed, the discussion is usually more to do with the standards of production [of books]" (J56).

Drama company director: "It's [statistical data and management issues] obsessively pursued to the detriment of any assessment of the work" (M58).

Another drama company director: "... we spent so little time talking about the work and that was a shame (E583)... I do think it clearly seems to be the nature of appraisals that the one thing you don't talk about is the actual work" (E559).

And the director of a small drama company maintained that this imbalance was indicative of the propensity of current arts council officers to shy away from artistic matters. They were unwilling, or incapable, he maintained, to consider the artistic work, and preferred to retreat to the safety of the statistical performance indicators: "... it's a self-confirming set of statistics that travels around the system but it actually doesn't tell you anything about the art. And whether the arts council is capable of being told anything about the art – or is interested in it – is the issue, isn't it? And can we reopen an idea of an arts council that has more emphasis on the art?..."(M158). And another: "...it did feel from my perspective that it was being skirted around. Maybe it's a bit too tricky..." (E623). A gallery manager echoed this view, "That's the dilemma we have at the moment: we have an arts council that is not motivated by the arts" (C299).

Another theatre manager was more blunt: "In terms of what I provide in terms of the artistic side ... that's another issue. What they do with that, I dread to think, because I think quantitative stuff is easier to deal with than qualitative and you have to question whether they've got the level of expertise in the arts council or the resources effectively to do the qualitative" (A229).

Another drama administrator echoed the feeling that there were too few arts specialists employed by the arts councils, "At the end of the day, you need people with vision, you need

visionaries because strategy on its own is very dry and, it's like management, it's like organisation, it's not what we're all here to do, we may need strategy to help us get there and help us deliver but actually the making of plays, the making of dance and the making of whatever the art form is actually much more to do with vision..." (Q174). This exact same matter, as we saw above, was raised by a gallery director during one of the appraisal meetings observed during this investigation.

This feeling, among some artists, that the arts councils' were becoming increasingly staffed by non-arts specialists not only echoes the view put forward by Pick (1988) – cited in Chapter 2 – but also is reflected in an advertisement that appeared in a daily paper recently, for the post of Arts Development Officer at one of the arts councils. The post-holder will have "a key role in the implementation and co-ordination of arts development and grant assessment." Although the post-holder will need "a broad-ranging knowledge of the arts", the areas of specific experience listed are, "Equal Opportunities, Cultural Diversity, Creative Industries." The advertisement adds, "An understanding of arts funding, local authorities and policy development, as well as a commitment to increasing access to the arts, is crucial to this role" (WM 2003). The view of many artists, however, is that specialized, art-specific knowledge should be a key requirement for any arts development officer.

One arts council officer acknowledged this recent trend, stating that arts councils were simply a reflection of the way the world of work had evolved in broader society, "I think the arts council is subject to the way employment is going these days, you're not

going to get yourself talking to people who have been in post more than five years. People move on. And ways of making judgments are being tailored to that – you know, box-ticking. People can take a significant role in the decision-making process after only a few weeks in post because of the software, it was designed to make that possible; you've got people coming in from agencies, slotting into the jobs and the whole thing doesn't collapse. But what you don't get is that conversation with someone who's really watching your work" (S347).

Throughout the interviewing process, one detected a tendency among visual arts organisations to be rather more sympathetic towards their arts council officers than their performing art counterparts. They saw the arts councils' visual arts officers as individuals who were, in reality, far more interested in artistic achievement than statistical measures but who were obliged to implement a system in which they had little faith: "...they weren't particularly interested in the statistical bit; they were keen to know how many we had come into the show but they didn't see that as being the underlying great achievement of it. What they wanted – certainly the officers – they wanted quality of production, quality of output and quality of content. .... But they also accepted that Government policy steered the objectives that the arts council had to follow and I got the feeling that they found those as infuriating as we did" (F82).

Whether this difference in attitude stems from the fact that performing arts organisations have always had to operate in a rather different environment than have visual arts institutions, is difficult to say and is, perhaps the matter for another study. But the question of attendances and box-office returns have always

been a part of the life of the performing arts, whereas public museums and galleries have a long tradition of being free to the public, with, perhaps, somewhat less of an imperative to scrutinize attendances. But the visual arts clients interviewed in this inquiry were certainly more supportive of the individual officers, tending, rather, to direct their criticism at the arts council and governmental establishment for what they viewed as the over-emphasis on PIs: "I think the forms tend to rely on statistical information and managerial and organisational capacity ... I think behind it all they would really like to assess *the artistic* benefits and social benefits but I'm not sure that they really assess that at the end of the day"(G153).

In spite of this slight difference in attitude regarding the nature of the officers in the various art forms, the underlying criticism was clear, that artists wanted an appraisal process that afforded far more importance to the artistic work of the organisation: "I wouldn't mind doing it if I found that there were more advantages and less disadvantages to doing it so that I could really see... a movement forward... and sometimes I feel it doesn't do that and that's where you talk about figures and I think there is a need to look at more soft analysis and it's tapping into that soft analysis that I don't think statutory bodies are very good at..."(G127).

Several interviewees offered their opinion on the reasons for the virtual absence of any meaningful discussion of artists' work in appraisals. Some felt, as outlined above, that appraisal team members were ill equipped to enter into discussions of an artistic nature. Some simply felt that it was such a complex matter that it

was best left untouched: "...it's so enormous and hopelessly complex; so a member of an appraisal team can't hope to get a handle on all that (P204) ... and also because those sort of things [non-artistic matters] are easier to discuss. So, I suppose, when you've got that complexity, it's easier to say, 'OK, well let's leave that to one side and tell me how you train your administrator or tell me about your book-keeping systems, or whatever', because they're tangible and they're easy to measure" (P339).

### **Politics vs. Art**

At the time of the advent of the National Lottery, there was very strong political, and public, pressure for the distributing bodies to ensure that the 'good causes' that it funded were of benefit to as broad a section of the population as possible. It was the arts councils themselves who were charged with distributing lottery moneys for the arts and the pressure from the government ensured that criteria for awarding lottery money were to emphasise the addressing of socio-political issues: "...one of the things that has really worried me over the last five years is the lack of rigour in assessment by the National [Arts] Lottery in its grant giving, because it seems to me that you can get a lottery grant for almost anything and never looking at what the quality is, and at the same time the Lottery has introduced these tick boxes for disability, inclusivity, ethnicity and – what's the other thing? – ACCESSIBILITY – and I think we've seen a decline in standards in the arts as a result of that, because they're driven by the wrong things. And I think that that's been a real problem for the arts council, and the Lottery criteria, by a process of osmosis, has taken over the arts council..." (J135).

An arts centre manager made a similar point, "And I thought it'd be interesting if I could read the Lottery guidelines and, again, it was very much, you know, a page out of every sixty was on your artistic work" (G274).

Others agreed that macro-political factors were, increasingly, driving the broader evaluation process: "It [the appraisal] was pretty thorough in terms of looking at various aspects of management – artistic policy, equal opportunities – in fact the whole question of equal opportunities and awareness of cultural diversity is very much something which has become a priority with the arts councils thinking" (C8).

And a drama company manager felt that the imperative to address these socio-political issues was detracting from her organisation's ability to give full attention to its core competency. When asked if organisations were required by the arts council to produce education policies, even if their work was not particularly focused on educational work, she replied, "Absolutely, and an equal opportunities policy, a cultural diversity policy, and a child protection policy... no time to do the art, really..." (Q95).

The problem, with giving so much import to such politically imposed agendas was not simply that they created a considerable imbalance between the artistic and the non-artistic but, also, that they were very crass mechanisms indeed that were implemented across the board: "What we've got at the moment is a single blunt instrument. It's like, if some new policy comes up – what's the latest one – 'Inclusivity' – it comes down,

some person sitting in the government says, 'Send it to all the schools, etc, and, and those arts people. Yeah, send it to the arts council', and so, we get that, so we've got a very blunt instrument. That's across sectors, OK? ... the same process and a little bit of art form expertise thrown in – so there's the problem right at the top" (I274).

A gallery director also felt that the government's populist agenda in respect of Lottery funding had coloured the approach taken by the arts councils to all of their funding schemes: "This has all been compounded by the Lottery and the way in which the Lottery has, if you like, been a major intervention in the funding process and it's predicated on the Government notion that it's about Arts for All and that's the single most important criterion that everyone gets a bite of the cultural cherry, irrespective of what that bite actually is. So, in a sense, the arts council doesn't see it as their mission any more to address artistic excellence..." (C221).

Several others gave a similar opinion: "The emphasis comes on from the production of art to the audience uptake of art – it's all about access, it's all about participation but it's not about the business of making art..." (C171) and, "The trend in the arts to use the art for socio-political purposes is potentially very destructive... (N65). In many ways, an artist just wants to improve someone's life and just doing it by equal distribution means that you can do a very bad job across a lot of people or a much finer job amongst fewer. The problem is, throwing good work at inappropriate situations is a disaster ... it's pretending that it's making a difference. Using the work as an arm of the social services is totally opposed to what art is about" (N216).



A drama company manager suggested that such an approach was not only inappropriate for the arts, but not necessarily the best way to tackle socio-economic issues, "... all these things that people say that art can do for the community or for the economy or whatever, you can actually do an awful lot more effectively, and often more cheaply, through other methods..." (D354).

### **Business vs. art**

But some interviewees felt that the lack of prominence given to artistic matters during appraisal was purely a sign of the times. In all walks of public life there had been a perceived shift to a mindset that demanded efficiency above all else ("at the expense of effectiveness" claimed one choreographer), that was obsessed with measuring outcomes ('what gets measured, gets done') and – mistakenly, it was claimed – asserted that the degree of public good achieved was commensurate to the numbers of population served ('never mind the quality, feel the thickness'). They felt that was inappropriate for the arts, where creators were primarily concerned with the quality of the work they produced rather than statistical outputs.

This view, of course, is not confined to the arts world. Instruments such as school 'league tables' are frequently criticized by educationists and, indeed, were recently scrapped by the Welsh Education Minister. And in a recent radio interview, a health service analyst complained that hospitals are required to furnish some 263 PI's per month to outside regulators (BBC(b) 2002).

"The big thing is," complained one theatre director, "the 'triumph' of the MBA – it has driven coach and horses through

artistic imagination and the way in which that artistic imagination is evaluated" (M222), and felt that "business-speak" had now so pervaded the arts world that it had made "artistic vocabulary... moribund and impoverished" (M208).

Some interviewees commented on the irony of business jargon – and procedures – entering the arts world at the same time that socio-political agendas were being imposed on their organisations. The pressure to appeal to all sectors of the public struck them as being rather odd within the context of business practice: "There is a pressure from the arts councils to address the 'general public' so we are urged to make work for a general public whereas in business, I would assume, you identify your specific market and make your product for that market and focus it fairly close..." (K106), and, "deep in the heart of the arts councils is this old Jennie Lee, post-war Labour philosophy that the arts are for absolutely everyone and therefore any piece of art you should be able to put in front of anyone and they should, *per se*, 'understand' it or it should be appropriate to them and I don't think that that's very business like, that's not how business works because I think business makes specific things that specific groups of people buy" (K200). This reminds us of Drucker's view that the expectations made of publicly funded organisations are frequently unrealistic. Whereas a market share of 22% would be perfectly satisfactory to a commercial business, this would, in the eyes of public sector funders, be considered well below the expectations they should have for their funded organisations. They, somehow, feel it reasonable to expect publicly funded organisations to serve all sectors of the population (Drucker 1973). Chris Smith, for example, during his tenure as Heritage

Secretary, is reported to have warned the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden that it had to "increase its accessibility to 'common' people or face losing £20m of public subsidy" (Economist 1997: 60).

Another interviewee felt that the trend to tackle all issues in the arts world by means of practices from a business culture demonstrated a lack of understanding of the nature of the arts and resulted in shallow analysis. He told of an experience he had had with a business consultant whom the arts council had sent to his drama company, on a particular occasion, because they had felt that his organisation needed some advice regarding their administration: "We were given a consultant, in inverted commas ... And that 'consultant' really basically did a SWOT analysis... you know, it's the abacus of thinking – instead of thinking, let's do a SWOT analysis!" (M108).

One interviewee talked of a rather disturbing development in which some artists were so disillusioned with the lack of importance afforded to artistic matters by the funding bodies, that they were opting out of the state funding system altogether: "I think in the end what it comes down to is that a lot of people I know just say, Well, this is not interesting any more; this may well be business but it's no longer art. Art is what we do and art is what we're interested in, so that while the Arts Council have decided that this is what their version of art is, it's not the whole version of art and if we want to continue, then we'll just do it in another way, and elsewhere" (K221).

In a more moderate stance, a choreographer felt that the inordinate emphasis placed on the non-artistic effectively

ignored that which was the whole *raison d'être* of an arts organisation. The fundamental mentality of the artist, he stated, was entirely different to that of the businessman; the key driver behind an arts organisation's operation was quite dissimilar to that of a commercial business concern: "In arts companies, profitability is a very poor measurement of output – it's not the measure that the industry sets itself. Actually I would do it for no money – I would die happy knowing that I'd made a better dance rather than I'd made a better profit" (N43). "At the end of the day I would turn down a buck to do something that, artistically, has a better outcome" (N55). "Although artists do want to enjoy their work and earn a bit of money and care for their family, I gave up one of those kinds of jobs to do what I do now" (N76). "Most businesses may start idealistically, but it eventually becomes all about money. With artists, the dream is always still there" (N88).

Another dance company manager made a similar point, "I think the arts are an industry in the sense that they engage in a creative process that results in an end product. But the main concern is not economics – there's a spiritual dimension, I think, that's intangible and difficult to measure..." (O13).

### **The need to redress the balance**

There was no doubt in most interviewee's minds, whether they were from the performing or the visual arts, that they wished their artistic work to be given greater consideration in the appraisal process: "For us, what you should be looking at is, first of all, the artistic quality of the work that you do..." (D145). And the manager of another drama company agreed, "The work is what

we should be judged on and I'm not sure we always are – that's what's important; we can sit around having meetings – we and the arts council – till the cows come home about figures and budgets, and forward planning and their year plan and their corporate plan and the rest of it but actually what they need to do is get out and see the work" (Q325).

And, again, from a theatre director, "I don't feel that the arts councils are alive to the fact that it would be better to look at the work. I think the arts councils could re-orientate the emphasis of the appraisal around issues of what's happening artistically" (M125).

This point was made several times during the course of the inquiry: "What I want to have with the arts council are discussions about creative ideas; and that's something you never – I can't remember the last time I had that discussion" (C216). And, "I've never actually been in an arts council meeting where someone might say – no one's actually asked what might be the basic presuppositions of the show or are they up for discussion – which I think they ought to be – I don't see why these things aren't [discussed]" (M74).

A theatre in education company manager also pleaded for more attention to be paid to the artistic work, "We want the arts council to come and see our work. I want them to come and see our work more than I want them to come and speak like this, because it's there that they have a real understanding of why this company exists" (A275).

Another director suggested that the current approach tended to be adversarial and, thus, made the prospect of constructive dialogue less likely, "The whole thing is 'us' and 'them'; why can't we talk – about art?" (M219).

One theatre company manager, however, offered a word of caution, stating that her artistic director was somewhat reluctant to talk about artistic matters in arts council appraisal meetings: "His feeling is a bit, in a way, not that it isn't any of their business but, in terms of going into the detail, the real detail of his artistic vision, he very much believes that if you say too much about the kind of company that you are and be very explicit about everything that you're going to be doing, you become predictable" (L331).

### **Measuring the quality of art?**

There was, however, an acknowledgement that evaluating works of art was a tricky business. Not only are works themselves often extremely complex in their structures and intents, but the effects they had on audiences, and even on society itself, are very difficult, if not impossible, to understand and pin down, let alone to measure. "Measuring value and measuring success of the arts I always think of as a bit strange.... Obviously, we have all the data about who came to see it, what kind of people came to see it, how many people participated in our workshops but it's the quality that people's experiencing you can't measure...." (L241).

An arts council officer, who had for many years enjoyed a successful career as a performer, agreed that the entire issue of

judging artists' work was fraught with difficulties, "I just think the whole question about how you judge those things that are not bean counting are very vexed; all the attempts to debate that, in my experience, ran out of time before they come to a conclusion, or they're based on people's confidence in their own training, discipline, prejudice – whatever you choose to call it – about what is and isn't good art. A dressing room full of professional actors when I was in rep theatre, who could never, ever agree on what was a good film, good acting – you know, there was never any consensus. There were sometimes opinions that were dominated by whoever was top opinion god at the time but, 'What is good art?' is just ever contentious" (S167).

Some agreed that even reviews from the critics, as helpful as some might be, were not a satisfactory way to judge a work of art: "You can see whether they're good reviews or bad reviews, how people have enjoyed it and, also, actually how well it's been attended, I think, is an indication of its artistic success or its popularity, which is measurable to a certain extent. But the actual assessing of the quality of the art is always going to be subjective" (L393).

One arts council officer felt very strongly about including audience members' responses to art works in the appraisal process, "It seems to me to be involved in the performing arts and not to be concerned about audiences – not just audiences but the opinions of audiences – is bizarre; it wouldn't have done for Aristophanes and it wouldn't have done for Shakespeare" (S698). But, in discussing the issue of how to judge a work of art, several artists challenged the very notion that the effect their

work had on audiences should be a matter for consideration and criticized the trend among funders to view popularity as a yardstick. Even audiences, claimed a theatre director, were not always interested in being 'entertained' by that with which they were most comfortable, "But I still think that, in the arts, very often the type of things that interest people are the things they've never seen before – the very provocative things, not the most homogenised" (K92). Similarly, the type of art encouraged by the 'Lottery' attitude was seldom that which motivated artists themselves: "The desire [from the arts councils] seems to be to want 'good' art, 'good' product but those are never the things that stimulate me – I want to see things that are kind of 'wonky'" (K99).

Furthermore, the very intention of the artist in creating a work was often at odds with the concept of seeking to please audiences (satisfy the customer): "I suppose what I'm doing in making work is fulfilling a life-wish to do it but all my reasons for doing it are political – for making art – they're not about business at all and I don't think I've ever managed to change myself into somebody who's 'providing a service', and therefore the way I measure the success of something is, I suppose, quite Utopian really. You know, I'm not sure I want people to have a 'good night out' nor am I sure that I want to provide a 'good product' that they can consume, but I suppose what I want to do is make something that sticks in their throat a little bit, really, so they have to work as hard as I do – to work out what this thing is, why it exists in the world. I think the best that I can ever do is try and change the world of theatre – I don't know – just constantly to ask questions about why are things the way they are. So very often the



measure of success is not in terms of audience reaction, really, but whether I achieve the strategy I set out to achieve. Now that may seem to be a very old notion but, in one way, I think the artist can do no other ..." (K271).

The question of audiences is also complex for, just as marketing specialists in commercial business have come to realize that there is not just 'one' market but many, many markets, so also is it misleading to consider that there is such an entity as 'an audience'. There are many different audiences, as a composer pointed out, "Sometimes people say to me, 'Do you write for the audience?' and I say, 'No.' And they say, 'Well, why not? How can you omit to take the audience into account?', and I say, 'Well, what audience?' And sometimes I don't even know, of course, who they are and where they come from... I mean, how do you know what an audience in Latvia is going to feel about in 5 or 10 year's time, or school kids in wherever - I don't know" (I312).

For artists who run some of the larger organisations, in particular, there are a number of parties, beside the audience, who may have a vested interest in the success of an artistic undertaking. One artistic director of a dance company considered it his role to satisfy – or, perhaps, satisfice, as Simon (1957) would say – these various parties in a kind of juggling act: "There is no one key indicator of success. If you have a one-dimensional view of success, then you can't get the support of a key part of your industry. It should be stakeholder based – for example audiences, ourselves, etcetera. I have to have different criteria

for each of the different relationships that we have. The problem is, each relationship requires a different criterion for them to think that it's being successful. My job as an artist is to make sure of the success criteria that the other side of the relationship values. To the venue it will be about selling tickets – they don't care what the show's like as long as they sell tickets; for the dancers it's about offering them good choreographers to work with; to the choreographers it's about offering a sympathetic environment; for me personally, it's about giving my life meaning" (N265).

