Evaluation practices in community music: a constructionist approach to exploring community musicians' perspectives

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Abstract

Within UK community music, evaluation has become an essential element of professional practice, however, it is an aspect of their work that many community musicians find challenging. Although exploration of community music evaluation in published literature is limited, it has identified problems and tensions, but with minimal investigation of community music practitioners' perspectives. This study explores community musicians' constructions of evaluation practices, including how they negotiate evaluation and what influences evaluation in their work, to reach a deeper understanding of evaluation in community music for the benefit of the whole community music sector.

With a qualitative, constructionist methodology, theoretically informed by discourse analysis and positioning theory, 16 one-to-one online semi-structured interviews with community musicians were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis, leading to a series of findings. Although interviewees often constructed evaluation in the singular, it is a multifarious morass of intentions, purposes, methods, methodological standpoints and practices, with most valuing reflective forms of evaluation that focus on the quality of their practice above other forms. The metaphor of multiple dimensions characterises different aspects of evaluation – *what* it is, *why* community musicians do it, *how* they do it, and the *affect* of evaluation – which, along with a typology of different positions community musicians take towards evaluation and factors that influence the differing positions, provides a new conceptual framework for understanding evaluation in community music.

The thesis argues that evaluation should be understood as multiple contextually situated practices which acknowledge the complexity of community music. The research calls for all those in the community music sector (project managers, evaluators, commissioners, funders and policy makers) to give greater consideration to community musicians' perspectives, enabling more agency, control and influence over evaluation in their work; thereby contributing to greater professional satisfaction for community musicians who are a vital workforce as community music has become an important complement to music education and creative health and wellbeing. The research advocates for a grassroots community of practice regarding evaluation to enable utilisation of the findings in the UK community music sector and for a more cohesive view of evaluation to be developed.

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Ethics, Data and Copyright Statements

Ethics Statement

This study was approved by the Bath Spa University Ethics Panel on 03/04/2020. Should you have any concerns regarding ethical matters relating to this study, please contact the Research Support Office at Bath Spa University (researchsupportoffice@bathspa.ac.uk).

All participants provided written informed consent prior to enrolment in the study and for any associated datasets to be utilised as presented within this thesis.

Data Statement

Due to the degree of personal information in the dataset that could compromise the anonymity of research participants, the datasets are not publicly available, and no interviewees consented to their data being shared.

Copyright Statement

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the thesis

Is there a solution to evaluation out there for music making, because if there is, I want it. I want it now. I think it's something we're all struggling with in community music.

(quote from interviewee 'Paula')

1.1 The need for this investigation

This study investigates community musicians' perspectives on evaluation practices they encounter in their work. Community music is a multifarious cultural activity that occurs in many cultures and communities worldwide. The focus of this study is community music in the UK, as historic and current cultural policy and practices have shaped the phenomenon of evaluation in community music in particular ways. Expectations and norms have emerged over many years leading to a current situation where community musicians and organisations who co-ordinate community music activity evaluate their work. The implications of such expectations and norms have received only a little attention from academic researchers. The intention of this doctoral study is to add to what is already understood and further investigate an aspect of widespread cultural practices. This introductory chapter firstly describes the academic rationale for the study, outlining the nature of community music, the nature of evaluation, and the issues and tensions that have arisen in how community music is evaluated. Next, an explanation of my interest in the topic and an acknowledgement of my position in the research is given. The research questions and aims are then stated, followed by brief notes on the terms and language used in the thesis, before an overview of how the thesis is structured concludes the introductory chapter.

1.1.1 Background to community music

Community music in the UK has developed to become a recognised approach to music making taking place in a wide variety of settings, in different kinds of communities, with different intentions, and different ways of making music. Teenagers doing a DJ workshop in a youth centre, parents and their toddlers attending a pre-school music group in a church hall, adults recovering from drug and alcohol addiction singing in a recovery choir, people of all ages playing in a brass band – all could be described as community music. Community music has become an established field of practice with community music organisations, higher education training courses, research centres and professional associations which support community musicians. There is not one accepted definition of community music, however, "music making with social goals" is a simple description offered by Rimmer (2009, p.71). Due to the wide range of activities that are considered to be community music, "elusive" is a term often used to describe the consensus amongst community musicians over a definition (Creech, 2010; Schippers and Bartleet, 2013; Brown, Higham and Rimmer, 2014; Mullen, 2017). Many writers respond to definitional difficulties by describing characteristics of community music, which include: typically taking place outside of formal education institutions, having no pre-determined curricula, a focus on creative music making and active participation, fostering personal or community development aims, a pedagogical approach of facilitating and enabling rather than teaching, creating opportunities for social connection, and an ethos of social inclusion and broadening access to music making (Joss, 1993; Koopman, 2007: Veblen, 2008; Schippers and Bartleet, 2013). There is a wide diversity of practice which carries the banner of community music, with variety in what is considered community music between different geographical and socio-cultural contexts (Howell, Bartleet and Higgins, 2017; Veblen, 2013). A commonly cited categorisation by Higgins (2012) includes "three broad perspectives of community music: (1) music of a community, (2) communal music making, and (3) an active intervention between a music leader or facilitator and participants" (p.3).[1] Higgins writes that this third

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[1] Elaborating on these three perspectives, Higgins writes that perspectives one and two "point toward an expression, through music, of a community's local identities, traditions, aspirations, and social interactions". Examples I have selected to illustrate these perspectives in a UK context are "(1) music of a community" as brass bands that have roots in local industrial workplaces such as collieries, and "(2) communal music making" as a traditional music session in a pub. The intervention perspective is where there is a more explicit intention of social change involving a professional community musician.

perspective of community music is "an approach to active music making… outside of formal teaching and learning situations" and "an intentional intervention, involving skilled music leaders, who facilitate group music-making experiences in environments that do not have set curricula" (p.4). Conceptualisation of community music as an *intervention* has become firmly secured in the UK (Howell, Bartleet and Higgins, 2017; Currie, Gibson and Lam, 2020) closely linked to a tendency in community music to align or adapt practices to achieve non-musical goals of funding bodies (Brown, Higham and Rimmer, 2014). However, such a definition of community music is not shared by all, with some who view community music more as a community-led emancipatory experience for those participating.

There have been a multitude of influences on community music's journey from its origins in 1960s radical community activism to contemporary practice, where activities may be state-funded and involve professionals intervening in communities to intentionally effect change aligned to government social policy agendas. Deane (2018) describes the cultural and social policy initiatives that have shaped community music in the UK from first recommendations of the Arts Council of Great Britain that public funding should support community arts (Baldry, 1974), a focus on economic value of public funding for the arts (Myerscough, 1988), the 1994 creation of the National Lottery which provided significantly increased funds for the arts, New Labour's Policy Action Team 10 (PAT10) which investigated how the arts could address social exclusion, and the launch of the National Foundation for Youth Music in 1999. Community Music experienced a "depoliticisation" (Deane, 2018, p.327) in the 1980s and early 1990s as it sought financial support from public funds and moved away from its roots in the community activism of the 1960s and 70s. Community music increasingly aligned itself to social policy agendas following the arrival of PAT10 which stated that participation in arts and sport had beneficial effects on four key indicators of "neighbourhood renewal": health, crime, employment and education (DCMS, 1999, p.22). Gray (2002) coined the term "policy attachment" where the arts, a "minor" policy concern of local government, addresses the objectives of other policy areas, such as housing and urban regeneration, to secure funding. The development of instrumentality in the arts, the "attainment of non-cultural, non-arts, goals and objectives" (Gray, 2007, p. 203) has, in tandem, seen a development of evaluation and impact measurement activity to seek evidence that non-cultural goals are achieved, to legitimise the use of public funds for the arts and to advocate for the value of the arts.

1.1.2 The development of evaluation in public policy and community music

The practice of evaluation in the funded arts in the UK (both public funds and private investment such as charitable trusts) has developed alongside the cultural and social policy – particularly related to community arts and people's participation in the arts. Evaluation in the arts has drawn from established theory and practice in other disciplines: health, education, community development and youth work. *The Sage Encyclopedia of Evaluation* defines evaluation as:

> An applied inquiry process for collecting and synthesizing evidence that culminates in conclusions about the state of affairs, value, merit, worth, significance, or quality of a program, product, person, policy, proposal, or plan. Conclusions made in evaluations encompass both an empirical aspect (that something is the case) and a normative aspect (judgment about the value of something). It is the value feature that distinguishes evaluation from other types of inquiry, such as basic science research, clinical epidemiology, investigative journalism, or public polling. (Fournier, 2006, p.140)

This definition encompasses several elements which are common to definitions of evaluation by different theorists. Firstly, that evaluation is a *process of inquiry* or investigation. Secondly, evaluation is concerned with making *judgements* rather than research with other aims such as testing a hypothesis. Thirdly, those judgements are about the *value, merit, worth or effectiveness* of the object of evaluation. Fourthly, evaluation involves a *systematic process of gathering and analysing evidence and data* (Scriven, 1980; Stufflebeam and Shinkfield, 2007; UK Evaluation Society, n.d.). There is a fifth element which features in some conceptualisations of evaluation – that evaluation is an inquiry process with a *purpose* (Trochim, 1998; Rossi, Lipsey and Freeman, 2004; Patton, 2008; Mertens and Wilson, 2019). The purpose is often utility, that is, the findings of evaluation are used for decision making, policy making, resource allocation or accountability to judge whether public resources are being used effectively.

It is a natural human activity to make evaluative judgements – they are ubiquitous and a part of everyday life (Bergqvist and Cowan, 2018). As evaluation theorist Stake says, "we look for merit and shortfall all the time, consciously and unconsciously" (Stake, 2004, p.3). It is the more intentional use of this judgement regarding specific cultural activities and the professional sphere of community music that this study is concerned. Stake (2012) states that "professional work is infused with evaluation" and is inherently concerned with

judgments about the quality of that work (p.189). Whilst this does apply to community music practice, a much larger influence on the nature of evaluation in community music is the context of evaluation as a practice within policy making. The origins of evaluation as a distinct discipline are firmly rooted in the educational and social programme evaluation of the USA. Practice in the UK draws on decades of theory developed by American evaluation theorists and scholars reaching back to the 1960s (see Alkin (2012) and Mertens and Wilson (2019) for recent accounts of the lineage of evaluation theory and the different schools of thought which contribute to contemporary evaluation practice). Evaluation in the UK has developed in different professional sectors to become a firmly established component of government, statutory services such as education and health, the voluntary sector and the cultural sector. Various government approaches to policy have contributed to how evaluation is situated in practice, from the 1980s UK government's focus on "new public management" and a drive to make public services more efficient, to the 1997 New Labour government's focus on "evidence-based policy making" that made claims of policy being led by evidence rather than ideology. These influences can still be seen in policy making today, with a strong culture of evaluation in government evident through initiatives such as the Evaluation Task Force, a "joint Cabinet Office-HM Treasury unit providing specialist support to ensure evidence and evaluation sits at the heart of spending decisions" (UK Government, 2024a), the Magenta and Green Book guidance on evaluation which guides policy evaluation in the UK (HM Treasury, 2020; 2022); and the network of What Works Centres which support evidenced-based decision making and evaluation in specific policy areas (UK Government, 2024b). This culture of evaluation is replicated across government departments and Arm's Length Bodies[2] which include organisations that shape cultural policy and distribute public funding, such as Arts Council England. It also reaches beyond government to organisations who align their work to public policy or have a wish to affect social change, such as grant-making charitable trusts. How this culture of evaluation manifests is through expectations, and often contractual obligations in funding agreements, that organisations who receive funding will evaluate their work. Furthermore, *how* funding recipients evaluate their work is often explicitly or implicitly influenced by the organisations who distribute public funding through their own guidance and toolkits such

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[2] Arm's Length Bodies are a specific type of UK central government department that deliver services
https://www.gov.uk/guidance/public-bodies-reform

as Arts Council England's self-evaluation framework (Arts Council England, n.d.), the Heritage Lottery Fund's Evaluation Good Practice Guidance (Heritage Lottery Fund, 2017), and Youth Music's Evaluation Toolkit (Youth Music, n.d.).

The explicit political nature of evaluation is not a new realisation. Evaluation theorist Weiss (1970, 1993) wrote of the political context of evaluation, where evaluation is a "rationale enterprise" that systematically assesses whether goals and outcomes of programmes are successfully achieved, which then assists decision-makers in their choices and actions (Weiss, 1993, p.2). Arts and culture are not a special case as the political nature of evaluation extends to all policy areas. Matarasso (1996) describes the overtly political context of evaluation in arts and culture:

> Evaluation only has two organisational purposes – to improve the organisation's ability to meet its objectives effectively, efficiently and economically, and to demonstrate the organisation's value to its stakeholders. These are aims which any organisation in receipt of public funds can be expected to endorse. That many are suspicious, even hostile to evaluation, underlines the fact that its application is far from neutral. (Matarasso, 1996, p.6)

This lack of neutrality in enacting evaluation is a significant issue for community music. If a primary purpose of evaluation is to demonstrate how a creative cultural activity addresses the social outcomes desired by the funding distributors, which more often than not reflects the current government policy of the day, then this is consistent with the framing of community music as an intervention. However, for those who may not subscribe to community music as an intervention, but favour emancipatory community-led definitions, then there is a discordance between the purpose of evaluation and the very nature of community music. Such a purpose is contrary to the activist origins of community arts that sought social change through grass-roots community action rather than through top-down government-backed social programmes.

A further issue that arises from the political context of evaluation is how evaluation is done and by whom. In the UK, there are many initiatives to support organisations in their evaluation endeavours such as NCVO Charities Evaluation Services, Evaluation Support Scotland and the think tank New Philanthropy Capital. Alongside the guidance and toolkits supplied by funding distributors, these initiatives and resources are intended to help people evaluate their own work. Additionally, evaluation has become a professional role in arts and culture and other sectors, with organisations employing their own monitoring

and evaluation workforce or engaging evaluation services provided by university academics, research and evaluation consultancy organisations (both non-profit charitable organisations and private businesses), and freelance individual evaluation practitioners. Whilst there are all these resources, professional evaluators and support to help those in receipt of funding to meet evaluation expectations and obligations, it often falls to community musicians who work directly with participants to undertake evaluation, although they often have no training in evaluation and no input into the evaluation practices they are subject to in their professional roles. In such a situation it would hardly be surprising to find that community musicians might be "suspicious, even hostile", as Matarasso puts it, to undertaking evaluation.

1.1.3 Scrutinising evaluation in public policy and the arts

Evaluation has become firmly embedded in UK arts and culture, yet it is not without scrutiny and critique. Scholars have been interrogating evaluation practices in the arts, for example, Selwood (2002) argued that government's gathering of data to assess the impact of public funding for arts and culture was "a spurious exercise" due to poor quality data and methodologically flawed evaluation. Data did not, in fact, lead to evidence-based policy, with funding decisions made on the basis of expectations rather than evidence of impact, leading Selwood to conclude that data gathering requirements of funded arts organisations are a political pursuit for accountability and government control over the cultural sector rather than any stated aim of evidencing impact. Belfiore and Bennet (2010) summarise the problems of governments' professed approach of evidence-based policy-making, and a consequential emphasis on simplified "toolkit" methodologies for evaluating the socio-economic effects of publicly subsidised arts which fail to consider the complexity of measuring "the effects of people's aesthetic experiences" (p.122). Evaluation can be methodologically weak and more akin to advocacy, with claims of social transformation not substantiated by critical academic studies (Baker, Bull and Taylor, 2018). In community music scholarship specifically, Rimmer (2009) highlights tensions in evaluating cultural activity with methods designed for other policy areas and "difficulties of evidencing the success of community music activity in tackling social exclusion", which can lead to community musicians seeking "to validate their work through the achievement of high-

visibility outputs" (Rimmer, 2009, p.86). Jennings and Baldwin (2010) give a damnatory description of evaluation in their ethnographic case study research of community theatre projects in Northern Ireland:

> Evaluation has become a corporate chore, often contracted out to professional consultants, whereby boxes can be ticked and formulaic cases made for the justification of funding (Leeuw, 2009). Practitioners' and participants' experiences and backgrounds have been either ignored or reduced to quantitative indicators for the fulfilment of socio-political objectives. There has been little space for the development of ongoing critical and reflective practice. In any case, practitioners have little motivation to assess their work critically, at least within the public sphere. Their continued employment has depended on positive (and positivist) individual project evaluations. (Jennings and Baldwin, 2010, p.73)

This account shows multiple deeply felt problems with evaluation that are negatively impacting on the experiences of participants and practitioners in community arts.

In disciplines outside of arts and culture such as youth work, evaluation is being contested and further researched. Community music for children and young people has adopted evaluation tools and theory from disciplines such as youth work, for example Youth Music's Evaluation Toolkit (Youth Music, n.d.) which is influenced by the Young Foundation's Framework of Outcomes for Young People (McNeil, Reeder and Rich, 2012). Research by de St Croix (2016, 2018) explores how changes to evaluation practice in youth work since the 1997 New Labour government's focus on performance targets, and the 2010 coalition government's large-scale disinvestment in open access youth work and the adoption of the "youth impact agenda", has negatively influenced and essentially changed the nature of youth work practice itself. Previously an "open improvisatory practice with a significant focus on process rather than outcome" (de St Croix, 2016, p.4), youth work has, she argues, become a practice where "numbers-based, outcome-focused cultures of performativity have become normalised, marking a shift away from previous qualitative and informal mechanisms of evaluation" (de St Croix, 2018, p.417). Theories of Change approaches to evaluation, where intended changes a project or intervention hopes to affect are made explicit at the outset, and the use of quantitative "tools, scales and surveys" (de St Croix, 2018, p.420) to evidence impact have become the norm. This has resulted in youth work becoming more focused on project-based work where outcomes can be evidenced within a given timeframe, programmes which can evidence measurable outputs (such as the number of accredited qualifications achieved), and even youth workers focusing on young

people who are more likely to achieve pre-defined outcomes. At the encouragement of funders and music development organisations, many organisations working in community music for children and young people adopted the concept of "youth impact", where the longer-term effects of immediate outcomes achieved by interventions can be evidenced. The normalisation of evidencing measurable outputs, pre-defined youth outcomes and "impact" which de St Croix describes, also exists in community music. Brown, Higham and Rimmer (2014) note that what is possible to measure in community music, may be different from what is important about the activity. This is the point de St Croix makes – that a relational process-based activity such as youth work cannot be reduced to quantitative measures of pre-defined outcomes. The same could be said of community music.

Researchers in public policy are questioning contemporary evaluation practices and their impact on individuals within the workforce. One example is Duffy (2017), who challenges the notion that evaluation is a process in evidence-based policy-making as policy changes faster than evaluation cycles, but is rather a tool of new public management and managerialism to exert control over people within organisations. Duffy suggests that evaluation has become a tool of governance and power over subjects, and she encourages readers to reclaim evaluation as a critical process to improve practice and policy.   Similar to Duffy, Dahler-Larsen (2012) contests the role of evaluation in evidence-based policy-making, suggesting that evaluation can be symbolic to demonstrate "external legitimacy" (p.90). People undertake evaluations as it is considered part of good organisational practice.   Dahler-Larsen states that evaluation can "create fictions and undermine professional discretion" (p.192) and that the evaluation industry creates "micro accountability structures" (p.229) which suggest a lack of trust in workers. Such a panoptical position could be actively harmful to a workforce's professional confidence. Duffy's and Dahler-Larsen's critiques of evaluation in policy making are examples of how people are contesting evaluation practices in other disciplines.

There is a body of research into evaluation in the arts generally, but much less so regarding evaluation in community music. Additionally, there is little research that considers the perspectives of community musicians themselves on how evaluation features in their work. Community musicians are commonly in a unique position to enact evaluation as they alone may have the relationships and access to participants to gather evaluation evidence – they are the professionals who are consistently present during the music making and can

repeatedly observe what is taking place. As the professionals at the centre of community music making, they are also best placed to utilise findings and learning from evaluation. It is, therefore, vital that community musicians are invested in and engaged with evaluation practices if they are to be worthwhile, however, existing research suggests this is not the case. Brown, Higham and Rimmer (2014) observe that within community music:

> The abiding culture of the sector means that, more often than not, practitioners are both relatively unused to and can be quite disparaging of evaluative and other research procedures. (Brown, Higham and Rimmer, 2014, p.49)

Considering a context such as that described by Duffy and Dahler-Larsen above, it is not surprising that community musicians might be "disparaging" of evaluation, should they perceive it to be managerialism to exert control, a tool of governance and power, symbolic for external legitimacy, and undermining of professional discretion.

The motivation for this doctoral research is to explore these issues to generate new insight into evaluation within the community music sector, for the benefit of all those working within it – community musicians, project managers, evaluators, funding organisations and policy makers. How it seeks to do this is to give closer consideration to community musicians' perspectives and amplify their voices. As key actors in evaluation in community music, community musicians' views are worthy of exploration and understanding. Although it may have moved away from its radical social activist origins, community music has become an important adjunct to formal music education (Rogers, 2006; HM Government, 2022), an intervention for wellbeing (Yi and Kim, 2023) and a mechanism for furthering cultural democracy (Higgins, 2012). It is therefore critical that the community music workforce, who are often freelance or sessional workers with little job security, are supported in the sector, have a professional confidence in their work, and are able to sustain fulfilling careers. Practitioners who directly make music with participants are fundamental to the existence of a community music sector that supports people's cultural lives, education, wellbeing and active citizenship.

1.2 Personal motivations for this study and positionality

I have earned a living as a freelance evaluator for arts and cultural organisations since 2011. My work involves being contracted to lead evaluation processes for time-limited arts projects by the organisations who conceive the project, acquire the necessary funds and then manage the project; alongside advising and supporting organisations on evaluation on an ongoing basis. I have built up my business over the years to become a successful freelance practice where I receive offers of work through personal recommendations, with some organisations repeatedly asking me to work for them on different projects. I regularly receive positive feedback from my clients that the evaluation I co-ordinate helps them to critically reflect on their work and that they are proud to share my evaluation reports publicly and with their project funders.

There is no established career route to becoming an arts evaluator in the UK. My own path has followed a circuitous route through arts management, arts fundraising, and producing festivals, events and participatory or community arts projects for children, young people and community groups. Alongside these roles I performed semi-professionally with folk bands for many years and worked as a facilitator leading music making in early childhood care settings and on music projects for families with young children. The melding of these differing experiences has led to a specialism in evaluating community music and participatory music making projects for children and young people.

Whilst I find my work to be very satisfying, I have often encountered practices and expectations around evaluation which make me feel conflicted: practices which request intrusive levels of personal data from people; are methodologically inappropriate for the nature of the inquiry; or lack integrity as a method of judging success. These practices can impinge on relationships between practitioners and participants or reduce the effectiveness of an evaluation process that intends to enable meaningful judgements to be made. In addition, artists and musicians engaged to work on community and participatory arts projects sometimes appear resistant to evaluation. This resistance is seldom overt, but more often manifests, for example, as a reluctance to complete written documentation for evaluation even when it is an explicit contractual requirement of the work they have agreed to undertake. The role of an evaluator involves a careful balance between competing demands: the needs of participants; the expectations of the commissioning organisation;

the reporting requirements of funders; the organisation's perceptions of funders' expectations; the engagement of musicians, artists or other staff in evaluation processes; and my own experiences and values as a musician and evaluator. How I approach evaluating arts projects has evolved as I have developed my practice to respond to the difficulties and challenges I encounter, and to ensure that I am providing a valued service which genuinely helps people to understand and improve their practice. I have developed my skills and theoretical knowledge of evaluation through regular professional development and academic study (including a Postgraduate Certificate in Evaluation Studies and MSc in Social Research and Evaluation). Whilst this doctoral research is by no means practice-based, my interest in the research topic is rooted in my professional practice as an evaluator and I consider myself to be a partial insider in the research (Greene, 2014). A significant motivation for this PhD is to deepen my understanding which could inform my own practice and help me to develop better ways to evaluate community music, in addition to benefitting the wider community music sector.

A parameter to define the scope of the research is to explore the topic from the perspectives of community musicians, rather than through the lens of my own practice or from the perspectives of other actors (such as evaluators, project managers or funding organisations). This is for three reasons. Firstly, my position as an evaluator gives me a great deal of influence on the epistemological approach of an evaluation, what methods are used, and how data are interpreted. There is the potential to exercise a great deal of power and influence. Due to conventions in how evaluations are commissioned and resourced in the UK arts sector, there are power inequalities between different actors in an evaluation (the commissioning organisation, the evaluator, other professionals such as project managers, the musicians or artists and participants). The reasons for exploring the perspectives of musicians who are at the coalface of community music activities are to acknowledge and redress this power imbalance. Questioning entrenched hierarchical organisational structures is personally important to me. There can be a strong positivist top-down element to evaluation which can disempower practitioners. This research aims to amplify the voices of community musicians, which could potentially help to rebalance those power structures should the findings and conclusions be significant enough to influence policy and practice. Secondly, community musicians are workers who play a significant role in *doing* evaluation. Without an understanding of community musicians' perspectives, those other actors who are involved in influencing, designing and doing

evaluation cannot have a full picture of the field. The third reason for exploring evaluation from the perspectives of multiple community musicians is that there is a plurality of practice in community music, therefore, seeking a diversity of opinion is likely to provide more insight than researching just my own practice.

These are very personal motivations for undertaking a PhD exploring the topic of evaluation practices in community music that stem from my own professional experiences, which add to the academic rationale for this study.

1.3 The research questions and aims

Three broad research aims were articulated at the start of the study:

1) To reach a deeper understanding of the relationship between evaluation and community music.

2) To generate new theory about evaluation in community music which could inform new models, frameworks and future approaches to evaluation.

3) To stimulate discussion and debate in the community music sector about contemporary evaluation practices and their effectiveness at capturing the value of community music.

The research questions which evolved during the PhD process informed by the review of literature, form one main question with three sub-questions:

How can a deeper understanding of community musicians' perspectives on evaluation inform how evaluation is thought about and enacted in the UK community music sector?

a) How do community musicians construct the concept of evaluation?

b) How do community musicians perceive the influence of evaluation on their own work and on the culture and practice of community music more widely, and how do they negotiate those evaluation practices?

c) What influences community musicians' conceptualisation and practice of evaluation in their work?

These questions guide the research design, methodology, choice of methods, analysis and discussion which follow.

1.4 Terms and language used in the thesis

The key terminology of community music and evaluation have already been defined, however, there are other terms that require clarification.

The phrase *evaluation practices* is not a term that is commonly used amongst the community music sector or by evaluation practitioners, with some exceptions – see Melville (2017) and Dunphy and Ware (2017) – it is, however, one I have intentionally adopted in this research. Evaluation practices is intentionally plural as evaluation is not a singular practice (something which is key to the analysis later in the thesis). I consider evaluation to be a practice as it involves actions that are negotiated by people who undertake those actions, it establishes ways of doing things that people subscribe to which creates conventions, but those conventions are not fixed, and they evolve over time as influences and thinking change.

As all those who participated in the research and created the data took part in an interview, they are referred to throughout the thesis as *interviewee*s and occasionally as *research participants*. Where people are described as *participants*, this means community music participants – the children, young people and community members who the interviewees work with – as this was the most common way that interviewees described the people who take part in community music making. Where the term *community musicians* features, it refers to professionals who lead, either alone or collaboratively, community music making with participants – not only the 16 interviewees, but community musicians generally.

The term *community music sector* encompasses all those who have professional or voluntary roles that contribute to community music in the UK in some way: community musicians, project managers, organisations that employ community musicians or contract freelancers, evaluators, funding and commissioning organisations, community music education and training providers, professional associations that represent and support community musicians, and policy makers in the fields of education, health and culture. All these actors are the audience for this research. A caveat regarding the use of the term *sector* is required to acknowledge that community music is a worldwide practice that varies between cultures. Even within the UK, there are diverse community music practices. What is meant by *sector* in the thesis, is all those who have a professional role within interventionist (Higgins, 2012) approaches to community music in the UK which have

explicit intentions of social or personal change for those who participate, or music education practices that utilise community music approaches to learning that focus on facilitation rather than teaching. People who participate in community music may ultimately benefit, but they are not the intended research audience. Whilst the research focuses on community music practice in the UK, there may be some utility of the research findings for those involved in community music in Western Europe, North America and other countries where approaches to community music are similar to the UK.

1.5 Structure of the thesis

Following this introductory chapter, the literature review in Chapter 2 gives an overview of existing research to provide a context for this study. Discourses of community music are considered: why there is such a resistance to definition; constructions of what community music *is*, what it *does*, and *how* it does it; and why considering discourses of community music in the literature is important for investigating evaluation in community music. Chapter 3 describes the research methodology (a qualitative methodology, relativist ontology and social constructionist epistemology) and theoretical framework (discourse analysis and positioning theory). Chapter 4 details the research methods selected with an account of how the research was undertaken, including ethical considerations and reflexivity. The analysis section of the thesis spans chapters 5, 6 and 7. Chapter 5 explores interviewees' constructions and conceptualisations of community music and evaluation, theorising about differing positions they take towards evaluation. Chapter 6 delves into potential explanations for their differing positions. Chapter 7 examines the relationship between evaluation and community music practice. Chapter 8 features the discussion of the analysis and findings and how they relate to existing literature, grouped into three topics: the ontological challenges of evaluation, what is evaluation actually for, and cohesiveness within the community music sector regarding evaluation. The concluding Chapter 9 summarises how the findings address the research questions, the implications for practice, judgements about the contribution of the research, consideration of the research's strengths and limitations, opportunities for further research, and my reflections on the study.

Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1 Introduction to the literature review

As a key element of the theoretical framework for this study is discourse analysis (described in section 3.4), the literature review starts with exploring discourses of community music in the literature. Literature that concerns phrases and concepts that are discursively prominent in UK community music is discussed – firstly regarding what community music *is*, followed by what community music *does* and *how* it does it – which are important for understanding what is being evaluated in community music evaluation. Definitions of community music, and constructions of community music as an intervention, activism and a practice, all concern what community music *is*. Social change and transformation, social connectedness, and improving health and wellbeing concern what community music *does*. *How* it does it, is not well articulated in the literature. Section 2.2 concludes with examining the role of discourse in community music more closely.

There is a large body of recent academic and grey literature on the value of culture and how it can be understood and measured – which influences how community music is evaluated. Framed as the "cultural value debate", the *social* impact of the arts is a key part of such debate. It should be noted that discussions of cultural value and the social impact of the arts concern arts participation in a very broad sense and can include activities such as visiting the cinema to watch a film – a very different kind of activity from community music participation. One of the challenges in selecting literature for this review is how wide to go beyond community music. Community music is one type of community arts, which is one type of cultural activity within a much broader field of arts and culture. Whilst there is literature that specifically focuses on evaluation in community music, it is limited, therefore literature on community arts and arts participation is also included where the points being drawn from it are applicable to community music.

The final section of the literature review considers three aspects of challenges in evaluating community music: the varied nature of community music practice, contrasting methodologies for evaluation, and problems and tensions that arise in enacting evaluation.

2.2 Discourses of community music

Whilst any field has discipline-specific terminology, community music has developed its own lexicon, with words selected which then become adopted by others, establishing a language of community music. Krönig (2019) writes that:

> There are certain phrases that become structural through their reproduction in discursive practice. In simpler terms, people refer to these expressions frequently and they become common reference points for any speech or writing in a specific field. This can be described as a contingent, historical evolution process. Often, it is not clear why a certain phrase becomes ubiquitous, but when it has achieved discursive prominence, a positive feedback process further increasing the currency of these semantics can be observed. (Krönig, 2019, p.25)

Examining phrases and concepts that have achieved "discursive prominence" and become embedded in community music discourse is important for considering how community musicians conceptualise community music, which is an important foundation for contemplating how they construct evaluation in community music.

2.2.1 Constructions of what community music is

2.2.1.1 Defining community music and resistance to definition

Many writers have provided definitions or listed characteristics of community music (Joss, 1993; MacDonald, 1995 cited in Higgins, 2008; Cahill, 1998; ISME, 2000; Koopman, 2007; Veblen, 2008; Higgins, 2012). Some find simple definitions inadequate to convey the varied nature of community music practice (Silverman, 2012). An important feature of the plurality of community music practice is not only the lack of a commonly agreed definition, but also a resistance to definition amongst community musicians and community music scholars (Higgins, 2012; Brown, Higham and Rimmer, 2014; Kertz-Welzel, 2016), leading to debate within the academic literature.

Looking back to the infancy of community arts in the UK, in the *Report of the Community Arts Working Party*, a landmark text that surveyed community arts in the UK for the first time, Baldry (1974) seemed completely comfortable with a lack of definition and that "the search for definition is probably futile" (p.7). Silverman and Elliott (2018) write that it is a

characteristic of community music to be continually expanding and developing as "new aims, forms, and applications of community music emerge" (p.366). A static definition of community music is therefore not appropriate, as it is necessary to keep "taking the pulse" (p.367) as community music responds to changes in society. This echoes Bowman (2009), who writes that community music is:

> Shared with others, contested, changeable and changing, and for all these reasons never fully 'knowable' in a way that is objective or navigable by technical means; and accordingly, the desire to eliminate ambiguity, complexity and unpredictability by introducing rules, standards and the like (…) poses a potential threat to the continued viability and growth of the practice. (Bowman, 2009, p.113)

Phelan (2008) suggests that community musicians are resistant to definition as it tends to identify "certain distinctive features" (p.154) which then become criteria for including or excluding activities that do or do not fit the criteria. Definitions rely on generalisations and abstractions which, by their nature, mean that definition will diminish particular activities that have a specific cultural, political or social context. Any attempts to define community music activities in a generalised way will fail as they can only be understood in their situated context of complex social activity. If one agrees with Bowman's and Phelan's positions, then resistance to definition is understandable, however, not everyone shares such views.

Kertz-Welzel (2016) poses the question, "what is so difficult about defining community music?" (p.118), responding that there is an anti-intellectualism that stems from the 1960s counter-culture origins of community music. According to Kertz-Welzel, resistance is due to a common "fear of scholarly investigation" amongst community musicians, which can manifest in over-criticism of the epistemological importance of definitions:

> At the beginning of all kinds of communication, logical thinking, and scholarly reflection are definitions because we need to know what we are talking about. They are imperfect and incomplete, but still, we use them because they help us to understand the world. Refusing to define basic terms means refusing to be part of the world of thinking, intellectual discourse, and academia. (Kertz-Welzel, 2016, p.119)

This epistemological scepticism is a problem, in Kertz-Welzel's view, as community music cannot absent itself from music education scholarship:

> Practitioners often suggest the dominance of practice, proclaiming their projects to be something which cannot be captured adequately through scholarly analysis. This can lead to a kind of non-reflective musical activism which fosters believers in the ideals of community music instead

of critical practitioners. Such a tendency could support the development of community music's ideological features in terms of an unquestioned belief in basic truths. (Kertz-Welzel, 2016, p.120)

Kertz-Welzel's publication provoked critique amongst community music scholars, for example, González Ben (2016), who countered that Kertz-Welzel was seemingly unaware of how definition can be an act of power:

It is important to acknowledge that naming and defining are acts of power. Who gets to define a given reality is important. (González Ben, 2016, p.221)

Imposing definition on a group who are resistant to it invokes a metaphor of colonialism, according to González Ben, when community musicians are:

Explicitly voicing an objection to defining themselves or to being defined. Advancing a scholarly definition of community music might indeed be seen as an act of symbolic violence. (González Ben, 2016, p.221)

They pose the possibility that definitional resistance is an intentional act against such colonialist practices:

Community music's definitional ambiguity could equally exemplify a very thought-through and conscious decision to push against academe's centuries-old epistemological entitlement. (González Ben, 2016, p.222)

González Ben also takes issue with Kertz-Welzel's accusation of "anti-intellectualism" in resisting definition as it assumes a superiority of theoretical definitions to operational definitions, when in fact, there would be no need for the theoretical without the practice.

There are more pragmatic rather than philosophical reasons for resistance to definition. Brown, Higham and Rimmer (2014) note that definitional resistance is intentional for some, so to maximise possibilities of work and funding:

Reluctance to be defined functions as a more or less deliberate strategy for keeping artistic, and most importantly commercial, options open. (Brown, Higham and Rimmer, 2014, p.4)

Many research network delegates who contributed to the research were comfortable with the undefined nature of community music which enabled flexible responses to "shifting policy and funding agendas" (p.2). The flexibility of community music was seen as a strength rather than a weakness. The authors characterised community music as a "chameleonic practice" (p.2) that can adapt to its changing policy and funding environment.

Camlin (2018) seeks to move the discussion forwards and find ways to articulate the "full richness" of community music instead of searching for simplified definitions that are overly reductive:

> Rather than arguing on the one hand that we must achieve consensus if our practice is to be understood by external parties, while simultaneously believing that it is politically expedient to resist such consensus on the other, I think we need to find a new way of talking about CM which acknowledges this central paradox. In other words, rather than seeing this lack of consensus over what constitutes CM as a problem or a weakness of our practice, we might instead consider it a defining characteristic. (Camlin, 2018, p.2)

A reluctance to be defined so that nothing is excluded is relevant to evaluation, as when considering what is being evaluated in community music, there is a need to appreciate the wide array of practices so that the differing contexts can be explored, particularly when interviewees might work in various kinds of community music and related fields, which could influence their approach to evaluation.

2.2.1.2 Community music as an intervention

The wide acceptance of community music in the UK as an intervention, stems from Higgins' (2012) text that suggests three different perspectives on community music: "1) music of a community; 2) communal music making; and 3) an active intervention between a music leader or facilitator and participants" (Higgins, 2012, p.3). It is this third perspective which Higgins offers as a definition of the kind of community music which his book *Community Music in Theory and Practice* explores. Higgins' definition has subsequently become widely cited in community music publications. In the editorial introduction of the *Oxford Handbook of Community Music*, Higgins reflects on the "prolific citing" (Bartleet and Higgins, 2018, p.15) of his "intentional intervention" definition, describing how the creation of such a definition was at the insistence of the book's editor and was imperative to the book becoming published. He seems to express an element of regret as, although this definition has provided some focus to community music scholarship, it has also created "an almost uncritical acceptance of the constructs" (p.15) in the field of community music, suggesting that the definition has narrowed conceptualisations of community music, and

the authors question whether the "intentional intervention" definition is adequate to encompass the breadth of present-day community music practice.

Higgins' (2012) text was, however, not the first time that community music was conceptualised as an intervention. Everitt (1997) noted the intervention element of community music as a feature which distinguishes it from amateur music making: "most, but not all, amateur activity emerges spontaneously from local communities or groups of enthusiasts and that most, but not all, community arts are the result of external intervention by professional artists" (p.39). Everitt's use of "intervention" suggests that a key feature of community music is that activities are initiated by professionals rather than growing organically from within communities.

Whilst there are examples of an "uncritical acceptance of the constructs" (Bartleet and Higgins, 2018, p.15) of community music as an intervention (see Powell (2022) for one example) there are writers who critically question the concept of intervention. Camlin (2018) takes issue with the term *intervention* as it risks the objectification of others, commonly by those in positions of socio-economic privilege. Although intervention may be well-intentioned, intervening in the lives of others without invitation reinforces inequality, and a "hegemonic grip on the means of cultural production" (Camlin, 2018, no pagination) is maintained.

The relevance to this study of conceiving community music as an intervention is, it is interventionist forms of community music that have externally required evaluation to judge whether the intentions of the intervention have been achieved.

2.2.1.3 Community music as activism

There are numerous accounts that track the historical development of community music in the UK (Joss, 1993; Everitt 1997; McKay, 2005; Higgins, 2008; 2012; Brown, Higham and Rimmer, 2014; Bartleet and Higgins, 2018; Deane, 2018). One area where all these accounts concur, is that the origins of community music in the UK stem from radical community activism. The origins of community arts that are not artform specific are also well documented as a form of activism (Baldry, 1974; Kelly, 1984; Jeffers and Moriarty, 2017; Matarasso, 2013; 2019). It is not the intention of this literature review to repeat

stories of community music's historical development which others have ably provided, but some key policy shifts that explain the journey from radical community activism to current practice are important to note.

The "outsiderdom" of community music, as McKay (2005) names it, became called into question in the 1980s due to a professionalisation of community musicians with new accredited qualifications from conservatoires and universities; and government policy and associated funding for initiatives to reduce unemployment led to employment for community musicians. The influence of policy and greater funding continued beyond the 1980s, with community arts increasingly supported by local and national government funding (McKay, 2005), and the late 1990s seeing a "subsidy revolution" (Everitt, 1997) for community music due to the creation of the national lottery which provided increased funds for arts and culture, and the 1997 New Labour government's focus on regeneration and social renewal.

By the 2010s, whilst community music's activist origins were acknowledged, delegates in Brown, Higham and Rimmer's (2014) research network were, on the whole, reluctant to describe contemporary community music as political, radical or as a form of activism. There were a number of reasons for this, firstly, a pragmatic shift amongst community musicians to align their work with policy and associated funding that was unlikely to accommodate distinctly activist practices. Alongside this, as community music became more "resource-intensive" and reliant on funding to support its infrastructure, people get "locked into fundings streams" (p.30). Secondly, as community music matured so did the practitioners who were driving it, with many becoming less radical as they matured. The burgeoning of community music following the 1990s "subsidy revolution" (Everitt, 1997) brought new practitioners to community music who did not have a history of radical or activist practice. Thirdly, as times changed and the political context of the 1970s and then 1980s Thatcherism moved into the 1997 New Labour government, there was no longer a need for such radical activism as the government invested in urban regeneration and renewal, including through the arts, thereby addressing inequality and social concerns of communities. Community music evolved into what Brown, Higham and Rimmer (2014) describe as a "quiet radicalism" as practitioners seek to affect change by working in partnership with institutions such as schools. Working with "formal service providers" like schools, led to community music striving to preserve its pedagogical foundations (dialogic,

facilitation, informal musical learning) whilst adapting to different values of these institutional settings such as foregrounding learning objectives and attainment measures, and consequentially moving away from the radical activism of the past.

Howell, Higgins and Bartleet (2017) write that community music's activism origins are now firmly historical, with a current position of community music as a service provider for government agendas:

> Contemporary community music practices are strongly informed by a history of social action, as well as by a set of beliefs and a growing evidence base about the potential of shared music making to bring about positive and beneficial individual and collective change. This history then collides with the contemporary needs of social service provision met by government and nongovernment bodies, and a project model of facilitator-led interventions has evolved. (Howell, Higgins and Bartleet, 2017, p.606)

Additionally, the acceptance of community music's position sitting alongside more formal music education can be seen through how community music features in music education policy documents such as the Music Manifesto reports (Rogers, 2006), the National Plan for Music Education in England (HM Government, 2022) and the Welsh National Plan for Music Education (Welsh Government, 2022).

The point here pertinent to evaluating community music is the degree to which community musicians might see themselves as "service providers" for institutions and adopt the values of those institutions regarding intentions for practice and how it is evaluated.

2.2.1.4 Community music as a practice

Community music is commonly understood as a *practice*. Small's (1998) oft-cited statement has influenced thinking in music education and community music about the nature of making music:

> There is no such thing as music. Music is not a thing at all but an activity, something that people do. (Small, 1998, p.2)

Elliot (1995), in making an argument that a new philosophy of music education was needed that did not focus on the aesthetic qualities of musical works, stated that music should be understood as a *praxis,* a purposeful form of action that takes place in specific social,

cultural, historic and political contexts. Community music could also be understood as a practice as it is not a static entity but shaped by the people who do it. Bowman (2009) writes:

> Because practices are what they are by virtue of people's interactions, they are shaped and reshaped by the ways individuals interpret and reinterpret them: by the kinds of attitudes, habits, skills, knowledge and values the practice exists to serve. Put differently, practices are habits that are intersubjectively or consensually constituted, intersubjectively validated and consensually maintained. They change over time in response to tensions or resistances they encounter. (Bowman, 2009, p.113)

Additionally, a plurality of practice is commonly accepted in community music (Bowman, 2009; Camlin, 2015; 2018; Silverman and Elliott, 2018; Bartleet and Higgins, 2018). The multiplicity of ways that music can be facilitated with different groups of people and in different settings is a feature of community music (Willingham, 2021). The relevance of the plural nature of community music to this study, is that evaluating something that is constituted as multiple and diverse practices which are not static but evolve, presents issues for how it can be evaluated.

2.2.2 Constructions of what community music does

2.2.2.1 Social change and transformation

Whilst there are many definitions of social change, within the arts, the term social change has been described as:

> A broad umbrella to encompass a range of typical social and civic outcomes from increased awareness and understanding, to attitudinal change, to increased civic participation, the building of public will, to policy change that corrects injustice. (Animating Democracy, 2024, no pagination)

Baldry (1974) emphasised the importance of facilitating social change as the core purpose of community arts:

> Community artists are distinguishable not by the techniques they use (…) but by their attitude towards the place of their activities in the life of society. Their primary concern is their impact on a community and their relationship with it: by assisting those with whom they make contact to become more aware of their situation and of their own creative powers

and by providing them with the facilities they need to make use of their abilities, they hope to widen and deepen the sensibilities of the community in which they work and so to enrich its existence. To a varying degree they see this as a means of change, whether psychological, social or political, within the community. (Baldry, 1974, pp.7-8).

The capacity for community music to effect social change remains a core belief common amongst many (Howell, Higgins and Bartleet, 2017; Willingham, 2021; Bartleet, 2023). Dunphy (2018) states that whilst there is research investigating the impact of the arts, there are few studies into "the processes by which participation in the arts contributes to social change" (p.308). One of these few studies is the National Endowment for the Arts' *How art works* investigation (2012) that proposes three levels of change. Levels one and two are "first-order outcomes". Level one concerns the quality of life for individuals and the:

> Cognitive, emotional, behavioural, and physiological effects that arts participation can produce in individuals, including transformations in thinking, social skills, and character development over time. (National Endowment for the Arts, 2012, p.13)

Level two includes benefits to society and communities such as contributing to "a sense of place and a sense of belonging" and a way to transfer values and promote political dialogues, in addition to direct and indirect economic benefits (p.13). The third level of change is described as "second-order outcomes" which are broader societal impacts through new forms of self-expression and outlets for creative expression.

Dunphy (2018) describes three approaches to how arts participation can affect social change: social action, art as therapy and community cultural development. The social action approach is characterised as "influencing public opinion and the actions of policy and decision makers" (p.309). The arts as therapy approach concerns individuals having greater motivation and outlets for self-expression which lead to positive social outcomes. Dunphy states that the art as therapy approach to affecting social change is contested, as using art to help people adjust to their environment, rather than change it, adds to inequity. The community cultural development approach involves artists facilitating community members to work together to "express identity, concerns and aspirations" (p.312). Goldbard (2006) is cited, who states that collaborative art making:

> Simultaneously builds individual mastery and collective cultural capacity while contributing to positive social change. (Goldbard, 2006, p.20)

Goldbard's view is that arts participation is "intrinsically pleasurable and inviting" and therefore accessible, making it effective at enabling outcomes such as developing "creative imagination, empathic capacities and heal[ing] social and personal traumas through the sharing of stories" through dialogue (Dunphy, 2018, p.313). The different understandings of social change in the arts Dunphy explores chime with the varied nature and intentions of community music practice being considered in this study.

The National Endowment for the Arts' (NEA) three levels of social change can be aligned to how other scholars describe social change in community music. Brown, Higham and Rimmer's (2014) summary of outcomes that are expected to be achieved in community music align to social change of a first-order level:

> Practitioners believe – and can draw on a variety of evaluative approaches to confirm – that their practice can confidently be expected to generate valuable benefits for participants. These are normally expressed in terms of personal development; and are manifested as self-awareness and confidence, the ability to communicate and collaborate, and enhanced ability to think and act creatively (also related to confidence). (Brown, Higham and Rimmer, 2014, p.44)

In Bartleet's (2023) *conceptual framework for understanding and articulating the social impact of community music* she groups social outcomes into four types: individual, micro, meso and macro. The framework also describes four stages of change (preconditions for change, immediate, intermediate, long-term impact) and four degrees of change (negative, stasis, small, significant). Individual outcomes are labelled as personal transformations and include creative expression, emotional wellbeing and self-awareness. Micro outcomes are relational transformations and include dialogic interactions, intergenerational connections and social networks. Meso level outcomes are community transformations and include collective identity, sense of belonging and social capital (both bonding and bridging). Macro outcomes are structural transformations such as human rights, ideologies (such as racism or sexism) and public policies. Three of Bartleet's four categories of social outcomes (individual, meso and macro) align to the NEA three levels of change.

In much of the community music literature, the terms social change and social transformation are used without distinction, although transformation rhetorically suggests dramatic, significant or irreversible change. In some academic literature, use of the term social transformation is purely rhetorical, with suggestions of social transformation unproven. Clennon (2013) conducted a quasi-experimental study to investigate how

participation in group music making changed young people's attitudes to committing certain kinds of crime. Statistical analysis of validated questionnaire responses from a control and two intervention groups showed small changes in some test scores for the intervention groups, although not statistically significant (presumed to be because of small sample sizes). The study concludes:

> Our preliminary results suggest that there seems to be a small but measurable improvement in the attitudes towards offending of the young people who had participated in the music workshops. (Clennon, 2013, p.103)

A small statistically unsignificant effect is hardly evidence of social transformation yet given the journal article title, "How effective are music interventions in the criminal youth justice sector? Community music making and its potential for community and social transformation: a pilot study", it seems that the author expected to find evidence of social transformation.

Boeskov (2017) states his belief that both community music practitioners and researchers have "overly optimistic views of music's ability to affect positive change" (p.86), and he highlights how the transformative potential of music is embedded in particular social and cultural contexts. Using the example of his community music work in a Palestinian refugee camp, he questions a general assumption that:

> The meanings and relationships generated in the community music practice are inherently positive or 'ideal', i.e. such practices are understood to constitute joyful, empowering and inclusive spaces that counter experiences of marginalization and exclusion. Further it is believed that these positive meanings have the power to intervene in and transform aspects of the participants' lives. (Boeskov, 2017, p.88)

Whilst Boeskov does acknowledge the transformative potential of community music, he states there can be:

> Feelings of sorrow, sadness, ambivalence or even anger as the structures of marginalization and exclusion are illuminated. (Boeskov, 2017, p.96)

When working with "marginalised" groups such as refugees, there is a risk that the complexity of people's experiences is not recognised.

A further consideration of how community music organisations employ the notion of transformation comes from Currie, Gibson and Lam (2020), who state that when organisations operationalise community music, managers then need to secure funding to

preserve and sustain their programmes and workforce, which leads to an emphasis on community music's transformational capacities to sustain their *organisations* rather than transformation for individuals or communities (Currie, Gibson and Lam, 2020, p.191).

In his doctoral research, Humphrey (2023) examines the term *transformation*, how community musicians operationalise the term in their work, and how cultural policy influences the discourse of community music. Humphrey concludes that within community music, practitioners and researchers employ the term transformation to mean:

> Primarily some form of personal change in individuals' perceptions of themselves and what it means to be musical or in areas such as self-confidence and self-esteem. (Humphrey, 2023, p.381)

He states that this finding is important, as the broader societal changes that can be encompassed in conceptualisations of social transformation, are not what community musicians and participants mean by transformation:

> Funders and researchers need to consider that facilitators and community members see transformation as a personal change when employing the term to describe the impact of community music. (Humphrey, 2023, p.382)

In summary, whilst the potential for community music to affect social change and transformation is widely accepted, it is claimed by some without evidence and is being questioned by others who seek a more nuanced understanding of the term. The implications for evaluating community music are, again, clarity about what is being evaluated when there are several different levels of change or categorisations of outcomes, and a possible lack of critique when community music may not achieve social change or transformation in some contexts.

2.2.2.2 Wellbeing

Music is understood to have numerous health and wellbeing benefits, including physiological, psychological and social effects (MacDonald, Kreutz and Mitchell, 2012). There is a plethora of research into the physiological changes in health and wellbeing for individuals from music such as changes in autonomic, hormonal and immune system functions that produce positive biological effects such as changes in mood (Koelsch and Stegemann, 2012). Whilst it is widely acknowledged that making music is a social practice

(DeNora, 2000; Turino, 2008; MacDonald, Kreutz and Mitchell, 2012), Murray and Lamont (2012) point out that a large body of research into the health and wellbeing effects of music focus on the individual and their subjective wellbeing rather than effects on communities.

Numerous psychological effects that are relevant to community music are reported in the literature. Many writers express views that music is linked to eudaimonia (Bowman, 2002; Boyce-Tillman, 2020; Elliot, 2020; Smith and Silverman, 2020; Powell, 2022) and the aligned concept of human flourishing (Ansdell and DeNora, 2012, 2014; Hesmondhalgh, 2013). Deci and Ryan (2008) describe eudaimonia as "living well or actualizing one's human potentials" (p.2). Smith and Silverman (2020) go beyond the Greek origins of the word to describe eudaimonia as human flourishing, characterised by living a fulfilling and meaningful life. Powell (2022) describes reasons why community music contributes to eudaimonia that include having "elements of free choice and personal and collective decision making" (p.16), and respecting individuals' goals whilst creating opportunities for those goals to be realised.

Another psychological concept relevant to explaining how community music affects the changes people purport is flow state (Tan and Sin, 2021). "Flow" is a concept developed by Csikszentmihalyi (1997, 2008) that describes a state of optimal experience when a person is faced with a highly challenging activity yet has the confidence and the capabilities to meet that challenge, resulting in a rewarding and enjoyable sense of "flow" (Custodero, 2012, p.369). Reese (2019) writes about participants in a community ukulele group and how facilitation enables "reachable goals coupled with self-differentiation" which led to players maintaining a flow state.