Nevertheless – and despite acknowledging that the concept of 'measuring' or placing a 'value' on a work of art was problematic for them, and that relying on popular acclaim as a gauge of artistic excellence was unsatisfactory – one interviewee felt it was possible to form a view as to the excellence, or otherwise, of an artist's work. "Objective judgment exists over time" (I270), said a composer, suggesting that it was not something that could be pursued within the 'snapshot' of the appraisal process. Objectivity, in his terms, existed within the extended time scale that sees the work of great artists – often from earlier ages – being generally accepted as being excellent. This echoes the assertions of Hume and others – noted in Chapter 3 above – that, over time, judgements about art converge. In terms of arts council client appraisal, however, this would prove to be difficult, as the kind of time-scales envisaged by Hume would simply not be available. One senior arts council officer, however, felt that, given sufficient time, it was possible to form sufficient a view of an artist's work "I think that if you took it on face level of walking into a room one day and hearing an artistic

director speak, I think it would be terribly difficult to make an opinion on that.... But, over an extended period, I think it is possible to get the gist of quality and vision... If you just met them every five years, then it wouldn't work" (H162).

### **How to tackle a thorny issue**

Throughout the interviewing programme, it was possible to discern a real contradiction – and, at times, a marked inconsistency – in the views of individuals in respect of the evaluation of their artistic work. On the one hand they felt strongly that greater prominence should be given to the consideration of their artistic work in the appraisal process but almost in the same breath, acknowledged the inherent difficulties in doing so in a manner that was fair and, further, even questioned the ability of arts council officers to be able to do so in any meaningful way.

When pressed on this matter, most interviewees maintained that, whatever the difficulties, they would still wish, in some way or other, to be able to have their work considered by the arts council, "They may not be appraisals as we know it, but the idea that periodically we get together consensually – we get together a team of people to look at the company I think is extremely useful" (E121).

Another spoke strongly in favour of a system that promoted a greater degree of self-assessment, "Appraisal, in the more genuine meaning of the word, should be both a backward- and a forward-looking process; and it should be about self-assessment as about anything else" (P374). This is similar to

Pringle's (2002) notion of artists as 'critical evaluators' of their own work.

Some suggested that, perhaps, it could be done in some other manner that might not necessarily be part of the programme of the formal appraisal team visit, but achieved on an ongoing basis throughout the year. A theatre in education company proposed establishing a permanent group that met regularly to discuss their work: "... an advisory board that is linked to our Board of Management, and the arts council would be absolutely welcome to come along to those meetings, so whoever is our lead officer at the arts council and seeing our work can come along to those meetings. And those will be arts practitioners, they may be promoters from venues, they may be teachers in schools who may not be *in tune with our methodology and practice* but understand how it impacts on students, and lay people" (A324).

It was noticeable that, after a little time to reflect on the issue, interviewees moderated their views somewhat, suggesting that, given the difficulty inherent in formulating fair and objective methods of *evaluating* works of art, they would be satisfied with being able to *discuss* their work in a meaningful way on a regular basis. The most popular suggestion, perhaps in an effort to counterbalance the subjective nature of individuals' opinions<sup>3</sup> was the establishment of groups of individuals to view work on an ongoing basis and to meet periodically to discuss work: "... it should be taken on the basis of a number of different people's opinions and that can include lay people to professionals and

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<sup>3</sup> See Santayana 1896; Hume 1757 and Kant 1790, cited earlier.

academics and your peers", said a drama company manager (D335). A gallery manager was a little more specific, "...so perhaps you have a pool of critics in various disciplines – some of them might be practicing artists who are trained up a little bit – and that you have three or four of those that go to see each play or exhibition and when it comes time – let's say on an annual basis – that the organisation sits down with them and the arts council to discuss the work" (F330).

A theatre director also proposed a similar scenario but was adamant that arts council officers should not be leading such a group, "The implication with people talking about your work is that they're going to judge it and they're going to make recommendations but as we said about the arts councils' staff, they aint got no training to do it and if they had the training, imagine what kind of training it would be in today's environment. It'd be, maybe at best, three weekend seminars a year or something and then you'd hear them saying, 'Well, actually, I think you really need to look at...' That's the danger" (M134). He was in favour of groups of practitioners, peers and critics and having the arts council officers present to witness the discussions: "I would like, if we could ... have a couple of people to see the work and then have some sort of discussion and expose the arts council to some of the things that are being talked about..." (M173).

Most felt that there should be a level of expertise in these groups so that they could discuss the work "artist-to-artist" and "critic-to-artist" (M232). The general feeling was that artists would be happiest being evaluated by specialists who knew the field – connoisseurs – rather than lay people. One interviewee

characterized any suggestion of lay evaluators as a misguided attempt to inject objectivity into the process. She rejected the notion of objectivity altogether. Not only did she maintain, (as did others, mentioned earlier), that opinions on art were subjective, but suggested that the assertion that there could be objectivity was, indeed, misleading, "...I don't think it can exist, because, actually, if it truly exists, it's ignorance..." (P222).

An orchestra manager did not feel the need to change the 'panel' but felt, again, that a much longer time scale was crucial to ensure a meaningful appraisal, not just in terms of the artistic product, but in all its facets, "I think that the people who are carrying out the appraisal should be attached to, or have a connection with the organisation for a much longer period of time. You know, coming into an organisation in November to carry out an appraisal in December.... you've not got the knowledge, you've not got the history, you've not got the context. If that appraisal panel has actually been engaged, let's say eighteen months prior to the appraisal, have made visits, have seen work, have talked to people within the organisation, have got a handle on it, have been used by the organisation as advisors, external sounding boards or whatever, then it becomes much more of a two-way process, it's much more of a dialogue, much more of an informed dialogue...." (P457).

By far the most radical – and controversial – proposition came from the artistic director of a music festival, who claimed that he would be perfectly happy to put his faith in the judgment of one acknowledged specialist in the field, "You have to accept that people are going to make judgments, and it may be difficult – more difficult in the public funding circumstance – to set up the

mechanisms that can give some political and social credence to that process... (I389). And I would first of all offer 'Single Person Appraisal' – but structured. Just tell everybody in the, say, dance community, we're going to get together, we're going to have a few meetings, between us we're going to find a respected professional who's going to look at the work and make recommendations and, barring accidents, those recommendations are going to be meaningful" (I343). He felt that, in this way, there were, at least, likely to be decisions made on the basis of the quality of the work, even though it was only one person's opinion of the work.

He also suggested that, for certain circumstances, other mechanisms could be put in place. He based his view on his experience of working within state funding systems in north America: "I think that a model that is not used in this country, which I've seen operate very successfully, is the small peer group model. I think that's especially appropriate for one-off things, for commissions, for special projects" (I375). But an arts council officer was somewhat sceptical stating that peer judgment amounted to being judged by one's rivals for funding (S277).

When asked to comment on the suggested 'Single Person Evaluation model, other interviewees, as one might have expected, expressed a distinct nervousness and felt that one-person evaluation would inevitably lead to a lack of trust in the appraisal system, particularly from organisations and artists who had received negative reports and recommendations from that person. One suggested that, in due course, such a system would lead to the establishment of an inner circle of chums, a kind of "Old Boys' Network" of artists (D241). Clearly, an evaluation

system based on the say-so of one person, particularly when so much is at stake, is extremely vulnerable to criticism and cries of 'foul'.

### **Going to see the headmistress**

The theoretical framework of this investigation proposed that the relationship between the arts councils and their funded clients was based upon a system of panoptic power exercised by the former over the latter. During the interview process, one was aware that, although the issue of the power of the arts councils over their clients was all-pervasive, in that it seemed to be constantly simmering below the surface and colouring the entire discussion, and that criticism of the appraisal system – one of the techniques of maintaining the power relationship – gave clear evidence of resistance to arts councils' power, it was rarely addressed specifically. Several artists referred, somewhat light-heartedly, to the appraisal team visits as 'the Spanish Inquisition' – a term apparently used quite commonly amongst arts council clients – and one interviewee commented that, "You did feel as if you were going to see the headmistress" (L257). Another, more thoughtful interviewee, after a moment of reflection, posed the rhetorical question, "I wonder if this becomes a power relationship with the arts council...?" (K234).

But beyond that, it was necessary, for the most part, to read between the lines or, perhaps more accurately, to accept that the notion of the arts councils' power over their clients was simply a 'given', which was tolerated, whether consciously or subconsciously, although resistance to this power was clearly discernable.



There were some clients who were clearly fully aware of this situation and accepted that, if they wanted to continue to receive funding, they had to follow their funders' agenda and comply with their demands and stipulations whether they liked it or not: "That's the overall impression I have, I'm turning the wheels, none of this makes sense, none of this is going to change anything but we have to do it – BECAUSE" (I163), said one. Another client, with rather more resentment, objected to the fact that, because of the categories, criteria and formats contained within the councils' 'archives of rules', they were forced to portray their work in a manner that may not have been of their own choosing: "They are the formats which have been produced by the arts council and, if you like, imposed on the company, so this is the format we work to, this is how we define our work" (A40).

Underpinning clients' relationship with the arts councils was the acknowledgement – tacit or otherwise – that the funders held the whip hand and in order for that relationship to flourish it was necessary to develop one's organisation and one's artistic work in a manner that "hit all the right bells" (P384), as one interviewee put it. Longevity depended on toeing the arts council line: "The feeling is that if this is going to be something that, for whatever reason, is going to be carrying on.... So, therefore, we need to be sure we've checked all the boxes" (I169). This is a clear example of the 'hidden transcript that is part of the power relationship (Scott 1990: xii).

A gallery director indicated that the 'rules' in the 'archives' changed periodically, providing yet more bells to hit, "Whatever becomes the flavour of the year, next year, you'll have to

provide a policy on it, and what you do is become involved in a rhetorical exercise and what you have to do is to say, 'I've got to put so much attention to that', and say 'I'll do it', but recognizing that it's going to take time away from other things" (C303).

Another gallery manager viewed the situation as one in which the client would never be able to succeed fully. She felt that arts council deliberately orchestrated matters so that clients would always feel inadequate in the relationship, as it "...places on its organisations a responsibility which they're incapable of achieving so they're always going to fail and therefore we get back to the appraisal system where you're constantly failing – you don't achieve anything, which is wrong and should be changed..." (G247).

A drama company manager gave the example of the arts councils' newly introduced procedure of three-year funding agreements which had initially been documents so replete with imposed conditions and requirements that many clients had refused to sign them: "I think only one company has signed one and I believe they had something like 32 clauses specific to them... and it has been said by an arts council officer that they should never have signed it because it was far too much to enforce, actually, all these specific conditions, that there should be no more than half a dozen specific conditions" (Q55).

Others spoke of the arts councils' procedures as an attempt to impose order and neatness on an arts world that was, by its very nature, loose, unregimented and opportunistic. The director of a dance company felt that this phenomenon was in danger, conversely, of killing off the kind of excellence in artistic creativity

that it was charged with encouraging: "The funders are trying to impose things like service order agreements and three-year business plans in an attempt to create order out of a very messy world. They seem to think that if we have order, we will have good art. Good art doesn't come out of good order; in fact, you can't predict where it's going to come from; it doesn't come out of a business plan..." (N239).

The artist cited earlier who said that he liked his art to be "kind of wonky", saw this as an attempt to make every funded arts organisation become more like the arts councils themselves, "...in my deepest private thoughts I wonder if these 'strategies' and this 'cleaning up' ... is actually to get rid of renegades, to get rid of the 'loose ends' ... and whether, indeed, in the end, the arts council, in a curious way, wants to look at arts organisations and just see a reflection of themselves" (K235).

If this were indeed the case, it might be said that it was no accident, for, in the arts councils' own appraisal handbook, let's not forget, one of the stated 'purposes of appraisal' is, "To ascertain to what extent the organisation's policies and performance have enabled the Arts Council's own strategic objectives to be achieved" (ACE 1994; ACW 1997). Should such an imperative be pursued too robustly, it could well lead beyond mere 'strategic objectives' and grow, even inadvertently, into a desire to see the arts organisation's entire operation evolve into an image of the funding body itself.

Although one company manager saw the imposition of the arts councils' agenda on appraisals as more inadvertent than deliberate, she, nevertheless, saw the consequence as one that

called into question the soundness of the appraisal process itself. She felt that the agenda for the appraisal should be drawn up with far more attention paid to the nature of the organisation itself: "All too often, the appraisal process is overlaid on an organisation rather than having come out of it" (P371).

This criticism echoes the one noted earlier regarding the standardization of *pro formae* and PI's. However, it calls into question, in a far more fundamental respect, the very effectiveness of the appraisal system itself, in as much as the standard agenda may not allow the arts council to see the arts organisation as it really is but, rather, merely observe it from a predetermined viewpoint of the arts council's own choosing. It may well be that a particular *a priori* appraisal agenda might be very well suited to appraising, say, an opera company, yet intuition alone would suggest that the same agenda would be inappropriate for the evaluation of a community arts co-operative. The converse would also apply: "We met with the arts council recently, we had to tell them how many disabled people we worked with this year; are you exercising equal opportunities? If we were a community group with a specific aim to work with disabled people, that would be fine in its own right, but if you are artist led and must still somehow satisfy these criteria, then it's difficult" (O135).

### **Policy diversity**

There was strong feeling in favour of introducing a policy of a diversity of approaches for appraisal: "I'm very much in favour of the diversity argument – diversity of approaches and models" (I295), said a festival director. Some interviewees suggested that the kind of appraisal method could vary according to some kind

of financial criteria, similar to those in other areas: "So, for example, with charity returns, if you're below a certain threshold, then you don't prepare charity audited accounts, so maybe there's a similar level that you can take with varying sizes of organisations or the varying amount of funding that you get" (G57).

A theatre company manager advocated varying the criteria according to the purpose behind the company's existence. The richness of the artistic community depended on the variety of types of organisations – and artists – within it: "There needs to be recognition in policy terms that there are certain organisations that are provision led and others that are artist led and there needs to be different approaches ... and a variety needs to be represented otherwise you're just going to get homogenised companies producing similar stuff – and that's the danger" (O147).

A similar point was made by a choreographer from another company, only rather more colourfully. He was referring to two dance companies – one, whose work was rather experimental in nature and which generally performed in smaller, arts centre houses, and his own company which toured mainstream contemporary dance for family audiences in larger civic theatres: "If you were judging, for instance, 'Company X' and us, you couldn't use the same criteria because, fundamentally we're in different businesses – our aims are different. *They'd* probably put at the highest level of their tree some kind of innovation, whereas ours would be very dancerly – I'm very concerned about old fashioned pointy-foot dancing but done with a great modern feel. But they're two artistic worlds that are miles apart.

In policy terms you've got to have a balance between the different kinds of arts organisations. At the top you've got to have one or two big flagship companies – national companies – your orchestra and the opera; then you have your mainstream level then you've got to have all the individual artists and companies and crazy hairy people at the bottom because, without the hairy people at the bottom the others don't have a lot to sit on – it's thin" (N324).

The distinction between the provision-led company – an organisation that's funded primarily to provide a particular programme of activity for the public – and the artist-led company whose *raison d'être* is generally to mount the work of a particular artist, is one that is well understood in the arts community. A gallery manager even implied that, in certain cases, both 'agendas' could be found within a single organisation. His gallery sometimes pursued a 'provision' agenda and at other times took an 'artistic' approach, yet both kinds of activity were evaluated by the same criteria, "You will get big attendances for some things – the very populist things – but the creative front won't get those huge attendances – and I just think that that expectation was there without really accepting the reality of what art did...." (F151).

The notion of different funding approaches for different kinds of organisations or activities is not, of course, new. In the mid nineteen-nineties, Geoff Mulgan(1996), at one time a Downing Street policy adviser to the New Labour Government, advocated that the arts councils should adopt policies that added flexibility to their funding and evaluation schemes, "I think everyone [in the arts funding bodies] who runs a budget should be asking, 'Can

we set aside 5, 10, 20% which is overtly oriented to risk, which doesn't demand so much in terms of the formal accountability of accounts, which is more open-ended?', knowing that, as in every cultural field, there will be quite a high proportion of failures but knowing, too, that the success will be much more productive for all that."

One interviewee felt that the notion of arts funding that recognized the artists right to fail, was something that had recently vanished from the arts funding bodies' way of thinking, even though it was still current in other areas in the funded sector: "In the past what patrons did was give risk money; they recognized a talent and that it needed to be cultivated and encouraged, and that giving money to a particular artist was not particularly a safe bet but that it might engender some valuable creative work. The government funds science and scientists that are engaged in a similar level of exploration as artists, they're engaged in a process of discovery, much as artists are, and they're not necessarily going to find the answer" (O158).

This point was also made by another interviewee, "One of the things that we are not allowed to do any more, which we were when I first came into the arts, is there is no room for failure, there is no allowance for failure any more" (Q187).

Although this study is not investigating the funding policies of the arts councils, the opinions expressed above do imply that a variety of evaluation systems need to be employed for different kinds of clients. As Mulgan suggested, the artist-led client would be allied to an appraisal regime that "doesn't demand so much in terms of the formal accountability of accounts". Or as the

previously quoted choreographer said, "The agenda for the hairy people should be almost totally free; you give them money, wait and see what comes back from it...." (N356).

### **SUMMARY OF INTERVIEWS**

The interviewing process presented a range of issues for further consideration. These issues are significant, firstly because they are central to the practice of arts council client evaluation and, secondly, because they were issues that were raised by virtually every interviewee. The key points raised, in brief, were:

- ◆ Appraisal, *per se*, is an essential element in the power relationship that exists between an arts organisation and its funding body
- ◆ The desire to demonstrate public accountability for arts funding is one that is shared by both artists and the distributing bodies
- ◆ Artists view appraisal as a valuable opportunity to meet with their arts council officers
- ◆ Nevertheless, resistance to the procedures employed by the arts councils to conduct appraisals is manifested in criticism from artists, who, through their own individual circumstances ('special cases'), effect a 'multiplicity of points of resistance'
- ◆ The workload involved in preparing for appraisals was felt by artists to be onerous and excessive and interfered with the day-to-day operation of their organisation
- ◆ Much of the agenda of appraisal meetings was thought to lack relevance both to the organisation being appraised and also to the task of evaluating. Examples of this include:



- Standardized, one-size-fits-all reporting formats required from every organisation, regardless of art form, size or nature
  - Bureaucratic box-ticking approach – again, the same tick-boxes for all organisations
  - Increasing prominence given to standardized lists of statistical performance indicators required from all organisations
  - Centrally initiated socio-political agenda imposed on all organisations
- 
- ◆ Lack of clarity in respect of the precise aims of the appraisal
  - ◆ Arts organisations felt that, all too often, appraisals were a missed opportunity, in that very little was gained by them from the process
  - ◆ Concern over the increasing lack of attention paid to artistic work in appraisals, in favour of consideration of managerial issues and statistical indicators
  - ◆ Concern that the socio-political agendas that inform the distribution of arts lottery funds have now pervaded general arts council thinking, giving prominence to these agendas in client appraisals
  - ◆ As a consequence, arts council staff are increasingly felt to be unqualified and unable to discuss and consider clients' artistic work, leading to a feeling among artists that the arts councils are no longer motivated by the arts nor the promotion of artistic excellence
  - ◆ Consequent concern regarding how judgments about an organisation are reached

- ◆ The power exercised by the arts councils over their clients serves to drive the appraisal process and, hence, colours both the process and conduct of appraisals and
- ◆ The need for a diversity of approaches to appraisal to cater for a range of different kinds of arts organisations

Discussion of these findings will be undertaken in the next chapter but the general impressions left from the interviews with arts organisations and observations of appraisals is that arts council appraisal of their funded organisations involves a significant amount of work from both parties. Whether the effectiveness of the appraisal process justifies this degree of effort, is a question that will be asked later.

It seemed also that there was, in line with trends in other public sectors, a significant amount of importance placed on the gathering of statistical data and the setting of numerical targets. Artists felt that this over-emphasis precluded any consideration of their artistic work in the appraisal process and that the balance between the prominence given to numbers, and artistic reflection needed to be redressed.