Many writers claim empowerment to be an effect of community music activity (Higgins, 2012; Scott-Hall, 2016; Vougioukalou, Dow, Bradshaw and Pallant, 2019; MacGlone, Vamvakaris, Wilson and MacDonald, 2020). However, there are critiques of the concept of empowerment in community music. Murray and Lamont (2012) observe that research into empowerment from community action has focused on people's sense of empowerment rather than any actual change regarding power relationships as a result of that action, highlighting that empowerment can be symbolic rather than real. Rimmer (2018b) suggests that discourses of "youth" common in community music activity, where young people are characterised as being "at risk", "marginalised" or "disadvantaged", are clearly contrary to values of community music such as empowerment, as community music activity

aimed at "youth" risks "accommodating – and thereby implicitly reifying – 'deficit' narratives of youth" (p.207).

If community music affects health and wellbeing in the ways described above, then this presents a challenge for evaluating it and what methods might be able to understand such complex psychological mechanisms such as eudaimonia and flow.

2.2.2.3 Social connectedness

There are several ways that music is understood to contribute to social connectedness. Listening to music in adolescence has been shown to have associations with social wellbeing such as relationship building and modifying emotions (Papinczak, Dingle, Stoyanov, Hides and Zelenko, 2015). Entrainment is a concept where musical interaction between people or groups creates synchronisation, for example, when "independent rhythmical systems interact with each other" (Clayton, 2012) or temporal entrainment where there is turn taking between people or groups (Stevens and Byron, 2016). These are effects of music *per se* and are not specific to community music, although they are often an element of community music making.

Communitas is a term employed by Veblen and Waldron (2012) to describe feelings of belonging to a group that people encounter through shared experiences that can involve "intense feelings of acceptance transcending the routine and day-to-day" (p.205). Additionally, community music practices can contribute to identity formation due to a person's connections to a group (Veblen and Waldron, 2012, p.206). Turner (2021) describes how in an after-school music programme, belonging to a choir creates "a sense of unity and connectedness" (p.40) that leads to children learning from one another.

Community music contributes to social capital with several indicators such as "norms and values, trust, civic and community involvement, networks, knowledge resources, and contact with families and friends" in addition to fellowship, identified as an element of group cohesion (Langston and Barrett, 2008, p.118). Jones (2010) argues that as music making inherently creates social capital, community musicians should set fostering social capital as a specific goal of community music rather than a byproduct (p.292).

Murphy and McFerran's (2016) review of literature on music and social connectedness for disabled young people summarises how studies make claims of music making facilitating social connectedness within peer groups, between individuals such as a disabled young person and a therapist, within the wider disability community, and within communities generally. Many of the studies include exploring the acquisition of social skills in different domains such as peer interactions and relationships, prosocial behaviour, and choice and agency.

2.2.3 Constructions of how community music achieves its avowed effects

Exactly *how* community music achieves the effects community musicians purport, is under-articulated (Brown, Higham and Rimmer, 2014, p.51). The diversity of community music practice means that a shared pedagogical framework that explains *how* community music making enables such effects as social change is lacking. Brown, Higham and Rimmer (2014) describe some of the ways that people speak of community music as "mythologies of practice" (p.18), where they can have faith in the processes of community music without adequate understanding of how any such processes achieve the professed outcomes. One contributor to their research believes that music enables the outcomes of community music activity because of something that is inherently, yet inexplicably, good about music:

> I think [this] is key to CM; if you don't like its values, then it's got others,
> and they'd be perfectly valid ones because they're all about what music
> does. (Brown, Higham and Rimmer, 2014, p.25)

This understanding of faith in the community music process is echoed by Kertz-Welzel (2016) who goes further and describes community music as an ideology:

> Community music as a concept could be understood as an ideology in
> terms of offering a set of basic beliefs and values which have an impact
> on how people see the world. (Kertz-Welzel, 2016, p.118)

Kertz-Welzel states that critical reflection is rare in the community music realm, whilst there is great enthusiasm from practitioners:

> The knowledge of transforming people's lives as well as the community
> and the society through music-making empowers all participants and
> seems to make questioning unnecessary. The lack of critical
> reflectiveness and the overflowing enthusiasm in publications about
> community music support this fact. Community music presents many

oversimplified notions regarding people and musical activities which are
difficult to challenge because they articulate a longing for inclusion and
participation. (Kertz-Welzel, 2016, p.120)

Here she makes a valid point – why would one question that social connectedness and
greater equity and inclusion through music making is a public good, particularly given the
understanding that making music is a fundamental human activity (Blacking, 1974; Small,
1998). What Kertz-Welzel illustrates is that there is a view which contests dominant
convictions of what community music does and how it does it.

Bartleet (2023) sets up her *conceptual framework for understanding and articulating the
social impact of community music* as enabling understanding of *how* community music
achieves social impact. However, although the framework adequately describes what
community music does, broken down into several categorisations, it does not fulfil the
author's stated aim of furthering understanding of *how* these impacts are accomplished:

I offer a framework for considering how the positive outcomes reported
in our field, and related disciplines more broadly, *can* [my emphasis] lead
to the kinds of systemic changes needed for real social impact to occur.
(Bartleet, 2023, p.34)

Bartleet states that community music's individual, micro and meso outcomes contribute to
social impact at a macro level that involves structural transformation in areas such as
human rights and ideologies. She acknowledges that her framework is theorising, however,
no evidence is offered to support the theorising. She states:

If I am being honest, after all this work, the complex question of how
social impact happens through community music still feels elusive to me.
(…) Rather than offering answers, my conceptual framework opens up
many lines of possible questions and considerations that are worthy of
further research and reflection. (Bartleet, 2023, pp.35-43)

Whilst Bartleet's framework is the most comprehensive attempt in the literature to
theorise about how community music achieves its stated effects, apart from drawing on
her own extensive knowledge as a practitioner and researcher, it does not appear to go
beyond what Brown, Higham and Rimmer (2014) term as "mythologies of practice"
regarding a lack of understanding of the "core processes and mechanisms used in
community music" (p.4) that enable professed outcomes to be reached.

Whereas Bartleet endeavours to break down components of social impact, Camlin (2023)
urges that music should be conceptualised as a "complex adaptive system" (p.39) where

multiple (psychological, biological, social, behavioural and musical) mechanisms interact. These mechanisms are not necessarily linear, can be unpredictable, and are not static as they are dependent on their environment and other elements in the complex adaptive system. Camlin's view is that reducing the impacts of music on people to one or some of its elements without acknowledging music's complexity, will fail to convey its value and fail to advance understanding of how music can contribute to human flourishing. He cites Fancourt, Aughterson, Finn, Walker and Steptoe's (2021) work on how leisure activities (including arts and music) have over 600 mechanisms that affect health. These mechanisms not only have a direct impact on health but also interact "across levels and between domains" (p.332), that is, there is *complexity* within how they affect health:

> In other words, the different mechanisms act with and upon each other to produce ever more complex ways in which affordances for health and wellbeing are realised. (Camlin, 2023, p.41)

Within a complex system there is constant adaptation to feedback created as elements interact with each other. Camlin argues that viewing music as a complex adaptive system avoids dichotomous characterisations such as music being intrinsically or instrumentally valuable.

Distilling these contrasting perspectives on how community music achieves its effects arrives at two points: it is not really understood how effects of community music are achieved; and how the mechanisms of music interact with their environment has such a complexity that deconstructing the mechanisms into variables is not worthwhile. This presents a confounding problem for evaluation in community music – if it is not understood how community music works, or community music is just too complicated to understand, how can one evaluate whether it achieves its intentions?

2.2.4 Why discourse matters

Section 2.2 of the literature review concludes with a closer examination of how discourse can shape community music and why that matters, as it has implications for how community music can be evaluated.

In addition to all the constructions of community music already explored, community music scholarship and to a lesser extent practice, is perfused with discursively prominent phrases

such as boundary-walkers, chameleonic practice, transformation, empowerment, ownership; and many terms that describe community music participants such as "disadvantaged" (Turner, 2021) or "at risk" (Rimmer, 2018b). The importance of considering discourse is that it can impact on power relations. Mesch (2013) writes that Foucault:

> Suggested that decisions made on the part of a given social group not only deal with particular concerns and problems, but also form discourses that regulate the flow or circulation of power in a society or social collective at any given time. (Mesch, 2013, p.3)

This is vitally important for the analysis that comes in chapters 5 to 7, when community musicians are the "given social group" being considered in relation to evaluation.

The phrase "boundary-walkers" is selected as an example of how one discursively prominent phrase has come to be part of the community music vocabulary. The first use of the phrase "boundary-walkers" to describe community musicians is attributed to Kushner, Walker and Tarr (2001):

> Community musicians are boundary-walkers. Uncertain as to their own professional status they inhabit territories that lie between other professions. (Kushner, Walker and Tarr, 2001, p.4).

Higgins' (2006) PhD thesis used the phrase "boundary-walkers" in its title to frame an exploration of conceptualisations of community music, and his subsequent use in publications (Higgins, 2015) and influence on community music scholarship has perfused the phrase throughout the community music sector. Use has continued with international conferences employing the phrase[3]. MacKay writes that the position of community music as existing in between different practices is important to its identity, with community music:

> In the interstitial space between peripatetic instrumental teaching in schools, orchestral outreach teams, private lessons, youth and community arts work, music colleges and higher education institutions. (McKay, 2005, p.65)

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[3] Walking the Boundaries, Bridging the Gaps https://www.yorksj.ac.uk/media/content-assets/ile/iccm/documents/wlu.ca-Walking-the-Boundaries-Bridging-the-Gaps-International-Community-Music-Conference.pdf

Although employing a different evocative metaphor of "interstitial space", the idea is the same as boundary walking – being on the edges of other practices or in between the more clearly-defined practices of music education. A recent edited volume by Willingham (2021) pushes the notion of boundaries to the fore with the title *Community Music at the Boundaries*. Boundary-walkers is an example of how a phrase has been embraced by academics and practitioners and has entered the discourse of community music and created an enduring narrative that community musicians are on the margins of institutions. If community musicians are "boundary-walkers" on the fringes of mainstream practice or established institutional structures, then they have positioned themselves, or been positioned by others, as not central – they are outsiders, which has implications for how they can act and operate within those institutional structures and the lack of power they hold – including regarding evaluation in their work.

Krönig (2019) describes changes in discourses of community music over time which he believes internalise values and norms, and subjectifies community music participants. He states that many terms, such as *growth* and *transformation*, align to the 1960s positive psychology movement. Later texts construct a discourse of neo-liberalism, emphasising individualism and responsibility, and subjectivating community music participants to develop their "entrepreneurial selves" – with phrases such as *empowerment, self-determination* and *autonomous* geared towards people investing in their human capital (p.29). Krönig offers a third discourse of advanced liberalism, where phrases such as *citizenship, democracy, engagement, inclusion, ownership* and *participation* construct a discourse of mutual responsibility and community spirit.

There are examples of community music practitioners and researchers breaking out of established discourse. Turner (2021) discusses how the discourse of "disadvantage" is misaligned with the creative capabilities of the communities she works with. She states that much community music activity focuses on working with communities experiencing socio-economic disadvantage, with funding applications and evaluations often characterising communities as in need or vulnerable. Turner reflects on how the discourse of social change, with the facilitator seeking social change whilst community members are the subjects of social change, does not match the reality of the community's musical skills, creative capabilities, confidence and influence through peer-to-peer learning. She warns against community musicians presenting themselves as "the heroes of the story" which

does not adequately credit the capabilities of communities. Turner's awareness of discourse enables her to question power relations. Rimmer (2018b) writes that "at risk" youth are thought to experience benefits from community arts participation the most, with anticipated effects such as confidence, resilience, self-expression, a stronger sense of identity and a more positive self-concept. Discourses of youth as "at risk" of deviant behaviour problematises young people as needing "intervention" which, even when framed as "youth development", are top-down initiatives imposed from above rather than stemming from young people themselves. Such instrumentalisation of community music has "problematic implications" according to Rimmer, as it is at odds with community arts' aims of cultural democracy, equalisation of power between participants and empowerment (p.206).

The relevance of these community music discourses is that they not only frame the nature of community music, which has implications for considering evaluation, but they also provide a backdrop for the discourses of evaluation in community music.

2.3 The current field of evaluation in arts and culture

2.3.1 Evaluation as a socio-cultural and political practice

What the practice of evaluation involves, according to Dahler-Larsen's consideration of definitions, is four key factors:

> (1) An evaluand; (2) some assessment based on some criteria; (3) a systematic approach or methodology to collect information about how the evaluand performs on these criteria, and (4) a purpose or intended use. Many agree that evaluation is basically a systematic, methodological, and thus "assisted" way of investigating and assessing an activity of public interest in order to affect decisions or action concerning this activity or similar activities. (Dahler-Larsen, 2012, p.9)

However, Dahler-Larsen notes that what constitutes evaluation practice is variable and dependent on social and political contexts. He cites Shaw, Greene and Mark (2006) who also comment on the social and political nature of evaluation:

> Systematic evaluation is conceptualised as a social and politicised practice that nonetheless aspires to some partition of impartiality and fairness. (Shaw, Greene and Mark, 2006, p.6)

Rossi, Lipsey and Freeman (2004) concur that evaluation is a systematic investigation with a political aspect:

> Programme evaluation is the use of social research methods to systematically investigate the effectiveness in ways that are adapted to their political and organisational environments and are designed to inform social action to improve social conditions. (Rossi, Lipsey and Freeman, 2004, p.16)

Rossi, Lipsey and Freeman's definition highlights that it is methods from social research that are commonly used to gather information for evaluation. Patton's (2015) publication *Qualitative research and evaluation methods: integrating theory and practice* also makes clear that the methods people use in practicing evaluation closely align to methods established in empirical research such as interviews and observation.

Evaluation *approaches* or *models* are terms that refer to ways of doing evaluation that are influenced by different theory. To demonstrate the practical application of varying approaches to evaluation within an explicitly political context, the quotation that follows from the *Magenta Book* (HM Treasury, 2020), a publication that guides evaluation of government policy in the UK, illustrates the varying theoretical approaches to evaluation:

> Comprehensive evaluation will typically consist of:
>
> • Analysis of:
>
> > - whether an intervention is being implemented as intended;
> >
> > - whether the design is working;
> >
> > - what is working more or less well and why.
>
> Together, these types of questions are typically referred to as a **process evaluation**.
>
> • An objective test of what changes have occurred, the scale of those changes and an assessment of the extent to which they can be attributed to the intervention. This is typically referred to as an **impact evaluation** and is investigated through theory-based, experimental, and / or quasi-experimental approaches.
>
> • A comparison of the benefits and costs of the intervention; typically referred to as a **value-for-money evaluation**.
>
> In order to fully understand an intervention's design, impact and results, all elements need to be explored. (HM Treasury, 2020, p.6)

In this context of evaluating the effectiveness of government policies to achieve explicitly political aims, three theoretical approaches to evaluation are named. There are, however, many more. Impact evaluation is akin to outcomes evaluation where "the basic notion is

that... something is supposed to change as a result of the program and outcome evaluations seek to assess whether or not this has happened" (Robson, 2017, p.49). Other examples include illuminative evaluation, developmental evaluation, realist evaluation and Most Significant Change evaluation:

> Illuminative evaluations are based on (...) the importance of understanding people and programs in context, a commitment to study naturally occurring phenomena without introducing external controls or manipulation, and the assumption that understanding emerges most meaningfully from an inductive analysis of open-ended, detailed, descriptive data gathered through direct interactions and transaction with the program and its participants. (Patton, 2015, p.207)

Realist evaluation is an approach developed in the 1990s to effectively understand how crime prevention interventions work in different contexts: "why a program works for whom and in what circumstances" (Pawson and Tilley, 1997, p.xvi). The purpose of realist evaluation is understanding how the mechanism and context of an intervention interacts to influence outcomes. Developmental evaluation focuses on supporting innovation and adaptation for interventions whilst they are ongoing (Patton, 2010). A rather different approach is Most Significant Change (Davies and Dart, 2005), a participatory approach to evaluation developed to understand the effect of international development NGO interventions. Most Significant Change explores the perspectives of practitioners and beneficiaries by capturing stories of change that an intervention brings about. Those stakeholders then determine which stories of change are most significant to aid those implementing a programme to understand its effects.

In addition to the array of theoretical approaches to evaluation practices, there is also a wealth of literature that focuses on how to do evaluation that is not discipline specific or theory-focused (see Davidson (2005), Podems (2018) and Kara (2023) for examples). Intended as practical how-to guides, such publications are not overly concerned with the different methodological approaches to evaluation but offer an overview of how to utilise methods, often from social research, to enact evaluation.

What all the literature referred to in this section of the literature review shows, is there are common over-arching goals of why evaluation takes place, but there are multiple theoretical approaches that are utilised and practical guidance of how to evaluate. Additionally, none of the literature cited concerns theories or practices specifically created to evaluate arts and cultural activity – yet they contribute to a societal culture of

institutions and organisations enacting evaluation as a socio-cultural and political practice, which is the backdrop for arts and culture evaluation.

2.3.2 The social impact of the arts and cultural value

Community music in the UK takes place in a context of wider debate about the social impact of the arts and how it can be evidenced. Others have given detailed historical accounts of cultural policy development relevant to cultural value and the social impact of the arts (Belfiore and Bennett, 2008; Hewison, 2015). Selected key points are highlighted here that are important to the forthcoming analysis.

The idea of the arts as a tool of human betterment has been debated by philosophers for thousands of years (Belfiore, 2012). Considerations of social impact are often based on the premise that the arts are improving for people, which is contested (Carey, 2006; Belfiore and Bennet, 2008).

Cultural policy has changed over time from the later years of Thatcherism where there was a focus on the economic benefits of investing public funds in culture (Myerscough, 1988), to the 1997 Labour government foregrounding the social value of the arts and its capacity to address social exclusion, an umbrella term that came to encompass plural social ills from crime and anti-social behaviour to young people's unemployment or lack of engagement in education. Many in the cultural sector embraced both these positions as arguments for greater public investment in the arts and were comfortable with the arts being instrumentalised as a method to address other priorities of social policy, or as Gray (2002) called it, "policy attachment" (p.81).

Matarasso's (1997) *Use or Ornament: the social impact of participation in the arts* was not the first social impact study, but its significant influence on UK cultural policy occurred as the report's conclusions aligned with the political zeitgeist of the 1997 Labour government to utilise the arts as tools for urban regeneration and reducing social exclusion. The report summarised 50 different social impacts to which the arts contribute as six themes: personal development, social cohesion, community empowerment and self-determination, local image and identity, imagination and vision, and health and wellbeing.

There were scholars who critiqued Matarasso's work as taking an advocacy stance, rather than a critical research perspective, and as methodologically weak (Merli, 2002; Belfiore, 2002; Belfiore and Bennett, 2008). Merli (2002) also asserted that the theoretical foundations of the research were questionable as the social change Matarasso purports that arts participation can affect, perpetuates rather than changes structural conditions that cause social exclusion. Some of the claims for social impact that Matarasso's research makes, such as "make people feel better about where they live", does not change people's reality but merely alters their perceptions of it:

> Making deprivation more acceptable is a tool to endlessly reproduce it. Social deprivation and exclusion arguably can be removed only by fighting the structural conditions which cause them. Such conditions will not be removed by benevolent arts programmes. (Merli, 2002, p.113)

Matarasso (2003) countered critique of his work by Merli and Belfiore, defending his practice-informed approach and the subjectivity of his research as a wariness of "uncritical scientism, and doubtful of claims to objectivity" (p.338) that he portrays as features of academic research. Matarasso refutes Merli's accusation that his work advocates for the instrumentality of the arts and he states his belief in its intrinsic value. Such fundamental different viewpoints on the social impact of the arts have continued to be debated.

There are writers who critique a policy or funding focus that instrumentalises the arts to the detriment of intrinsic value (Selwood, 2002; McCarthy, Ondaatje, Zakaras and Brooks, 2004). However, Holden (2004) argues that appealing to funders and politicians to consider the intrinsic benefits is problematic for numerous reasons, including the varied practices and purposes of the arts (do they all have the same intrinsic value?), the polarising nature of the argument where those who advocate for intrinsic value "are attacked for being 'elitist' and for neglecting issues of access and accessibility" (p.23), and who gets to decide what is intrinsically valuable when it comes to issues of how public funding is distributed. Gibson (2008) states that an "instrumental/intrinsic dichotomy" is overly simplistic for considering the complexity of culture, yet she defends instrumentalist cultural policy as necessary to counter elitism as "some cultural institutions continue to pay, at best, lip service to the political imperative to become more inclusive" (p.247). Belfiore and Bennett (2008) critique economic and social impact studies that do not concern themselves with the real purpose of the arts, that is, people's aesthetic experiences. These instrumental versus intrinsic debates are consequential for evaluation.

Not only is the emphasis on instrumentalism in policy critiqued, but there are also those who claim there is a failure of evidence that the arts achieve social impacts. Considering the evidence that the arts contribute to social inclusion, Belfiore (2002) cites Shaw who stated that "evidence of the contribution it [the arts] makes to neighbourhood renewal is paltry" (DCMS, 1999, p.94), and Jermyn (2001) found that studies relevant to the arts' contribution to social inclusion were methodologically weak. Belfiore and Bennett (2007) suggest an impossibility of creating a methodology that could adequately evidence the interplay of all the complex variables involved in how the arts affect people:

> This, of course, raises the question of whether, given the limitations of empirical research, such a methodology can be developed. Indeed, given the variables we have identified, within the arts themselves and across the diverse populations that engage with them, the article raises questions about whether any meaningful generalizations can actually be made about the social impact of the arts. (Belfiore and Bennet, 2007, p.262)

Belfiore and Bennet (2008) state that claims about the arts' impact or value lend towards a simplistic "rhetoric of transformation" rather than engaging with "highly complex intellectual issues" (p.193).

From the 2010s onwards, the social impact of the arts has been reframed as the "cultural value" debate, with an abundance of policy research studies, academic studies and evidence reviews intended to frame or reframe considerations of cultural value, usually commissioned by government departments or arm's length bodies, although also from policy think tanks (CASE, 2010; O'Brien, 2010; Arts Council England, 2014; Carnwath and Brown, 2014; Crossick and Kaszynska, 2016). Alongside these reports and reviews have been a focus on how to *measure* cultural value, which clearly aligns to considering how culture can be evaluated.

Measuring cultural value with a focus on the economic value is advocated by some (Bakhshi, Freeman, and Hitchen, 2009). O'Brien (2010) looked beyond economics with a literature review of methods of measurement for valuing culture that was multi-disciplinary, however, concludes that economic valuation methods should be used for government decisions about cultural policy as they are consistent with HM Treasury's Green Book (2022) that requires cost benefit analysis. Walmsley (2012) directly refutes O'Brien's call for methods that align to cost benefit analysis, arguing that his review

disregarded qualitative approaches that can have a more holistic understanding of cultural value.

Crossick and Kaszynska's (2016) report *Understanding the value of arts and culture: The AHRC Cultural Value Project* aimed to advance methodologies for evaluating aspects of cultural value and progress thinking beyond polarised binary positions such as instrumental and intrinsic arguments about the value of culture. Regarding evaluation, Crossick and Kaszynska state that funders are often perceived to steer evaluation of culture, and they call for evaluation to encompass formative and participatory evaluation for learning, moving beyond accountability to funders. They also question the appropriateness of established hierarchies of evidence that place randomised controlled trials and experimental designs as creating a gold standard of evidence, as attempting to isolate individual variables when investigating the complexity of culture is not effective. The authors note that a wide range of methodologies are being used to investigate cultural value, such as methods and approaches from social sciences, economics, ethnography, arts-based methods, and science and medicine. Whilst they view that the research their report draws on is of a high standard, they state that:

> Too much evaluation of the effects of arts and culture does not meet the necessary standards of rigour in specification and research design, especially but not only in the use of qualitative methods. (Crossick and Kaszynska, 2016, p.9)

Walmsley, Comerford Boyes, Garcia, Hayton, McAndrew, Mantell, Neelands, Thelwall and Wray (2022) investigate challenges of research and evaluation in the cultural sector, finding that meeting funding requirements was often the driver for gathering evaluation data, and current methods and approaches to evaluation are not adequate for conveying culture's social impact.

Attempts to measure the value of culture are questioned. Goldbard (2015) invokes Schumacher's (1977) term "scientism", meaning:

> The inappropriate application of methods and approaches from natural science to, for instance, the human subject, as if human beings were minerals or gases (Schumacher 1977). (Goldbard, 2015, p.214)

Goldbard argues that there is a paradigm of cultural scientism with a prevalent belief that the value of art and culture can be established by "creating, measuring and totting up indicators" (p.215). She offers four arguments against trying to apply measurement to

culture: a lack of proof that it changes policy, distorting what it claims to support, a vague purpose, and a focus on what is quantifiable and measurable obscures the "real value" of culture. Goldbard suggests a new paradigm is needed that encompasses "story, image, metaphor, and experience" (p.226).

O'Brien and Lockley (2015) note the rising use of the term "cultural value" since the 2000s and that it has become key to discourse in the cultural sector. They state that the term is used to describe what is considered valuable by individuals and organisations, yet also what is seen as worthy of public funding, and conflates attempts to assert value with attempts to measure and understand value. This is a fundamental point – that measurement of value is inextricably linked to advocating that culture has value in order to acquire, sustain or justify public funding.

As the literature review focuses in on evaluation in community music in section 2.4, many of the issues evident in social impact and cultural value literature will also be seen relating to community music – a lack of consensus on *how* cultural value should be measured or even *if* it should be measured due to its complexity, continuing calls for better methods, measurement distorting the nature of the cultural activity, and questioning of who gets to decide what is valued.

2.3.3 What are current evaluation practices in community music?

Evaluation in community arts generally, and community music particularly, is not a recent phenomenon. Braden (1978) notes the requirements of a 1970s Community Artists in Residence scheme to have independent evaluation. When responsibility for funding community arts passed from the Arts Council of Great Britain to more local Regional Arts Associations in the 1980s, a lack of evaluative criteria for community arts was noted (Jones, 1988). Working papers by Matarasso (1996, 1997) and Moriarty (1997) explored issues of how the arts should be evaluated and methodological concerns based on their views of the social impact of the arts. Cultural policy from the late 1990s shifted to include utilising the arts instrumentally to address societal issues such as health, education and crime. With this, the funded arts adopted evaluation practices to evidence how their work contributed to these social concerns. Within community music, evaluation came to be seen as inherent

to practice, with the ISME Community Music Activity Commission including evaluation as one of their 14 characteristics of "excellent" community music (ISME CMA, 2000, p.2). This has all laid a path for current evaluation practices in community music.

Whilst there is a plethora of grey literature in the form of guidance, frameworks and toolkits, there is relatively little academic literature concerning what current evaluation practices in community music are or how evaluation is done. The only detailed account of what community musicians do when they evaluate unearthed in the literature search is White's (2005) doctoral research which focuses on her own practice with a case study methodology – and describing practice 20 years before this study, so hardly current. The outcome of White's research is a model that represents evaluation in her community music work that she states could be useful for future evaluation. The model comprises of five domains that she describes as "ellipses": Who, Why, When, How and What, which all have continuums from considering the "person" at one end of the continuum, to "project" at the other end. No other literature, either academic or practice-orientated, has been found which draws on White's model or shows it being used beyond the doctoral research.

Lonie's (2018) chapter in the *Oxford Handbook of Community Music* gives an overview of contemporary evaluation practices in community music of the time, tracing some actions and initiatives that have shaped evaluation in participatory music making in the UK. The chapter is notable in that this overview describes what evaluation involves in the UK community music sector, much more so than other recent academic literature. The chapter highlights that evaluation has become an essential feature of community music due to an acceptance within the field that reflection and reflexivity are a central element of community music practice.

Regarding methodological aspects of current evaluation practice, Lonie describes an "outcomes turn" (p.282) in how public services, including culture, are subject to evaluation to measure and demonstrate their social value. It has become "mainstream" that funding for cultural activity from government and philanthropic organisations involves measurement of outcomes, and within participatory music making evaluation is an expected activity. Organisations such as Charities Evaluation Service, have developed evaluation guidance and tools that influenced the adoption of approaches to evaluation that prioritise measurement of outcomes by organisations that fund arts and culture such as Arts Council England (Arts Council England, n.d.) and Youth Music (Youth Music, n.d.),

hence Lonie using the term "outcomes turn". The 2000s and 2010s saw numerous organisations developing evaluation guidance, frameworks and toolkits that prioritised evaluating outcomes (Woolf, 2004; Jackson, 2004; Thompson, 2009; McNeil, Reeder and Rich, 2012; Heritage Lottery Fund, 2017) and this approach has continued to the present day (Culture Counts, 2024). Lonie lists popular methods currently used in evaluation of participatory music making including literature reviews, surveys, semi-structured interviews, focus groups, video observations and diaries kept by practitioners.

Reflection and reflective practice are recognised as a significant element of current community music and evaluation practice. A Music Education Code of Practice, developed collaboratively by Sound Sense[4] and Music Leader[5], includes the expectation that good community music professional practice involves reflecting on the work to improve practice. Mullen (2021) discusses the use of a quality framework (Youth Music, 2017) for reflection and prompting critical thinking in community music with children and young people.

A key point to consider for current practice, is why people evaluate community music, with a number of different reasons identified in the literature: external legitimacy and validation (Swan and Atkinson, 2012); improving or understanding practice (Brown, Higham and Rimmer, 2014); and acceptance that reflection and reflexivity are central to community music practice (Lonie, 2018).

2.4 Challenges in evaluating community music

2.4.1 Varied nature of community music

One of the challenges with considering evaluation in relation to community music is the plurality of practice and unboundaried nature of community music. Some community music practice would firmly be considered arts for health and wellbeing and, therefore,

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[4] Sound Sense in the UK professional association for community music. It is a membership organisation that advocates for community music. https://www.soundsense.org/

[5] Music Leader was an initiative in England, led by Youth Music, to support the professional development of music facilitators working with children and young people through training and networking. It operated from 2010 to 2013.

evaluation may be viewed through an arts for health and wellbeing lens (Murray and Lamont, 2012; Rodgers and Varvarigou, 2016; Caló, Steiner, Millar and Teasdale, 2020). Some community music practice is an alternative pedagogical approach to learning music that is closely akin to music education or takes place within schools (Koopman, 2007; Higgins and Bartleet, 2012; Coffman, 2013; Reyes, 2017; Salvador, Knapp and Mayo, 2024). Some practice sits within youth work and youth development that may not have defined goals for participants (Barrett and Bond, 2015). Then there are non-intervention types of community music where the purpose is to enjoy the experience of making music such as a community choir or a brass band. Non-interventionist community music is not the focus of this study, although it is common for community musicians to work in both interventionist and non-interventionist "music of a community" (Higgins, 2012).

It is not only community music *practice* that is varied, but also practitioners themselves have varied experiences and approaches to their work. Glover and Hoskyns (2006) note that community musicians' work is often a portfolio career with a mix of being practising artists and working on a number of different projects in social or educational contexts. Additionally, community musicians come from an array of backgrounds with variations in education and training relevant to their work. The authors state that different traditions each "brings with it a form of discourse, practice and learning assumptions that musicians import into their work", and musicians' different perspectives "profoundly affects" their evaluation and reflection (p.85). Musicians' backgrounds and differing experiences often influence the personal aims they have for their work with a strong "sense of mission" (p.85), including viewpoints of "I love music myself" and "I was brought up on the punk rock attitude that anyone can play", which they state can lead to misunderstandings in project evaluation if not discussed, made explicit and negotiated into the working approach of the project (p.86). Brown, Higham and Rimmer's (2014) report notes the divergence amongst their research network delegates, in terms of experience and outlook, which creates a "fragmentation, diversity and elusiveness" (p.41) which adds complexity to their task of furthering understanding of the topic of contemporary community music practice.

The diversity of practices and the challenges they present for evaluation, are not just limited to community music, but are an issue for the arts generally. Belfiore and Bennett (2008) point out that mechanisms that affect people's response to the arts are not well

understood and that a lack of definition over what constitutes "the arts" creates problems for judging their effects:

> It is obvious that if one cannot say with any degree of clarity what something *is*, it becomes very difficult to say (and measure) what it *does* and *how* it does it. (Belfiore and Bennett, 2008, p.126)

They cite Carey (2005) whose view is that "a work of art is anything that anyone has ever considered a work of art" (p.29). Clearly, this chimes with definitional difficulties in community music and the unboundaried nature of community music practice.

2.4.2 Methodological dilemmas in evaluating community music

Critique and divergent opinions of how community arts and community music are best evaluated are apparent in the academic literature. Clements (2007) raises foundational issues with social impact evaluation of the kind advocated by Matarasso (1997), due to its incongruity with the aims of community arts. Clements claims that social impact evaluation methods disregard political, ethical and methodological problems that are inherent in evaluation that does not enfranchise participants:

> A deconstruction of this process uncovers the problems of utilising evaluation to facilitate empowerment and autonomy for participants as it is steeped in a methodology of control illustrating the tension between self-determined democratic intent and predetermined purpose, itself one classic description of the struggle undertaken by community arts practitioners over the last four decades. (Clements, 2007, p.326)

A further methodological difficulty Clements (2007) identifies in evaluation is a lack of clarity between evaluation models and how the political location of different models goes unacknowledged. He cites McDonald's (1993) political classification of evaluation into three models: bureaucratic, autocratic and democratic:

> Firstly, 'bureaucratic evaluation' where the evaluator accepts the values of those funding and determining the project in order to help them to achieve policy objectives. The evaluator is integral to a functional bureaucracy and bends to the will of clients and managers, therefore lacks independence. (…) Secondly, 'autocratic evaluation' in which the expert offers independent judgement, focusing on educational merit, where the methodology utilised prioritises principles yielding objective proof. Thirdly, 'democratic evaluation' where the evaluator is an information broker collecting all definitions of, and reactions to, the programme. (Clements, 2007, p.331)

The point Clements raises, is that there are multiple approaches to evaluation, and whilst there may not be clear distinctions between approaches in practice, the lack of acknowledgement of the different approaches, and therefore purposes of evaluation, is unhelpful.

Galloway (2009) states that a problem with evaluation is constrained views of the ontological nature of the arts' social impact:

> Many of the key deficiencies identified in the evidence base for the social impact of the arts are a consequence of the ontological limitations of this model and its successionist view of causation. (Galloway, 2009, p.128)

She argues that social impact evaluation is ontologically limited as expectations of generalisability are misguided when the effect of the arts on people is so varied and contingent on many variables that cannot be controlled. Also concerned with methodological deficiencies of social impact evaluation are Belfiore and Bennett (2010) who critique "toolkits" for evaluation. Many funding and cultural sector support organisations provide toolkits containing tools for gathering data and ready-made evaluation frameworks (Arts Council England, n.d.; Youth Music, n.d.; Jackson, 2004; Woolf, 2004; Culture Counts, 2024). What many of these toolkits lack is acknowledgement that they adopt particular methodological positions which the creators consider to be appropriate for evaluating cultural activities, and little awareness, discussion or critique of differing evaluation methodologies. Belfiore (2009) makes her views of toolkits extremely clear:

> Any impact evaluation toolkit that promises to evaluate the transformative power of any form of aesthetic experience in '10 easy replicable steps', thus bypassing or refusing to address such complexity, is likely to be – let us be honest – bullshit. (Belfiore, 2009, p.355)

What lies behind such strong critique is a belief that there is a widespread intentional lack of concern for the truth in cultural policy research, with research too often pursuing an agenda to influence policy or garner support for the arts, rather than a disinterested critical research ethos. Toolkits that aim to simplify the process of evaluation similarly lack a critical research ethos. In later work, Belfiore and Bennett (2010) develop these ideas further, stating that there is a "toolkit mentality" in arts impact evaluation fuelled by:

> A quest for a straightforward method of impact evaluation, easily replicable in different geographical contexts and equably applicable to

different art forms and diverse audiences. (Belfiore and Bennett, 2010, p.122)

Belfiore and Bennett (2010) concur with Galloway (2009) that the pressing issue for evaluating the arts' social impact is not what are the best methods and techniques, but epistemological questions around the best research approach for investigating and understanding complex phenomena such as the arts. Their proposition is that approaches from the humanities, which they clarify as "fields of enquiry that are primarily concerned with the exploration of the human condition and of the products of human existence: language, beliefs, writings, artefacts, and social and cultural institutions" (p.123), are better suited to investigating the arts than "empirical models borrowed from the social sciences" (p.122). They argue that humanities-based approaches are more attuned to "address questions of values and explore the deep-seated beliefs about the arts and culture" (p.124) as societal beliefs about the role and function of the arts and their capacity to affect transformation reach back to Plato and are not necessarily influenced by empirical evidence (Belfiore and Bennett, 2008). Evaluation toolkits, therefore, with their focus on simplifying data gathering with empirical methods from the social sciences, are misaligned with understanding and assessing the complex aesthetic experiences the arts involve. Lonie's discussion of toolkits considers Belfiore and Bennett's arguments, yet views toolkits to be useful if they are not used rigidly or unthinkingly:

> These tools can be used helpfully, assuming they are also approached critically. It can be argued that the intention of many toolkits is to provide a range of modes of enquiry, to spark ideas and expand thinking when answering research questions, rather than to impose rigid frameworks on wholly unsuitable situations that generally involve social, psychological, and musical processes all at once. (Lonie, 2018, p.297)

However, Lonie offers no evidence on *how* toolkits are used in practice and if, in fact, they are used critically or rigidly.

The limitations of particular evaluation methods are described by Jennings and Baldwin (2010) in an example where questionnaires were designed by external evaluators to align to the aims of a funding programme. Participants were asked to complete questionnaires rating how much they agreed or disagreed with statements such as "I have made new friends". The authors state that evaluation that focuses on methods such as questionnaires like this do not allow for dialogic analysis by practitioners that can provide rich information for future development. Clements (2007) describes limitations of methods in an arts

programme for young men in prison, where the purpose of the evaluation was to measure social impacts around personal change regarding negative attitudes and patterns of behaviour. Clements characterises the methods available to him (registers, feedback forms, personal diaries, observation and informal interviews) as capable of creating "soft evidence" within the timeframe of short courses, but there was no possibility of adopting a longitudinal methodology which he viewed as necessary for "rigorous" evaluation and the "hard evidence" required (p.327).

Brown Higham and Rimmer (2014) write that discerning what constitutes reliable evidence or proof for evaluation is a challenge. Within community music, there is a reliance on qualitative evidence, characterised as "stories and anecdotes" which often originate from practitioners and commissioners who "have a vested interest in the stories having a happy ending" (p.4). Yet quantified evidence is also problematic, as what it is possible to measure in community music outcomes, may not be the same as what is important about the activity. What constitutes good evidence of outcomes was agreed to be reports by "third parties" (meaning people who are not participants or practitioners involved) such as teachers, which can provide an "authoritative – and relatively independent – account of benefits which the participants themselves may not have been able to articulate" (p.42).

Mackney and Young (2022) state that evaluation in participatory arts often favours statistical evidence and methods from the social sciences such as interviews, focus groups and surveys which have a "tendency to overlook tensions and contradictions" (p.399). A further problem with evaluation in participatory arts, in Mackney and Young's view, is how public funding bodies have created an "evidence agenda" that prioritises accountability, improvement and advocacy over critical reflection. The "uncritical evangelism" this agenda creates leads to evaluation methodologies that limit celebrating risk, difference and failure, and the telling of stories about challenges faced, which can impact on the artistic risk-taking participatory arts practitioners are able to take (p.400). The authors describe how in the evaluation of a theatre and music-based participatory arts project, "traditional" methods such as focus groups and surveys were adequate for understanding intended outcomes such as artform skill development, teamwork and increased confidence, but could not capture more complex longitudinal social change such as developments in participants' sense of self. They argue that arts-based creative research methods to evaluate

participation allow for reflection and complex narratives, whereas the dominant statistical evidence and methods from social sciences do not.

What kinds of evidence are valid for evaluating participatory arts is a key issue for Rowe and Reason (2017) who question the nature of evidence in the arts. Their view is that personal testimony is a cornerstone of a nation's legal system and there is no question that personal testimony is valid and supports other forms of evidence in legal proceedings – so it should be regarding evidence about the impact of the arts. The authors take issue with personal testimony being relegated as anecdote or not valued as it is a subjective account.

In contrast, other researchers perceive quantitative methods for evaluating arts participation to be more desirable. Hacking, Secker, Spandler, Kent and Shenton (2008) used a range of quantitative survey methods to evaluate whether any change occurred for adults with mental health needs after six months of arts participation. Their research project was a commission from government departments (Health and Culture, Media and Sport) to develop the evidence base relating to arts participation and mental health, in response to evidence reviews in arts and health concluding that there was "a lack of appropriate instruments related to the aims of projects and that there are no established principles and protocols in relation to collecting and analysing data for the purpose of meaningful project evaluation" (Hacking *et al.*, 2008, p.639).

What these examples regarding methods show, is the existence of incompatible methodological positions on how community arts should be evaluated. There are some who perceive that evaluation can reveal an impartial, objective and unbiased truth given the right resources and methodology. These perspectives attach words such as "rigorous" and "robust" to their advocated approach to evaluation and are aligned to positivist paradigms. However, there are other writers who advocate for evaluation that foregrounds subjectivity, such as Matarasso, who states that who defines value is crucial to evaluation, and that evaluation is not a scientific method that can uncover an objective truth:

> It is obvious, though not always remembered, that evaluation is fundamentally about values. (…) it is not an abstract, quasi-scientific process through which objective truths can be identified. It is necessarily relative. (…) The important, and essentially political question, is which value system is used to provide benchmarks against which work will be measured – in other words, who defines value. (Matarasso, 1996, p.2)

These differing positions illustrated in the examples seemingly fail to acknowledge different worldviews that account for contrasting value systems and what people think is good evaluation. Matarasso argues that evaluation should take account of "legitimate subjectivity":

> The day-to-day business of programme evaluation is fundamentally subjective. Social policy generally, and arts projects specifically, are value-driven. (Matarasso, 1996, p.14)

Whilst the subjective nature of arts participation is widely accepted, the subjective nature of evaluation is not. Clements (2007) states that neutrality in evaluation is symbolic rather than real, as most often those doing the evaluating are also advocates for the work. Contrary to Matarasso's view that evaluation is fundamentally subjective, Galloway (2009) notes that there is a dominant assumption that a medical scientific method is the most desirable method for assessing the social impact of the arts and has the greatest capacity for robustly evidencing outcomes. Galloway gives an example of this from Merli's (2002) criticism of Matarasso's work, where Merli alleges methodological weaknesses as there were no control groups or controlling for "extraneous variables" in the *Use or Ornament* research. These dominant assumptions also position case study research as inferior in the hierarchy of research.

Many writers express dissatisfaction that evaluation, in actuality, does not align to what they methodologically consider to be good or ideal evaluation. Clements (2007) gives an articulate account of his position:

> Ideally, for community arts programmes concerned with social impact, evaluation is a transparent information service that is embedded in a democratic methodology. But in practice it is a contested and ambiguous process utilised strategically to garner funding and advocate organisations. This alongside short-termism, lack of time, money and interest, gears techniques towards top-down bureaucratic-autocratic methods which undermine local control and too readily influence project aims and objectives. There is no value neutral evaluation and evidence may conflict with advocacy and funder-led agendas encrypted in bureaucratic-autocratic methodologies, which procedures can too readily disavow the participant and project reality. (Clements, 2007, p.333)

Others share Clements' view that evaluation is often lacking against their ideal of evaluation. There are those who profess the ideal for evaluation in the cultural sector is one of robust evaluation, based on reliable evidence, involving critique, openness and

transparency, but that evaluation can be somewhat lacking in this regard (Brown, Higham and Rimmer, 2014; Lonie, 2018; Rimmer, 2020).

These methodological dilemmas in the literature, preview what is to come in the analysis chapters as they are topics that have arisen in the analysis as important to the research questions, in particular: some methodological approaches to evaluation are inconsistent with the emancipatory ambitions of community arts; different methodological approaches and purposes of evaluation are often not acknowledged; toolkits that offer simple solutions are inadequate for understanding complex phenomena; there are diametrically opposing views on the most appropriate methods for evaluating community arts, which is closely linked to whose values are used to do the valuing in evaluation.

2.4.3 Problems and tensions in evaluation of community music

Aside from the methodological concerns, there are a number of themes evident in the literature that can all be considered problems or matters that cause tension in the sphere of community arts and music.

2.4.3.1 Complexity of community music

Several community music scholars have described community music as complex or as having inherent complexity (Bowman, 2009; Boeskov, 2017; Bartleet and Higgins, 2018; Bartleet, 2023; Camlin, 2023; Yi and Kim, 2023). Considering complexity as a problem or tension in evaluating community music, there are two ways this features in the literature – firstly, writers who explore the inherent complexity of community music and the mechanisms for how it achieves the effects it does, and secondly, writers who consider how the complexity of community music presents challenges for evaluation.

Bartleet (2023) acknowledges that even after many years as a community music practitioner and scholar, she struggled to understand exactly how community music results in social impacts, therefore, she developed a conceptual framework that aims to articulate the complexity of community music:

> Community music can be thought of as a complex variable, and the relationships between community music and social issues do not present stable or independent constants (DeNora and Ansdell, 2014). As such, community music initiatives involve processes where music cannot be severed from other potentially intervening variables. (Bartleet, 2023, p.39)

As mentioned in section 2.2.3, Camlin (2023) calls for music to be understood as a complex adaptive system where multiple mechanisms interact and create feedback that produces adaptation. He writes about how cultural experiences are not generalisable, and do not have outcomes that are guaranteed or occur from a simple cause and effect; therefore, a holistic understanding of music is needed that does not attempt simplification but acknowledges complexity:

> CM community seemed to want conceptions of those same practices which were simple and fixed, so that those unfamiliar with the practices – in particular, funders – might grasp them more easily. However, this is to do the diversity and complexity of the practices themselves a disservice. (Camlin, 2023, p.92)

Then there are writers who comment on the complexity of community music and explicitly discuss the issues this presents for how it can be evaluated. Due to the perceived intangible nature of arts participation, evaluation of value and outcomes is seen as complex according to Galloway (2009) and Dunphy (2015). Galloway (2009) argues that the complexity of arts experiences cannot be reduced to simplified variables, therefore any attempts to do so are ill-judged. It is better to acknowledge that the intricacies of aesthetic experiences of the arts are so complex and specific that they cannot be reduced to variables and generalisable research conclusions.

Brown, Higham and Rimmer (2014) note that whilst there are common pedagogical approaches and values in community music, there are unfounded assumptions that the mechanisms and processes that enable positive outcomes are generic across all community arts, which is not necessarily the case as the situated context of community music activity affects outcomes, influenced by variation "in terms of working practices and principles, aims and objectives, contexts and settings, the nature and quality of experiences, [and] artist-participant relationships" (p.53). Whilst the authors do not use the terms complex or complexity here, what they are describing is clearly akin to the complexity of community music as described by Bartleet (2023) and Camlin (2023). Brown, Higham and Rimmer comment that professional researchers experience difficulties in understanding and

articulating outcomes that community arts can achieve, therefore, it is hardly surprising that community musicians and community music organisations find evidencing the value and outcomes of their work challenging.

Lonie's perspective is that there is often a tension between approaches to evaluation and the findings presented, due to oversimplification of the complexity of participatory music making:

> The result is often a set of findings that both fail to represent the diversity and complexity of musical interactions and their effects, and oversimplify 'effects' by applying a quantitative 'cause and effect' rubric. (Lonie, 2018, p.296)

Another aspect of the complex nature of community arts is that what practitioners intend, may not be what actually occurs, due to the interaction of elements in a complex adaptive system. This presents challenges for evaluation approaches that focus on proving intended outcomes. It is Jennings and Baldwin's (2010) view that evaluation can be overly focusing on pre-determined outcomes which results in a lack of considering unintended outcomes. Their community theatre projects were supported by funding programmes that had aims of peace building and reconciliation, but the most significant successes of one of their case study projects was the positive difference it made to individuals' wellbeing, with participants who experienced significant mental health difficulties overcoming personal challenges to participation. This echoes Brown, Higham and Rimmer's (2014) observation that what gets measured by evaluation is not necessarily what is most important.

So, although several writers acknowledge the difficulty of evaluating the complexity of community music, there are few solutions offered in the literature. One who does offer a solution is Dunphy (2015) who views that the inter-connectedness of human experience is unlikely to be effectively judged by an economic or social impact evaluation. Alternatively, she endeavours to offer a "holistic framework" for evaluation of arts participation that encompasses outcome domains of cultural, personal wellbeing, social, economic, civic and ecological, with three elements of change:

> Perspectives of change (who perceived and experienced the change); dimensions of change (what type of change occurred); and degree of change (how much change occurred), to arrive at an overall assessment of project outcomes. (Dunphy, 2015, p.251)

The framework lists seven outcome indicators for each of the six outcome domains (42 in total) with three suggestions of ways of collecting data and formulating judgements offered. Firstly, quantified data could be collected by asking people to rate each indicator on a 1 to 9 numeric scale (with 5 being a neutral position to allow for negative outcomes). Secondly, an alternative to a rating scale is suggested where evaluators analyse qualitative data and convert it into quantitative scales. Thirdly, the author suggests that expert assessments could produce judgements that are quantified with a nine-point scale. All three options offered in the framework involve quantifying data as key to making evaluative judgements, and view quantitative data as more robust than qualitative. The author is seemingly unaware of their positivist stance and does not acknowledge the ontological complexities of evaluation such as those discussed by Galloway (2009). It is unclear how the proposed framework would represent the inter-connectedness of human experience by breaking down outcomes into distinct domains.

2.4.3.2 Critiques of the quality of evaluation

Methodological weaknesses are alleged in an array of community arts practice: in health (Kelaher, Dunt, Berman, Joubert, Curry, Jones, Stanley and Johnson, 2007; Clift, Phillips and Pritchard, 2021), in international development (Dunphy and Ware, 2017), and in community music (Lonie, 2018). Reasons for judgements of methodological weakness are that evaluations do not explain their choice of methodology (Dunphy and Ware, 2017), include no empirical findings (Clift, Phillips and Pritchard, 2021), and arts and health evaluations do not explicitly state which model of health is adopted (Angus, 2002). Dunphy and Ware (2017) list many ways that evaluations are deficient in their data analysis, for example, not providing detail about the analysis process, data being insufficient to substantiate claims, and claims of causality without supporting data. They also view an absence of research questions or a theory of change as indicating poor quality evaluation.

Lonie (2018) lists several aspects of evaluation that he perceives to be commonly lacking: an absence of context for the evaluation such as a literature review, a lack of research questions that provide parameters for the evaluation, over-claiming in the interpretation of evidence, purely describing evidence without adequate interpretation, and inadequate recommendations and conclusions that do not link to the research questions. Additionally,

Lonie states that evaluations can be limited by the lack of a logic model or theory of change that articulates the mechanisms of how the music making activities are expected to achieve the anticipated outcomes.

2.4.3.3 Evaluation influences experiences

Rimmer (2009) writes about how policy can influence what gets public funding and consequently how participants' experiences of music making are shaped. The 1997 Labour government's policies of the arts being used instrumentally to address social exclusion and young people's disengagement in education, influenced the nature of the projects the National Foundation for Youth Music[6] funded, requiring structured music making and outputs such as performances and recordings, whilst also addressing issues of social exclusion for "at risk" young people. In these circumstances, Rimmer observed that the need to demonstrate the value of the work fundamentally changed the nature of the music making young people could be doing which led to not meeting the stated aims of the project:

> Yet given the recognised difficulties of evidencing the success of community music activity in tacking social exclusion, a resultant tendency is for community music practitioners to seek to validate their work through the achievement of high-visibility outputs. (Rimmer, 2009, p.86)

In projects featured in Rimmer's research, young people's participation ceased as they did not have the self-confidence to take part in forthcoming performances, and the funding requirement to provide structured music making was not interpreted widely enough to include young people's interests in producing events rather than creating music themselves, leading to disengagement with the project. Prioritising evidencing the outcomes of the activity curtailed young people's participation and therefore the likelihood of outcomes being achieved. Camlin (2023) writes that an act of measurement makes a

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[6] The National Foundation for Youth Music is a charity established in 1999, with National Lottery funding, to fund music making projects in England for children and young people who experience barriers to music making due to social and economic factors. They remain a significant funder of community music activity for children and young people in England, although the focus of their funding programmes has changed over the years.

"cut" in the experience, thereby changing the nature of what is being observed, particularly when only selected variables are the object of measurement:

> We can recognise that musical experience suffers in a similar way to trying to understand it by reducing it to a measurement of only some of its variables rather than as a holistic and inseparable phenomenon of entangled mechanisms. (Camlin, 2023, p.63)

Clements (2007) critiques a lack of distinction between "natural instrumentalism" and "synthetic instrumentalism" (pp.329-330). Natural instrumentalism occurs because social impacts are inherent in creative activities, but they are not pre-planned and engineered by the activity offered. Synthetic instrumentalism is when there are pre-determined social outcomes a project hopes to affect, and activities are designed to enable those outcomes. Clements claims that evaluation does not distinguish between the two or:

> The extent to which the pre-specification of objectives distorts the outcome. There is a danger that measurement defines success, not what actually happens. (Clements, 2007, p.329)

Clements' point reiterates Rimmer (2009) in that the act of evaluating against pre-determined criteria (social impact outcomes) can shape the nature of the activity and influence the experiences of participants and what is ultimately achieved.

2.4.3.4 Resource intensive

The resources needed for community arts projects to fulfil requirements for evaluation can be problematic. Jennings and Baldwin (2010) wrote of how funding programmes' evaluation requirements included participant and practitioner questionnaires with rating scale answer choices. Practitioners described the workload required to get the questionnaires completed as a "nightmare" that did not benefit developing the practice:

> Practitioners report that the administrative work involved in applying for and justifying funding is onerous, burdensome, and occurs at the expense of artistic activity. This is a very real concern when the time and effort devoted to 'filling out the forms' does not ultimately result in useful evaluative information. (Jennings and Baldwin, 2010, p.72).