It's interesting to note, in light of the fact that literature relating to education evaluation has informed the majority of the theoretical thinking behind this inquiry, that David Bell, the Chief Inspector of Schools for England, has recently cautioned against a fixation on statistical data and targets, as it can eventually reduce achievement and be damaging to educational standards:

*"One of the things inspectors find is that an excessive or myopic focus on targets can actually narrow and reduce achievement by crowding out some of the essentials of effective and broadly-based learning. They also find teachers, heads and local authorities for whom targets are now operating more as a threat than a motivator.... I have a very real concern that the innovation and reform that we need to see in our schools may be inhibited by an over-concentration on targets."*

(Bell 2003)

In a similar vein, one of the theatre directors interviewed suggested that the arts councils' fixation with non-artistic matters in its appraisals jeopardises its future as an arts body:

"... the arts council is destined to become just purely functionaries that can openly declare, 'I'm not interested in your work,' – you know, that would be their opening gambit always – 'I'm just interested in how the money's being spent – tell me who your accountant is and I'll go straight to him'" (M179).

### **THE PURPOSE OF APPRAISAL – THE ARTS COUNCILS' VIEW**

During the course of the fieldwork, informal discussions were held with six officers of the Arts Councils of both England and Wales. Of these, two were finance officers, one a marketing researcher and three were senior managers – two art form directors (heads of department) and one an acting chief executive. Formal interviews were conducted with a further three ACE and ACW officers, one of whom was a touring officer, and two senior managers – an art form director and an acting director of finance.

During the interviews, the straightforward question was posed, "What is the purpose of appraisal?" The initial responses were, themselves, equally straightforward: "It's about value for money for the public because the money that we give is tax-payers' money. So we have to prove, if you like, to government or to the public that, by giving so much money to certain arts organisations, we're getting value for money" (T226). Similarly, "I think a body has to have some basis on which it decides to give money. The nonsense of not having an answer to the question, 'Why do you fund this company?'" (S229). Another officer, from a different arts council, used virtually the same words: "The arts council has to ask itself the question why it funds a company..." (H45).

One officer with many years' arts council experience suggested that, in the last decade and a half, the importance afforded appraisal had grown as funding had become tighter: "... you'd get new members of Council coming and saying, 'Why are we funding these people?' And every generation you'd get a new minister asking 'Why are we funding this...?' And there are people who are not funded saying, 'Why can't we get in on the funding ladder?'" (S238). Following years of standstill funding (effectively a decrease in funds) from successive governments in the 1980s and 90s, the pressure on arts councils' budgets was becoming increasingly intense and from this arose the demand by arts council members that a certain portion of the monies they distributed should be more fluid and not awarded to the same clients year after year, "...and some people saying you should be moving this money around"(S249).

When seeking ways to withdraw funding from some clients in order to free up money, appraisal became a far more serious business. Even at that point, it was suggested, artistic quality was rarely the main concern: "It didn't get very much into, 'On the day we went to see this particular dance performance, we thought the performers were not very good,' or something like that – that didn't seem to be the function of those particular appraisals..." (S157). It was suggested that managerial and financial issues were far more of a concern: "On what basis do you take money away from longstanding clients? Usually, money would only get withdrawn from a longstanding client for budgetary reasons .... the rock they actually foundered on was failing to balance their books - always" (S251).

Another officer, herself a former arts practitioner, professed that her personal inclination would steer her to look beyond the financial bottom line and in the direction of seeking to determine how the artistic work was developing, even though, ultimately, financial accountability had to take precedence, "...has the company found a new life? Is it invigorated? Why do we keep putting public money into these things? So it's a time for the arts council to qualify why the funding is given – and to be sure about it" (H50). At no point, however, was there any suggestion that appraisals were used as part of the process to select organisations for grant aid. This was exclusively a system for examining the work of clients who were already in receipt of funding.

One officer introduced another factor by drawing attention to the fact that many of the longstanding clients had, to a large extent, been nurtured by their arts council officer over many

years and that, in the process, rather complex and interdependent funding arrangements had been carefully built up, often involving a number of diverse funding partners. These could include various local authority departments (Education, Leisure, Social Services, Tourism, Economic Development, etc), other statutory bodies, as well as private business sponsors. Very often the officer had worked very hard to establish the mutually dependent funding package and it was not in his or her interest to cause its unravelling: "The existence of the success of a client that you had nurtured is part of your own achievement, and so, ... we were appraising people that were part of our battle plan, if you like; you wanted to do an appraisal that, subconsciously, was supportive" (S43). And, "You might be very aware, in doing an appraisal, of a possibly fragile but very important relationship with another funder, that you wanted to reinforce – so this chips away at the objectivity of it" (S89). In these kinds of circumstances, a negative appraisal not only jeopardised the future of the arts organisation's funding but also the carefully developed relationship with a funding partner. By withdrawing arts council funding from a client, "...you've pulled the 'kite mark' away..." (S140).

Although artistic matters were officially part – albeit a small part – of the appraisal agenda (ACE 1994) and show report *pro formae* are circulated with appraisal team papers, there seems little doubt that the primary reason behind appraisal, from the funding bodies' perspective, is to demonstrate public financial accountability. Appraisals rarely led to the withdrawal of funding, except in exceptional cases where an organisation might have been experiencing chronic budgetary problems over an extended period of time.

As noted earlier in Chapter 2, both the ACE and the ACW have undergone separate processes of restructuring in recent years and those processes are still being worked through. During discussions with several officers it had become apparent that the appraisal systems in both organisations had effectively been suspended over the previous eighteen months or so – indeed, this was partially the reason why only two appraisals had been observed – and that the entire issue of client evaluation was due to be reviewed during the evolution of the restructuring process. The detail of the evaluation procedures eventually adopted by the two bodies may well be somewhat different but, since both bodies are funded by the same government (albeit two different arms of that government<sup>4</sup>) the approach will need to be broadly similar and of a nature that would satisfy the political masters.

In view of the fact that the 'new' organisations would, naturally, take time to bed down, the final interview undertaken for this inquiry was with one of the arts councils' senior managers. The majority of the interview was, consequently, able to focus on current thinking regarding client evaluation.

It was confirmed at the outset that it was hoped to conduct a review of the entire evaluation process in the near future: "About two years ago we started a review of that process and, unfortunately, that was at a time when the arts council started to go through a re-organisation and it was very slow to go through it because of what was going on here; and after a year we actually abandoned it [the review] and we're waiting for the new organisation to come into place..." (T16).

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<sup>4</sup> The DCMS in England, and the NAFW in Wales.

Earlier in this chapter, in reporting the observation of the visual arts client appraisal, it was noted that a letter from the arts council to the client had indicated the arts council's intention to employ a 'lighter touch' in respect of its clients. This intention was confirmed by the senior manager in this interview: "Yes, in terms of the whole monitoring and evaluation of our organisations, that is very clearly what's coming through in the policy" (T49).

The term, 'lighter touch' suggests that the 'touch' had previously been rather heavy-handed and perhaps in a tacit acknowledgement of this she added, "We want to have a different sort of relationship – what we call a 'grown up relationship' – with our organisations" (T56). This would include recognition of – and indeed respect for – the work that organisations carry out through their own self-appraisal: "So in our monitoring policy, we believe that if organisations are currently monitoring themselves – either their box-office or, you know, the standards, the quality of their work, we could rely on that, so we don't need to do it again. So it's those sorts of things; if the Board meets so many times a year and they take an interest in the finances, well why do we have to do it? So the idea is that we trust our arts organisations to do the job that we pay them for. It's about working with them so that there's no duplication, so that they're not doing something for themselves and then having to do it to us" (T60).

In response to questions about the workload associated with appraisals, she restated this point, "We've agreed that we shouldn't ask an organisation for anything that they shouldn't



produce for themselves so, in theory, Boards should meet at least four times a year and we would never ask for more than the papers from those – so you would expect that within the Board papers to be management accounts. If there weren't, we'd be very surprised. So we're not going to ask for the things they shouldn't have, so, they should have a budget, they should have Board papers, those sorts of things" (T121).

This response seemed clear enough but, when pressed on specific detail – particularly in respect of financial reporting (a source of frequent complaint from arts organisations, as seen above) – the issue seemed far from resolved. Would the arts council be prepared, it was asked, to say to client organisations, "However you produce your own financial accounts, for your own management purposes, that, essentially, will do for us?" The answer seem to contain resonances of Henry Ford's famous statement concerning the colour of his Model 'T' cars, in as much as it seems that in whatever format an organisation produced it's own financial accounts, that would be acceptable as long as they were in the format that the arts council approved! "It may be OK for us, depending on whether it shows – it's no good if it's only a few lines and we can't actually see how much is actually spent on touring or how much is spent... – so it needs to be in the form in which we can evaluate why we give money to an organisation. And so if we give money to an organisation to do ten tours in six regions, if we can't see that in some way, then obviously we would need to ask for that" (T151).

During the course of discussing the issue of workload, an important point arose. Recent restructuring in both ACE and ACW had involved policies to reduce the establishment costs of

both bodies. This had resulted in a considerable reduction in posts, with the consequent financial savings enabling more money to be given in the form of grant aid to artists and arts organisations. In ACE this had produced a saving of £10 million earmarked for re-allocation. One of the consequences of this was that, with fewer officer posts, the capacity to conduct client appraisals was significantly reduced, "So if you're taking away a hundred people from the organisation, so that you can give more money to the arts, you can't do everything" (T563).

Although there was not, as yet, any resolution regarding the form that any future appraisal system would assume, it was clear there would need to be, at the very least, a radically different approach to the way regular client monitoring would take place. Not all clients could be monitored systematically as had previously been the case and the decision on which clients were to be scrutinised at any given point (and in which manner) would be determined by considering the potential risk associated with each client, "And the other thing about the policy is that it will be based on risk. So all clients will not be looked at in the same way" (T79). "It could mean artistic risk but it's more to do with the nature of the organisation and the way it delivers its objectives. So, for example, if a company always had to ask for an advance payment on its next year's grant, we'd consider that to be a risk. If they've had a deficit for the past six years, that's a risk. If they're going through a re-organisation, that would be a risk. If they've got a change of artistic director – those sorts of things..." (T191).

This reduction in staff would also have an impact on the remaining employees and on future recruitment, in that post-

holders would have to take on added responsibilities outside their area of specialty: "So the art form people here would need to have a broad range of skills and they are being trained in finance – so, finance for non-finance people" (T386). Thus, art-form officers would need to undertake financial scrutiny that had previously been undertaken by finance officers. And where, for example, highly specialized financial analysis would be required, "they'd have to get somebody from outside the organisation to do that" (T363). There was a hint that perhaps the yet-to-be-decided appraisal system might not involve highly specialized financial analysis nor, even, was there any guarantee that there would be an appraisal system at all: "But you're assuming that that appraisal system will continue and there's no reason to believe that it will. But if that was to continue and they required a finance person on the team, they would have to employ somebody from outside" (T366).

In addition to the acknowledgement that fewer staffing resources would necessitate the implementation of a less systematic client evaluation regime, the interviewee identified a concern that more attention would need to be paid to artistic matters. But she also felt that ensuring artistic quality was not always the overriding concern: "I think it depends. I think, quality is one of our ambitions obviously, so quality would be one thing we'd be looking at, but, you could argue that, in certain areas of the country where artistic provision is very low, we'd be less harsh on quality than in some areas – that's a very broad statement – but, you know, it's about introducing people to the arts and obviously quality is absolutely critical but we may fund things that we may not think is particularly innovative but it provides arts for an area that doesn't receive other artistic..." (T248).

But, generally, whilst maintaining that the consideration of the artistic work in the broad evaluation process was an important issue that needed to be addressed seriously, she acknowledged that this was a complex issue and could propose no simple solution: "My colleague and I spent some time talking about artistic quality and we thought that it couldn't be evaluated quantitatively, it has to be a qualitative evaluation. We used to do a lot of show reports but it's been decided that they are so subjective – that practically everyone that goes to see a show has a different opinion about it – and so we thought if you wanted to evaluate the quality of an organisation that would have to be done by someone that had an expertise across the field. So if you wanted to evaluate one particular theatre company with another – and though they obviously vary in the sort of things they do – you would have to have a whole range of experience within that field and we felt that art form officers should have that experience in order to evaluate the quality of an organisation. So you'd be compared to your peers, if you like – that would be one way – there's obviously all the standard things that are horrendous to sample, things like press reviews, all those sorts of things. Audience numbers give you the number of people who attend, they don't say anything about quality – although you would hope there would be some correlation, but there isn't necessarily, so those sorts of things, looking at peer reviews, just by experience, and press coverage, those sorts of things" (T501).

This interview has been revealing in that many of the pressing concerns of artists have, it appears, been acknowledged. The

'lighter touch' approach, if introduced, would certainly be welcomed by arts organisations. But will they be as welcoming of an arrangement that, in practice, affords them much less 'quality time' with their arts council officers?

Similarly, the acceptance that more consideration needs to be given to artists' work will gain wide approval. But will artists be happy with the notion of arts council officers being the sole artistic arbiters, given that many of them feel that arts council officers do not have the skill nor the knowledge to take on such a role? On a more practical level, is it reasonable to assume that it is possible to find individuals who not only have expert knowledge in all the artistic and practical aspects of a given art form but will, at the same time, be capable of analyzing financial, statistical and management matters to an acceptably proficient level?

Despite these questions, it is gratifying that the issue of client appraisal is being considered seriously. It is, however, interesting to note that the current thinking on client evaluation has been brought about not entirely out of concern for finding a meaningful way of evaluating the work of clients or of addressing their grievances but more out of practical necessity, in that the reduction in posts – albeit for extremely laudable reasons – will require that any new system must involve a significantly lighter workload for arts council officers. The clients have been complaining about heavy workload and inappropriate procedures and agendas for many years, but to no avail. It's ironic that it's the workload of the funding body officers that has, in the end, prompted a review of the process.

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## CHAPTER 6

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### 'RINGING THE RIGHT BELLS':

### DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

It is over a quarter of a century since Eisner proposed his *Connoisseurship* model and almost fifteen years since Reason and Rowan put forward their *New Paradigm*, and Guba and Lincoln their *Fourth Generation Evaluation*. Yet much of what they saw as flawed in contemporary evaluation practice and which they sought to address, is still present in the *modi operandi* of many of today's evaluators and evaluation exercises. For example, it seems almost axiomatic nowadays that whenever any form of evaluation or assessment is indicated, the first order of business *must be* to determine what were the *objectives* of the project under scrutiny. Tyler's 1930s concept of measuring intended outcomes against actual outcomes is very much alive and kicking in many circles, particularly those of commercial business and Government, notwithstanding the subsequent criticism of such an approach by several noted theorists (Cronbach 1963; Stake 1967; Guba & Lincoln 1981). It is also a basic element in the appraisal systems of the two arts councils under consideration in this inquiry.

In this chapter, the appraisal practice in place at Arts Council England and the Arts Council of Wales will be discussed in

respect of three aspects of the theoretical constructs introduced earlier:

- ◆ the power relationship that exists between the funders and their clients
- ◆ criticisms made by theorists of prevalent evaluation practice
- ◆ key elements of approaches advocated by theorists

A point to note at the outset is that both arts organisations and funding bodies strongly supported the notion of the appraisal of funded organisations. Funders considered it necessary in order to determine whether or not funds were being effectively deployed, whether or not value for money was being achieved, and to offer reassurance, or otherwise, to themselves that they had been correct in awarding the grants in the first place. Their political masters also expected them to conduct client evaluation and monitoring exercises as part of the commitment to public accountability. Some officers also saw appraisals as part of an ongoing undertaking to work with the arts organisation, to aid with the dissemination of examples of best practice, in order to enable the organisations' continuing development and progress.

Artists, too, were committed to the concept of public accountability and were keen to participate in a process that demonstrated that they were not cavalier in their attitude

towards the spending of public monies. Beyond financial accountability, they also wished to demonstrate to the wider world that they were serious about what they did, that they were efficient and effective as organisations, and that their work was creative and innovative.

But artists also viewed appraisal as a valuable opportunity to meet with their funders, to sit down, face-to-face, and talk about their recent successes, to discuss their concerns, and to seek solutions to matters that were proving problematic. Indeed, apart from the process of evaluation, the very act of meeting – of spending 'quality time' with their funding body officers – was something that was greatly valued by artists and felt to be an important aspect of the relationship.

## **POWER**

The one element that underpins all else in the theoretical framework of this investigation is the nature of the relationship between the funding bodies and their client organisations. In Chapter 3, this is characterized as a power relationship, with the power brought to bear by the arts councils over their client organisations likened to the Foucaultian conception of 'disciplinary power', which, in modern society, is exercised through various means of surveillance. The metaphor used by Foucault for this kind of power is the Panopticon, Jeremy Bentham's 18<sup>th</sup> century design for an inspection house or prison, and, as was outlined in Chapter 3, Foucault states that Panoptic power has the effect of imposing a form of internal discipline – a kind of self regulation – upon subjects, in that it "trains,



individualizes, regiments, makes docile and obedient subjects" (Macdonell 1986: 102). Is the fact that artists were eager to meet with their funders, to discuss their achievements and frustrations, perhaps even to seek approval of their efforts from their paymasters, is this, too, a manifestation of the effect of the inner discipline instilled by Panoptic power? Or is this another, more subtle, form of resistance to power? For as Foucault states, in addition to playing the role of adversary, resistance can be characterised in various other ways, including that of "support or handle in power relations" (Foucault 1978: 95).

The three key features of Panoptic power, according to Foucault, are the maintenance of an archive of rules, the exercise of disciplinary power (panopticism), and the use of systems of testing the consequences of panopticism through micro-analysis.

And present throughout are a multiplicity of points of resistance to power for, as Foucault insists, "Where there is power, there is resistance" (Foucault 1978: 95).

*Figure 8* below summarises in table form the three features of disciplinary power, together with the characteristics of resistance to that power, which, it is argued, underpin the power relationship between the arts councils and their client organisations, and relates them to their manifestation in the arts councils' appraisal process.

<b>Theoretical construct</b>	<b>Manifestation</b>
Panoptic archive of rules	Categorisation of clients, schemes, art forms, scale of organisation, amateur/ professional, capital grants/arts grants, social policy. AC strategic objectives.
Panoptic disciplinary procedures	Placing clients into categories; Heavy workload; manipulation of clients' programmes of activities; cosy managerialism; reduction or withdrawal of grant aid.
Panoptic testing & inspection	Monitoring and appraisal system.
Resistance to power	Criticisms by artists – multiplicity of points of resistance; Strategic manoeuvres countered by opposing manoeuvres; 'Official' and 'hidden' transcripts; Power relationships 'largely ineffective'.

**Figure 8: Power relationship between arts councils and their clients**

**The archives of rules**, as described earlier in Chapter 3, are the various **categories** of clients, art forms, grant schemes and so on that are drawn up by the arts councils' and which, in turn, are subject to the arts councils' own strategic objectives. And it is worth reminding ourselves that one of the key "purposes of appraisal", according to the arts councils, is to ascertain the extent to which the arts organisation has furthered the achievement of the arts councils' own strategic objectives (ACE 1994; ACW 1997).

These rules act to 'discipline' the arts organisations, for failure to adhere to them could result in the withdrawal of funding, along with the seal of approval – or "kite mark" as one interviewee called it – that is implicit in receiving grants from the arts councils.

**Disciplinary procedures** can manifest themselves in various ways. From the moment of the first contact made by arts organisations with the arts councils, the various **categories** with which they must conform are brought into play.

But one of the chief areas of complaint among arts organisations – and one that had the most immediate effect on the day-to-day running of their operations – was the **high workload** associated with appraisals. Many interviewees attested to this, describing the great deal of time involved in preparation for appraisal visits and the amount of paperwork involved. The observation of Appraisal 1, particularly, supported these claims, with the product of their efforts – the great deal of paperwork contained in the appraisal team's packs – clearly evident. The imposition of such administrative burdens on organisations can also be seen as part of these disciplinary powers. One of the arts councils' development officers acknowledged the great amount of work required of clients in the appraisal process and felt that he, too, (almost out of courtesy) had a duty to match their efforts.

Yet it is the matter of officers' appraisal workloads that is now causing the arts councils to review the appraisal system. Although there is a stated intention to decrease the amount of paperwork required from clients by "not asking an organisation for anything they shouldn't produce for themselves" (T90), the other element in this intention is to rely more on the clients' own self-appraisal. Self-appraisal was also proposed in one of the artists' interviews as a component of any future appraisal system. Whether or not this will involve the introduction of some sort of

formal self-evaluation system is not yet known but, one way or the other, a significant part of the burden of responsibility for appraisal will be shifted from the arts councils onto their clients, and this is quite clearly another example of the 'internal discipline' that is a consequence of Foucaultian panopticism. Even though the stated aim is to introduce a 'lighter touch', the power relationship is nevertheless perpetuated.