The time-consuming nature of evaluation has also been discussed by Swan and Atkinson (2012) and Humphrey (2025), who noted that the time practitioners spent on collecting data for evaluation resulted in reduced time for participants to make music (pp.91-92).

2.4.3.5 Advocacy and uncritical evaluation

A common problem with evaluation in community arts is a tendency to focus on positives and advocacy:

> The bias towards positive findings and evaluation as advocacy remains a clear barrier to the ideal standard of evaluation as providing reliable evidence on project performance and informing future planning accordingly. (Lonie, 2018, p.284)

This view is echoed by Jennings and Baldwin (2010) whose experience was that evaluation reports were "a form of superficial self-advocacy on behalf of the delivery organisation and the commissioning agency" (p.74) operating on a level of public relations. They acknowledge that evaluations may also incorporate opportunities for critical reflection and professional development, but that comes with risk when failing to present a positive narrative could jeopardise the engagement of a community in the work.

Belfiore and Bennett's (2010) view is that the intertwining of advocating for funding with arts evaluation and research is problematic and impairs critical research:

> Discussions of the impacts of the arts and their measurement have become entangled in debates around funding, so that the two are rarely considered independently from one another. As a result, advocacy considerations have often encouraged an uncritical research agenda in this area. (Belfiore and Bennett, 2010, p.124)

A further reason that evaluation can focus on positives and advocacy is that organisations' continued existence is at risk due to reliance on the support of funding organisations, particularly in an environment when allocation of funding is highly competitive (Jennings and Baldwin, 2010). Jancovich and Stevenson's (2021, 2023) research investigates failure in cultural participation. They cite an interviewee who admits to lying in evaluations and perceives that everyone does, as admitting to failure in evaluation bears too great a risk to professional reputations and the viability of already financially precarious creative careers (Jancovich and Stevenson, 2023, p.45). Exposing failure not only risks personal professional reputations but also poses a risk to the employing institutions artists represent.

Baker, Bull and Taylor (2018) recount long-standing issues with commissioned evaluations of El Sistema programmes, particularly early evaluations of the Venezuelan programmes in

the 1990s that had an advocacy tone and were "marked not only by a reverent tone but also by a striking lack of critical scrutiny or robust evidence of the supposed social benefits" (p.256). They detail a catalogue of methodologically questionable practices, unfounded claims, and of outcomes not being proven from numerous El Sistema programme evaluations, including in the UK. Yet the advocacy narrative of social transformation from the programmes, both within the evaluations themselves and the programme's use of evaluation findings continues. The authors portray a stark picture of evaluation as advocacy that supports an ideological narrative that is not based on evidence – the "uses and abuses of Sistema evaluations" (p.262) as they call it – and they call for evaluations to be seen as political tools. Rimmer (2018a) examines evaluation of UK Sistema-inspired programmes and also highlights methodological weaknesses in how children's participation is evaluated, with rating scale questionnaires that foreground positively framed statements and minimal consideration of children's own words from qualitative interviews. In a further article, Rimmer (2020) highlights the proximity of evaluation, advocacy and policy when he describes an "inner circle" of a government adviser, researchers and evaluators involved with *In Harmony*[7] advocacy.

Brown, Higham and Rimmer (2014) offer a clear description of what they see as the purpose of evaluation in community music:

> Evaluation should be applying the most appropriate, affordable research methods to learn from the experience of engaging in CM activities, with a view to improving our understanding and practice. Even if it tells us things which it is inconvenient to hear. (Brown, Higham and Rimmer, 2014, p.40)

Underlying this statement is the premise that advocacy can be conflated with evaluation, where only positive outcomes from evaluation are found and communicated. This can be a common occurrence in self-evaluation where community music organisations execute internal evaluations of projects that serve the function of advocacy rather than critical inquiry. The authors question the extent to which people in the community music sector want to take a critical approach to examining community music practice, and they note,

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[7] *In Harmony* is an Arts Council England Sistema-inspired programme taking place in various economically disadvantaged areas in England.

"some of our participants were happy not to question the repeated assertion that 'music does what it does'" (p.39).

2.4.3.6 How understanding and learning from evaluation reports gets utilised

Jennings and Baldwin (2010) cite Mark (2001) who states that there is little cumulative knowledge from evaluations about the nature of change programmes created, how change is affected and for whom. Jancovich and Stevenson (2021) call this cumulative knowledge from evaluation social learning. They state that evaluation of individual projects that do not acknowledge failure means there is no social learning about whether policy around cultural participation works. Lonie (2018) frames a sector-wide problem of evaluations often occurring in isolation, therefore there is no social learning across the sector. He advocates for more discussion of evaluation approaches and learning that arises from evaluation.

Glover and Hoskyns (2006) perceive all those involved in working on a project to be members of a learning community where there is collaborative and distributed learning. However, their experience of evaluation in youth music making projects is that individuals often do not understand themselves as being in a learning community which can lead to incoherence in project delivery that ultimately impacts on participants' experiences.

2.4.3.7 How evaluation gets designed and by whom

Jennings and Baldwin (2010) highlight that programme objectives and associated evaluation agendas are most often set at an "executive level" whilst the onus is on the community organisation delivering the project to fulfil evaluation responsibilities, usually with no input or influence on evaluation criteria by the people participating. Lonie (2018) highlights that evaluation takes place at different levels: a policy-level and a micro-level. He notes that the "micro-level evaluation" which community musicians inhabit, is in a different sphere to evaluation that takes place at a policy-level. However, Lonie's chapter gives little attention to micro-level evaluation and community musicians' role within evaluation (either micro-level or policy-level) is unexplored, although he acknowledges

reflective practice is core to community musicians' practice and it should be better integrated into evaluation designs. He states that ideal evaluation practice should include critical exploration of approaches to evaluation by everyone involved (presumably including community musicians) although he offers no proposals of how that might happen and insinuates that current practice does not always include everyone who should be involved.

Swan and Atkinson (2012) state that as arts and health work has moved from project-based funding to a commissioned service model, evaluation requirements have shifted so that community arts organisations are subject to "disciplinary governmentality" by commissioners that involve monitoring outputs and evaluating through indicators of measurement that shape the work rather than respond to it (p.218).

Salavador, Knapp and Mayo (2024) call for greater involvement of community members in the design of evaluation as it would improve data quality and usefulness rather than "top-down metrics that are reactive to funder goals and designed without student, family, or community involvement" (p.213).

2.4.3.8 Timescale of evaluation

Due to the way that community arts projects are designed, evaluation most commonly gathers data from participants during the in-the-moment timeframe of the project, but rarely considers any longer-term impact (Jennings and Baldwin, 2010). If one considers this against the bold notion that community music can be transformational, an inability to demonstrate any long-term sustaining of that transformation appears inadequate. Many writers state that no longitudinal time frame is a problem for participatory and community arts evaluation (Clements, 2007; Dunphy and Ware, 2017; Mackney and Young, 2022).

2.4.3.9 Antipathy and ambivalence towards evaluation

In community arts, practitioners' show antipathy towards evaluation due to the analytic and reductionist nature of evaluation that is incongruous with the intuitiveness of their artistic practice (Dunphy and Ware, 2017). Melville (2017) observes in her experience of

being an evaluator in the arts, evaluation can be very emotive for arts practitioners due to outside scrutiny, the anticipation of judgement, or the affirming experience of one's ideas and actions being listened to, in addition to sometimes being negative and fearful (p.107).

Literature that includes community musicians' perspectives of evaluation is sparse. Glover and Hoskyns (2006) cite an article from *Sounding Board*[8] where a practitioner writes that they have an ambivalent attitude towards evaluation as they constantly question themselves whilst doing their work:

> I am asking myself whether I am doing things in the most effective ways: whether the direction of my work is on the right track. When I am working with groups I am constantly looking at faces, observing actions and asking questions to check whether I am really helping them in their music making. (Glover and Hoskyns, 2006, p.84)

The writer goes on to state this reflective process is "the core of evaluation" (p.84) but he is wary of being explicit in this reflection as to do so could inhibit the process. Glover and Hoskyns observe that musicians working in participatory youth projects can have hugely varying attitudes towards evaluation, from attitudes they frame as very negative where evaluation is done "under duress" (p.88), to very positive attitudes where an evaluation process is integral to the work. They also observe that practitioners delivering a project are often unaware of the project's aims and core objectives, or do not consider them in their evaluation.

Whilst all these problems or tensions articulated in the literature were spoken of in some way by one or more of this study's interviewees, those that feature more prominently in the analysis and discussion chapters as they have most relevance to addressing the research questions are: the complexity of community music; the quality of evaluation; the lack of criticality in evaluation; who decides how evaluation is designed; and the feelings and emotions practitioners have towards evaluation.

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[8] Sounding Board is the members journal of Sound Sense, the UK professional association for community music, a membership organisation that advocates for community music. https://www.soundsense.org/

2.5 Chapter summary

The key points from the surveying of literature that are important for this study are: community music is a multifarious ill-defined practice; discourse shapes community music; there are strong differences amongst practitioners and academics about what community music is and what it does; there is not strong research evidence of how community music achieves its professed effects and the evidence that does exist is contested. The wider landscape of UK policy that expects culture to have an instrumental social impact for people has created an environment where there is a prevailing view that the value of culture can be understood and measured if one can find the right methods to do so. This is the environment where community music evaluation is operating and is therefore influenced by.

The literature highlights many challenges with evaluating community music: the wide variation in community music practice and practitioners' experiences and approaches; incompatible differences in the appropriate methodological approach for evaluating community arts; and many problems and tensions in evaluation which, when considered altogether, paint a very unsatisfactory picture of evaluation. The isolated instances of attempts to address some of the problems fall short, leaving the problems unresolved.

Furthermore, whilst there is a body of literature and research investigating evaluation in the arts generally, literature that focuses specifically on the field of evaluation in community music is sparse, therefore, this study can add to what is known about the field.

Chapter 3: Research methodology

3.1 Introduction to the methodology chapter

This study is interdisciplinary, sitting on the fringes of several disciplines: social sciences, music, psychology, cultural studies and cultural policy. Consequently, there are not already furrowed methodological and theoretical paths to follow. Evaluation is considered more of a sub-discipline of social research in the UK, although it has a more distinct disciplinary identity in the United States, however, evaluation is the object of study, not the research approach taken. Within community music research, the research approaches utilised are as varied as the practice itself – commonly autoethnography, case study methods and arts practice as research. This study concerns evaluation within community music, therefore, prior research in community music does not necessarily offer a guide. Identifying a methodological and theoretical framework is therefore crucial to articulating the philosophical orientation of the study.

Guba (1990) defines a paradigm as "a basic set of beliefs that guides action" (p.17). How terms regarding the philosophical aspects of research are used can vary. To be clear about how I am employing these terms, I draw on the writing of Denzin and Lincoln (2018). Ontology concerns the nature of reality and what there is to know. Epistemology concerns *how* things about the world can be known and the relationship between an inquirer and what can be known. Methodology concerns the "best means for gaining knowledge about the world" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018, p.97). Crotty (1998) describes the purpose of justifying one's philosophical perspective:

> In the end, we want outcomes that merit respect. We want the observers of our research to recognise it as sound research. Our conclusions need to stand up. (…) We need to be concerned about the process we have engaged in; we need to lay that process out for the scrutiny of the observer; we need to defend that process as a form of human inquiry that should be taken seriously. (Crotty, 1998, p.13)

This chapter describes my rationale for the research paradigm: a methodology of qualitative inquiry, a relativist ontology, and a social constructionist epistemology, with theoretical influences of discourse analysis and positioning theory.

3.2 Qualitative inquiry

My approach in this study is to investigate the phenomenon of evaluation in community music from the perspectives of community musicians, aiming to understand how they conceptualise and experience it. As has been seen in the literature review, there are varying viewpoints about defining community music and methodological differences in how people think community arts should be evaluated. To adequately explore how people make meaning from their differing viewpoints, qualitative inquiry is the research approach that is most effective at considering the divergence of meaning making likely to be encountered. Coyle (2016a) describes qualitative research as "involving the collection and analysis of non-numeric data" for the purpose of describing and potentially explaining meaning making – that is, how people experience and make sense of the world (p.10).

To maintain a focus on examining a wide range of meaning making, my approach to qualitative inquiry draws on Kidder and Fine (1987), cited in Braun and Clarke (2013, 2022a), who coined the term "Big Q" to distinguish research which is "fully qualitative" as opposed to "small q" research that analyses qualitative data with qualitative techniques, but within a quantitative paradigm. Within Kidder and Fine's assertion, research in a qualitative positivist or post-positivist paradigm would be "small q" as it applies the *values* of quantitative research to qualitative inquiry. It is these *values* of qualitative research, which Braun and Clarke (2013) describe as "fundamentals" of qualitative research (p.19), that justify my approach of qualitative inquiry. These fundamentals include investigating meaning rather than numbers, acknowledging there is not a single answer, accepting the importance of context and valuing subjectivity and reflexivity (Braun and Clarke, 2013, p.19). Maintaining this awareness of a "Big Q" approach and these values in my research has manifested in the choice of analytic technique, how concepts such as data saturation and sample size have been scrutinised, maintaining reflexivity, and careful consideration of language in the thesis by avoiding terms that emulate quantitative research such as correlation and variance.

3.3 Ontology and epistemology

3.3.1 Relativism

A relativist ontological position rejects the existence of a singular truth or objective reality. There are multiple social realities (Guba, 1992) that are contingent on human practices (Braun and Clarke, 2022a). A relativist interpretation of the world is contingent on one's "moral, political, economic and cultural perspectives" and an acceptance that people who differ in such perspectives can have different interpretations of the world (Newby, 2014, p.36). A relativist ontology has influenced how the research questions are framed, for example, understanding "community musicians' perspectives" is intentionally plural (both community musicians and perspectives) to acknowledge that there are multiple realities amongst community musicians and that an individual community musician may not have a fixed singular perspective, as their realities are shaped by their own unique combination of social, political, moral and cultural experiences and values.

A relativist epistemology acknowledges that a person's own values and worldview influences their approach to research. A relativist approach has influenced the research design in several ways, but particularly in the choice and design of methods and the selection of the analytic approach. Focusing on interviews to elicit how community musicians themselves represent their realities, rather than other methods such as participant observation, is intended to maximise interviewees' perspectives in the co-construction of data. A semi-structured interview design enables flexibility in the interview process for interviewees to contribute whatever they wish to the topic, rather than a more structured approach to interviewing that is led by the interviewer. The selection of reflexive thematic analysis, as opposed to other forms of thematic analysis (described in detail in Chapter 4), is intended to embrace the relativist position of acknowledging the subjectivity of the researcher, their influence on the co-construction of data and their role in the analysis and interpretation of data. The importance of reflexivity in a relativist research approach has been rendered through the extensive memos and reflexive notes made during the analysis process.

3.3.2 Social constructionism

Social constructionism is thought to originate in the early twentieth century but gained popularity following Berger and Luckmann's (1966) *The Social Construction of Reality* (Holstein, 2018). Social constructionism is both an epistemological and ontological position which posits that there is no objective reality which can be observed, but that all knowledge and meaning is constructed by human beings. Ontologically, human reality is socially constructed. Epistemologically, how human beings can understand those realities is "developed and transmitted within an essentially social context" (Crotty, 1998, p.42) – that is, how socially constructed realities can be researched and understood is also socially constructed. Braun and Clarke's (2013) definition of social constructionism expands on the ontological aspect:

> A broad theoretical framework, popular in qualitative research, which rejects a single ultimate truth. Instead, it sees the world, and what we know of it, as produced (constructed) through language, representation and other social processes, rather than discovered. The terms in which the world is understood are seen related to specific socio-political, cultural, historical contexts, and meanings are seen as social artefacts, resulting from social interaction, rather than some inherent truth about the nature of reality. (Braun and Clarke, 2013, pp.336-337)

Burr's (2015) definition concerns the epistemological and methodological aspects of social constructionism by highlighting the *critical* element:

> A critical stance towards our taken-for-granted ways of understanding the world and ourselves. It invites us to be critical of the idea that our observations of the world unproblematically yield its nature to us, to challenge the view that conventional knowledge is based upon objective, unbiased observation of the world. (Burr, 2015, p.2)

The critical stance Burr describes is towards the philosophies of mainstream experimental psychology where it is "taken-for-granted" they are the "best means for gaining knowledge about the world" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018, p.97). I have applied a critical stance in the design of this research, considering and questioning the most appropriate methods for investigating the research topic and maintaining reflexivity throughout the process which is particularly important given that I am researching a field of practice in which I operate.

A further point from Burr relevant to the approach for this study is discourse and the role of language in micro and macro social constructionism. Micro social constructionism

occurs in everyday discourse in interactions between people, potentially creating multiple realities. Macro social constructionism also sees language as having a constructive power, but it is linked to social and institutional structures. Both micro and macro social constructionism can be considered together in research (Burr, 2015, pp.25-26).

Potter and Roble (2002) write that the "social" has commonly been dropped from constructionism as it is now redundant. Hereafter, the term constructionism will be used in this thesis.

3.3.3 The appropriateness of relativism and constructionism for a study on evaluation and community music

Constructionism is a befitting philosophy applicable to music. Ethnomusicologist John Blacking (1974) described music as "humanly organised sound" and "the product of behaviour of human groups" (p.10). Others have argued that music is a socially constructed phenomenon (Bowman, 2009; Shepherd, 2012; McKerrell, 2016). Applying social constructionism to community music is equally apt. As has been seen in the literature review chapter, there is no societal consensus on what community music is, with some who "claim there is no such thing" (Veblen, 2008, p.5), therefore, the very concept of community music is socially constructed, with socially constructed discourses concerning what community music *is* and what it *does*, such as it being an intervention that is capable of affecting social change and transformation. Similarly, evaluation is "a social and political practice" (UK Evaluation Society, n.d.) that is concerned with what human beings value about the object of evaluation. Societal constructs of value are, by their very nature, contextual and contingent on social processes. Music, community music and evaluation are all practices that take place in multiple constructed social, political, historical and cultural contexts.

Furthermore, the research process itself is relativist and socially constructed (Steier, 1991). I, as the researcher, have constructed the particular methodological patchwork that I am describing in this chapter, based on my understanding and interpretations of what are socially constructed acceptable ways of researching this topic. The research process is trying to make sense of multiple people's perspectives, who all have differing lived

experiences and worldviews they bring to their work. Additionally, my values as an evaluator, musician and human being are indivisible from the research process. Relativism acknowledges that the researcher's worldview influences the research.

3.3.4 Considerations of alternative paradigms and methodologies

Given the research aims outlined earlier in the thesis, to amplify the voices of community musicians within the community music sector concerning evaluation, and the personal values I stated to challenge entrenched hierarchies, one might question why this research is not taking place within a participatory or transformative paradigm. A participatory paradigm involves the practical knowledge of the community being researched, with knowledge being collaboratively co-constructed. A transformative paradigm concerns "issues of power and on addressing inequities in the name of furthering human rights and social justice" (Mertens and Wilson, 2019, p.159). Dahler-Larsen (2018) describes transformative-participatory approaches as concerning fairness, justice and democracy which reject elitist bias over who defines the issues being investigated, who makes the decisions and whose voices are heard. Whilst a transformative or participatory paradigm and a research approach of participatory action research would have suited the topic of this thesis, there were a number of ethical and practical considerations that made this too challenging. It was an ethical choice not to ask community musicians to contribute significant amounts of unpaid labour to my research. Community musicians are largely freelance self-employed workers or sessional employees, therefore the majority of those contributing to the research would not be paid for their time as part of their job. There were not resources to compensate community musicians for their time that would have been required for a participatory research approach.

3.4 Theoretical influences

3.4.1 Discourse analysis

The concept of discourse concerns not the everyday use of the term to mean a verbal interchange or conversation, but how people use language to construct their worlds:

A discourse refers to a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on that in some way together produce a particular version of events. It refers to a particular picture that is painted of an event, person or class of persons, a particular way of representing it in a certain light. (Burr, 2015, pp.74-75)

Discourses can construct, enable and constrain how people think about and understand a given field. This is particularly relevant to professional disciplines and institutions, where language constructs how people act within discourses. Writing about Foucault's (1972) *The Archaeology of Knowledge* and his "archaeological method", Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdine state:

His premise is that systems of knowledge are governed by rules that determine the limits of thought and language within a given historical period. When referring to 'discourse', Foucault does not mean a particular instance of language use – a piece of text, an utterance or linguistic performance – but rules, divisions and systems of a particular body of knowledge. Discourse approximates the concept of 'discipline' in two ways: it specifies the kind of institutional partitioning of knowledge we find in medicine, science, psychiatry, biology, economics, etc. But it also refers to techniques and practices through which objects, concepts, and strategies are formed. (Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdine, 2017, p.114)

Discourse analysis is a constructionist approach that examines the constitutive effects of language based on the premise that language constructs social reality. Language is not a "neutral information-carrying vehicle" but a "site where meanings are created and changed" (Wetherall, Taylor and Yates, 2001, p.6). People utilise various linguistic resources such as words, phrases, metaphors and clichés, to construct their version of reality, although not always intentionally (Coyle, 2016b). Discourse analysis is not a singular approach or method. The three main approaches are conversation and linguistic approaches, Critical Discourse Analysis and Foucauldian Discourse Analysis – it is the latter that is a theoretical influence for this study. Conversation and linguistic approaches examine grammar and syntax, that is how sentences are structured, to understand how they construct meaning (Gee, 2014). This differs significantly from Foucauldian Discourse Analysis which does not concern language at the level of linguistics or the meanings to be found in individual texts, but how language can produce and reproduce power structures and relations:

A Foucauldian approach to the analysis of texts, or historical discourse analysis, as it is sometimes called, focuses on tracing the interrelatedness of knowledge and power in studying historical processes through which

certain human practices and ways of thinking have emerged. (Peräkylä and Ruusuvuori, 2018, p.672)

It is the historic aspect of how language enforces power that makes this approach to discourse analysis particularly Foucauldian. It is the consideration of "rules, divisions and systems of a particular body of knowledge" (Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdine, 2017, p.114), and the power dynamics inherent in institutional practices based on rules, division and systems that is of relevance to investigating evaluation in community music. To be clear, it is the element of how language and discourse construct power dynamics in Foucauldian Discourse Analysis that is the theoretical influence on this study, not the analysis of historic texts. It would be a worthwhile investigation to trace the genealogy of discourses in community music evaluation using Foucauldian Discourse Analysis in historic texts such as government policy documents and evaluation guidance documents (for example those referenced in the literature review), but that is not the focus of this study.

The influence of discourse is particularly pertinent to a study of community music. Discussion of community music frequently draws on terms that have come to shape and conceptualise community music. Phrases such as community musicians describing themselves as "boundary-walkers" (Kushner, Walker and Tarr, 2001) and community music being a "chameleonic practice" (Brown, Higham and Rimmer, 2014) can be attributed to specific scholars, however, they have become part of a community music lexicon where they are accepted concepts in the community music field. It could be argued that such language is not merely reflecting the reality of community music but is actively constructing it, for example, "boundary-walkers" reproduces community music as an outsider practice. In this study, a research participant invokes the phrase "boundary-walker" when talking about why he chose to be a community musician rather than a music teacher. He tells a story of working with children in a school where he characterises teachers as *in charge* of children, and he does not wish to be in a role where he is telling children what to do. These are the kinds of scenarios where issues of power are evident in community music discourse. This interviewee is operating within a discourse of community music being a practice where there is egalitarianism between community musicians and community music participants. An attentiveness to these kind of discourses in the data that concern power dynamics is how Foucauldian Discourse Analysis has theoretically influenced the research.

Applying a discursive lens to community music is not widespread, with Krönig (2019) and Humphrey (2020, 2023) being the only scholars to date to do so. There are examples of researchers who have examined discourse in related fields of music education (Mantie, 2013; Talbot, 2013; Spruce, 2017; Jordhus-Lier, 2018) and music therapy (O'Callaghan and McDermott, 2007).

What is crucial to understand about Foucauldian Discourse Analysis, is that there are not such strongly established analytic methods as there are for other forms of qualitative analysis (such as grounded theory or thematic analysis). Coyle (2016b) explains that there are "no clear, agreed formal set of agreed procedures" (p.173) for doing discourse analysis (although he gives an overview of scholars who have described their method). Coyle cites Billig (1988) who asserts that analysing discourse is more about developing an "analytic mentality" that is alert to discursive practices rather than following any particular method. This aligns to what Willig (2012) refers to as "suspicious interpretation" where a researcher's interpretation is:

> Based on the assumption that all is not what it seems. (…) Such an approach to interpretation presupposes that the phenomena we encounter (be they accounts, behaviours, symptoms, social practices, historical events, or whatever) are merely the surface level manifestations of underlying processes and structures that generate them. What we encounter, that is to say what appears before us, is not the whole story. (Willig, 2012, p.15)

What the "analytic mentality" (Billig, 1988 cited in Coyle, 2016b) of discourse analysis brings to this investigation is a mindset of interrogating the interviews for "taken-for-granted" (Burr, 2015) assumptions, not taking interviewees' words at face value, and being alert to issues of institutional power. An awareness of how discourse constructs the fields of evaluation and community music enhances the analytic and interpretive potential of the study.

3.4.2 Positioning theory

Positioning theory is an analytic lens and explanatory theory for understanding how people use language to assign rights, duties and obligations to themselves and others (Green, Brock, Baker and Harris, 2020). Positioning theory is a micro social constructionist theory

that concerns the process of social interaction (Burr, 2015). It expands on macro social constructionist theories such as subject positions, where discourses subject people to particular ways they can act – subject positions can constrain or open up possibilities for how people can act. How positioning theory expands on the concept of subject positions is that it acknowledges two aspects that are simultaneously at play – people are constructed by discourses yet are also manipulators of it through intra-personal interactions where they can offer, claim, accept or reject positions (Burr, 2015).

Harré, who has been a significant proponent of positioning theory, claimed its development occurred to provide an alternative to role theory as a way of understanding social interactions (Harré and Langenhove, 1999; McVee, Silvestri, Barrett and Haq, 2018) as the concept of role is more static or fixed than positioning, which is dynamic:

> If we are to come close to understanding how it is that people actually interact in everyday life we need the metaphor of an unfolding narrative, in which we are constituted in one position or another within the course of one story, or even come to stand in multiple or contradictory positions, or to negotiate a new position by "refusing" the position that the opening rounds of a conversation have made available to us. With such a metaphor, we can begin to explain what it means to 'refuse' to accept the nature of the discourse through which a particular conversation takes place. (Davies and Harré, 1990, p.53)

There are three elements to positioning theory – positions, acts and storylines. Positions are fluid, rather than roles that are fixed, where:

> One can position oneself or be positioned as e.g. powerful or powerless, confident or apologetic, dominant or submissive, definitive or tentative, authorized or unauthorized, and so on. (Harré and Langenhove, 1999, p.17)

Social interactions such as conversations have storylines, and the positions people adopt, reject or assign to others are linked to such storylines. "Acts", the third element of positioning theory, refers to speech acts where speakers discursively construct themselves or another person through that speech act. A further tenet of positions is that they assign rights, duties and a moral order. How people and groups are positioned in terms of rights, duties and obligations, has moral implications that influence how people act within a discourse, for example, how they are located as "'trusted' or 'distrusted', 'with us' or 'against us'," (Moghaddam and Harré, 2010, p.2). The term *moral* is used by Harré to mean "understandings and actions expected in particular kinds of human interaction" rather than

in the sense of morality (Lock and Strong, 2010, p.320). These aspects of positioning theory (storylines, acts and rights, duties and moral order) have provided a lens to view how interviewees speak of other actors in the community music sector such as funders, project managers or other community music organisations, for example, they help to notice that several interviewees speak of "the funders" as a single homogeneous entity rather than a multitude of individual workers within multiple organisations, thus adding to the analytic mentality previously described.