Another aspect of panoptic disciplinary power is reflected in Guba and Lincoln's assertion that the presence of '**cosy managerialism**' renders any evaluation system flawed. This phenomenon has always been present in arts council client appraisals in, arguably, an even more heightened form than portrayed by Guba and Lincoln, since the manager commissioning the evaluation and the evaluator conducting the process are one and the same – the arts council. The parameters and boundaries of the appraisal – the 'rules' – are established by them and subsequently 'enforced' by them. These rules are not always transparent, with several of the arts organisations complaining that they were never quite clear about what criteria were being used in their appraisals.

At the time of writing, a form of contract between the funder and the funded was being introduced and these 'funding agreements' set out clear targets for the organisation. But already, complaints have been made about some funding agreements which, in some cases have degenerated from being an honest attempt to add clarity to the contract, to becoming a long list (as many as 32 in one case) of detailed stipulations, thus, once more, perpetuating the 'disciplinary' nature of the power relationship. It should be possible to add clarity to a situation

without resorting to an oppressive list of stipulations, conditions and controls.

Such clarity will, no doubt, be welcomed by artists, as will the client-specific nature of the document, although there is no indication that the appraisal process itself will abandon the one-size-fits-all approach. Such an approach, as was discussed earlier, will lead to the **manipulation of the clients' programmes of activity**, since artists will be effectively compelled to tailor their operation to fit the requirements of the appraisal process, as opposed to the appraisal process being tailored to suit the nature of the arts organisation it will need to evaluate.

And the ultimate sanction of the arts councils' disciplinary power, of course, is the threat to **reduce or withdraw funding**, should they not be satisfied with the operation under scrutiny.

And whereas rules and panopticism are used to discipline clients, appraisal is the **micro analysis** – the tool of inspection – that is used to determine whether the rules are being observed and the discipline is effective.

That the arts councils' inherent power over its clients is part and parcel of the appraisal process was alluded to by several interviewees. One interviewee specifically used the term 'power relationship' in describing his organisation's relationship with the arts council, another described the appraisal experience as a little like "going to see the headmistress", and it is quite common among arts organisations to refer to appraisal team visits (albeit with tongue in cheek) as the "Spanish Inquisition". And those appraisal visits observed did, indeed, display a certain uneasiness

in demeanour, particularly among the arts organisation's personnel. There was a distinct air of apprehension present, despite the outward cordiality, with the underlying tone, and one that persisted unremittingly throughout the visit, being one of a group of individuals confronted by a jury of their betters.

Several interviewees described their attitude to the currently used appraisal system as one, despite their strong criticisms of it, that they tolerated, that they "have to do" in order to toe the line and fulfil what is set out in the 'rules'. Could this be a product of the "training and conditioning" (Foucault 1980: 155) that is an integral part of Panopticism? They obeyed the rules even though it often meant depicting their organisation as a somewhat different entity to that which it actually was, by portraying it in a form that was not altogether accurate but which, nevertheless, conformed to what the arts councils expected of them. To this end they were always careful to "ring the right bells", to "check all the right boxes", and to employ appropriate trigger jargon. And they continued to comply even when the rules changed, as they periodically did, when either the arts councils or the government of the day introduced a shift in strategic objectives.

One interviewee felt strongly that the appraisal system was, effectively, designed to ensure that clients would always feel inadequate in their relationship with the arts councils as it demanded of its clients obligations that they were incapable of fulfilling, thus placing the client in a position where it would forever fall short of the ideal.

The various criticisms of the appraisal system demonstrated the **multiplicity of points of resistance** that exist within the arts

councils' relationships with their client organisations. Depending on their particular circumstances, individual arts organisations highlighted aspects of client appraisal with which they were particularly discontented. Although many criticised similar aspects, they did so with varying degrees of passion. This was clearly not a co-ordinated campaign of resistance, there was no 'single locus of great Refusal'.

Artists often viewed the arts councils' demands and conditions as **strategies** designed to get rid of awkward clients ('renegades') or to tidy up 'loose ends', and felt that these demands were often unachievable so that clients would fall short of the mark. In such instances, they implemented various other **strategic manoeuvres** as a counter tactic: some provided data that was "just guesswork" (M35) or even "made up" (D32), "just complete rubbish" (D100). Others did just sufficient to comply by "going through the motions" (I157). Others simply provided the same documents (suitably amended) that they had provided in previous years (D97).

Evidence of the '**hidden transcript**' on the part of the clients was also evident. The cordiality, bonhomie and obvious effort made by the organisation in Appraisal 1 to impress the arts council team was evident and can be seen as a (rather stiff) 'public performance' when compared to the negative and sometimes slighting comments made about the funders when they were 'offstage' in the subsequent interview. Almost all the interviewees, at some stage or other, made disparaging comments about the arts councils, some rather vehemently, with some calling into question the integrity of the funding body and, on occasion, even the competence of the officers. Clearly, such

behaviour would not have taken place in the presence of arts council personnel and, again, was reserved for 'offstage' moments.

All these factors lead to the inevitability of the power relationship, eventually, being **"largely unsuccessful"** (Mills 2003: 47), in that it fails to achieve its goal of total domination. Certainly, in the case of artists, their spirits are not totally dominated, nor is their work. Indeed, it can be said that the arts councils, through their appraisal system, have negligible affect on artists' work, firstly because that is the one area that is most jealously guarded by artists against interference, and secondly, because, as has been seen in the findings, the appraisal system singularly neglects to consider an organisation's artistic work to any meaningful degree. And finally, the very fact that artists, in one way or another, are aware that their relationship with the arts councils is one of unequal power, ensure that the uneasy state of 'them and us' is perpetuated.

However, the senior manager interviewed at the end of the field work stated that, in future, the arts councils wished to enjoy a more "grown up" relationship with its clients, that it wished to place greater trust in them. Yet, where a client was perceived, according to the AC's own criteria, to be a "risk" it would consider it necessary to monitor that client closely. It is, of course, possible to argue that this is reasonable – indeed that it is the AC's duty to ensure that there are no question marks surrounding its funding decisions – however, it does illustrate that even in a 'grown up' relationship – a term that suggests a more equal partnership, it is often felt necessary to bring one's position of



authority to bear. And where power continues to be exercised, it will, in one way or another, be resisted.

But how can we be sure that by placing the relationship between the arts councils and their clients within the Foucaultian concept of a power relationship, we have come to a reasonable and valid interpretation of the data? Could it, perhaps, be possible to arrive at alternative interpretations?

Let us examine briefly another possibility. Is it possible, from examination of the raw data, to view the attitudes of the funder and the funded in the appraisal process simply as a form of trade-off. The arts organisations accept that the arts councils are expected to conduct appraisals of them and, therefore, tolerate appraisals as a nuisance that they have to endure from time to time. They conform with the demands placed upon them with a deal of grumbling, but knowing that, in the end, any report (as long as they have 'rung all the right bells' and 'checked all the right boxes') will be rather anodyne affairs that will not herald any far reaching changes or effects. Most importantly of all, however, they know that the 'trade off' with the arts council is that appraisal will not interfere with their artistic work one bit, simply because it doesn't involve any meaningful consideration of it.

*At first sight, such an interpretation hardly seems to sit comfortably within the theoretical construct of a power relationship. But when one considers Foucault's thinking in respect of resistance to power, it is possible to argue that viewing this alternative interpretation as being at odds with the power*

relation concept creates an artificial distinction, for Foucault sees them as being complementary to each other.

The artist may well regard appraisals (as they are currently conducted) as nuisances but some expressed their criticism of it in much stronger terms; and it is such dissatisfaction that eventually fosters a multiplicity of points of resistance to a procedure that is, after all, imposed upon them by a more powerful body. They devise strategic manoeuvres and tactics to counter those strategies that are put in place by the arts councils. The arts councils, in turn, employ further counter strategies that are manifested in the form of new demands placed upon their clients.

The tolerance displayed by artists in public is typical of the 'hidden transcripts' that are in play throughout this encounter. These involve both parties in cordial, 'public performances' in each others' presence but they demonstrate varying degrees of hostility toward each other when 'offstage' in the presence of their peers.

The suggestion that appraisal has no affect on the organisation's artistic output is not only in accord with one of the main conclusions drawn during this investigation (since the appraisal system largely ignores organisations' artistic output) but is also in keeping with Foucault's contention that power relationships are largely unsuccessful, in that the more powerful party never achieves the goal of total domination over the less powerful. The artists' resistance will, in any case, ensure that they fiercely guard their art against interference from the more powerful institution.

This is just one example of a possible alternative interpretation of the data, and in this case it was argued that it, too, could be placed within the theoretical framework of this inquiry. But there are, no doubt, several other interpretations that could be made of the data. What, then, are the factors that cause the researcher to arrive at his particular interpretations?

Firstly, there is the case that the researcher was present at the gathering of data and was able to see and be in direct contact with the individuals concerned. He was able to sense their attitudes, demeanours and perspectives and 'hear' (beyond mere listening) the timbre of their voices, the varying degrees of their passion, and the underlying meaning of their words. In such a situation one is able to understand much more than is contained in the bare words. One is able to use one's own 'critical subjectivity' to gain a greater appreciation of what is being disclosed. Critical subjectivity is the "quality of awareness in which we do not suppress our primary subjective experience; neither do we allow ourselves to be swept away by it; rather, we raise it to consciousness and use it as art of our inquiry process" (Reason 1988: 12). Janesick (1998: 53) likens this process to creating a dance: "The qualitative researcher is like a choreographer who creates a dance to make a statement. For the researcher, the story told is the dance in all its complexity, context, originality and passion."

Secondly, the relaxed informality in the conduct of the interviews with artists, and the consistency of the issues raised in the interviews – despite the range of art forms, geographical locations, and nature of organisations visited – led to a confidence that the interviewees were relating their experiences

and views honestly, and were not simply engaging in some other form of 'public performance' for the researcher. Furthermore, the contention, on the part of the senior arts council manager that the AC wished to have 'a more grown-up relationship' with their clients, amounted to an acknowledgement that their current relationship with them was rather less than that of equal partners.

These are examples of what Eisner (1976: 146) called 'structural corroboration', whereby, throughout the inquiry, the various threads of the data gradually build up to provide an ever more complete picture to demonstrate that the researcher's interpretation of the data, and the conclusions drawn from them, all hang together and the pieces fit.

### **CRITICISMS OF PREVALENT CONTEMPORARY EVALUATION PRACTICE**

Guba & Lincoln, in their criticism of Third Generation Evaluation, Eisner, in proposing his Connoisseurship Model, and Reason & Rowan in their New Paradigm, all perceive weaknesses in prevalent contemporary evaluation practice. The key elements of their criticism are depicted in *Figure 9* below, in terms of their manifestations in current arts council appraisal practice.

<b>Theoretical Construct</b>	<b>Manifestation</b>
Cosy managerialism	Arts councils set parameters for, and also conduct appraisal.
<i>A priori</i> objective setting	Appraisal objectives set out in handbook.

(Continued...)

Preordinate agenda	Parameters of appraisals clearly set out by arts councils in handbook; these parameters, guidelines and checklists have not changed since 1994 and apply to all clients receiving recurring funding, irrespective of scale or type of organisation.
Context stripping	Bias towards evaluating management and hard elements of operation at the expense of artistic work and softer aspects; standardised reporting formats; one-size-fits-all approach.
Lack of value pluralism	Arts councils set criteria and objectives; evaluation of the extent to which clients achieve arts councils' strategic objectives; opinion in final report will be that of the arts council appraisal team.
Over-dependence on quantitative data	Financial data pro formae, P1's.
Oversimplification & reductionism	Quantitative data from all clients aggregated; complex issues largely ignored and headline or 'bottom line' figures elevated in importance.
Claim to a certain authority	Reports from appraisals will be "authoritative documents" (ACE 1994; ACW 1997) which will purport to draw authoritative conclusions regarding the client.

**Figure 9: Appraisal process related to weaknesses claimed by theorists**

The practice of the arts council client appraisals has certainly been **objective based** and, according to the senior manager interviewed, seems likely to continue as such if current arts council thinking were to be adopted. The data obtained from both arts organisations and arts council officers confirm that appraisals have been **preordinate** in their design, with agendas and objectives set out *a priori* and this, according to Guba and Lincoln, is not conducive to evaluation in creative situations. For

a preordinate design and, particularly, the *a priori* setting of objectives, can lead to the premature closing off of emerging creative paths. And once objectives have been formally set, it will be extremely difficult to ignore ones that subsequently prove to be inappropriate or to add to the list ones that subsequently emerge, as new, or unexpected, opportunities present themselves (Guba and Lincoln 1981: 7).

The appraisal visits observed supported this view. In both cases the preordained checklist agendas were adhered to systematically. Nor were they conducted in a manner that was either constructivist or responsive. In Appraisal 1, the client, on several occasions, requested that a discussion of "the artistic imperative" be introduced into the proceedings. On each occasion this request was politely averted and the original agenda, once again, pursued.

Rather, they have been conducted, whether intentionally or inadvertently, in keeping with the concept of panoptic power that has been absorbed into the arts councils' organisational culture and has for so long characterized the relationship between the two parties.

The standardized reporting formats used throughout the arts councils' appraisal and monitoring systems further confirm that appraisal has not been conducted in a responsive manner, and many arts managers complained that the formats were irrelevant to their particular circumstances. This not only causes frustration for those who have the added work of having to tailor their submissions to suit these formats but, more importantly, has the effect of not allowing them to represent their organisation in

the manner which is most appropriate for them nor in one that reflects the true nature of their operation. An effective appraisal will seek to look at an organisation 'as it is' but standardized, one-size-fits-all reporting formats not only preclude a responsive conduct of the appraisal but will, ultimately, not allow the evaluators to view the organisation in its true light. This, essentially, contributes to what Guba and Lincoln call '**context stripping**' by effectively manipulating the environment of the evaluation. It will also tend to **oversimplify** the data by underexposing instances of 'productive idiosyncrasy'. Much of the data gathered in this way will, to use Rowan and Reason's term, be dead knowledge. Neither will it lead to Eisner's aspiration to 'informed critique'.

This kind of data collection is often perpetuated by the bureaucratic nature of a public body. As was discussed in the previous chapter, employees of public service organisation will feel the need to function with 'uniformity of decisions and actions' and this is generally regarded as one of the key characteristics of bureaucracy (Blau and Scott 1966). This, asserts Merton, subsequently leads to a fixation on rules and a lack of adaptability and a tendency to goal displacement, where procedures originally introduced to ensure consistency and fairness acquire a greater importance than the original goals (Merton 1968).

This was certainly the feeling of most of the artists interviewed regarding the manner in which their appraisals had been conducted. And, clearly, the arts councils were firm in their insistence that clients address the entire preordinate checklist when making their submissions prior to appraisal meetings even

if, as some clients claimed, much or part of it was irrelevant to their organisation. This was also confirmed in the first appraisal visit observed, with large sections of the team members' pack (containing the appraisee's submissions which had been produced in accordance with the arts council's checklist) not discussed in the meeting nor mentioned in the subsequent report, presumably because they were, by then, not considered to be relevant to the appraisee's operation.

The arts councils' stated intention of employing a lighter touch in the appraisal process and, in most cases, requiring only the submission of paperwork that a client would have prepared as a matter of course for their own management purposes, indicates the prospect of adopting a somewhat more constructivist attitude to client evaluation on the part of the funders. It still seems, however, that they will seek to evaluate their clients on the basis of their – the arts councils' – stated strategic objectives and will not be entirely responsive to the essence of clients' individuality, demonstrating a clear lack of **value pluralism**.

Eisner, Guba and Lincoln, and Reason and Rowan all maintain that evaluation that perpetuates the scientific method will be **over-dependent on quantitative measurement** as a source of data, and this was certainly a criticism made by arts organisations of arts council client appraisal and monitoring where, they maintained, large amounts of statistical information was regularly being requested from them, much of which they would not ordinarily assemble for their own management purposes. And, frequently, the same information was requested several times over, but in different formats and configurations. All acknowledged that the collection of a certain amount of



statistical data was necessary, including for the purposes of fulfilling the arts councils' role of advocacy on behalf of the arts to local and central government and in other fora. But, artists felt, much of the statistics gathered served no apparent purpose and were seen by them as another burden placed upon them by arts council bureaucracy. Certainly a large part of the case studies' paperwork contained a great deal of quantitative statistics.

Similarly, the recent increase in the demand for statistical performance indicators by the funders was criticised by artists. They complained that, whatever evaluators said to the contrary, where PI's were employed, it was almost inevitable that the 'bottom line' figure was the one that would stick in the mind of the evaluators, leading to what Raynard (1997: 16) calls "judgement by anecdote". They feared that those analysing the PI data would neglect to look beyond the figures to discover the often complex nature of the matter being examined, and use the data to present an **oversimplified and reductionist view** of their operation.

At a conference a few years ago, I was in informal discussion with a Value for Money specialist from the National Audit Office. I raised the issue of the potentially reductionist propensity of an over-reliance on statistical indicators. He maintained that statistical data was useful only if, with each statistic, one posed the question, 'So what?' (Goldsworthy 2000). In other words, it's not the statistic that can cause the problem but the superficial interpretation of such data. If you have a quantitative measure, what is its significance? A theatre was 50% full for a certain production, or a gallery had 2,000 attendances for one of its

exhibitions; 'So what?' Do those figures, on their own, give us any meaningful information about those events? One has to ask oneself what is the significance, if any, of a given item of data?

Also, quantitative data, as stated earlier, are easy to use and can appear very **authoritative** (Matarasso 1996), so it can be tempting to use them as a relatively uncomplicated way of evaluating an organisation's activity.

In the first of the appraisals observed, the papers for the meeting contained several tables of statistical indicators for: Subsidy % of total income, Earned Income %, Contributed Income %, Artistic Expenditure %, Marketing expenditure %, Staff and overhead expenditure %, Attendance per performance, Subsidy per performance, and Subsidy per attendance. It may well be argued that these indicators could be useful management tools, but they were not discussed nor referred to in the appraisal. These are exactly the kinds of statistical PI's that the specialist from the National Audit Office maintained should be tested with the "So what?" question. In the appraisal observed, they were neither tested nor discussed at all, leading one to question why they were considered necessary for the appraisal in the first place. On the other hand, the fact that these statistics were prepared – but not discussed or referred to – may lead to a suspicion, on the part of the artists, that some secretive, undeclared process existed, in which they did not participate and that the PI's were being used by officers to arrive at judgements to which the artists themselves were not privy.

The normal practice with regard to PI's and other statistical data would be that, once gathered, they would be turned over to the

statisticians and financial officers for collation and analysis. These individuals would, by virtue of their posts, be unlikely to have very much knowledge – certainly no in-depth knowledge – of the client organisations and would be ill-equipped to consider the “many variables which may not be amenable to quantification or measurement in statistical or monetary terms” (Geddes 1992). They would clearly be unable to consider the ineffable and the inexpressible elements of an organisation’s work.

The senior manager interviewed indicated that, in future, any analysis of financial and other statistical data would have to be conducted by the art-form officers themselves. Alternatively, they would need to engage individuals from outside the arts councils to undertake such analysis. If analysis were undertaken by the art-form officers, then the consequences could be two-fold. Firstly, the statistical and financial analysis, other than in exceptional cases, is likely to be carried out by individuals who would not be specialist statisticians or accountants. But they would be familiar with the clients and acquainted with their work, thus increasing the likelihood of greater consideration of that which lies behind the PI’s.

And, secondly, since the responsibility for conducting the appraisal would now fall on the art-form officers alone (and not shared with finance officers and the like), the probability is that, in order to render the officers’ workload manageable, and also to keep the subject matter of the appraisal within the ambit of the officers’ competence, the statistical data required of the clients would not only be reduced but confined to those which are most informative. This offers the possibility that appraisals could then be conducted in a manner that was “qualitative

rather than quantitative;" and "holistic rather than reductionist" (Reason 1988: 79), and could address one of the arts organisations' greatest concerns by affording greater consideration in the appraisal process of the work they produce.