Furthermore, there are different modes of positioning including self and other positioning, tacit or intentional positioning, first and second order positioning. An example of first order positioning in the context of community music evaluation might be if a project manager were to ask a community musician to request that participants complete a feedback form. The project manager is locating themselves in a position of authority that has the right to request a worker whom they manage to complete tasks, thereby positioning the worker as a subordinate. In such a situation it would be expected that within the norms of social rules the community musician complies with their manager's request due to the duties of an employee. Second order positioning would occur if the community musician were to reject the first order positioning by refusing to undertake the task of getting the feedback forms completed. In a situation such as this, there may be further positioning if, for example, the reason the community musician gives for their refusal is that the questions on the feedback forms are not appropriate for the participants, and by asking for them to be completed the community musician would be impairing the relationship they have created with the participants. The community musician is positioning their manager as not understanding the needs of participants or of not having created a relationship with them, thereby positioning themselves as the person who has greatest understanding of the needs of participants. This example illustrates the relevance of positioning theory to this study as it is not a purely hypothetical example but a situation that one interviewee described in their interview. Community musicians do engage in discourses around community music practice and evaluation where they adopt, assign and reject positions within their work. In the analysis chapters, interviewees' tacit positioning of other community musicians and funding organisations is evident. A typology of interviewees' positions towards evaluation is a key part of the analysis, with the concept of positioning aiding the theorising that arose from the analysis.

The aspects of positioning theory that have influenced this research are several. Firstly, understanding how people are constrained and enabled to act within discourses has alongside it, an element of people constructing the discourse through intra-personal interaction. In the case of this research, it is the speech acts between interviewee and interviewer that form the intra-personal interaction. Secondly, that people can act with agency within discourses, through assigning, adopting and rejecting positioning of themselves and others. Thirdly, positions are fluid, with an individual able to adopt different positions at different times or even take contradictory positions.

3.4.3 Applying these theories in this study

How Foucauldian Discourse Analysis and positioning theory have theoretically influenced this study are in the choice of data analysis method and as an analytic lens to examining the data and inform the interpretation. I have not undertaken a discourse analysis of the interview transcripts or thoroughly analysed the texts to identify all the incidences and modes of positioning. Such an in-depth use of these theories is not necessary for seeking meaning to address the research questions. These theories do, however, provide a framework that explains my approach to analysing the data. The concepts of discourse, power and positioning are foundational to some aspects of the analysis presented.

Importantly, utilising discourse analysis and positioning theory maintains a methodological coherence with a relativist ontology and constructionist epistemology. Positioning is a social constructionist approach to examining discourse (Harré and van Langenhove, 1999) and a feature of discourse analytic research (Coyle, 2016b, p.168). How discourse constructs social reality is a basic tenet of social constructionism. Exploring positioning focuses in on the micro constructions that take place in interactions between people, whereas Foucauldian Discourse Analysis concerns the macro constructions. The analytic method selected for this study, described in Chapter 4, is a theoretically flexible method that can work effectively with discourse analytic approaches (Braun and Clarke, 2020b).

3.5 Chapter summary

This chapter has outlined the methodological and theoretical choices made in the research design, aiming to demonstrate the study's "methodological integrity" and coherence between research aims, theory and research topic, to aid judgements on the trustworthiness of the research (Levitt, Motulsky, Wertz, Morrow and Ponterotto, 2017). The next chapter describes how the methodology informed the selection of methods and how they were enacted to gather and analyse data.

Chapter 4: Research methods

4.1 Methods design

The selection of methods was informed by the methodological approach outlined in Chapter 3, the review of literature (including methodological literature), and research aims and questions. Ethical considerations also played a part in the choices made. Some decisions were pragmatic, influenced by the resources for the study and coronavirus pandemic restrictions during the data collection phase[9].

4.2 Data collection methods

4.2.1 Sampling strategy, sample size and saturation

The sampling strategy for this study was purposive, which Schreier (2014) describes as a group of sampling strategies, with the "key idea underlying purposive sampling is to select instances that are information rich with a view to answering the research question" (Schreier, 2014, p.89). In purposive sampling, there must be adequate diversity amongst the sample to ensure that enough differing perspectives on the research topic are included (King, Horrocks and Brooks, 2019), in addition to accounting for differences in characteristics (such as age) that might be associated with differing positions on the topic (Ritchie, Lewis, McNaughton Nicholls and Ormston, 2014).

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[9] From March 2020 the UK was subject to "lockdown" restrictions and social distancing guidance to reduce the transmission of COVID-19. New legislation restricted public gatherings, and schools, businesses and services were required to close except for those considered essential. After the initial lockdown, many restrictions remained, with further lockdowns in November 2020 and January to March 2021. Varying social-distancing guidance remained throughout 2021 whilst the UK vaccine programme was implemented. Many community music activities transferred to taking place online instead of in-person which was a new way of working for most. It was the norm for workplace activity such as meetings to remain online to reduce transmission. Activities such as research interviews were not permitted during the lockdowns and avoiding non-essential social contact until the population was vaccinated remained for some time (throughout the data collection phase of this study).

I established criteria of whose perspectives were needed to address the research questions. The criteria were essentially, people who have professional experience of leading community music making with children and young people in the UK[10]. By *professional* I meant people who have a level of expertise so that someone would pay them to lead community music making or they could earn money on a self-employed basis. This criterion was set so that interviewees were likely to have some experience of evaluation in their work although, as I wanted people with a range of experience and perspectives, I did not specify that they needed to have any particular level of experience or knowledge about evaluation. The reasons for having exclusion criteria for people with only voluntary rather than professional experience was that they would be unlikely to have encountered evaluation practices enough to contribute the depth of knowledge I was seeking. To ensure that these criteria were met, potential interviewees were asked to complete an online Expression of Interest (EOI) form (see Appendix 1) before being formally asked to participate in an interview. As I did not know how many people would respond positively to the recruitment, the EOI was also intended to ensure that I did not have too many interviewees and there was heterogeneity in terms of geographical location, length of experience, education and training, and type of practice.

Appropriate sample size and the concept of data saturation in qualitative research are much-discussed topics. A commonly cited understanding of data saturation is the point at which no new information is gleaned from additional data (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006) investigated the degree of data saturation in thematic analysis of 60 interviews, finding that saturation occurred within the first 12 interviews. Hennink and Kaiser's (2021) systematic review of studies using empirical data found that data saturation was reached within a narrow range of interviews (9 to 17) or focus group discussions (4 to 8), particularly those with relatively homogenous study populations and narrowly defined objectives (Hennink and Kaiser, 2021, p.1).

There are divergent views on appropriate sample size and data saturation. O'Reilly and Parker (2012) note that data saturation is a common quality marker for qualitative

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[10] The scope of the study was originally intended to be evaluation in community music making for children and young people only. This was broadened after several early interviews as it became apparent that, whilst their work focused on children and young people, many interviewees worked with people of varying ages, therefore how they spoke of evaluation could not be compartmentalised to just consider work with children and young people.

research, including being a specific criterion in some academic journals' peer review process. They argue that the notion of data saturation as an indicator of quality across all qualitative research is inappropriate as the concept of theoretical saturation was originally developed in grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Charmaz, 2014).   Francis, Johnston, Robertson, Glidewell, Entwistle, Eccles, and Grimshaw (2010) confidently state that data saturation was reached after 17 interviews in their study utilising content analysis, however, they are clear that the principles for establishing saturation they adopt may not be appropriate for other kinds of qualitative interview research.

To ensure methodological coherence with the analytic method of this study, reflexive thematic analysis, Braun and Clarke's stance on sample size and saturation was considered. They observe researchers uncritically using Guest, Bunce and Johnson (2006) as justification for their sample size (Braun and Clarke, 2021), and they view the entire notion of data saturation as "not philosophically and methodologically consistent with reflexive TA" (Braun and Clarke, 2022b, p.15). The concept of saturation in qualitative research is predicated on the idea that once a certain amount of data is collected no further data collection would gain new information or enable new insights, however Braun and Clarke see this as nonsensical within reflexive thematic analysis:

> Within a conceptualization of qualitative research as a reflexive process of knowledge generation or construction, rather than discovery, there is always the potential for new understandings (Mason, 2010), developed through ongoing data engagement, or through reading the data from different perspectives. (Braun and Clarke, 2022b, p.15)

They advise researchers using reflexive thematic analysis to avoid the concept of saturation altogether and alternatively consider "information richness" or "information power" and whether the dataset and group of research participants have "adequate information power – that is, to be able to say something (qualitatively) meaningful" (Braun and Clarke, 2022b, p.16).

4.2.2 Research participant recruitment

There were three strategies for recruiting interviewees: approaching community musicians whom I knew (either directly or by reputation) via email to ask if they would participate; asking others in my professional network to share my request for participants with their colleagues and acquaintances; and an open call-out via the social networking platform Twitter and online newsletters of professional associations such as Sound Sense. All of these strategies requested that potential research participants click on a weblink that took them to the Expression of Interest form (Appendix 1) with a two-page information sheet (Appendix 2) that included details of what the research was for, what would be involved for research participants, confidentiality and anonymity, the consent process, data management and the right to withdraw, and my contact details with an invitation to contact me with questions that needed to be answered before making a decision to participate. All these elements were given careful consideration so *informed* consent to participate could be given. If people wished to proceed having read the information sheet, they were asked to complete the Expression of Interest form.

The invitation to participate conveyed the criteria of having professional experience of leading community music making with children and young people in the UK. Given the wide range of practice and the definitional resistance outlined in the literature review, I intentionally did not define community music in the communication of criteria to potential participants, other than offering "music making with social goals" (Rimmer, 2009) as a simple description. If potential participants considered their work to be community music, then they could be included in the research. There was one person who completed the EOI form who did not meet the criteria as all their experience of community music was in a voluntary capacity. All others were accepted. The process following completion of the EOI was, I emailed each research participant with a weblink to an online consent form (Appendix 3) and asked them to suggest some dates and times that were convenient for the interview to take place. After agreeing a mutually convenient time, I sent a Zoom link. All interviews that were arranged took place as scheduled.

Although not planned at the outset, after six interviews had taken place, I employed theoretical sampling to investigate further an aspect of the data I had noticed. Theoretical sampling can be described as:

An initial sample may be recruited and interviewed, and on the basis of preliminary analysis of their data, a further sample defined to address particular emerging issues. (King, Horrocks and Brooks, 2019, p.58)

In the early interviews, it seemed as though interviewees who ran their own organisations and fundraised and project managed their work themselves, were more inculcated into the professional jargon of evaluation than those who worked for organisations managed by others. I wanted to understand if this was a common pattern, therefore, subsequent recruitment appealed for community musicians who ran their own organisation. This theoretical sampling strategy enabled exploration of "emerging issues" (King, Horrocks and Brooks, 2019, p.58) and was successful at achieving a mix of interviewees who ran their own organisations, and those who worked with and for organisations run by others.

4.2.3 Summary of interviewee profiles

Of the 16 research participants, all were currently working professionally as community musicians. One was based in Scotland, with all others geographically spread across England covering most regions: South West, London, East of England, West Midlands, East Midlands, Yorkshire and the North East. There were none from Wales or Northern Ireland. Six were male and ten were female. Regarding disability and neurodivergence, I did not specifically ask for information about this, although during the interviews one interviewee said they had a visual impairment and identified as disabled, and another said they were autistic. Interviewees were not asked for information about their ethnic background, age or any other demographic characteristics.

The length of time interviewees had been practicing as community musicians ranged from three-and-a-half years to 40 years. Four had been practicing for ten years or less, with all others having 15 years or more experience. The range of education, training and qualifications interviewees had relevant to community music also varied. One interviewee had no qualifications. Several had practice-orientated training such as a level three Certificate in Music Facilitation and a level four Certificate for Music Educators. Undergraduate degrees were held by 12 of the interviewees with three of those being from conservatoires and a further two in community music from other kinds of higher education institutions. Three interviewees had postgraduate qualified teacher status. Seven had

Masters level degrees in community music or music education with four currently studying for a PhD in music education or community music. Amongst the interviewees there was a vast array of experience relevant to community music practice: youth work, primary and secondary teaching, adult education teaching, instrumental peripatetic teaching, brass band leadership, performing and composing. Three of the interviewees' musical skills came from informal learning (Green, 2002) or being self-taught, with all others having an advanced level of music education.

The kinds of community music work interviewees did also varied, including early years and family music making, community celebratory projects, groups for disabled young people, informal youth club groups, one-to-one mentoring, workshops in schools, groups for mental health service users, and projects for recently arrived refugees. There was also a mix of people who were employed by an organisation, were self-employed and working for one or more organisations, people who ran their own organisations, in addition to some whose work involved a combination of all these modes of working.

A short description of each interviewee is given in Appendix 4. A table that enables comparison of interviewees' experience appears in Appendix 5.

4.2.4 Semi-structured interviews

Interviews were selected as the most appropriate method of generating data pertinent to the nature of the research questions and consistent with a qualitative methodology and constructionist paradigm. For research questions that require exploration of individuals' perspectives and experiences, interviews are an appropriate method. King, Horrocks and Brooks (2019) state that "*meaning* and *experience*" (p.54) should be the focus of qualitative interview studies. According to Brinkmann and Kvale (2015), a qualitative research interview's purpose is to "understand the themes of the lived daily world from the subjects' own perspectives" (p.27). An interviewee does not simply recount an objective truth, but data and meaning are co-constructed between the interviewer and interviewee through the interview process:

> The very term interview itself testifies to the dialogical and interactional nature of human life. An interview is literally an inter-view, an interchange of views between two persons, conversing about a subject

of mutual interest. Con-versation in its Latin root means "dwelling with someone" or "wandering together with," and the root sense of dia-logue is that of talk (logos) that goes back and forth (dia-) between persons. (Brinkmann, 2020, p.426)

As an insider in the research (Greene, 2014) my prior knowledge and perspective on the topic would also be part of the co-construction of knowledge, therefore reflexivity was crucial in every stage of the research to guard against my views being foregrounded in the data, analysis and interpretation. Selecting interviews was methodologically coherent within a constructionist research paradigm and a theoretical framework that includes discourse analysis, as a method for generating data that most closely imitates conversation was desirable.

Critiques of the methodological limitations of interviews were considered including Atkinson and Silverman's (1997) suggestion that relying on interviewees' "invention of the self" is problematic and people tend to give "over-rationalistic accounts" of their own behaviour (Silverman, 2017). Scepticism about individuals' representations of themselves is advised by Potter and Hepburn (2012) who are wary of how people speak of "their own conduct, causal and developmental relationships, intra-psychic processes" and their "ambitious cognitive judgements and feats of memory and analysis" (p.567). Even with these potential pitfalls, I nevertheless considered interviews to be the most effective method of gathering data that would enable the understanding I was seeking. The focus of the analysis was to be how interviewees constructed evaluation, not whether they were giving an accurate objective account of their experiences.

Selection of the type of interview came from consideration of the research questions and methodological approach, with semi-structured interviews chosen as the most effective form of interview. The strength of semi-structured interviewing is that it combines pre-prepared questions with an expectation of flexibility in varying the questions to probe and follow up issues in response to the interviewee's answers (Bryman, 2012). In semi-structured interviews, the interviewer ensures that all the topics in an interview guide are covered yet also allows the interviewee to digress, creating a conversational style (Morris, 2015) and enabling "the knowledge-producing potentials of dialogues" (Brinkmann, 2020, p.437). Semi-structured interviews are the form of interview that most closely imitate naturally occurring conversation and therefore were best suited to my focus on discourse, however, they also inherently contain imbalances of power. Brinkmann and Kvale (2015)

call this "power asymmetry", as a research interview is not an "open and free dialogue between egalitarian partners" (p.37). There are many potential aspects of power asymmetry including instrumentalisation of the conversation, "manipulative dialogue" where the interview follows the interviewer's hidden agenda which the interviewee is unaware of, and a "monopoly of interpretation" which gives the interviewer exclusive privilege in interpreting the interviewee's contribution to the research (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015, p.37-38). Willig (2013) states that "a high level of reflexivity on the part of the researcher" (p.122) is needed for analysing discourse in semi-structured interviews due to the influence of the interviewer.

Some methodological literature uses the term "interview guide" rather than interview schedule to highlight the flexibility of questioning in semi-structured interviews (Morris, 2015; Morgan Brett and Wheeler, 2022). The flexibility was the primary reason for employing semi-structured interviewing – the research questions required data about specific aspects of the object of study and also needed to give interviewees adequate space to express what was important to them to obtain a range of perspectives. Semi-structured interviews accommodated both these factors.

Focus groups were a second method of data gathering from community musicians that were originally planned but subsequently abandoned due to the impossibility of organising in-person focus groups during the data gathering phase. Online focus groups were considered and work to recruit participants took place, but with such additional demands on community musicians' workload due to working remotely or socially distanced, recruitment was not fruitful, and I made a pragmatic decision to do additional one-to-one interviews instead. The intention was that focus group participants would be co-workers who might have shared experiences of evaluation as they worked for the same organisation. It was anticipated that discourse around evaluation might be different in such a group conversation than a one-to-one interview situation. However, at the point of making the decision to abandon focus groups, several interviews had been completed, therefore I knew that interviews were effective at eliciting the kind of data needed to address the research questions.

4.2.5 Online interviewing

All interviews were conducted online using Zoom and recorded using the in-built meeting recording facility. Interviews took place between November 2020 and August 2021 which included periods of national lockdowns due to the coronavirus pandemic when face-to-face interviews would not have been permitted. During this time, it was common for professional communication, including research interviews, to be conducted online, however, from the outset, it had always been my intention that the interviews would take place remotely – it was not an adaptation to accommodate the circumstances of the pandemic. At the time of creating my research plan at the start of the PhD in 2018, I was aware of critiques of the effectiveness of online interviews, however, I perceived that any disadvantages were outweighed by the advantages. Whilst not the norm in the arts and community music sectors at the time, I found in my work that online meetings were increasingly accepted as an alternative to in-person meetings to reduce travelling time and to reduce car use because of environmental concerns. Flick (2022) acknowledges that online interviewing "can be a cheaper, easier to organise, pragmatic way of doing interviews" (p.305). In my research plan I named Skype and Google Hangouts as the platforms I would use, only offering telephone or face-to-face interviews as an alternative for interviewees who had access requirements making an online interview unsuitable.

I was aware of literature that viewed online interviews as a poorer substitute for face-to-face interviews (Weller, 2017; Seitz, 2016). I did not share these concerns due to my experiences of professional meetings online and my exploration of online interviewing in my Masters degree study, where a module assessment required conducting an interview and analysing one's own performance as a research interviewer (I had chosen to do an online interview using Skype). When initially planning online interviews, critiques of online interviews I encountered in the literature appeared outdated for their time, given the pace of technological development:

> Synchronous interviews can be complicated to set up as the researcher
> needs access to the appropriate software, such as chat room facilities.
> (James and Busher, 2012, p.179)

James and Busher's critiques of online interviewing not only concerned technological aspects, but also the quality of communication. There was, however, plenty of literature that expounded the benefits of online interviewing that I considered at the time of planning

the research, and I documented my rationale for selecting online interviews as practical, methodological and ethical.

Firstly, practical considerations. As a part-time self-funded PhD study, I considered the limited time and financial resources I had to invest in the research. Remote interviewing removes the need for travelling time on the part of the researcher and interviewee, thereby enabling participants from a wider geographical area to be involved (King, Horrocks and Brooks, 2019, p.115; Hanna and Mwale, 2017, p.259). Additionally, many community musicians are freelance or work on a sessional project basis, therefore, their time would not be paid for as part of their employment whilst participating in a research interview. To minimise the time commitment requested of participants, I sought to eliminate travel time for the interview participants. Deakin and Wakefield (2014) selected to interview using Skype for their doctoral studies where their research participants were geographically dispersed. They found the only drawback to online interviewing was absentee interviews who did not attend the interview at the agreed time, whereas in comparison, in-person interviewees all attended as arranged.

Secondly, methodological considerations. Online interviews using video and audio were preferable to the telephone for interviews as it enables non-verbal communication through the use of visual cues and helps to build rapport with face-to-face communication (Hanna and Mwale, 2017). Weller (2016) notes challenges with elements of rapport building, such as greetings, focusing on technical aspects of the call "rather than rapport-building small talk" (p.623). She also describes limitations of visual communication, even with good quality remote calls, as webcams often only give headshots. However, despite the limiting aspects, Weller concludes that remote video interviewing has positive aspects:

> The relationship between mediated forms of communication and rapport are therefore complex. Remote modes do not necessarily mean that rapport is more challenging to establish or maintain. 'Remoteness' shifts the encounter in such a way that the physical separation between researcher and participant can facilitate a greater (emotional) connection through participants' increased sense of ease with the setting and mode. (Weller, 2016, p.623).

My experience of working in the field of community music is that musicians are very confident at using technology for communication and I judged that there would be "ease with the setting and mode".

Thirdly, ethical considerations. Community musicians are often freelance or employed on a sessional or short-term basis for specific projects, therefore can have little influence over their working environment and practices. Maximising participation from a wide range of musicians (not just those who are in secure employment and whose time is paid for) was an important ethical principle. The decision to utilise remote interviewing reduces the environmental impact of the research project as doing face-to-face interviews with musicians based all over the UK would involve significant travel, including by car.

The seismic shift to online communication in people's personal and professional lives created by the coronavirus pandemic made potential disadvantages and the rationale described above somewhat redundant. The ubiquity of Zoom by late 2020 was beneficial to the interviews as all interviewees were very familiar with the app – both the technical and practical aspects, and the social etiquette aspects. Many of the plans I had made in my research plan to ensure that online interviews did not exclude any potential participants due to inaccessibility were not necessary. People's familiarity with Zoom meant that I did not offer alternative options, and no interviewees requested any.

4.2.6 Acquaintance interviews

Acquaintance interviews are when there is a prior relationship between the interviewer and interviewee that is formed outside of the research process (Garton and Copland, 2010). Apart from the interviewee for an initial pilot interview (detailed in section 4.2.7), my original intention was not to recruit participants with whom I had directly worked should they not feel able to speak freely in the interview. I did, however, anticipate recruiting community musicians with whom I had a more distanced professional acquaintance, therefore, implications of acquaintance interviews were considered when planning the methods, and acquaintance interviews were included in the ethical approval process as they do raise ethical issues such as "mutual self-disclosure" (Garton and Copland, 2010) and the need to take particular care with anonymity and confidentiality (King, Horrocks and Brooks, 2019).

An interviewer being acquainted with interviewees can be beneficial for the research. Good interpersonal relationships between interviewer and interviewee are key to an

effective interview, therefore being acquainted can enable trust and openness according to Blichfeldt and Heldbjerg (2011). In their analysis of acquaintance interviews, their interviewees said, "that they were more relaxed and honest and that they opened up more than they would, had the interviewer been a stranger" (Blichfeldt and Heldbjerg, 2011, p.19). Garton and Copland (2010) state that prior acquaintance is beneficial for rapport in the interviewer-interviewee relationship. Acquaintance interviews have the potential to closely imitate naturally occurring conversation due to this increased rapport, whilst also minimising power imbalances in the relationship.

There are potential disadvantages and pitfalls of acquaintance interviewing highlighted in the literature. A high level of acquaintance can impede the interviewer-interviewee relationship with situations where the interviewee guards against disclosure of personal information to someone they know, or they are not honest about their views as they know that the interviewer would not share their point of view (Blichfeldt and Heldbjerg, 2011, p.15). Such situations can raise questions over quality criteria and trustworthiness.

Methodological considerations of acquaintance interviews concluded that they were consistent with my methodological approach. Blichfeldt and Heldbjerg (2011) write that research within a positivist ontology that strives for objectivity would not utilise acquaintance interviewing, however, constructionist research that aims to explore interviewees' subjective worlds "may generate especially valuable results by interviewing friends and/or acquaintances" (Blichfeldt and Heldbjerg, 2011, p.5).

How these issues were considered in the methods for my study were that, with the exception of the pilot interview, I did not seek out participants with whom I had a high level of acquaintance. It was important for trustworthiness that interviewees did not feel restricted to express their views should they perceive that they did not match my perspective. I did, however, include more distanced professional acquaintances amongst my interviewees, not *because* they were acquaintances but because it was a pragmatic approach to purposive sampling. I invited community musicians with whom I had a professional acquaintance to contribute to the research due to their specific experiences, such as running their own organisation, that I wished to explore more in the research.

4.2.7 Interview guide and question design

Designing the interview questions involved consideration of existing literature on community music and evaluation, methodological literature on interviews, my prior knowledge and experience of the research topic, and close scrutiny of the research questions. The interview questions were created to be specific enough to elicit information about different aspects of the research questions, yet also have scope across the interview guide to offer the interviewees flexibility to raise issues I had not foreseen and fully give their perspective on the topic. All the interview questions were open-ended to provide this flexibility. An example to illustrate how I ensured each research question would be addressed follows, regarding the research question *How do community musicians construct the concept of evaluation?* Several interview questions were designed to obtain data for this research question. Firstly, the elicitation activity described below on page 97 was intended to introduce the topic of evaluation and explore what the interviewee understood by the term. A later question in the interview guide provided another opportunity for interviewees to talk about ways that they did evaluation, thereby expanding on what they considered to be evaluation. The question I asked was:

> *Different evaluation methods, resources, toolkits used in community music – tell me about what experience you have of these – just list some. Let's take some of those in turn and tell me about them.*

Furthermore, towards the end of the interview guide, a question asked if interviewees were not required by anyone to evaluate their work, w*ould you do anything which you consider to be evaluation?* Again, answers to this question contributed to understanding how interviewees conceptualised evaluation. All the research questions were considered in this way, breaking down each concept within the questions to ensure there was an interview question that was specific enough, yet also open-ended enough, to elicit responses to address every aspect. This produced a first draft of questions.