For this, of course, was another of the arts organisations' criticisms – the feeling that there was an over-emphasis in appraisals on the consideration of managerial issues at the expense of reflection on artistic matters. This, again, is a clear example of **'context stripping'** since it patently serves to disregard a large element – indeed, the most important element – of the arts organisation's operation.

This they attributed to two factors: firstly, that in recent years there had been a shift in arts council priorities from concern for the production of art towards a preoccupation with the audience's – the consumer's – uptake of the arts. They felt that this ignored the very reason for an arts organisation's existence – the creating of artistic works – and was manifested by the various socio-political agendas that were being espoused by public bodies and, subsequently, being imposed on publicly funded arts organisations. As a consequence, the performance of publicly funded organisations was being evaluated more on the basis of how it addressed such issues as accessibility, disability, urban regeneration, rural regeneration, economic development, multiculturalism, inclusivity, and so forth, rather than on the quality of the art work.

Allied to this was the complaint that pressure was put on arts organisations to appeal to all sectors of the public, whereas, in practice, an organisation may be targeting specific segments of

the public. Drucker (1973) pointed out that market segmentation was considered entirely valid in commercial business but that in the world of not-for-profit organisations it was the norm that any government funding was usually accompanied by the expectation that they serve all sectors of the public.

It is quite reasonable, of course, for the Government to require its first tier funded bodies – such as the arts councils – to ensure that the public money it distributes benefits all sectors of the public. And the arts councils will seek to achieve this through the implementation of its strategic aims. But this can be achieved without requiring every single funded arts organisation to conform to every single one of the funding body's aims. The danger of requiring all arts organisations to address all of the ACs' strategic aims, claimed artists, would be a diminishment in richness of variety leading to "homogenised companies producing similar stuff" (O155). The funders could ensure that the extent of their aims is met by the breadth of variety within their portfolio of funded organisations. Arts organisations can then concentrate on catering to their natural audiences and addressing issues that arise from artistic and creative imperatives.

And a second reason for the diminishing consideration given to artistic matters, artists felt, was that, as in other public service sectors, government was demanding that the values of commercial business management should be applied to the not-for-profit sector. This instilled in public bodies, like the arts councils, a mindset that sought managerial efficiency above all else and a fixation on measuring outcomes. This would clearly steer the appraisal towards that which is more obviously

quantifiable and away from matters which are qualitative and associated with vagaries of personal opinion and taste.

This reminds us of the point made by John Pick (1988: 84) and quoted earlier in Chapter 2. Artists are no longer judged on their artistic merit, he claimed, the norm now being that “they will be ‘assessed’ according to the ways they have exhibited their ‘enterprise’, ‘maximized their resources’ and ‘met their targets’. They will now report on whether they have ‘improved access’ for the centrally targeted groups, through efficient ‘marketing’”.

Similar criticism was made by Eisner in respect of the effect that the popularity of scientific management was having on evaluation in the US education system in the mid twentieth century. He asserted that this mind-set had led to aspects of the education experience (including the pupils) being regarded as mere commodities.

A consequence of this, according to interviewees, is that the nature of officers employed by the arts councils has changed in recent years. They, increasingly, no longer come from specialist arts backgrounds but from the world of local government, service management, marketing, and the like, leading to complaints from arts organisations that the funding bodies had too few officers with arts expertise. Officers, in that situation, were naturally reluctant to embark on a dialogue in respect of a subject matter of which they had no specialist knowledge. And some interviewees felt that this state of affairs had brought about a situation where the arts councils were in danger of losing their ability to be organisations that promoted excellence in the arts.

This, too, has led to a **lack of value pluralism**, for that which is pursued in appraisals will tend not to address the issues, claims and concerns of one of the key stakeholders – the arts organisation itself – but doggedly pursue matters which the funding body deems to be important and with which its officers will be more comfortable.

For some artists, this trend was leading them to opt out of the funding system altogether, feeling that their freedom to respond to creative forces was being constrained by the pressure from the funders to heed market forces and to comply with socio-political agendas. They felt that the regime that their organisations were being forced to adopt was “no longer art” (K221).

One might well argue that this is not a significant issue and that, indeed, today as throughout history, many artists – perhaps even the majority – work quite happily outside the funded sector. This statement has an added potency, however, if one considers that it must be a matter of major consequence for an artist who has been working within the arts funding system, and whose livelihood has been allied to that system, to reach the conclusion that his or her artistic integrity is being compromised to such an extent by the very body that was established to promote the arts, that the only way to maintain his or her artistic integrity is to withdraw from that system completely. This suggests that, to some artists, at least, the direction currently being taken by the arts councils is seen as a betrayal of the very purpose for which they were established in the first place. Indeed, some artists felt that the arts councils had reached a point where they were no

longer motivated by the arts and “didn’t see it as their mission any more to address artistic excellence” (C221).

### ADDRESSING THE WEAKNESSES OF PREVALENT EVALUATION PRACTICE

The theorists who were so critical of prevalent evaluation practice, all proposed alternative approaches which, in many respects, were compatible. Guba and Lincoln advanced their concept of Fourth Generation Evaluation, Eisner proposed his Connoisseurship Model, and Reason and Rowan advocated a New Paradigm. In *Figure 10* elements of the current appraisal practice are tested against the key elements of these models.

<b>Theoretical construct</b>	<b>Manifestation</b>
Responsive mode of operation	Not present in current system. Integral part of SA. Proposed, to a degree, as part of new 'lighter touch approach.
Constructivist methodology	Not present currently in AC thinking, nor apparent in proposals for the future, but advocated by artists. Integral part of SA.
Value pluralism	Not present currently in AC thinking, nor apparent in proposals for the future, but advocated by artists. Integral part of SA.
Holistic approach	Not present currently in AC thinking, nor apparent in proposals for the future, but advocated by artists. Integral to SA.
Connoisseurs	In current AC system, a limited number of connoisseurs brought onto appraisal teams; artists claim that increasingly fewer AC officers have arts expertise. Connoisseurs are not the <i>sine qua non</i> of SA but neither are they excluded.

(Continued...



Claims, concerns and issues identified by stakeholders	Consistent with preordinate agenda and objective setting, criticism that claims, concerns and issues identified by client organisations and their audiences are not adequately addressed. Integral to SA.
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**Figure 10: Appraisal process related to key elements of theorists' proposals**

### **Pilot Social Audit**

In 1998, as was described earlier, the Arts Council of England did seek to explore ways of improving the appraisal system by conducting a pilot Social Audit of one of its larger clients. Since this pilot is an instance of ACE's appraisal practice in recent years, it is appropriate to consider this, too, in respect of the theoretical constructs.

Many of the characteristics of Social Audit would seem, at first sight, to be particularly well suited to arts appraisal. Its procedure appears to conform to the **responsive-constructivist approach** advocated by Guba and Lincoln, as it rejects a preordinate design and adopts a perspective that allows for emergent and unforeseen issues to be included in the evaluation. It also embraces the principle of **value pluralism**. Yet, paradoxically, it uses this process to draw up a set of objectives against which the organisation's performance is then measured. As we saw earlier, measuring against set objectives was criticised by Cronbach (1963), Scriven (1973) and Guba and Lincoln (1981) as being particularly unsuited to creative situations, as it can lead to the closing off of emerging creative paths. And an approach to evaluation that is organised around objectives and evaluated against those objectives has also been criticised as not leading

to explicit judgement of worth or merit (Guba & Lincoln 1981; 1989).

Objective setting may, indeed, be appropriate to some non-creative aspects of an arts organisation's programme, such as the number of new productions per year, the number of touring weeks, and so on, but it is easy to recognise the possibility that objectives, in this Social Audit sense, would appear to most artists to be wholly irrelevant to the process of artistic creation. For the artist, the processes of creation "revolve around the producer, the artist, and the *intrinsic* value of the product" (Lewis 1990: 141). Kao (1989: 17) remarks that "the creative process is inner-directed" and even "the notion of doing market research to validate a creative vision is often anathema to people on the creative side of a business".

If we are to believe the claims of Social Audit advocates, the Social Audit approach, we might assume, with its commitment to a **holistic approach** to evaluation, could be of great interest to arts organisations, for it could "simultaneously embrace their aesthetic, cultural, economic and social values" (Matarasso 1997: 3). It is claimed that it could seek to address the issue of quality (as opposed to quantity) which tends to be obscured or undermined by the preoccupation with financial performance and quantitative indicators (Turok 1990).

But, as Cohen and Pate (2000: 113) ask, how can we be confident that Social Audit can achieve this? Necessarily, the identification of stakeholders, the identification of indicators, and the choice of research (data collection) methodologies are crucial. The Indicator Profile – **the claims concerns and issues**

**Identified by the stakeholders** – shown in Appendix 1 includes, for example both "Number (%) of positive and negative reviews in newspapers" and "Assessment of audiences (rating scale)." The 'quality' of a theatre's performance of a play could be measured by the Social Auditor holding a focus group session with a selection of teachers who had sent their pupils to a play; alternatively, the focus group could include children who had seen the play. Taking the teachers' and pupils' views as evidence, it could be determined whether the indicators had been achieved. But how large should the focus group(s) be, and who should be included in them? One would expect the groups to be comprised of all the various stakeholders but there is no certainty that any of those, apart from the artists themselves, would possess any **connoisseurship**. Neither is it necessarily the case that the auditor would be a **connoisseur** in the field. And what questions should be asked? What relative weighting should be given to the various categories of stakeholders (are pupils' comments more important than their teachers'?)? Significantly, would such questioning lead to a final judgement of the *aesthetic* value of the performance? What aesthetic pronouncement on the performance could be made if critics disliked it, but teachers loved it?

It may, indeed, be the case that the indicators adopted in a Social Audit (see Appendix 1) are *more sensitive than those of* previous methods to the fact that the work of arts organisations is creative in nature. But it could also be the case that SA merely makes a crass attempt to measure creativity, taking it to be synonymous with that which is measurable whilst, in effect, denying the real essence of creative endeavour. A Social Audit might use a rating scale to determine an audience's assessment

of a performance, to chart, for instance, the proportion of an audience that claims to have 'enjoyed' a play or was 'moved' by a piece of music; these data are then used to determine whether the organisation has met certain of its objectives.

One might argue that this is no different from normal market research practice and, as such, is perfectly acceptable. But we are dealing here with a process of evaluation and can we be content solely with ascertaining the 'market response' to an artistic work (it's 'worth', as Guba and Lincoln would call it) and, furthermore, what proportion of an audience should claim its satisfaction with an art-work before the objective may be deemed to have been achieved?

There is nothing inappropriate about the gathering of data about audiences and their reaction to art. Indeed, it could be useful to both artists and their funders. But care will need to be taken when assessing such data, and it should always be tested with the 'So what?' question.

The failure to do so was, essentially, one of the characteristics of scientific research practice that was so severely criticised by Eisner (1976: 136-7), when he attacked the tendency to oversimplification of the particular by the adoption of reductionist processes in the attempt to represent a complex phenomenon in the form of straightforward tables or scores. "Quality thus becomes converted into quantity..."

At first sight the Social Audit might appear to provide an opportunity for arts organisations to be evaluated on the full extent of their work - including, most importantly, those aspects

that are important to them. Discussions held with artists who lead funded organisations would suggest that they would be interested in exploring (albeit cautiously!) certain aspects of this kind of approach. But bearing in mind artists' deep concerns about current appraisal methods, a Social Audit approach needs to be considered very carefully before it can be determined if it is, indeed, an improvement of the current system.

At very least, there are important practical matters to consider. To improve on the appraisal procedures currently practiced by arts funding bodies, any new arrangement would need to cut down significantly on the 'bureaucracy' of appraisal - the sheer time, effort and paperwork that are now involved. This 'bureaucracy', as stated earlier, entails weeks of preparation - the production of large amounts of documentation (business plans, marketing plans, affirmative action plans and quantities of statistical data) as well as income and expenditure projections, and cash-flow forecasts, for the next three or five years. These are then discussed in meetings that can take several days to complete. Indeed QUEST, the 'Quality, Efficiency and Standards Team' established by the DCMS to act as a watchdog over government spending on Culture, Media and Sports, has itself recently published a report that calls for the burden of bureaucracy in the cultural sector to be reduced, in order to improve management and innovation (DCMS 2000).

There is no doubt that Social Audit can likewise involve a heavy work-load which, as indicated above, includes a lengthy procedure of identifying the various stakeholders, of convening stakeholder group meetings, of determining stakeholder objectives and establishing appropriate indicator profiles with each of these groups, and thereafter administering

questionnaires, scrutinising external and internal documents, analysing data, and, finally, writing comprehensive reports. Although it partially fits into Guba and Lincoln's Responsive Constructivist Evaluation paradigm, Social Audit, in its customary form, therefore, may not cut down on the 'bureaucracy' of appraisal, and, indeed, might represent an even greater burden than the traditional form of appraisal. Further, recent experience with the Arts Council of England pilot demonstrated that stakeholder focus groups were difficult to convene, and some were cancelled altogether when it became apparent that only one or two individuals were prepared to attend. Apart from presenting practical data collecting difficulties, such problems also raise serious questions regarding the validity of the data gathered.

In some of the large non-arts businesses that have conducted Social Audit, such is the extent of work involved that separate well-staffed units were established within the company to oversee the whole Social Audit process - an expense which the vast majority of arts organisations simply could not contemplate.

Neither does Social Audit resolve the question of how, if no two individuals will react to a work of art in entirely the same way (since individuals have different mentalities, knowledge and experience (Santayana 1896), it is possible to evaluate an organisation's artistic work in a way that generates confidence and is seen to be fair. This comes back to the question, discussed earlier, of whose values should predominate in drawing conclusions from an evaluation. Usually, the notion of fairness is equated with objectivity - a difficult equation when we consider reactions to a work of art that are necessarily subjective and

that, in any case, there are inherent difficulties associated with the very notion of objectivity, as have been discussed earlier in Chapter 3.

Despite the overwhelming desire on the part of interviewees for the balance between the consideration of artistic matters and that of managerial issues to be more evenly struck, most – whether they were artists or arts council officers – acknowledged that in embarking along the path of seeking to evaluate works of art, one was treading on very difficult ground indeed.

Implicit in Guba and Lincoln's demand for **value pluralism** is the notion that there are many ways of looking at a subject, whatever it is. Some of the great thinkers of the last several centuries – Hume, Kant, Santayana and Bourdieu were given as examples – have stated that, in viewing a work of art, different individuals will have uniquely different opinions regarding that work. Several of the interviewees concurred, with the most memorable contribution coming from an arts council officer who recalled sharing, for many years, dressing rooms with other actors, and the endless daily discussions never reaching any consensus whatsoever as to which were the 'best' plays, productions, actors, directors or films.

Philliber (2002), however, claims that it is possible to measure *anything*. ("If I can see it, smell it, taste it or feel it, I can measure it!"), implying that even the most intangible qualities of any subject can be reduced to quantitative data. Given the nature of her audience at the conference at which she delivered her paper, it was clear that she was, in effect, claiming that she could measure art. One is tempted to ask, 'Why?' Why would she wish to *measure* art? And, indeed, what would she

measure? Would she adopt criteria similar to those proposed by Matarasso (2002) – “Technique, Originality, Ambition, Connection and Magic” – or would she employ a clapometer? Would she measure different aspects of a work in different ways and would she invent new units of measurement to express these values? Unfortunately, she doesn't offer any clues and subsequent efforts to elicit clarification have borne no fruit. In any case, what would be the purpose of measuring art, unless she felt that she had the distinctive insight that enabled her to specify that a work of art had a measurement value that was definitive and conclusive?

Philliber's claim flies in the face of the opinions of some of the greatest aesthetic thinkers of our civilization and it was their view that was echoed by those interviewed. Whilst acknowledging that it was indeed useful to quantify some aspects of their work – attendances, number of performances and productions, touring weeks, *et cetera* – reactions to works of art were subjective and not amenable to quantification nor to being reduced to single definitive values. This, too, can be seen as a major criticism of the Social Audit method, where, in the final analysis, qualitative data are translated into quantitative measures.

### **Mainstream arts council appraisal practice**

The key elements of theorist proposals, as indicated in *Figure 10* above, are largely absent from current arts council appraisal procedure. A **responsive-constructivist approach** is, to a certain extent, hinted at in talk of employing a 'lighter touch' in future, but, at present, the preordinate agenda is the order of the day.



**Value pluralism** is also missing from the current system as the appraisal is conducted by the funder's team in respect of the funder's own appraisal agenda and its own strategic objectives. Consequently, the **claims, concerns and issues** of the artists themselves are effectively ignored.

Neither is there a **holistic approach** to the appraisal, for, in practice, the process revolves around consideration of managerial and financial issues, to the neglect of the most important aspect of the organisation's operation: its artistic product.

Although current practice does allow for a degree of expertise in certain areas – management, architecture, disability issues, engineers (ACW 1997) – and such specialists are sometimes co-opted onto appraisal teams, input by **connoisseurs** to the appraisal process is generally limited. This is particularly the case in respect of arts connoisseurs, and was a situation that artists wished to remedy.

As a consequence of this, in respect of the appraisal process, rather than have any attempts to 'evaluate' their artistic work – to assign values to it – artists would prefer to see procedures established that would facilitate an informed discussion and reflection about their work with other artists, critics, arts council officers and members of the public. This has a resonance of Eisner's desire for evaluation to involve **connoisseurs** in a process of "informed critique" or, as one artist put it, to discuss the work "artist-to-artist, critic-to-artist" (M232).

Artists acknowledged that discussing their work with individuals would expose them to those individuals' subjective views and sought to temper this by creating situations where they could discuss their work with more than one person together. As the artist quoted above indicated, they would like such discussions to include well-informed individuals. This is very much akin to the 'peer debriefing' approach advocated by Cooper *et al.* (1998). Peer debriefing was suggested by Guba and Lincoln (1989: 237) as a means of interpreting or discussing tentative conclusions and of establishing the credibility of a study. Cooper *et al.* propose a slightly variant approach, whereby peer debriefing is used by evaluators to help their clients identify ways of making the optimum use of evaluation findings (Cooper *et al.* 1998: 269). This, of course, is very similar to the purpose that would be behind forming these groups – to discuss and reflect upon the organisation's artistic work in a manner that is both useful and constructive and, at the same time, candid. The groups advocated by artists, however, would consist not only of peers but also of informed lay persons and, importantly, connoisseurs in their fields.

There are, however, several theorists who were seen not to be in favour of connoisseurship. Matarasso (2002: 6) believes that artists make poor judges of art, Guba and Lincoln (1981: 20) dislike the elitist flavour that is associated with the very notion of the connoisseur, and Kushner (2000: 118) feels that people tend to be suspicious of those who claim expert status.

I would question both Kushner's and Guba & Lincoln's contention that professing expertise on the part of the evaluator will lead to feelings of suspicion and resentment from the subjects of the

evaluation. Artist, much as educationalists, would far prefer to be evaluated by individuals who know their field, have wide experience in it and are finely attuned to its nuances and subtleties. Those that are treated with suspicion are the generalists, the outsiders.

And, of course, connoisseurs need not necessarily be individuals with 'expertise'; but they may, through their own enthusiasm and pursuit be very well informed about their particular area of interest, and this would enable them to participate in the process of 'informed critique'.

That artists can hold extreme and idiosyncratic opinions, as Matarasso contends, may often be the case. But artists are usually well informed in their field and their strong opinions can be tempered by being part of a larger and varied group of connoisseurs. A problem of trust might well arise if the individual claiming connoisseurship were to have only limited (or no) knowledge and was, in fact, a bogus expert. In this respect, the question of validity must rest on ensuring that the evaluator is a *bona fide* connoisseur.

The artists interviewed clearly favoured discussing their work with small groups of connoisseurs and it is interesting to note that when artists talked of such groups, they saw them as having a continuing function, so that the organisation could benefit from on-going critique, advice, and consideration of their work. The current appraisal system involves sessions that meet either every three to five years or annually. Whatever the time interval, they take the form of *post-hoc* reviews of the previous period. This

was another of the criticisms levelled by Cronbach (1963) at Tyler's objective-based evaluation model. Cronbach argued that evaluation is most useful when it is used to improve the project while it is still fluid (Worthen & Sanders 1973), much like the NASA scientists (referred to in Chapter 3), who saw little merit in an evaluation that reached its conclusions after the project was ended, when it was too late to make a difference to the outcome (Guba & Lincoln 1989: 29).

In Chapter 3, the question of objectivity was discussed, concluding that it was not possible for individuals to be entirely objective in their judgements. One interviewee happily embraced the notion of individuals' subjectivity when discussing art – echoing Reason and Rowan's concept of 'critical subjectivity' (Reason 1988) – and further claimed that should objectivity indeed exist, then it would amount to little more than ignorance.

One form of connoisseurship – peer review – arose in interviews and artists, particularly, did not seem enthusiastic to see it introduced as a formal process. They were not averse to some element of peer review, providing that it was implemented with sufficient care. There was always a possibility that one's peers could also be rivals for scarce funds and, as an artist's work is essentially *sui generis*, it would be difficult to identify other artists who were true peers. And one of the officers interviewed made a similar point, telling of the difficulty she had had of finding appropriate peer comparators for client appraisals and in the end had concluded that it was inappropriate to conduct peer comparison. The inclusion of peers as members of broader discussions groups would address both these concerns in that it

would allow peers to have some input into the process through discussion, whilst not requiring them to sit in sole judgement of the arts organisation. Neither would they be used for direct comparison.

One of the underlying complaints by artists in respect of appraisals was that they failed to see the purpose of large parts of the process, as it was currently conducted; appraisals involved devoting a degree of time and effort that seemed incommensurate with the benefits to be gained. Their feelings echoed Drucker's assertion that, "There is nothing so useless as doing efficiently that which should not be done at all" (Fitzhenry 1986: 4).

The cause of this, many felt, was the one-size-fits-all approach adopted in the appraisal system. The same procedures were adopted whether the organisation being appraised was an opera company in receipt of a multi-million pound grant, or a community arts organisation receiving a grant of under five thousand pounds. The agenda for all appraisals was preordained with only the minimal consideration given to the nature and scale of the organisation.

There is also a certain irony to this, for the panoptic archive of rules is present when it is deemed necessary by the funding body to place organisations into categories but it is somehow absent in the appraisal process, where all organisations are treated in the same way. Categories, of course, can often be useful for internal administrative purposes but they can also lead to bureaucratic over-complexity which can frustrate the outside client. And it can be all the more aggravating when, in the precise situation

when it might be considered appropriate for one's uniqueness to be taken into consideration, the notion of different categories is abandoned. This can be seen as another facet of the panoptic disciplinary power in the arts council/ client relationship.

### **CONCLUSION**

It has been possible in this chapter to examine the appraisal system currently employed by the arts councils to evaluate the work of its funded organisations in light of the concepts advanced by theorists such as Foucault, Guba and Lincoln, Eisner, and Reason and Rowan.

The senior arts council manager who talked of possible future practice, indicated that it could include greater flexibility and this, it is felt, would be greatly welcomed by funded organisations. However, although 'flexibility' in procedure and approach can be seen as a positive step, it is open, unfortunately, to being subjected to officer whim – that which could be seen as another form of cosy managerialism.

Consequently, some artists interviewed suggested that what was required was the implementation of deliberate policy diversity in this area, with clearly defined criteria indicating which kind of organisation would be subjected to which kind of appraisal procedures. On the face of it this seems perfectly reasonable but one can immediately see that this would involve further addition to arts councils' archive of rules.

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## CHAPTER 7

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### DEVELOPING AN ALTERNATIVE MODEL: ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Consider the following evaluation report made by a Leisure Services Officer after attending a concert at a civic venue:

#### **"SCHUBERT'S UNFINISHED SYMPHONY**

1. *For considerable periods the four oboe players had nothing to do. Their numbers should be reduced and their work should be spread over the whole of the orchestra, thus eliminating peaks of inactivity.*
2. *All the violins were playing identical notes. This appeared to me to be an unnecessary duplication and the staff of the section could be cut drastically. If a large sound is what is important, then an electronic amplifier could be substituted.*
3. *A significant amount of effort was absorbed in the playing of demi-semi-quavers. That appears to be an excessive refinement and I would recommend that all notes should be rounded up to the nearest semi-quaver. If this were done it would be possible to use trainees or lower grade staff.*
4. *No useful purpose appeared to be served by repeating with horns the passage that had already been played by the strings, and if all such redundant passages were eliminated the concert could be reduced from 2 hours to twenty minutes.*

*If Schubert had attended to these matters, as suggested, he probably would have been able to finish the symphony after all."*

(Evans 2000)

As absurd as this fictitious evaluation report might seem, implicit in it is a very serious point, that for any evaluation to be meaningful, its nature and conduct needs to be appropriate to the evaluand in question. In this case, the efficiency principles of scientific management are simply not apposite to the evaluation of an orchestral concert. As Baumol and Bowen so famously once said,

*“Whereas the amount of labor necessary to produce a typical manufactured product has constantly declined since the beginning of the industrial revolution, it requires about as many minutes for Richard II to tell ‘his sad stories of the death of kings’ as it did on the stage of the Globe Theatre. Human ingenuity has devised ways to reduce the labor necessary to produce an automobile, but no one has yet succeeded in decreasing the human effort in a live performance of a 45-minute Schubert quartet much below three man-hours.”*

(Baumol and Bowen 1966: 164)

Also implied in these two quotations is the point that, in trying to assess the success of any subject, it is necessary to employ the appropriate data. The time it takes to play a Schubert piece, the quantity of semi-demi-quavers played, or the number of times a passage is repeated, is simply not germane to the process of arriving at an opinion of whether the work is any good or not.

The Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), too, in a report on funding agreements between it and the Non-Governmental Public Bodies (NDPB's) that it sponsors, emphasises



the need to ensure that the data requested from NDPB's is appropriate and useful and stipulates that,

*"to determine what is necessary in terms of data gathering, the Department and NDPB's should sit down together and review what data are really useful and are actually used."*

(Montague 2000)

This holds resonance with one of the main sentiments of the artists interviewed in this investigation – their opinion that much of the data gathered during the appraisal process is not actually useful and rarely, if ever, used, and that much of the ground covered in appraisals is irrelevant, not only to their organisation but, more importantly, to the process of determining whether or not their organisation is doing a good job.

The system, at best, satisfied the requirements of the arts councils in that, through it, they could claim to be demonstrating their accountability for public monies. At worst, the system was cumbersome, bureaucratic, one that consumed a great deal of time and effort and, in the view of artists, was based on agendas that were often irrelevant to their organisation. But more importantly, the current system succeeded only in evaluating part of organisations' operations – their management and administration – largely to the exclusion of what their stakeholders would consider their main *raison d'être*: their artistic work. Furthermore, those arts organisations being appraised saw very little positive or constructive outcomes from the process, as appraisal reports generally did little more than replicate information that the organisations themselves

had provided in their pre-appraisal submissions. Although these reports offered no judgements overtly, artists feared that judgements about their overall performance were indeed being reached by their funders but that they were uncertain of the basis upon which those judgements, if any, were being made.

Both arts councils are contemplating reviewing the systems now in place. It is inconceivable that the government departments that sponsor these bodies would agree to a situation where no evaluation at all of funded organisations were undertaken and, consequently, it is proposed that it would be in the interest of all concerned if an alternative system be considered.

A basic tenet of these proposals will be that the evaluation of funded arts organisations should consist of two elements: firstly, there will need to be a component that addresses the issue of public financial accountability – felt by all parties to be essential – and, secondly, an element that reflects upon and considers the artistic work produced by the organisation.

To undertake the evaluation of these two different, albeit inter-related, elements, two separate procedures are proposed. One will deal with the 'harder', tangible, mostly quantitative, aspects of monitoring such matters as financial probity and adherence to funding agreements, and the other will consider the softer, ineffable, qualitative aspects of the artistic work. Although both aspects will need to be addressed through different mechanisms,

both are integral to the organisation's operation and performance and their appraisal will need to be conducted in tandem. Accordingly, I call the proposed approach *Tandem Appraisal*.

### **DEVELOPING THE TANDEM APPRAISAL APPROACH**

In Chapter 6, the findings were considered in respect of the theories discussed in the earlier Literature Review. The three key evaluation models used in this analysis were Guba and Lincoln's *Fourth Generation Evaluation*, Eliot Eisner's *Connoisseurship Model*, and Reason and Rowan's *New Paradigm Research*.

Typifying these three as 'models', however, is somewhat misleading. Guba and Lincoln (1989: 8) use the term "an approach to evaluation". Eisner, too (1976: 340), talks of "a new way of looking at the phenomena", and Reason and Rowan (1981: xiii) call their New Paradigm, "an approach to inquiry."

As with many of the evaluation and inquiry methods proposed over the years – some of which are subsequently called 'models' by others – these theorists were proposing approaches that could be explored and tailored to suit the needs of the hour. Guba and Lincoln (1989: 186-7) do offer a chart depicting "the flow of Fourth Generation Evaluation", (reproduced in Chapter 3 above) but they explain that it is not a strict sequence and it should not "be adhered to rigidly. Rather the chart generates progression only in a general way" (Guba and Lincoln 1989: 185). Eisner (1976: 347) thought of his proposals as, "a wedge in the door of possibility" and Reason (1988: 231) suggests that the New Paradigm concept requires

inquirers to hold the ideas "firmly but lightly, and to find ways of using them *appropriately* for the situation." He encourages the approach to be viewed as, "a continual invention of response to the possibilities offered by the situation."

As was noted earlier in Chapter 6, these three approaches (although the New Paradigm approach is directed at the field of inquiry rather than evaluation) share many similar characteristics. All eschew the dominant scientific paradigm and embrace a Responsive Constructivist ethic; all three seek to examine phenomena in their true situations without recourse to context stripping; all three espouse a greater reliance on qualitative perception than on quantitative data; and all three place greater importance on humanistic concerns than on scientific considerations.

There is, however, one area in which Eisner differs from the other two. Whereas Eisner seeks to entrust evaluation to knowledgeable individuals – connoisseurs – so that they may engage in informed criticism, the other two approaches are mistrustful of the notion that evaluative authority should be placed in the hands of connoisseurs and argue for value pluralism, taking into account the 'claims, concerns and issues' raised by the various stakeholders.

This issue of connoisseurship, then, could be problematic for, as we have seen in the findings of the interviews, arts organisations are strongly in favour of their work being considered by connoisseurs who bring to the process an astuteness of perception, who, as Eisner (1976: 339) stated, are "informed about the qualities" of the subject

matter, and who, are "able to discriminate the subtleties". But need there be a conflict between connoisseurship and value pluralism? Does one mutually exclude the other? It is felt here that it need not.

There was a clear indication from the interviews that the majority of arts organisations rejected the notion, proposed by one artist, of 'single person appraisal'. Indeed several proposed setting up small panels or groups of informed individuals that reflected the plurality of interests of those who affect or are affected by their work. Adopting the group approach would enable the creation of procedures that embraced both connoisseurship and value pluralism at the same time. Whereas a system that espouses the inherent subjectivity of a single connoisseur could prove unsatisfactory, the collective subjectivity represented by a group of connoisseurs – as long as a fair representation of stakeholders' concerns is included – would be acceptable.

One can be a connoisseur in the arts without being a professional, just as a connoisseur of vegetable growing may simply be a keen amateur gardener. The connoisseurs envisaged as members of these groups would include other artists or critics, and, possibly, other professionals (such as teachers whose schools may host the arts organisation), and arts council officers, but they would also need to include members of the public who are keen arts attenders (audiences, viewers or readers) and who are well informed about the organisation's work, not only to ensure value pluralism but, importantly, because audiences are key stakeholders in any arts organisation and it is, after all, their tax pounds that contribute to

the grant aid it receives. These groups, then, may include both amateur and professional connoisseurs, and also different kinds of connoisseurship.

Such a plurality of views would also enable the consideration of both the 'merit' and 'worth' of an organisation's work, for as Guba and Lincoln (1981: 45-6) assert, 'merit' should be established by experts in their field, whereas 'worth' can be determined by an array of stakeholders. Hence, a small group, comprising both connoisseurs and stakeholders would provide the vehicle to consider both aspects of the work's value.

Despite small differences between the three approaches advocated by the theorists mentioned above, there is sufficient common ground among them to consider them as being compatible and that where conflicts occur, these can be resolved by offering solutions that address the needs of the situation, as in the example above.

Throughout the life of an artist, whatever the discipline, one's art is honed and one's practice supported by attending, on a fairly regular basis, workshops and classes by master teachers. Typically, as in other fields, the techniques taught and the insights imparted will differ from teacher to teacher. Some will be revelatory, some will be uninspiring. Some will be absorbed avidly, others discarded. Quite often, the advice of one teacher will sharply contradict that of another. The key to edification and progression is to be aware of

much but to select carefully that skill or wisdom that is appropriate to one's own work and which is suited to one's own particular circumstances and aspirations.

Similarly, in seeking to propose ways in which the appraisal of arts council clients might be made more appropriate and meaningful, the intention here is to apply the approaches of the theorists in the way in which they themselves advocate – as 'a wedge in the door of possibility', and as 'a continual invention of response to the possibilities offered by the situation' – by selecting those elements of all three, and including some ideas proposed by interviewees and others, which, together, could form an approach that will be suited to the circumstances and aspirations of arts organisations and their funders .

It is possible to do this not only because there are a number of elements in these three approaches that are particularly well suited to evaluating arts organisations but also because, as suggested earlier, they share many compatible theoretical concepts.

Therefore, the proposals made in this chapter will be a synthesis of theorists' and interviewees' views that will favour the Responsive Constructivist approach, that will encourage an appraisal practice that is iterative and evolving, and which will enable organisations to be viewed in their true situations without recourse to context stripping, will rely more on qualitative perception than on quantitative data, and will place greater importance on humanistic concerns than on scientific considerations in seeking to ensure "that the measurable does not drive out the immeasurable" (Thornton 1992).

Apart from being a procedure that both the arts councils and their clients felt was important in order to demonstrate public accountability, appraisal is an essential element in the relationship between an arts organisation and its funding body. As a point of contact between both, it is valued by artists as an opportunity to meet with arts council officers periodically and to become acquainted with latest developments, best practice and current thinking, from both parties. They also view this contact as an important opportunity to bring their funders into increasing acquaintance with their artistic work.

The feeling from many organisations is that there are not enough opportunities to meet with officers, with the result that when they do occur, they tend to be rather strained and uncomfortable affairs and are confined to the consideration of managerial and budgetary issues and seldom do they touch on the organisation's artistic work. The proposals currently being considered by the arts councils to employ a 'lighter touch' might, therefore, reduce even further the opportunities available for such meetings.

Of course, meetings between clients and officers need not be confined to the appraisal visits alone and one felt from talking with artists that perhaps it is a weakness of the funding system as a whole that meetings between officers and their clients do not occur more frequently outside the formal appraisal process. It would seem beneficial, therefore, that any new overall approach to appraisal includes more opportunities for regular, low-key meetings between arts organisations and their officers.



As for appraisal *per se*, as indicated above, there is no question but this will have to continue in future in some form or another. Some of the key issues to emerge from this inquiry will be considered individually and proposals, employing a Responsive Constructivist/Connoisseurship approach offered.

Any new appraisal system will need to address those elements of the current system that were found to be the main sources of dissatisfaction. These include some very practical matters such as the actual procedures employed in the conduct of appraisal, but also issues that arise from the organisational cultures of both the arts councils and their clients, and the kind of relationship between the two that has been brought about as a consequence of these cultures.

### **Workload**

The workload involved in preparing for appraisals was felt by artists to be onerous and excessive, particularly in view of the perceived limited benefit derived by them from the process. And, in terms of its practical effect on their workday, it was the cause of much of their strongest complaints. This is not simply a matter of artists wishing to reduce the amount of work they have to undertake but, for relatively small organisations with limited administrative personnel and resources, it can have a truly disruptive effect on their operation as a whole, both managerial and artistic. No appraisal process should have the effect of seriously disrupting the organisation's work.

In Chapters 3, 5 and 6 it was reported that the Arts Council of England, in 1998, in exploring ways to improve the appraisal system, had conducted a pilot Social Audit of one of its clients. Despite the fact that it espoused a stakeholder-based design and followed a largely Responsive Constructivist approach – characteristics that would gain favour with arts organisations – this pilot was never repeated. The commissioner of the pilot has since left the arts council and it was not possible to obtain any formal reason why this remained a one-off project. Informal communications, however, indicate that there were three main reasons why Social Audit was not pursued any further (Hitchen 2004): firstly, the policy of Social Inclusivity, which is a key social policy of the current government, had not yet been introduced and, consequently, it was not felt, at the time, that there was any imperative for assessing the social impact of arts organisations.

Secondly, it appeared, in many ways, to be a classic case of the mismanagement of change. The timing was simply not right; with major organisational re-structuring looming, there appeared to be little appetite among senior managers for any added disruption to their procedures.

And thirdly, Social Audit was perceived, at the time, to be a rather new, 'alternative', and unproven method. Senior managers were simply not convinced that SA was an improvement on the current system. They indicated that they had found the results of the pilot interesting and useful and that there were lessons to be drawn from it, which could benefit the client appraisal system. But when the

person who originally commissioned the pilot left the arts council, it left no one around the senior management table to champion the Social Audit approach.

But, in other circumstances, could SA have been successfully adopted as a means of client appraisal? As can be seen from the Social Audit Cycle shown in Figure 1 in Chapter 3, to conduct this process thoroughly involves an enormous amount of work and the devotion of a significant amount of time by a large number of individuals. In addition to the misgivings regarding the suitability of Social Audit as a method of evaluating artistic work expressed in Chapter 6, it is doubtful whether Social Audit would reduce the workload involved in appraisal.

Similarly, the complete 'flow' of Guba and Lincoln's Fourth Generation Evaluation (Chapter 3, Figure 2), if it were to be carried out in its entirety, would also involve a high degree of time and effort. Both of these processes, then, would involve a significantly heavy workload – even more, one suspects, than that involved in the appraisal process currently employed by the arts councils. Were one to adopt either one of these systems, the issue of heavy workload would not be resolved.

Much of the work for appraisals involved the preparation of financial and other statistical information, along with forward planning documents and policies and action plans in respect of various socio-political agendas. The intention of the arts councils to employ a lighter touch in future will no doubt assist in alleviating this burden. The suggestion that client organisations should no longer

be required to provide any information that they do not already prepare for their own boards of directors is particularly sensible and will save a great deal of organisations' time and effort. Directors are legally liable for the company's operation and both company law and, for most funded arts organisations, the Charities Commission, stipulate the financial reporting obligations that are required under law. There will no doubt also be some other forms of data and information that boards may require for their own management purposes, including management accounts, planning documents and out-turn actuals and forecasts. Generally, therefore, there should be ample information to enable arts councils to monitor the organisations they fund effectively.

The point was made by a senior arts council manager that there may be certain indicators, relating to work for which they receive funding, that some organisations might not provide for their boards in a discreet form and that the arts council would then require them to submit such information. The request for such information, too, seems reasonable. Indeed, where it relates to areas for which public funding is received, it should be seen as a matter of best practice that organisations submit such information to their boards for consideration. As long as the sort of information required is relevant and meaningful – “really useful and actually used” (Montague 2000) – it, in due course, becomes a routine management activity for the organisation and, thus, ceases to be seen as an extra burden.

**Standardized reporting formats**

As well as cutting down on the workload, this approach would also address the matter of standardized reporting formats. As long as the agreed information was provided, the organisation would provide it in a format that best suits the organisation's own operation, thus at the same time minimizing the work involved and enabling the information to be presented in a manner which reflects the practice, nature and 'personality' of the organisation in question.

The provision of these data need not involve lengthy meetings nor, indeed, any meetings at all. They could easily be conveyed electronically with the minimum of extra work involved. Should the funding body wish to analyse these data further in order to extrapolate information that may be useful to them (or their political masters), then they would be at liberty to do so but they need not expect the arts organisation to undertake such tasks.

**Socio-political policies and action plans**

Another issue which was the cause of much criticism was that of socio-political policies and action plans, which clients are required to produce in order to demonstrate that they are pursuing the AC's strategic objectives. This is a sensitive matter, for the subjects of these policies are important and, indeed, are not taken lightly by arts organisations. But the manner in which this area was approached by funders led to considerable unease among artists regarding the instrumentalisation of their work. That is, that they

perceived that their work was being seen as something to be used for other purposes beside their inherent artistic purpose – in this case to further the government's socio-political agendas.