Considering *how* to ask the questions had an ethical dimension. My aim for the interviews was that they would be straightforward for the interviewees, would be an interesting and enjoyable experience for them, and that they might find it a useful exercise for themselves to reflect on an aspect of their professional work. I was familiar with "creative methods" such as walking interviews and techniques such as photo elicitation (Kara, 2020) although I disregarded these as they would complicate an online interview and there was no point

in attempting to be innovative with methods unless there was a clear advantage to the research in doing so. However, simply a series of direct questions risked being unengaging for the interviewee. I considered different question types to vary the format of questions such as introductory, follow-up, probing, specifying, direct, indirect, structuring, silence and interpreting questions (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015, pp.160-161). I included some optional follow-up and probing questions in the question design should they be necessary to obtain greater depth of information by asking interviewees to expand on their answers. A second aspect of *how* I asked the questions concerned my choice of words and an intention to keep language fairly informal and like a naturally occurring conversation. To this end, I scripted the questions in a conversational style with as minimal jargon as possible.

There were a few occurrences in my question design where I expanded beyond Brinkmann and Kvale's nine question types, adding elicitation techniques into the semi-structured interview format to vary it further:

> Elicitation techniques are a category of research tasks that use visual, verbal, or written stimuli to encourage participants to talk about their ideas. These tasks are particularly useful for exploring topics that may be difficult to discuss in formal interviews, such as those that involve sensitive issues or rely on tacit knowledge. (Barton, 2015, p.179)

Barton (2015) also writes that elicitation techniques can be effective at getting interviewees to talk about concepts that may be too abstract for direct questioning. This was a factor in my use of elicitation techniques to get interviewees talking about evaluation – a way in to talking about evaluation that may have been quite abstract for some interviewees, whilst also delving into their tacit knowledge (Polanyi, 2009).

The first elicitation activity I called a Word Association game which I explained to interviewees as:

> *This is like a Word Association game. If I say 'evaluation', what words come into your head? Just words or short phrases – and I'm going to write them on a post-it note.*

I then asked interviewees to respond in a similar way to other words: quality, monitoring, impact measurement. I then read back to them the words they had said and asked, "tell me more about the words you've chosen – why those words?". I had further intentions with the Word Association activity. Firstly, I wanted to vary the question format to keep

the interviewee engaged, so presenting a game rather than a series of direct questions would enliven the interview. Secondly, I wanted to capture interviewees' instinctive reactions to concepts around evaluation, rather than them overthinking their answer, or as Atkinson and Silverman (1997) put it, give "over-rationalistic accounts". Both my intentions for the Word Association activity were met, with interviewees appearing to enjoy the exercise and it yielding data relevant to the research questions.

The second elicitation technique for varying the questioning style was inspired by the use of vignettes (Hughes and Huby, 2004; Jenkins, Bloor, Fischer, Berney, and Neale, 2010; Kara, 2020). I briefly described a hypothetical scenario to the interviewee and asked how they thought they would respond in the given scenario, for example:

> *Think of a particular project or setting where you've worked. If there were absolutely no requirements from anyone to evaluate – funders, project managers, partner organisations – what would you do? Would you do anything which you consider to be evaluation?*

There were other questions that utilised this questioning style, for example, "Thinking very broadly about the topic – evaluation practices in community music – if you had a magic wand – what would you change?". Jenkins *et al*. (2010) describe the purpose of vignettes in qualitative research interviewing:

> Scenarios can be presented to interviewees that encourage them to engage in various acts of orientation and how, through such acts, the researcher is able to gain insight into participants' interpretative processes. (Jenkins *et al*., 2010, p.176)

The vignette-inspired questioning style was not merely a rhetorical device but was intended to probe beyond interviewees recounting direct experiences, and into giving their views.

Further drafts of the interview guide considered question order and the overall structure of the interview, which followed an established format of what Gillham (2005) calls an orientation phase, a substantive phase and a closure phase. My orientation phase thanked the interviewee for completing the online consent form, reminded them of their right to withdraw, and informed them it was fine to divert from my prepared questions should they wish. The substantive phase began with introductory questions that asked interviewees to talk about their work in community music and their route into being a community musician. This was not merely intended as a warm-up exercise, but the information offered in

response to these questions was crucial for the analysis of differing perspectives on evaluation. Further questions about how they defined community music and what they valued about the practice of community music were intended to explore how interviewees conceptualised community music, to enable understanding of how they conceptualised *evaluation* in community music. The substantive phase moved onto exploring evaluation with the Word Association activity and further questions on evaluation designed to prompt discussion linked to aspects of the research questions. The closure phase included a question linked to the flexibility of semi-structured interviewing: *is there anything else you want to contribute or anything you want to ask me?* A debrief phase where I again stressed anonymity, the right to withdraw, and what would happen to their interview data (transcribed, analysed and potentially included in the thesis) was the final part of the interview guide.

A pilot interview tested out the interview questions in order to refine the format, language or content of the questions. The interviewee for the pilot interview was a personal friend who was also a professional colleague and a community musician. The pilot interview lasted 75 mins and was followed by 30 minutes of discussion and feedback about the interview content and process. I specifically asked for feedback on whether anything was too complicated or ambiguous in how I asked the questions, with only minor changes made to the interview questions in response. The most significant revision was adding a question about whether evaluation in community music had changed over time as the pilot interviewee had reflected back over her long career, and she drew comparisons between working in the 1990s and the present day. The final iteration of the interview questions is shown in Appendix 6.

I reviewed the interview questions following each of the early interviews to reconsider if interviewees were understanding my questions in the way that I intended, which resulted in a small number of adjustments for later interviews. After ten interviews, I undertook an initial analysis of the transcripts to determine how effective the data were at addressing the research questions before recruiting more interviewees for a second phase of interviews. Following this analysis, I made more significant revisions to the questions, adding a section to explicitly explore community musicians' agency and control regarding evaluation, as this was a notable theme in the unfolding analysis. Another revision involved

asking people to give a "dictionary definition" of evaluation to elicit more articulate responses than some interviewees had given.

4.2.8 Conducting the interviews

Interviewees' familiarity with Zoom meant scheduling the interviews was quick and straightforward and providing information about how the application worked was not needed. Some of the discussion about creating rapport in online interviews in the literature was also not a consideration, as the pandemic had made digital communication the norm. There were some difficulties and interruptions, but these were encountered with grace and ease: slow internet connections creating an audio delay, delivery drivers knocking on the door during an interview, and even one interviewee needing to give their dog a "comfort break".

4.2.8.1 Pilot interview

The pilot interview took place in November 2020. It was originally my intention that the pilot interview was only for testing and developing the interview guide and the data would not be included in the analysis. However, reflecting on the content and process and the pilot interview afterwards, I felt that being acquainted with the interviewee had not unduly influenced the data and that she had contributed a wealth of information that would be valuable in considering my research questions. I contacted her to clarify if she would be happy for her interview to be included in my research dataset, which she was. I discounted my initial criteria of not including people who I had worked with previously, as from the experience of the pilot interview, any potential conflicts of interest with acquaintance interviews were not an issue with community musicians talking about their professional practice as the pilot interviewee was very open, frank, honest and happy to critique her own practice.

4.2.8.2 Phase one interviews

Following the pilot interview, further interviews started in early January 2021. I set myself a target of completing ten interviews before Easter 2021, which I achieved. I labelled these as Phase One interviews. Dividing the interviews into two phases was somewhat pragmatic but also was important for the theoretical sampling strategy. Phase One involved interviewing all the participants I had so far recruited. Another recruitment drive was needed to seek more participants, but before planning more recruitment I wished to do an initial analysis of Phase One interviews to consider if there was anything missing in the sample, in terms of perspectives and differences in experiences amongst the interviewees.

4.2.8.3 Phase two interviews

Phase Two interview recruitment continued with a purposive and theoretical sampling approach, although to widen participation beyond my professional networks, I speculatively emailed community music organisations whose work I was aware of through reputation, to ask if they would share my request for research participants with their community musicians. Six further interviewees were recruited through this method. Phase Two interviews had slightly amended interview questions (as described in the question design section of the thesis) but in all other regards, they were the same as Phase One.

The Phase Two interviews were completed in August 2021. At this point, I was undecided if more interviewees should be recruited and if a third phase of interviews was necessary to achieve what Braun and Clarke (2022b) call "information power" and "meaning sufficiency". I intended to transcribe Phase Two interviews and then undertake a thorough analysis of both Phase One and Two transcripts before determining whether more data were needed to adequately answer the research questions. Following coding of the transcripts and a few iterations of theme generation, I was satisfied that I had achieved a good representation of different community musicians and a wealth of data that could adequately address the research questions.

In total, 16 interviews took place. The shortest interview lasted 45 minutes with the longest being 90 minutes. Most interviews were just under one hour in length.

4.3 Data analysis methods

4.3.1 Analytic method: Reflexive Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is a theoretically flexible pattern-based cross-case analytic method which has become commonly used to analyse qualitative textual data in many disciplines, particularly psychology and social research. The prolific citations of Braun and Clarke's (2006) article "Using thematic analysis in psychology", where they describe the theory and method, demonstrates the widespread use of thematic analysis in academic research (Terry and Hayfield, 2021). Disciplines more aligned to this study where thematic analysis has been used are cultural policy (Jancovich and Stevenson, 2021; Belfiore, 2021), community music (MacGlone *et al.*, 2020; Camlin, Daffern and Zeserson, 2020; Humphrey, 2025) and arts participation (Stevens, Butterfield, Whittington and Holttum, 2018; Howard, 2023).

Crucial to thematic analysis is the understanding that themes are created through the analytic and interpretive work of the researcher. A theme is described as "a pattern of shared meaning organised around a central concept" (Braun and Clarke, 2022a, p.77). Themes themselves are not the end point of the analysis, but a tool for analysis and interpretation in the research.

Braun and Clarke have produced several publications where they revisit the ideas in their 2006 article and address issues which have arisen in the intervening years concerning how researchers employ thematic analysis in research (Braun and Clarke 2019; 2020a; 2020b; 2022a; 2022b). They warn that thematic analysis is often misunderstood as an atheoretical data analysis tool, whereas it is actually a theoretically flexible approach which is not tied to any one theoretical position, for example, as in Grounded Theory or Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, where the analytic methods are closely tied to the theoretical perspectives of these research traditions. Thematic analysis can be utilised within different theoretical positions and Braun and Clarke assert that a high-quality thematic analysis study will make explicit the theoretical framework used (2020b). A second issue they highlight is there is a common lack of recognition that there is more than one kind of thematic analysis and, again, good quality research will state which kind of thematic

analysis is used and how the choice of analytic technique is consistent with the research design (Braun and Clarke, 2020a).

For Braun and Clarke, one way they emphasise their thinking about thematic analysis is their move towards the term "Reflexive Thematic Analysis" to distinguish their approach from others. They outline three differing categorisations of thematic analysis: coding reliability approaches, codebook approaches and reflexive approaches. Coding reliability approaches involve the researcher developing a codebook and striving for coding consistency across the dataset, seeking to minimise researcher subjectivity in the analysis. Codebook approaches sound very similar, and both approaches feature developing themes early in the analysis process, but the difference is that codebook approaches utilise a codebook to document the analysis as it develops and ensure communication between researchers working on a project. Reflexive thematic analysis differs from these two approaches in several ways. Theme development occurs later in the coding process and explicitly acknowledges the researcher's role in generating themes from the coding. Many of Braun and Clarke's publications challenge the notion of themes "residing" in data or "emerging" from the data during the analysis. The researcher has an active role in constructing themes from their interpretation of the data but should be reflexive in how their position and assumptions influence how they conceptualise the themes. Another distinctive feature compared to other approaches, is that reflexive thematic analysis seeks to go deeper than descriptive themes by distinguishing between semantic and latent themes. Semantic themes are considered explicit or on the surface of the data, summarising the things research participants say. Latent themes go beyond the surface meaning of the data and involve interpretation and theorising by the researcher (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This distinction of semantic and latent themes is crucial to how my study utilises reflexive thematic analysis within a constructionist paradigm and a theoretical influence of discourse analysis. How discourse analysis informs my analysis very much sits within a latent approach to theme development:

> Thematic analysis at the latent level goes beyond the semantic content of the data, and starts to identify or examine the underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualisations – and ideologies – that are theorised as shaping or informing the semantic content of the data. (…) Thus for latent thematic analysis, the development of the themes themselves involves interpretative work, and the analysis that is produced is not just description, but is already theorised. Analysis within this latter tradition tends to come from a constructionist paradigm (e.g.,

Burr, 1995), and in this form, thematic analysis overlaps with some forms of discourse analysis (…) where broader assumptions, structures and/or meanings are theorised as underpinning what is actually articulated in the data." (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.13)

Braun and Clarke (2020b) state that reflexive thematic analysis is not a suitable method for the "fine-grained analysis of language practice" (p.43) required for discourse analysis, however, they consider that when it is utilised within a critical qualitative theoretical framework such as constructionism, it is similar to pattern-based discourse analysis approaches, as both are concerned with macro patterns of meaning. They suggest a number of circumstances when it may be more useful for researchers to select reflexive thematic analysis rather than pattern-based discourse analysis that include two points relevant to this study:

> When a researcher is not certain they are committed to a full discourse orientation in their analysis. The research questions and interests are not solely or primarily oriented to the effects of language (such as subject positions). (Braun and Clarke, 2020b, p.44)

Byrne (2021) describes the difference between *experiential* and *critical* orientations to data:

> An experiential orientation to understanding data typically prioritises the examination of how a given phenomenon may be experienced by the participant. This involves investigating the meaning ascribed to the phenomenon by the respondent, as well as the meaningfulness of the phenomenon to the respondent. (Byrne, 2021, p.1396)

Contrarily, a critical orientation considers discourse as constructing social reality rather than being a reflection of it. A critical orientation to data analysis involves exploring patterns in the data and interpretations of meaning that consider language as constitutive, rather than focusing on the interpretations of meaning offered by the research participants. I wished to allow for both experiential and critical orientations which reflexive thematic analysis would enable. Terry (2016) states that reflexive thematic analysis's theoretical flexibility means it is a suitable tool for "a pluralistic analytic approach" (p.104). Braun and Clarke (2020b) observe that Terry "perceived much value in using TA in combination with discursive approaches" (p.44). This is the approach taken in this study's analysis – a pluralistic approach that considers individuals' own experiences and meaning-making yet also considers the macro meanings where language constructs social reality rather than merely reflects it (Byrne, 2021).

4.3.1.1 Quality and trustworthiness in thematic analysis

Issues of quality in thematic analysis research have been considered in the context of Lincoln and Guba's four criteria of credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability (Nowell, Norris, White, and Moules, 2017). Being such strong advocates for the method, Braun and Clarke (2020a) have been so dismayed by misconceptions of thematic analysis in the research community, that they developed their own criteria to help others to evaluate the quality of studies purporting to utilise thematic analysis. These criteria are expressed as problems which I have paraphrased as: treating thematic analysis as a singular approach; citing Braun and Clarke (2006) but then not following their approach; methodological incoherence; assuming thematic analysis is atheoretical; not appreciating the theoretical flexibility of thematic analysis; a misunderstood assumption that thematic analysis only offers a descriptive low level of interpretation in comparison to other analytic approaches; confusing codes and topics with themes (indicators of underdeveloped analysis); not understanding the themes are constructed through the analytic and interpretive work of the researcher; and proceduralism that involves enacting a method without critical thinking.

Close attention has been given to these quality criteria in the design and execution of this study, particularly to stating the theoretical framework and ensuring coherence – a relativist constructionist paradigm, both deductive and inductive coding, and a pluralistic orientation to the data that considers both experiential and critical perspectives.

4.3.2 Preparing data for analysis

All interviews were recorded using Zoom's facility to record both video and audio of the interviews. A back-up audio-recording was also made using a separate audio-recording device. Directly following each interview, the Zoom audio file was trimmed to remove the introductory and closing sections of the interview which did not need to be included in the transcription. The trimmed audio files were then imported into NVivo qualitative data analysis software and transcribed using NVivo's automated transcription function. NVivo transcription uses Natural Language Processing, a type of artificial intelligence (AI) which enables spoken language to be converted to written text. Whilst NVivo claims that the

automated transcription is over 90% accurate, my experience of using NVivo transcription was that the automated transcripts needed very careful checking and editing to ensure accuracy. The programme relies on AI recognition of common patterns of syntax and grammar, therefore, where words or phrases are inaudible on the recording, the programme fills in what is missing to create a sentence which is grammatically correct but can mean something very different to what the speaker actually said. Bokhove and Downey (2018) describe automated transcripts as a "good enough" (p.11) first version and that manual reviewing can be effective at identifying the majority of discrepancies that need amending. Some of the factors that can influence automated transcription quality identified in the literature I also experienced, such as errors due to poor audio quality or incorrect AI recognition of names and terminology (Bokhove and Downey, 2018, p.11). One factor the literature highlights as an issue in transcription quality is different accents (Bokhove and Downey, 2018; Herdiyanti, 2024), however, I did not find any variations in how NVivo transcription coped with different regional accents. Using NVivo transcription with careful editing saved a great deal of time as the checking and editing took around two hours for a 45-minute interview.

As with any transcription, decisions needed to be made about what transcription notation system to use and what level of detail to include in the transcripts. I explored a range of academic literature related to transcription of interview data (Bryman, 2012; Braun and Clarke, 2013; Flick, Kowal and O'Connell, 2014; King, Horrocks and Brooks, 2019). Braun and Clarke (2013) note that "qualitative researchers most often construct their own notation systems" (p.163) and this is what I did "on the basis of reasoned choices rather than arbitrary, non-reflective ones" (Flick, Kowal and O'Connell, 2014, no pagination). The analysis for this study did not require a level of detail of conversation analysis transcripts, where the length of every pause and rise of intonation is captured in the written transcript. My system was based on verbatim or orthographic transcription but with a small selection of additional elements. I included all verbal utterances such as "erm" and "oh", as well as paralinguistic sounds, shown in square brackets, where they appeared to have meaning in relation to the words spoken. The most frequent example of these non-verbal sounds was indicating laughter by the interviewee. There were times when laughter was part of intentional humour, however, it was sometimes used by an interviewee to indicate they were being ironic, and they actually meant the opposite of the words they spoke. There

were other times when I interpreted an interviewee's laughter as expressing exasperation or bewilderment, for example:

> *If you don't understand your Theory of Change and why what you're doing works, then what are you collecting? [laughs].*

Other non-verbal communication included in the transcripts were sighs or pronounced exhalations of breath which appeared to indicate the interviewee's frustration in the situations they were recounting. Pauses and long pauses in speech were also shown as they often indicated a period of thought, or difficulty or hesitancy in answering. Also included as they suggest hesitancy, are filler words such as "erm" and superfluous phrases such as "you know" and "I mean" which are common in speech. NVivo transcription omitted many of the "you know" phrases to give a less cluttered transcript which made more grammatical sense. However, I added these phrases to the transcript during the editing to show the hesitancy in the speech.

Braun and Clarke (2013) write about how punctuating the written text of a transcript can put the transcriber's influence on the text, and they advise to add as little punctuation as possible. NVivo transcription adds full stops and commas very effectively within conventional grammar, but all needed careful consideration to ensure the punctuation did not change the meaning of what was said. One punctuation decision I made was to add commas after repeated words, where they show a stumbling or stuttering of words, as inclusion or exclusion of commas could change the meaning. One example that illustrates this point: "I think it creates a bit of a hierarchy. Not, not deliberately". The repetition of "not" does not mean a double negative but was a stumbling over words, therefore adding the comma was essential to the meaning. After the transcripts were edited to ensure accuracy, they were ready for further reading and coding.

The conversion of spoken data to written text is problematic and selective (Flick, Kowal and O'Connell, 2014). The limitations I encountered in the analysis of transcripts were the impossibility of conveying emotions such as frustration, indignation or a sense of sadness. When writing about passages of text from the interviews, I could sometimes recall the prosody of an interviewee's spoken words that I interpreted as exasperation or irony, but there is no indication of that in the transcript. There are places in the analysis and discussion chapters where I have commented that the audio-recording conveys, for

example, a sense of frustration that is not adequately captured in the interview transcription.

4.3.3 Thematic analysis process

The process for analysing the data broadly followed six phases outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006):

1) data familiarisation

2) systematic data coding

3) generating initial themes from coded and collated data

4) developing and reviewing themes

5) refining, defining and naming themes

6) writing the report

I created memos and reflexive notes using the notes function in NVivo to document my thinking and actions during the analysis process.

4.4.3.1 Familiarisation (phase one)

The familiarisation phase involves immersion in the data through "repeated reading" and actively searching for patterns and meaning so that the researcher is familiar with the breadth and depth of the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.16). How I enacted the familiarisation phase was reading the automated NVivo transcripts and editing them as previously described, which involved listening to the audio-recordings closely. Whilst doing this, noticing passages of text that were potentially relevant to the research questions was also familiarisation. Attention was given to aspects of the transcripts that piqued my interest even though immediate relevance to the research questions was not obvious. Additionally, the familiarisation phase involved considering how language was used by the interviewees to construct their narratives, such as positioning or metaphors. Ideas of codes and potential themes arose from familiarisation with the transcripts, but they stayed in my head until I started coding when they were first written down.

4.4.3.2 Coding (phase two)

Coding involves systematically working through the data to identify passages of text that have relevance to the analysis for the purpose of "organising your data into meaningful groups" (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.18). Braun and Clarke advise to code for "as many potential themes/patterns as possible" in the initial coding so not to narrow the focus at an early stage. All my coding was done using the coding function in NVivo. I started with six *a priori* codes that were the main aspects of the research questions, but all other codes were inductive, arising from my interpretation of what information was relevant to the research questions yet also remaining open-minded to important facets of the data. At this stage, I wanted to acknowledge the interviewees' contribution to the research and ensure that I fully considered their perspectives before I narrowed the analysis to focus on the research questions. I coded each of the ten Phase One interview transcripts in turn, however, from the second transcript onwards, I did return to earlier coded transcripts if there were new codes that could apply. I noted how many new codes I had created after each interview. The first coded transcript contained 92 codes. After the first round of coding all 16 transcripts there were 411 codes. I intentionally did not spend much time refining and reducing codes in the first round of coding unless there were obvious repetitions, so to keep a broad view of what information was relevant to the research questions. A second round of coding reduced the number of codes through combining codes where appropriate and grouping codes together where there were clear associations with others, for example, grouping together codes that identified passages of text that concerned different purposes of evaluation. This second round of coding involved creating hierarchies with codes and sub-codes. It was here that the coding focused more on analysis aligned to the research questions rather than considering the entirety of the data.

4.4.3.3 Generating initial themes (phase three)

The initial theme generation phase involves broadening the analysis beyond codes to potential overarching themes, by considering relationships between codes and organising them into "candidate themes" for closer scrutiny in the next phase (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.20). To group ideas together and create initial themes I exported all the codes from NVivo into an Excel spreadsheet. I found many features of NVivo frustrating and it was easier for

me to move codes around and group them together in Excel. This enabled me to examine and reconsider many of the codes, appraising whether they noted patterning across the dataset and how they were relevant to the research questions. This process also had the added advantage of creating an "audit of code generation" – a feature of trustworthiness according to Nowell *et al*. (2017) – as I had codes saved at regular points whilst I continued amendments in NVivo. My first full version of themes had 13 themes, all with many sub-themes. I was aware that these earlier themes included semantic themes that were more akin to topic summaries, and these were further developed in the later phases of analysis to focus more on latent meanings. "Candidate" themes can be temporary and tentative (Terry, 2016) as the analysis is developed further, and I considered these 13 themes to be candidate themes.

4.4.3.4 Developing and reviewing themes (phase four)

The reviewing themes phase involves refinement of the candidate themes by reviewing all the data coded as relevant to a theme to ensure there is a coherent pattern. A thematic map is then created and the entire dataset reviewed to ensure that the themes do, in fact, represent all the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006, pp.20-21). To simplify the themes and focus in on a central concept for each theme, I reduced 13 candidate themes by combining them into three main themes, each with several sub-themes. These three themes were latent themes, conceptualising aspects of my analysis rather than descriptive semantic themes. At this point, I created visual maps of the themes using an online whiteboard app to play around with hierarchies between themes and sub-themes, further enabling me to scrutinise my analysis and consider different ways of structuring and presenting the analysis. This also required creating abbreviated theme names to use in the visual map which helped with clarifying the essential elements of each theme. I noted in my memos that I frequently questioned myself over whether the developing themes were too descriptive or stating the obvious, or whether things I was noticing were interesting but not relevant to the research questions.

An important stage in the analysis involved going beyond the coding in the transcripts to consider the cross-case analysis and differences in interviewees' perspectives. Using information from the Expression of Interest forms and the interview transcripts, I created

two methods of organising and summarising the data. The first method was a one-page profile of each interviewee which included information about the nature and focus of their community music work, the number of years working as a community musician, their route into becoming a community musician, their education and training, their experiences of evaluation, and the main points their interview could contribute to the research questions. The second method was a spreadsheet which also included information from the Expression of Interest forms listed above, in addition to plotting aspects of the unfolding analysis such as positions interviewees take towards evaluation and the degree of agency and control they have regarding evaluation. This stage in the analysis was invaluable to testing out the themes, checking if they encompassed the "patterning of meaning across the data set" (Terry, 2016, p.111), and positing reasons for interviewee's different perspectives which fed into the typologising of positions on evaluation that are a key element of the thesis's overall argument.

4.4.3.5 Refining, defining and naming themes (phase five) and reporting (phase six)

Braun and Clarke (2006) describe phase five as identifying the "essence" of the themes, organising data into a "internally consistent account", telling a story for each theme, and assigning names that are "concise, punchy, and immediately give the reader a sense of what the theme is about" (p.22). The sixth phase of reporting is the final stage of the analysis once themes are fully formed, and involves developing an analytic narrative, selecting data to illustrate the narrative, and presenting an argument that addresses the research questions (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.23). Whilst Braun and Clarke describe phases five and six as distinct phases, how I enacted them involved undertaking the refining of themes and report writing alongside each other. Whilst I had what I considered to be a final iteration of themes (in an Excel file and as a visual thematic map) before I started writing the analysis and discussion thesis chapters, the process of writing drafts, and responding to feedback from my supervisors on the drafts, prompted major revisions of the themes. One very useful part of this process was writing a one-page summary of each theme to succinctly explain the analysis. The final version of the themes is shown in Appendix 7 (in a table) and Appendix 8 (the thematic map).

4.4 Ethics and consent

4.4.1 Ethical approval for the research

Ethical approval for the research was granted by Bath Spa University's Ethics Committee in April 2020. The process of developing the application considered ethical issues concerning how to ensure informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity, acquaintance interviews, the risk of harm to participants and mitigations to minimise the risk of harm. No concerns were raised by the Ethics Committee.

4.4.2 Consent

The two-page information sheet (Appendix 2) was an element of the consent process. It explained that participation was optional and there was a right to withdraw up to the point I started to analyse the data (which I specified as one month after the interview). My contact details were given should anyone have questions not answered by the information sheet. All interviewees completed the online consent form (Appendix 3) before the scheduled interview date. At the start of each interview, I thanked everyone for completing the consent form and reiterated their right to withdraw – either completely or to request that parts of the interview were not included in the dataset. No one withdrew from the research. During a closing debrief phase of the interview, I restated what I would do with their interview data and that it could feature in the thesis and journal articles.