In the introduction to this study, it was noted that a seminar had recently taken place to consider this and other associated issues. It was of great concern to this study's interviewees, also, that the manner in which their organisations addressed socio-political agendas might be used by the arts councils as criteria for the evaluation of their work.

Furthermore, the preparation of strategy documents for the implementation of these policies requires a great deal of consideration and research and can take a significant amount of time. And if this time is spent on activity which, in the first place, is felt to be inappropriate and unproductive, it can lead to further resentment and dissatisfaction.

Additionally, artists felt that the arts councils seemed much more concerned with ensuring that organisations generated these policy documents than with actually considering their content, and some even doubted that, once produced by the clients, they were ever even read by officers. Many questioned the need for all organisations to submit full, standard format policy and implementation plans for all issues, particularly those that may not, in practice, have but minimal relevance for their organisation's operation. For example, the needs of disabled people involve many important issues of which all organisations need to be

informed and aware. But a policy on access for the disabled will generally have far more relevance to, say, a theatre or an art gallery, which is regularly visited by members of the public, than it will to a touring dance company whose premises are not generally open to the public. Of course, there may well be circumstances where individual touring companies might need to address disability access issues as they pertain to their own particular situations.

Where the arts council adopts a policy on a certain matter, it may wish to make its clients aware of that policy and the issues that surround it. This could be achieved through the circulation of information or, depending on the importance or the complexity of an issue, by the convening of a seminar or workshops which clients could attend. It could then require boards of managements to consider the arts council's policy and determine whether and how it may wish to address the issue in respect of its own circumstances. A certain policy might, for some organisations, be highly relevant and a full policy and implementation plan would be appropriate. For other organisations it may not carry the same degree of significance and may, therefore, require only an agreed statement of intent that is recorded in the minutes of the board meeting.

In any event, such matters are more properly the responsibility of the organisation's board of management. For, unless the matter is an important element of the programme of activity for which grant aid is given, then it need not be part of the appraisal process. Such a responsive approach would not only ease the work burden but

also diminish the resentment felt by many clients towards having to generate a series of unhelpful and, in their view, un-needed documents.

### **Evaluation by exception**

Another important feature of the responsive mode is that of 'evaluation by exception', which appears in Step 9 of the flow of Fourth Generation Evaluation. Interviewees felt that a great deal of the evaluation process was taken up by matters that were either routine or irrelevant to evaluating their organisation. This was exemplified by a bureaucratic box-ticking approach which involved pursuing every item on the standard, pre-ordinate agenda, irrespective of whether or not it was relevant to the organisation being appraised or, indeed, to the task of evaluating the organisation's performance.

By adopting 'evaluation by exception', routine or irrelevant matters will be disposed of prior to the appraisal by the use of e-mail, letter or telephone conversation, so that any formal session can concentrate on those matters that are a cause of concern or dispute. Thus, again, the responsive mode will ensure that, with regard to the agenda, the particular circumstances of the organisation are taken into account and that the evaluation can proceed in a meaningful way.

### **Appraisal clarity**

Associated with this process comes the need to ensure clarity regarding the appraisal being undertaken, for many organisations complained that they were so unclear as to the criteria against



which they were being appraised, that they were constantly trying to second guess their evaluators in an effort to understand what it was they were seeking. The introduction of funding agreements, as noted in Chapter 6, should assist in this matter, as long as they are used sensibly and articulated clearly. The agreement should relate to those particulars for which funding is given and the elements of that agreement would then be the basis for that part of the evaluation that relates to public accountability. Typically, these particulars would be confined to those fundamental elements which were the basis for awarding the funding, for example: the number of productions or exhibitions, touring weeks or exhibition weeks, number of staff/ artists involved, number of performances and/ or workshops, and attendances. Except, possibly, in exceptional cases, there should be no need for the kind of funding agreement, mentioned by one interviewee, which ran to thirty-two clauses of oppressive stipulations and conditions.

These data, of course, will generally be quantitative in nature and it could well be argued that their inclusion in the appraisal system is inconsistent with the constructivist approach. But if the basis of arts council funding to a client is a grant of, "£xxxx in order to conduct two five-week tours of two new productions", then it is reasonable to expect that there is a need to monitor whether or not this work has been undertaken. However, these data can still be considered in a Responsive Constructivist manner. There would be no benefit in evaluating them in a purely quantitative manner by viewing them simply as targets missed, achieved or surpassed. One will still need to ask the "So what?" question in order to determine the underlying

factors that contribute to the organisation's performance and to form a more complete picture of the organisation's programme of activity.

Some might also argue that the funding agreements effectively amount to the setting of a priori objectives in another guise, and, as such, should have no place in the Responsive approach. But these are particulars that have already been negotiated and agreed between funded and funder and that process, too, must be seen as part of the appraisal process. They have been determined in an iterative, responsive process and are not part of an agenda imposed by the appraiser.

This part of the appraisal process – one that might be better termed 'monitoring' – should confine itself to the matters that are associated directly with the funding award. There will be no need for it to involve itself in internal organisational matters such as the job satisfaction of administrative staff (as witnessed in one of the appraisal case studies) and the like, for such areas are more properly the responsibility of the organisation's board of management.

As mentioned earlier, there is also a danger that funding agreements could be construed as increasing further the arts councils' 'archives of rules', but an agreement, by its nature, is something that is drawn up and agreed by both parties, so that if arrived at in the spirit of joint initiative, it will be viewed as a means simply to clarify the agreed nature of the relationship between the

funder and the funded and, as such, will not only serve as a clear basis for part of the appraisal process but will also act to generate a greater degree of trust between the two bodies. Currently, the power exercised by the arts councils over their clients serves to drive the appraisal process and, hence, colours both the process and conduct of appraisals. An appraisal process that takes as its starting point a previously agreed arrangement is more likely to proceed with a greater feeling of partnership.

### **Returning to the 'art' of the matter**

A key criticism levelled at evaluation practice that espouses the scientific paradigm is that of "context stripping", by which the natural environment of the evaluand is manipulated or sanitized (Guba & Lincoln 1989: 36), resulting in the gathering of "dead knowledge" (Reason & Rowan: xiii) and a situation whereby instances of "productive idiosyncrasy" are relegated to a position of inconsequence and uniqueness treated as an unwelcome disturbance in the pursuit of broad tendencies or overriding effects (Eisner 1976: 338).

One of the major complaints of artists was that arts council appraisal failed to consider the one topic that was most important to artists – that of their artistic work. Artistic output, after all, is the sole reason for their existence as organisations. Neglecting any aesthetic consideration of an organisation's performance, even when appraising managerial issues and financial probity, is a clear instance of 'context stripping'.

*Tandem Appraisal* will address this issue by including consideration of artistic output as one of its key elements. But this, as was suggested earlier, is an area that offers many difficulties.

Guba and Lincoln remind us that the purpose of evaluation, after all, is to arrive at value judgements in respect of that which is being evaluated. They further distinguish between two different kinds of value that can be attributed to an evaluand – 'merit' and 'worth'. 'Merit' is the term they use for the implicit, inherent value that the evaluand possesses independently of any possible application. 'Worth' is their term for extrinsic value that is context determined and viewed within the ambit of a particular use or application. Hence, an evaluand may be deemed to have a high degree of 'worth' but little 'merit', or vice versa.

An example of where these two terms might be used occurred in the interview with a senior arts council manager, described at the end of Chapter 5. In discussing the issue of artistic quality, the interviewee suggested that in certain situations, 'quality' might not be the major concern: "I think quality is one of our ambitions, obviously, so quality would be one thing that we'd be looking at but you could argue that, in certain areas of the country where artistic provision is very low, we'd be less harsh on quality than in some areas.... But, you know, it's about introducing people to the arts and, obviously, quality is absolutely critical but we may fund a thing that we think is not particularly innovative but it provides art for an area that doesn't receive other artistic [provision]" (T188). In other words, in certain circumstances, the fact that a work had low merit might be overlooked because of the high degree of worth

associated with its introducing art to new audiences. In this case, then, the effect of the work in attracting audiences was seen to be more important, to the funders, than the inherent quality of the work itself.

But it would be misleading to think of such a scenario as exceptional. Indeed, it has long been a complaint of artists that the inclination of funders has been to view the success or failure of an organisation's work more in terms of the consumer response than on the merits of the work itself. Arts council appraisals, then have tended to concentrate much more on 'worth' than on 'merit'.

Arts organisations were greatly concerned over the increasing lack of attention paid to their artistic work during appraisals and wished to return to a situation where consideration of their creative work assumed a central and integral role in the appraisal process. They had perceived the nature of appraisals, in recent years, as shifting away from consideration of the 'merit' of art in favour of the scrutiny of managerial issues and the gathering of statistical performance indicators that could be used to determine its 'worth'. The seemingly incessant request for statistical data by the arts councils can be seen as a potent manifestation of the panoptic power wielded by them over their clients and was an important factor in the clients' consequent concern regarding how judgments about their organisations were arrived at by the arts councils. This feeling that the arts councils were arriving at judgements about their work by adopting values that were far removed from those of the artists themselves was one of the key sources of artists' deep mistrust of their funders in the appraisal process. Consideration of artists' work

will need to be central to the agenda of any appraisal system if it is to gain credibility among arts council clients. If the process has credibility, then it is far more likely to be supported by clients who will then engage in the process in a spirit of co-operation and partnership.

In appraisals, it was evident that the 'measurable' was, indeed, driving out the 'immeasurable'. And although statistical indicators can appear very authoritative, they seldom serve to get any nearer to determining whether or not an organisation is doing what it does well, nor do they contribute to the development of a meaningful trust between funder and funded, and, indeed, it is even doubtful that they can be used to demonstrate effectively an organisation's public accountability.

Artists, notwithstanding their desire to have their art work considered in a meaningful way, also doubted whether arts council officers currently possessed sufficient expertise to be able to reflect upon their work in an informed manner. But they expressed very strongly their desire to have their work considered by connoisseurs, so this suggests that expertise would need to be brought in from outside the arts councils to consider the artistic work. Even connoisseurs, however, will view artists' work subjectively, and will hold differing views as to the merits of any given work of art. Bringing together more than one connoisseur will provide a plurality of views emanating from a plurality of values. And these connoisseurs (and their values) if sensibly selected could cover the plurality of interests of key stakeholders.

Bringing to the evaluation process a plurality of values is one thing, but a plurality of views and opinions could prove to be a significant problem if the individuals championing these various perspectives were asked to come to conclusive judgements about an artists work. For, as stated above, firstly Tyler and, later, Lincoln and Guba assert that the obligation of evaluators is to make value judgements about the evaluand. But we have also seen earlier that noted theorists such as Hume, Kant and Santayana have maintained that it is impossible to come to collective judgements about works of art.

Others have suggested that it is only over an extended period of time is it possible for a generally accepted, informed view as to the greatness or otherwise of a work of art or an artist to evolve. The arts councils' appraisal process, however, simply doesn't have the benefit of such a degree of time-lapse. However, there is a sense whereby opinion, formed gradually over time, does have a bearing on the appraisal process. If, for instance, over a relatively extended period of time – say, several years – an organisation is seen to be constantly experiencing problems (usually budgetary), this can trigger in the minds of funders the notion of an organisation that presents undue financial risk. This can lead to decisions to reduce, or even withdraw, funding. Likewise, organisations can – again, over a period of several years – be felt to be going from strength to strength and their funding levels can benefit accordingly.

This, however, is not, *per se*, part of the current, formal appraisal process, which tends to act much in the same way as a balance sheet, in the sense that it essentially takes a snapshot of the

organisation as it is at the point of appraisal. But clearly, impressions build up over a period, particularly if the same officer has been responsible for conducting the appraisals during that period. To be sure, very serious concerns may sometimes be flagged in an appraisal report, but generally speaking, as noted earlier, most appraisal reports tend to be rather anodyne in their content and conclusions.

The gradual build up of impressions in appraisers' minds is frequently not, therefore, something that is openly declared but is much more akin to Midgley's (1996: 69) suggestion that, in certain situations, evaluators tend to bring with them to an evaluation certain kinds of information (such as constraints on future budgets, probable future demands on budgets or the emergence of new priorities in policy, for example) that are privy only to them and that can colour the conduct of the evaluation and, subsequently, its conclusions.

Any judgements regarding a client, therefore, in the infrequent instances when they do occur, are not made during the formal appraisal process but occur as part of a far more informal process that relies on such factors as whether a client is successful in generating, and maintaining, partnership funding, or whether it is experiencing other budgetary problems. As one arts council officer stated, "Usually, money would only get withdrawn from a longstanding client for budgetary reasons... the rock they actually foundered on was failing to balance their books – always." (S251)

In light of this, then, is there any need for appraisals to come to any



judgements of value in respect of an organisation's artistic work? Do we need to accede to the clamour of the likes of Philiber that, because of their doubtful claim to being able to measure anything, including art, we should measure the artistic outcomes of funded organisations' work. Arts council officers themselves have indicated that the purpose of client appraisal is not to make selection decisions as to which organisation or the other gets funded. Nor is its purpose to place arts organisations in a pecking order of 'value'. The appraisal system is in place, broadly speaking, to reassure the arts council that past decisions were justified, and that continued funding is appropriate. It needs, "an answer to the question, 'Why do you fund this company?'" (S372).

Appraisal, then, in arts council terms is essentially a validation procedure, rather than an evaluation process. This suggests that in arts council appraisal, at least, it serves no useful purpose at all to seek to measure organisations' work and that Lincoln and Guba's *sine qua non* – the obligation to reach judgements of value – is not, after all, so important.

But would this simply be another example of what Scriven called 'valuephobia' – a failure of nerve by shying away from declaring whether the subject was of value or not? The difficulty with seeking to place judgement values on a work of art is that it assumes that it is possible to do what Philliber claims and come to some form of conclusive judgment about a work. But, as we have seen, many have asserted that this is not possible.

Despite the calls for judgements of value from Tyler and Guba and Lincoln, Eisner's approach seems far more appropriate within the context of arts council client appraisal. Certainly, Eisner asks that the value or 'import' of the phenomenon be considered (Eisner 1976: 343), and he later stated that the duty of an evaluation was to ascertain whether that which was being assessed contributed or not, "to a state of educational health or illness" (Eisner 1991: 99-100). But he also maintains that where so much in a particular phenomenon is ineffable and inexpressible, the purpose of evaluation is not to provide definitive accounts of truth or reality but, rather, to share one's connoisseurship, to develop astute perception in others, and to use this as a basis for informed critique (Kushner 2000: 114).

This key issue of the potential diversity of individuals' subjective views ceases to be an obstacle, then, if the group of connoisseurs gathering to consider an organisation's work were not required to reach any conclusive judgement. Quite simply, if it is not possible to achieve collective judgement in respect of artistic work, why even attempt it?

And since coming to a definitive judgement is not, after all, one of the aims of appraisal, it would be far more meaningful (not to say achievable) to require groups to consider the organisation's work within an ethos of critical reflection, whereby the issues surrounding the work were discussed and analysed by the artist and the connoisseurs together through mature, critical dialogue, embracing a 'dialectic practice' (Guba & Lincoln 1989: 43-4) that was 'personally referenced' (Eisner 1991: 102). One arts council officer

indicated that she did not find comparison with other arts organisations appropriate, echoing Eisner's assertion that evaluation that is 'criterion referenced' or 'norm referenced' is not apposite. Consequently, Guba and Lincoln's (1981: 45) notion of determining 'comparative or relative merit' would similarly not be appropriate.

The artists would not attend the groups to 'be criticised' *per se* but to be equal partners in the discourse, so that the appraisal can take advantage of the artists' own experience of being 'critical evaluators' as they progressed through the process of creation. The overriding ethos of the groups would be that of engaging in a discourse of 'informed critique' that would serve to perform the evaluative task of the critic, in that it "illuminates, interprets, and appraises the qualities that have been experienced" (Eisner 1991: 86). And if, as Hume (1757) maintained, "all opinions are equal, and no one has a just claim to authority," the wide variance in the views (and advice) being put forward, including those of the critically reflective artist, will lead to what might be termed a 'collective subjectivity', that embraces the breadth of the views held in all their complexity.

Arts council officers, too, would attend the groups in a spirit of partnership with their opinions contributing, in the same way as other members, to the collective subjectivity of the group. By submitting to this collective ethos, there is no doubt that the degree to which they hold panoptic power of their clients would be somewhat eroded. But the reductions in arts-specialist staff in the arts councils have already signalled a shift in appraisal responsibility

from the arts council officer towards the arts organisation. Officers may, indeed experience less day-to-day power in their relationship with clients, but this should be viewed within the context of an improved, and more meaningful appraisal approach. And a greater degree of partnership, holds out the prospect of less resistance from artists.

In terms of the appraisal procedure, greater benefit would be derived if this were not a summative exercise, but a series of what I shall call colloquia held at reasonable intervals during the period under consideration. In keeping with the ethos of Fourth Generation Evaluation, an on-going, cyclical process would feed into the progress of the artist's work. What use is such a practice to the artist or the funder after the event, when it is too late to draw upon any notions, initiatives or wisdom that may emerge from the discourse?

In this respect, the colloquia conducted by this small group would play a crucial part in the development of the organisation as well as in its appraisal. Data from the interviews indicated that arts council officers are as keen as the artists (or their audiences) to see the success of a funded artist. After all, the organisation is, in many ways, the funder's strategy in action, and it is far better to ensure that its work is progressing well as it develops, rather than, possibly, discovering, after the event, that it has failed. Some artists bemoaned the fact that, in their view, the arts councils had virtually ceased to be involved in artistic development or the promotion of artistic excellence. This mechanism would enable these matters to be integral to the appraisal process.

Some interviewees maintained that, largely due to their previous employment background and training, officers currently employed by the arts councils were ill equipped to consider the artistic aspects of their clients' work. Attendance at these colloquia would expose them to informed and open aesthetic discourse and act to develop aesthetic perception and their ability to engage in such dialogue, thus further enhancing the artistic competence of the arts councils themselves.

Another benefit of regular reflection is that there would be less of a temptation, on the part of the funders, to seek a conclusive judgement than there might be if one meeting only were held toward the end of the period of grant aid. A rolling cycle of viewing work and attending colloquia would enable all involved to benefit from the artists being able to articulate their own ongoing critical evaluation, and to observe the artistic progress of the initiative and the organisation, for, as one officer stated, one of the important aspects of appraisal for her was that she wished to see whether the organisation, "had found a new life, is it invigorated?"

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## CHAPTER 8

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### A TANDEM APPROACH TO ARTS ORGANISATION APPRAISAL

*Tandem Appraisal* will involve two rolling cycles of activity progressing in tandem – one a monitoring system that largely concentrates on gathering a limited amount of relevant, useable statistical data, and the other a process of informed and considered reflection on the artistic work, carried out by the artists themselves together with a small group of connoisseurs, both professional and lay, in an ongoing series of colloquia.

#### **Monitoring cycle**

The former of these two cycles – the monitoring – can be carried out routinely with the data relayed electronically at agreed intervals during the funding period. Typically, these would be quarterly submissions, in co-ordination with the organisation's own board meetings. In this way, a minimal amount of extra work for the organisation would be involved, since the information would be prepared for the quarterly board meeting in any case. The only extra meetings with the arts council would be an initial meeting to negotiate and agree the nature of the data required and to set up the logistics of the system. Any other monitoring meetings would take place by

exception, if and when issues arose that were a matter of dispute or a cause for concern to either the organisation or the funder.

### **Cycle of colloquia**

The other wheel of this bi-cycle process would, essentially, be the outward, active manifestation of the process. A small group of connoisseurs would be selected to take responsibility for viewing (or observing) the organisation's artistic output. It is crucial, however, that the nature of the connoisseurship should reflect the essence of the organisation. As well as the art form and the scale of the organisation, and whether it is a presenter or a producer (or both), other factors will need to be considered, for as Ellis (2003: 4) explained in his recent paper "It is, for example, the goal of some arts organisations to support and develop a given cannon of work, and to act as stewards of that tradition; it is the goal of others to provide opportunities for individual development through the transformational experiences that culture can provide; and of others to provide and build expressive and emotional bonds through communal participation." These are quite different ambitions and will need to be viewed from different perspectives.

The colloquium group, then, would be tailored to suit the work of the organisation but, typically, it would consist of some three or four individuals, besides the artists and the appropriate arts council officer. These might be: another artist working in a

similar field – possibly someone who could act as a mentor for the artist –, a venue programmer (if appropriate), a critic, academic or other connoisseur familiar with the field of work, and an informed lay person who, depending on the nature of the organisation, could be, say, a keen arts attender, a school teacher, a local authority community development worker, or some other person representing the 'claims, concerns and issues' of the consumer of the works of art.

The selection of colloquia members should be undertaken jointly – and agreed – by the funding body and the arts organisation. But this process will also need to take cognizance of the particular circumstances of individual organisations. The process of identifying informed lay persons, for instance, in a small rural town will be a different matter than of doing so in a large city.

It is suggested that both the funding body and arts organisations each assemble a 'bank' of potential colloquium members. This would be the basis for selection proposals and negotiation, and would also ensure a ready resource should replacements or additions be needed for the colloquium. These 'banks' could be developed through a variety of ways: informed lay persons could be identified through personal contacts, professional contacts, lists of season ticket holders, lists of 'friends' of the organisation, and so forth. Identifying appropriate artists or critics might be somewhat easier, since



such individuals would be known through their work. It is also proposed that both funder and arts organisation should invite the public to add their names to the 'bank' through announcements in the press and media or by posting notices in arts venues. Such a selection process would enable all parties to have confidence in both the selection method and in the subsequent appraisal process.

There should be no assumption that the views of any one member of the colloquium will carry more weight than those of another. The small number of group members (six or fewer) should obviate the need for a chairperson, but members may wish, at the outset, to express their expectations of the colloquium and agree on how they would wish the colloquium to be conducted, perhaps even to agree on a 'convenor' for each meeting. Any one of the members should have the right (either at any colloquium or prior to it) to flag up any topic that they would wish to have discussed. The underlying tenor of the colloquium should be that of a forum for open discourse to engage in constructive, informed critique that can be useful to both the arts organisation, in the development of their work, and to the arts council in coming to a reliable and valid appraisal of the organisation's work.

This group would be expected to become very familiar with the organisation's work by attending performances or exhibitions, or even rehearsals, studio work sessions or exhibition hangings, if

helpful. The group will need to meet at appropriate intervals (appropriate in terms of both usefulness and practicability) to reflect upon the work and to discuss it. Colloquia generally need not last more than two hours. Members might well wish to consider the work in light of some of the criteria proposed by Matarasso (2002: 6): "technique, originality, ambition, connection, and magic", or they might wish to adopt other criteria or even other means of facilitating the discourse.

However, any criteria adopted should not be treated as a preordinate list of objectives. Discussions should be centred around the actual effects of the work – as in Scriven's notion of Goal-free Evaluation – and not conducted as an exercise to determine whether or not objectives have been met. As Guba and Lincoln (1981: 7) point out, the *a priori* setting of objectives closes off creative paths and is not appropriate for creative endeavours. Consideration of actual outcomes enables the inclusion of all outcomes, whether intended or unintended, and also acts to safeguard against disregarding instances of what Eisner calls "productive idiosyncrasy" by considering them as one would any outcome.

It might well be that the majority of the discourse would be centred around issues of the work's merit but those representing the concerns of art consumers may also wish to consider issues of worth.

It is important that the critical reflection of these group sessions be reported (what Eisner calls, "the art of disclosure") and this could be in the form of audio or video tape recordings which would be useful both to artists and funders wishing to act upon any issue that might arise from these meetings. Also these could be consulted should points of dispute arise.

The cost of such a system would not be greatly different to those incurred under the current system, and could be marginally less costly.

The chief items of expenditure would be the reimbursement of colloquia members. Typical costs would involve the provision of tickets to performances and travel costs. These costs are already paid for by the arts councils under their current procedures for gathering show reports. In the case of artists or lay persons (particularly those who are self-employed and whose attendance at colloquia might involve a loss of earnings) a small honorarium should be considered.

The hard costs, as they are at present, would be borne by the arts council, although others, such as the arts organisation, can often alleviate the costs with payments in kind, by providing meeting rooms, refreshments and, in some cases, complimentary tickets.

Both these cycle wheels (monitoring and reflection) would be

conducted in tandem, so that both the 'measurable' and the 'immeasurable' would contribute to the progress of the process. However, as with the issue of appropriate connoisseurship, the degree of weight given to the two component cycles would also need to reflect the nature of the organisation and the funding it receives. It was noted in Chapter 5 that Mulgan (1996) had suggested that artist-led organisations (often comparatively small organisations) that are awarded 'risk money' to carry out innovative or experimental programmes of work should not be subjected to a regime that "demands so much in terms of the formal accountability of accounts".

Likewise, in the case of an (often larger) organisation that is funded to provide a particular service to a particular geographical area or to meet the needs of a certain type of audience, the funding agreement might stipulate certain levels of touring or exhibition mounting that would then need to be addressed in the monitoring cycle.

The general two-cycle approach is represented in *Figures 11* and *12* below, and is depicted in the form of a tandem bicycle. It is suggested that the rear wheel, which gives the tandem its momentum, should represent the cycle of artistic colloquia, and that the front wheel, which guides the tandem along its path, represent the monitoring cycle. Clearly the purpose of a tandem – ridden by two people acting in partnership to propel the machine forward – is to aid them in arriving at their destination and, similarly, it is the destination of the two wheels

that completes the metaphor. For, in order to prevent the process from becoming an endless routine of useful but unpurposeful and unsatisfying meetings, the cycle should pause periodically at an agreed interval – perhaps annually but certainly as the period of the current funding agreement draws to an end, so that both parties – the funded and the funder – can meet and synthesize the knowledge gained from the process. All individuals who had been part of the appraisal and who had gained in-depth knowledge of the organisation and its work, would attend.

Again, in terms of procedure, the principle of 'exception' would be in force, so that issues considered at these meetings would only be those which are relevant to the process and useful to either party. Routine matters need not be included. This meeting, too, would need to be recorded and subject to disclosure.

This meeting, importantly, will enable the knowledge, and wisdom gained by all parties – particularly by the organisation and its funders – over the course of the twin cycled journey to be crystallised so that, in terms of the funding relationship, both parties become clear about where they stand and the general parameters of any new funding agreement could be discussed.

The following table suggests a possible sequence for both cycles of activity:

## TANDEM APPRAISAL

<b>Rear Wheel: Cycle of colloquia to reflect on artistic work</b>	<b>Front Wheel: Cycle of procedures to monitor statistical data</b>
1. View work	A. Set-up meeting
1a. Colloquium	B. Data sent to AC
2. View work	C. Data sent to AC
2a. Colloquium	C1. Need to oil the wheel: Check the system if necessary
3. View work	D. Data sent to AC
3a. Colloquium	D1. Puncture: some data or procedures causing concern: Meeting to discuss emerging issues and solutions
4. View work	E. Data sent to AC
4a. Colloquium	

**Figure 11: Tandem Appraisal: colloquia and monitoring cycles**

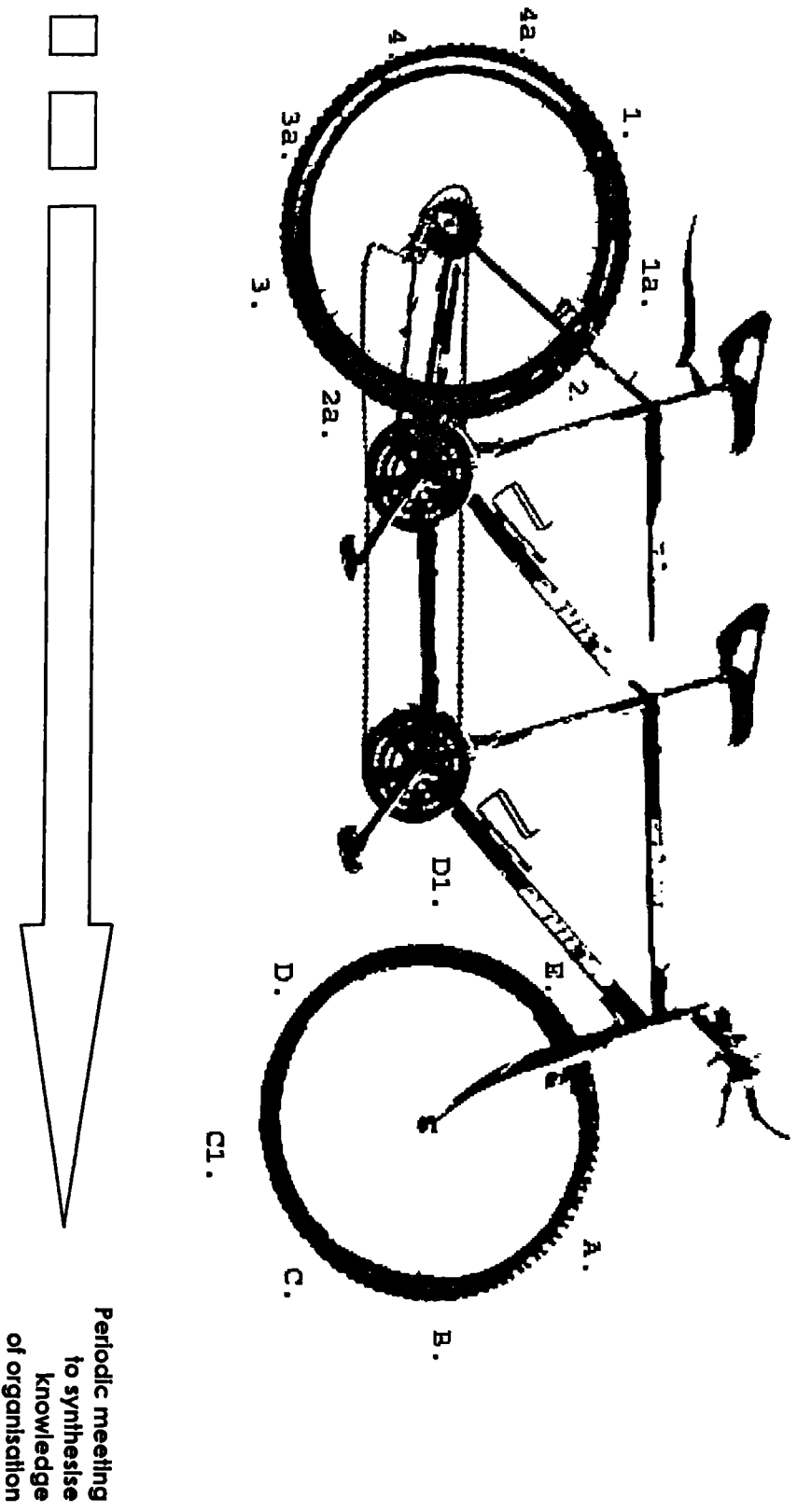


Figure 12: Tandem Appraisal: The linked twin cycles of artistic reflection and statistical monitoring

**Potential criticisms of *Tandem Appraisal***

The *Tandem* approach to arts council client appraisal was drawn up by synthesising the views of individuals interviewed and those of theorists in the field of evaluation. It is felt that arts organisations who undergo arts council appraisal would be largely supportive of such an approach, as would arts council officers, as it addresses the most important complaints and issues raised by them. These were discussed in the previous chapter.

However, it is clear that certain elements of *Tandem Appraisal* could be open to criticism, particularly from some of the theorists whose work has provided the basis for the theoretical construct of this study.

In arriving at the *Tandem Appraisal*, these potential weaknesses were considered and features built in to the process in an attempt to address them. These, too, were discussed in the previous chapter and are summarised in *Figure 13*:

Criticism	Remedy
Connoisseurs bring an elitist flavour to appraisal, leading to suspicion on the part of the evaluand.	Artist stated that they wished to have their art considered by informed individuals who knew the field in which the artists worked.
Matarasso believes artists are not good judges of others works of art.	If artists are included as members of the colloquium groups, their presence will be mitigated by that of several other non-artist members. The value-plural nature of the colloquia will act to temper any extreme opinions.



Criticism	Remedy
Colloquia could be accused of suffering from 'valuephobia'.	Placing a definitive value on artists' work is not the purpose of arts council appraisal nor, it is argued, is it possible. The collective subjectivity of the colloquium group can offer guidance and indicate whether an arts organisation is producing art which has worth and merit.
<i>Tandem Appraisal</i> does not offer any way of measuring aspects of organisations' performance.	The monitoring cycle collects statistical data on those quantifiable elements that are relevant to the funding agreement. The funding body can use these data to compile any performance measures that it may deem appropriate and useful.
Danger of <i>Tandem Appraisal</i> degenerating into a fruitless and inconclusive cycle of procedures.	The monitoring data will be delivered according to an agreed timetable and periodic meetings called to resolve matters of concern. The colloquia will be recorded and open to disclosure. Periodic meetings will be held to 'take stock' and determine what, if any, action needs be taken.
The partnership nature of the <i>Tandem Approach</i> could lead arts council officers to resent the consequent diminution of their Panoptic power over arts organisations.	Staff reductions in the arts councils already herald a degree of shift in appraisal responsibility from AC officer to client. Officers may, indeed, experience less day-to-day power over clients, but this needs to be viewed within the context of an improved appraisal regimen, and prospect of less cause for resistance .

**Figure 13: Potential criticisms of *Tandem Appraisal***

**Concluding remarks**

In the Introduction, it was stated that the question to be addressed by this study was, "Are the appraisal procedures currently employed by arts councils in Wales and England appropriate for the evaluation of the totality of an arts organisation's performance and, if not, what form, if any, should alternative methods take?"

In Chapter 5 the findings of the data gathered indicated that there was strong criticism of the appraisal system from arts organisations and that arts council officers, too, were far from satisfied. All were of the opinion that the appraisal process was not, in effect, serving the purpose of truly evaluating funded organisations and that it needed to be reviewed.

In Chapter 7, the development of an alternative procedure was discussed, and following consideration of the key issues, an approach entitled *Tandem Appraisal* was proposed.

*Tandem Appraisal* embraces the Responsive Constructivist approach and incorporates the need, in the field of the fine and creative arts, to engage connoisseurs in critical reflection on work being produced by funded arts organisations. It also incorporates the notion of value pluralism by enabling key stakeholders to participate in the process and for their 'claims, concerns and issues' to be considered and reflected upon. On a practical level, it offers a simple, uncomplicated, partnership approach to arts council client appraisal, and enables the funders to take a holistic view of an organisation's work whilst, at the same time, satisfying the needs of public accountability.

It should also greatly reduce the amount of extra time and effort devoted to the appraisal process and should, in due course, be absorbed into the routine operations of both bodies.

More importantly, perhaps, by adopting this approach, appraisal will become a far more meaningful process which could be of considerable use to both funding body and arts organisation, by confining the process to consideration of those things that really matter in determining whether or not the organisation is doing a good job and whether the arts council is spending its money wisely. It should also ensure that, in appraising the work of arts council clients, the measurable need not, after all, drive out the immeasurable.

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## Appendix 1

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### Example of Indicator Profile Established by Theatre's Stakeholders

(Source: Unpublished pilot social audit undertaken for ACE, 1999)

#### The Theatre and the Arts

##### Produce high-quality, diverse theatre appropriate to the city

1. Number of performances, workshops and other events
2. Numbers attending each event; capacity (% tickets sold)
3. Number (%) of positive and negative reviews in newspapers
4. Assessment of audiences (rating scale)
5. Assessment of other stakeholders (rating scale)
6. Assessment of specialist arts professionals
7. Number of awards won

##### Produce work which expands horizons and changes people's perceptions

1. Assessment of audiences (rating scale)
2. Assessment of other stakeholders (rating scale)
3. Assessment of specialist arts professionals

##### Act as a flagship for the arts, promoting excellence and the value of creativity

1. Assessment of professional arts community
2. Satisfaction of audience and stakeholders with the current programme
3. Assessment of audiences and other stakeholders (rating scale)

##### Provide support for professional and community-based theatre groups and individuals

1. Number of partnerships with local theatre companies
2. Nature and extent of other support offered to theatre groups
3. Assessment of local theatre companies

##### Link the international with the local, valuing both

1. Number of international artists and companies
2. Balance between local, national and international artists employed
3. Number of opportunities to link international artists and local companies

##### Remain open to all kinds and means of expression

1. Number of writers whose work was performed at the theatre in 1998
2. Number (%) of stakeholders considering the theatre's work as innovative.

#### The Theatre and the Community

##### Advance personal and community development through its work

1. Impact on personal development of participants in projects
2. Impact on community development of partner organisations

##### Support the involvement of schools and young people in theatre

1. Number of schools and community projects
2. Assessment of teachers of the impact
3. Assessment of participants

**Include disabled people, ethnic minority groups and others throughout its work**

1. Audience profile
2. Staff and board profile
3. Take up of concessionary tickets and special access schemes
4. Numbers (%) of disadvantaged people involved in outreach work

**Work to eliminate barriers to access of all kinds**

1. Number of outreach and special access schemes
2. Number of community-based projects that the theatre is engaged in.
3. Partnerships with organisations supporting disadvantaged groups
4. Physical access improvements
5. Number (%) of partners considering the theatre succeeding in getting people from all aspects of the city working together
6. Number (%) of partners that think the theatre helps people to understand each other better

**Work with local companies to promote social responsibility**

1. Number of local companies partnering with the theatre
2. Investment of local companies in the theatre's community projects
3. Performance and attitude assessment of the theatre's commercial partners

**The Theatre's Partnerships**

**Consult widely, give people a voice and listen to what they say**

1. Number (%) of partners being asked for ideas by the theatre
2. Number (%) of partners feeling actively involved in the theatre's activities
3. Number (%) of partners considering the theatre being open to anyone's ideas?

**Build good partnerships with all kinds of groups and organisations**

1. Average length of partnership with community based organisations, private companies and other types of organisation.
2. Number (%) of partners actively promoting the theatre within their networks, e.g. recommending funding or other support.

**Be good custodians of the reputation of the theatre's partners**

1. Assessment by stakeholders of the theatre's conduct
2. Number (%) of partners having visited the theatre over the last year/month

**Be open and honest about its policies and decisions**

1. Assessment by stakeholders of the theatre's openness

**Demonstrate its trust in the people it works with, and its trustworthiness**

1. Recognition rate of at least one play performed at the theatre over the last six months by people in the street (e.g. after being shown a list of performed plays and random plays)
2. Recognition rate of activities at the theatre, apart from traditional theatre

**The Theatre and the City**

**Welcome large audiences from across the whole community**

1. Audience profile
2. Assessment by audiences of the theatre's welcome;
3. Assessment by other stakeholders of the theatre's welcome;

4. Recognition rate of the theatre by people in the street when shown a photo.

**Provide leadership in local cultural development, and represent the city nationally**

1. Number of local arts development initiatives involving the theatre
2. Number of the theatre's productions touring beyond the city
3. Assessment of stakeholders of the theatre's cultural leadership.

**Support local economic development and the business community**

1. Expenditure by the theatre on local business and residents;
2. Number of local trading partners;
3. Assessment of stakeholders

**Encourage a sense of local ownership by local people**

1. Number (%) of stakeholders who recommend others to visit the theatre
2. Number (%) of stakeholders who visit the theatre other than for a performance
3. Number (%) of stakeholders who feel proud of the theatre

**Celebrate and promote the achievements of the theatre and its partners**

1. Number (%) of partners aware of the theatre's 40 anniversary
2. Amount of local and national media coverage.

**The Theatre's Standards**

**Manage its affairs efficiently and effectively**

1. Number (%) of internal stakeholders and partners who consider the theatre efficient.

**Be a good employer and promote training**

1. Amount of hidden hours work per staff member
2. Staff assessment of the theatre as an employer.
3. Provision and take up of staff training.
4. Satisfaction level of staff with the relevance of training
5. Satisfaction level of staff with the potential to implement learning.
6. Difference between lowest and highest rates of pay

**Make people feel confident of its operation**

1. Average length of co-operation with partner
2. Number (%) of contacts that are personal as well as professional

**Provide consistency in its contacts with its partners**

1. Number (%) of partners that feel that they are kept informed of what the theatre does

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