4.4.3 Confidentiality and anonymity

Whilst research participants were advised in the information sheet that their interview would not be used or shared for any purpose other than the PhD research, it would not be entirely confidential as sections of the transcript or recording may be shared with my supervisory team and some extracts could be quoted in the thesis and other dissemination activities such as journal articles or conference presentations. They were also advised that whilst their names, the names of anyone else they spoke about (for example colleagues), or the name of any organisation mentioned in the interview would not be used, complete

anonymity could not be guaranteed as I hoped to involve some very experienced community musicians who had a national profile in the research, therefore details about their work may enable others to identify them.

Including acquaintance interviews in the research raised issues of confidentiality and anonymity, particularly regarding interviewees with whom I have a continuing acquaintance. I have guarded against breaching anonymity when engaging with acquaintance interviewees in a professional sphere following the interviews by not discussing the research with interviewees unless they broach the topic first – which has happened on one occasion as an interviewee was interested to know how the PhD was progressing. I have been able to maintain anonymity for research participants.

To create anonymity and to keep participants' identity secure, I created a participant log spreadsheet which had research participants' names and contact details, alongside a participant code and a first name pseudonym (which is how they are referred to throughout the thesis). This file had additional password protection to keep research participants' identities secure. In all other files, no real names were used – only their code or pseudonym.

4.4.4 Potential risks of harm and actions to minimise risk of harm

As part of the ethics approval application, potential risks of harm to research participants were considered. I judged it to be very unlikely that participants would experience physical or psychological harm during interviews, however, it was possible that some interviewees might find critiquing their own professional practice or the practice of their co-workers, employers or funders to be emotionally challenging.

My position as an insider in the research poses risks for myself. Evaluation in community music is a small field in the UK that I rely on for my livelihood. I anticipated that the research may involve critiquing policy or the practice of organisations who fund community music activity. I did consider there to be a risk of jeopardising my professional relationship with such organisations if such critique were made public. My approach to mitigating any risk, is to ensure that the research is of high quality and defensible, and any publications, conference presentations or public engagement activities meet professional standards.

The criticality towards current evaluation practices in this thesis may not be welcomed by all, particularly those who have an interest in maintaining the status quo such as evaluators and funding organisations.

I also anticipated that interviewees may be critical of practice within organisations for whom they worked. Sufficient anonymisation of interviewees and organisations addressed this concern. I anticipated that research participants may discuss "non-consenting others" (Mannay, 2016, p.275) as part of interviews such as colleagues or the community music participants with whom they work, and anonymity of anyone featured in this way was assured. One aspect of risk of harm that I did not foresee was the extent that some interviewees were critical of anonymous others in the community music sector. Interviewees commented on what they perceived as other community musicians and organisations doing evaluation that was of poor quality. Some interviewees portrayed others such as funders or social workers as not really caring about the community music participants. Whilst data from the transcripts were anonymised when used in the thesis, there is a general risk of presenting community musicians' criticisms publicly and of demonstrating a lack of collegiality with other professionals in the community music sector and partner organisations. Furthermore, if interviewees recognised themselves in the thesis or other public use of the data such as journal articles, they may not agree with how I have framed their contribution to the research which could jeopardise my professional relationships with people in the community music sector.

It was a requirement of the ethics approval process that a data management plan was created using DMP Online to show that research data was to be stored securely. Throughout the PhD all data was handled as described in the data management plan.

Beyond the institutional ethic approval process, I maintained an ongoing ethic of care (Kara, 2018) towards the participants that manifested in actions. During the debrief section of the interviews I asked all interviewees if they wished to be contacted when the research was completed to receive a summary of the findings and conclusions. I kept a spreadsheet to document their verbal consent to be contacted again. All interviewees were eager to be informed of the findings. After the data collection phase was completed, I gave presentations at two community music sector conferences sharing some initial analysis and findings from the research (part of the stimulating discussion and debate in my research aims). As these were both events intended for community musicians, there was potential

for my interviewees to be in attendance, therefore I felt it was important to forewarn interviewees that they may be hearing their words and contributions to the research in my presentation. I emailed all the interviewees, framing the email primarily as a thank you for their participation now that the data collection phase was completed, but also naming the events that I would be speaking at so that there would be no surprises should they be attending. Following the first submission of the thesis, all interviewees were contacted to inform them that the thesis was submitted, to thank them for their contribution, and to share a short summary of what the research involved, the findings and the conclusions (see Appendix 9).

4.5 Reflexivity and my position in the research

I considered three aspects of reflexivity: personal, epistemological and methodological. Personal reflexivity is illustrated with two examples of reflexivity in action during the analysis process and consideration of my position as an insider in the research. Epistemological reflexivity concerns how I have endeavoured to remain consistent with the stated epistemological approach and how my positionality has shaped the research. Methodological reflexivity includes how my position influenced the selection of methods.

4.5.1 Personal reflexivity

The memos created during the coding and theme development capture many reflexive moments that illustrate how my experiences and situation had the potential to influence the analysis and research process. During the time I was coding the transcripts, I was also reading Braun and Clarke's (2022a) newly published book, *Thematic analysis: a practical guide* that consolidates the ideas in many of their previous publications, prompting a great deal of reflection on how I enacted the six-phase process.

Firstly, an example of how my personal situation influenced the process of analysis. The were two points from Braun and Clarke (2022a) and their book launch webinar[11] that brought an awareness of how my position as a researcher was enmeshed with being a mother and my need to combine caring for two children with working full-time and doing a part-time PhD, and the effect that had on the research process. The first point was considering how the space in which one has to work makes you feel and how that influences the analysis. The second point was prompted by Braun and Clarke's own reflections on how, in the past, they advocated that lower-tech methods of coding were superior to digital methods as they enable one to get "closer to the data", which they now recognise as an ableist point of view. Whilst I have undertaken a great deal of interview coding in my evaluation work by hand with printed out transcripts and coloured pens, I do not share the commonly-held view that non-digital analysis enables a closer reading of the data – I think it is a matter of preference and experience. The text below is an extract from my memos, edited for brevity, that illustrates how I reflected on both these points regarding space and one's personal situation influencing the availability of techniques for coding and analysis.

> *Whilst having a whole day to immerse myself in coding transcripts without other distractions of work or family is the ideal, to get the analysis done I have to do the coding in less than ideal situations. Yesterday I spent an hour coding on a Saturday evening whilst I'd put jacket potatoes in the oven for the kids' tea. I need to maintain an awareness that I may not be giving different transcripts equal attention if I don't have much time, which could lead to inconsistency in the coding.*
>
> *Although I am fortunate to have a desk in a room to work in at home, it's a multi-function room in a family home (one end of the room looks like a professional home office but the other end is a chaotic mess – laundry hanging up to dry, piles of clean washing waiting to be put away, bags of stuff waiting to go to the charity shop). Even if I wanted to, I can't have printed out transcript extracts covered in post-it note codes laid out on the floor for days at a time. I don't really have a choice but to do the coding and theme development digitally as I have no space for lower-tech options.*

A second example of personal reflexivity concerns how my personal experiences and worldview influences the analytic work in the research. In the initial candidate themes, I had a sub-theme named *Community musicians commonly shy away from acknowledging*

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[11] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hns-tlUx1_Q&t=526s

political influences on CM and evaluation. Whilst reviewing the coding in Jenny's transcript I realised that her view did not fit this theme. Several interviewees shy away from expressing views they perceive as being overtly political, but Jenny *is* overtly political, and she is aware and unapologetic about the political stance she brings to her work. There was something that Jenny said that made me recall my own past experience of music being overtly political – I played in a band in the late 1990s that was invited to perform at the Sheffield Festival of Political Song[12]. I was bemused because I had almost forgotten about this, even though it was one of my proudest moments performing music as we were the support act for Dave Swarbrick, and something in Jenny's transcript reminded me of this experience. I recognised that I felt an affinity with Jenny's worldview and how important music and politics were to her. I was very aware of foregrounding these ideas in the analysis because they chimed with my own worldview. In the final iteration of themes, political influences were eliminated as they were not the most important aspects of the data.

4.5.2 Epistemological and methodological reflexivity

The epistemological position taken for this study has influenced the research. An aspect of being an insider in the research requiring reflexivity is how my position as an evaluator of community music, who is researching evaluation in community music, influenced the data collection, analysis and interpretation. There were occasions during the interviews when interviewees specifically referenced the fact that I was an evaluator, for example, in one acquaintance interview, an interviewee said, "evaluation is a very specific skill. I'm not just saying that because I'm talking to you, but I think that's true". What they meant by "because I'm talking to you" was that they knew that I was an evaluator. It was apparent in some other interviews where I was not previously acquainted with the interviewee that they also knew I was an evaluator. It is not possible to know if interviewees' awareness of my position as an evaluator in the community music sector influenced what they said in their interview, however, it was something I was alert to in the analysis.

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[12] Raise Your Banners Festival of Political Song was organised by Sheffield Socialist Choir between 1995 and 2001.

My knowledge and experiences of evaluation influenced the methodology and design for this research. My preferred approach to evaluation is collaborative evaluation.

> *Collaborative evaluation requires a substantial degree of collaboration between evaluators and stakeholders in the evaluation process to the extent that they are willing and capable of being involved.* (Rodríguez-Campos, 2012, p.523)

How this manifests within my work is that I will ask people in the arts organisations that contract me to input into the evaluation design and creation of data collection methods, such as articulating intended outcomes or giving feedback on interview questions I draft. It is usually project managers or creative producers who will give this input, although sometimes arts practitioners are also requested to be involved. It is often a requirement when being selected for new evaluation work that one needs to articulate one's proposed evaluation approach. In such a situation, I would always characterise my approach to evaluation as collaborative and to explain more fully to prospective clients what that means, I describe evaluation approaches as a spectrum, from emancipatory evaluation to independent evaluation. I liken independent evaluation to an OFSTED[13] inspection, where someone external to the work defines the criteria for judgement and makes evaluative judgements without the input of anyone involved in the project. Next along the spectrum is collaborative evaluation where an evaluator co-ordinates the design and execution of evaluation, but with the input of project managers and sometimes practitioners. Then there is participatory evaluation, where the beneficiaries of the activity (the community music participants) will be involved in influencing and undertaking the evaluation along with others such as practitioners and project managers, although the evaluator will still play a central role. Emancipatory evaluation is where an evaluator plays a supporting role in empowering the beneficiaries of a project to determine and undertake evaluation. Reflecting on the design of this research, my familiarity with a collaborative evaluation approach influenced how I approached the PhD research – I invited the input of community musicians through participation in an interview, but I retained control over how much input they had, whilst also undertaking the analysis and interpretation myself without offering any input to interviewees.

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[13] OFSTED is the UK government inspectorate of schools. It inspects educational and childcare establishments and makes judgements about the quality of education provided.

I was also attentive to how my knowledge and experiences of evaluation that come from my work shaped the questions I asked in the interviews and what I came to foreground in the analysis and interpretation. One illustrative example is a question I asked about what evaluation toolkits, models or resources interviewees used in their work, currently or in the past. Whilst all interviewees listed methods with generic descriptions such as feedback forms, reflective diaries or "smiley faces", there were few that named specific tools or approaches to evaluation or used language that demonstrated an understanding of theoretical underpinnings of evaluation. I remember being surprised by this, as I had expected people to be more familiar with data collection tools and frameworks that are utilised in community music and arts evaluation. My interpretation of this was that, on the whole, interviewees had a relatively surface level of knowledge about evaluation. I realised, however, that my expectation of interviewees' knowledge was rooted in my position as being very familiar with such resources through my work, and my interpretation was influenced by judgements about their knowledge relative to my own.

Throughout the research, I have reflected on methodological choices with the intention that the research design and execution remain consistent with the stated epistemological approach. One area where there was considerable reflection was the selection of constructionism. When engaging with the data, there were aspects of the transcripts and my analysis that prompted me to question if I was diverting from a constructionist lens. This was particularly tricky to navigate concerning one important aspect of the analysis – the affect of evaluation on interviewees (see section 5.3.4) that considers how feelings, emotions and more pervasive sustained affective states influence positions interviewees take towards evaluation. A constructionist lens focuses on how language constructs discourses, yet exploring interviewees' feelings and emotions aligned better to a phenomenological approach. I considered whether to reassess the entire analysis through a critical realist lens. I did not consider crafting an epistemological bricolage that attempted to combine different approaches into a coherent framework – that seemed too complicated. Instead, the approach I have taken could be considered as a reflexive methodology where the research approach is adapted in response to the unfolding research. Luttrell (2010) writes that reflexive qualitative research design involves two approaches, "one based on serendipity and surprise, the other based on prior theoretical plotting" (p.160). I was not anticipating that interviewees' feelings and emotions would feature so significantly in the data as they featured only a little in the review of literature.

The affect of evaluation arose from the data, but my analysis remained centred on how interviewees spoke of feelings within the interview as a constructed narrative of past experiences, thereby retaining a consistency with a constructionist approach, rather than attempting to analyse those emotions as a phenomenological approach would. This is perhaps what Steier (1991) means when he writes of paradoxes and inconsistency as important for challenging a researcher's assumptions:

> Our reflexivity thus reveals itself as an awareness of the recognition that we allow ourselves to hear what our subjects are telling us, not by imposing our categories on them, but by trying to see how our categories may not fit. (Steier, 1991, pp.7-8)

My pluralistic approach to data analysis, encompassing experiential and critical orientations to the data (Terry, 2016; Byrne, 2021) is an example of how epistemological reflexivity shaped the research.

A further important element of reflexivity involved expanding my understanding of different research traditions and epistemological perspectives. I come from a background of having studied music at undergraduate level (encompassing performing, composing and musicology – the traditional positivist kind of musicology), applied healthcare following my undergraduate degree, and social sciences at Masters level. All this study was within a Western Euro-centric academic tradition. In the earlier stages of my PhD, I read about indigenous research traditions, feminist research perspectives and post-humanist research to broaden my thinking about what research can be. There was an example of how this became relevant to the research process in my memo notes, when considering how an interviewee describes their in-the-moment evaluation of what is taking place during community music making as "sensing". I spent a long time thinking about what this interviewee, who has a visual impairment, meant. It reminded me of the reading I did in the early stages of the PhD about indigenous research methods and the dominance of Western Euro-centric research traditions that do not consider other ways of knowing. I reflected on my life experience and worldview that, as a non-disabled person, was very different to this interviewee and it felt important to acknowledge their experience and their interpretation of how information is transferred between people as "sensing", therefore it remained part of the analysis. This approach to reflexivity is articulated by Steier:

> When the observer is placed within her or his inquiry, we have a beginning for a reflexive methodology for research. By recognising our

> own role in research, our reciprocators are, seemingly paradoxically,
> given a greater voice. (Steier, 1991, p.180)

I am aware that this choice to retain "sensing" in the analysis could be seen as allowing the constructionist lens to slip by acknowledging this interviewee's interpretation as the "real" way to understand the situation they describe. But conversely, I consider that it maintains a constructionist worldview by not prioritising *my* ways of thinking about the world above those of a research participant whose experiences and circumstances are different from my own.

4.6 Chapter summary

Chapter 4 has summarised the process of designing the data methods, recruiting research participants, collecting and analysing data, with consideration of ethical issues relevant to the research and some examples of reflexivity. This was all done with the intention of methodological coherence between the methods and the methodology described in Chapter 3.

Chapter 5: Conceptualisations of community music and evaluation

5.1 Introduction to the analysis chapters

The analysis and discussion spans four chapters of the thesis. Chapters 5, 6, and 7 present findings from the analysis along with supporting evidence from the interviews, whilst Chapter 8 contains the discussion.

The purpose of Chapter 5 is to show the great deal of variation regarding evaluation in community music and how a wide array of experiences of evaluation leads community musicians to adopt differing positions. Following an overview of themes from the thematic analysis process, the chapter begins with describing how interviewees conceptualise community music and evaluation relevant to the unfolding analysis that occurs later: discourses around the defining features of community music, what interviewees value about community music, a plurality of practice and community of practice, and interviewees' definitions of evaluation. Next, the first theme generated in the thematic analysis process is explored – the multiple dimensions of evaluation, which presents four inter-related dimensions of *what* community musicians do when they evaluate, *why* they evaluate, *how* they evaluate and the *affect* of evaluation. The chapter concludes with presenting a typology of five broad positions that interviewees take towards evaluation that synthesises the disparate characterisations of aspects of evaluation described so far.

Chapter 6 explores factors associated with differing positions interviewees take towards evaluation. Chapter 7 considers how evaluation influences practice, issues of quality and limitations of evaluation.

5.1.1 Overview of the themes

As is part of the six-phase reflexive thematic analysis process, the reporting starts by presenting the themes generated through the process, before explanation of the analysis with data to support the interpretation. Themes are "a pattern of shared meaning organised around a central concept" (Braun and Clarke, 2022a, p.77) that summarise the core findings of the analysis. The abbreviated theme names from the analysis are:

Theme 1 – Multiple dimensions of evaluation: what, why, how and affect

Theme 2 – Values are foundational to evaluation in community music

Theme 3 – Community musicians adopt varying positions towards evaluation

Each of the three themes have sub-themes which add more detail and nuance to the central concept of each theme. The final iteration of themes is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Final version of themes from the thematic analysis process

Theme 1 – Multiple dimensions of evaluation: what, why, how and affect

How community musicians experience evaluation has multiple dimensions: *what* they do when they evaluate, *why* they evaluate, *how* they evaluate, and the *affect* that evaluation has on community musicians.

Sub-theme 1a – what evaluation is

Evaluation is not a singular activity but involves a multitude of actions, and there are differences in what interviewees understand evaluation to be, in addition to differences in what is being evaluated – the music-making process involved in community music or the outcomes it creates.

Sub-theme 1b – why community musicians evaluate

There are four main purposes of evaluation: *for practice*, *for participants*, *for funders/commissioners or managers*, and *for advocacy, celebration or sharing*. The purpose(s) of evaluation are key to whether it influences practice.

Sub-theme 1c – how community musicians evaluate

How community musicians enact evaluation varies primarily depending on the organisational structures they work within: who they are working for, their position in the organisation, and the degree of influence they have on evaluation in each particular situation. Community musicians display degrees of resistance and acquiescence to evaluation practices required of them that do not align with community music's values.

Sub-theme 1d – the affect of evaluation on community musicians

The affect of evaluation goes beyond the acute feelings and emotions community musicians experience when doing or thinking about evaluation, to a sustained pervasive underlying state which is felt at a person's core.

Theme 2 – Values are foundational to evaluation in community music

Community musicians' values are foundational to their views of evaluation in community music.

Sub-theme 2a – Inconsistency with values of community music

Some types of evaluation are inconsistent with the values community musicians associate with community music.

Sub-theme 2b – Some practices are irreconcilable with meaningful evaluation and cannot capture community music's complexity

Community musicians seek to make evaluation meaningful and worthwhile but there are some aspects of evaluation that are irreconcilable with meaningful evaluation, and some community musicians believe that community music's complexity cannot be captured by evaluation methods.

Theme 3 – Community musicians adopt varying positions towards evaluation

Community musicians adopt different positions towards evaluation, associated with many factors including their education, training and experience; the organisational structures they work within; how direct their relationships with funders are; the kind of community music they do; the intentions of their practice; and their strength of values.

Sub-theme 3a – Education, training and experience influences positions on evaluation

Community musicians' education, training and experience is a factor that appears to influence how much they interrogate and seek to progress their evaluation practice.

Sub-theme 3b – Different intentions and kinds of community music practice influence positions on evaluation

Community musicians engage in different kinds of community music practice that have different intentions which influence their positions on evaluation.

Sub-theme 3c – Positions within organisational structures and relationships with funding organisations effects positions on evaluation

Differing positions within organisational structures, and how direct their relationships with funding organisations are, effects community musicians' positions on evaluation

Sub-theme 3d – Strength of values are associated with positions on evaluation

Community musicians' varying strength of values is associated with how they position themselves regarding evaluation, such as some being unwavering to evaluation practice they perceive as "tokenistic", and positioning others as doing evaluation that is of lesser quality than their own.

A visual thematic map of the themes is also shown in Appendix 8. These themes illustrate a step in the analysis process. The purpose of presenting the final iteration of themes is to give an overview of the analysis that contributes to the argument developed further in the analysis and discussion chapters of the thesis.

5.2 How community music is conceptualised relevant to evaluation

5.2.1 Defining features of community music

An overview of defining characteristics of community music from published literature has been given. Here the interviewees' own definitions are presented, as their conceptualisations of community music are important for the analysis that comes later. Interviewees' definitions closely match the discourses of what community music is and what it does for people explored in the literature review, and also reflect the definitional difficulties and resistance to definition.

A question for all interviewees early in the interviews asked how they define community music. Some interviewees, such as Felix, revelled in evading definition. When asked how he defined community music, Felix responded:

> *That's a really good question. I tend, I try not to. I try not to define community music. (…) My quite contrarian argument would be if someone says it's community music and they're the ones doing it, they're probably right.* (Felix's interview)

Following this display of resistance, however, Felix continued to describe features of community music:

> *I know that there are probably purists in the world who would argue my work walks right on the boundary with music education. We often work in formal education settings – some people would argue that's not community music. I would disagree. I think it's about the approach. (…) I think there's an approach about creating with people, I think you do community arts with people rather than to them. I don't know how that works in schools, because I go in and the class are told that it's what's going to happen, but we're still creating together. No one's at the front directing all the time.* (Felix's interview)

The participatory and collaborative approach to creating music is one defining feature of community music for Felix. He also highlights how community music takes place in different settings, in this case schools, and the proximity of community music to music education. Felix's quote also references a lack of unity in people's definitions when he speaks of "purists" and disagreement.

Many other interviewees were similarly not able to offer a neat definition, but described features of community music, such as Debbie:

> *This is not the first time I've had this conversation, unsurprisingly, but I think… I don't think I have an answer definitively.   I think it changes for me quite a lot. I think it's quite a dynamic thing. But I'd say just now, I define community music as [long pause] erm, [long pause] the process of bringing [long pause] err, a collection of people together with a common purpose to create or develop, either create music or develop musical skills in a, sort of, group setting, that's… I feel like that's really vague, but it is something, I do struggle to define it.* (Debbie's interview)

The main point within Debbie's meandering definition is that community music brings people together to create music as a group. Not all interviewees struggled with definition in the way Debbie did. Owen's view was straightforward in comparison:

> *For me, it's just about using music within a social context for social outcomes. That's as far as it [definition] needs to go, as far as I'm concerned.* (Owen's interview)

The thematic analysis synthesised all the defining features of community music that interviewees spoke of, resulting in the list below:

- Social outcomes are as important as musical outcomes

- Making music in a group, where musicians and participants create music together or collaboratively

- Brings people together

- Builds or strengthens relationships (between community members or families)

- Takes place outside of formal education, fills gaps, or is a more flexible way of learning music than other music education

- Provides access and inclusion to music making for everyone

- Process is more important than a product or performance.

There is a hierarchy in the list above, with the importance of social outcomes being the most commonly named feature of community music by the interviewees. The collaborative nature of creating music in a group was the second most common feature, followed by bringing people together and strengthening relationships.

Whilst there is not one neatly defined way that the interviewees described what community music is, the list describes common elements that featured in multiple interviews, and demonstrates that the community musicians who participated in the research had understandings of community music that were consistent with discourses in the published literature, with many of the view that community music is not tightly defined or in need of a fixed definition. The amorphous and unboundaried nature of community music is relevant to the later analysis. If there is intangibility in the object of evaluation, there are implications for endeavours to evaluate it.

5.2.2 What interviewees value about the practice of community music

What interviewees value about community music concerns the nature of the practice that makes it a satisfying and worthwhile activity that they chose as their professional occupation. Responses to a question asked of all interviewees about what they value, were synthesised into four categories (*music*, *human flourishing*, *community-building* and *community music practice*). Appendix 10 gives a table with a fuller list of these categories.

Within the music category, interviewees value community music as having causal mechanisms on people. They perceive that music making enables fun and playfulness, creates eudaimonic feelings, and can be used instrumentally to improve wellbeing or quality of life. They also value the participatory way that music is created in community music, particularly the egalitarianism and collaboration which comes from a lack of hierarchy between a community musician and participant, and that community music also enables the community musician to share their love of music with others and introduces people to styles of music and musical experiences that are new to them.

The second category of human flourishing groups together the different ways that interviewees say that community music benefits participants – it empowers people, enables change for people, enables communication or self-expression, supports people's

creativity and supports relationships within families. These are all aspects that contribute to human flourishing which, according to VanderWeele (2017), is defined as:

> *Doing or being well in the following five broad domains of human life: (i) happiness and life satisfaction; (ii) health, both mental and physical; (iii) meaning and purpose; (iv) character and virtue; and (v) close social relationships.* (VanderWeele, 2017, p. 8149)

The third category of community-building uses emic categorisations from the interviewees' comments: they value that community music brings people together, supports social interaction, develops connections between people and builds a sense of community. Interviewees clearly have an intention to contribute to human flourishing and community-building through community music, and they value that they can make people's lives better through ameliorating deficits they perceive in society, such as a lack of opportunity for social interaction and a lack of social connection in communities.

What is notable when people speak about what they value about community music within these three categories, is the high level of conviction they have in their belief that community music making has transformative effects for people who participate. This is illustrated by Ann in a quote where she speaks about the joyfulness people experience when making music together:

> *And you rise because the power of music, when it's facilitated well, is that it becomes harmonious in some way, which might be rhythmically or musically or just emotionally. And you just suddenly unleash this genie out of a bottle and people... are transformed by it. I know those [are] very, very strong words, but I do feel that strongly about it, and that's what's driven me on to do it.* (Ann's interview)

Ann herself acknowledges that she is making a very strong claim that music is transformational for people, although her statement is not out of place in the community music discourses of social change and transformation outlined in the literature review. Another aspect of the evident conviction is how personal it is for interviewees, shown in this example from Jenny where she repeatedly emphasises that it is *her* love of music that is important to why she values helping others to make music:

> *I love music and I'm passionate about community building and creating space for people to feel valued and be together. I love music myself, you know, it's my passion, I love to sing, I love songs (...) there's something about song that really speaks to me. So, I love it when people can tell stories through their music. I love helping people write songs.*   (Jenny's interview)

Both Ann's and Jenny's strong conviction that community music has these benefits comes from direct experience through their work. This direct experience was widespread amongst the interviewees. Eric's interview provides an example where he speaks about the joy he gets from enabling young people in a youth club to experience music that is new to them:

> *I think they value the opportunity to do something that they wouldn't have been able to have done otherwise. So, you know, just, I love it (...) the look on young people's faces when, you know, I don't know, you bring in an instrument they've never seen before or (...) a piece that they've never heard before or show them something on YouTube that they've never even heard of or thought of.* (Eric's interview)

Within these three categories of community music, human flourishing and community-building there are both intrinsic and extrinsic value, for example, the quotes above from Jenny and Eric concern the intrinsic value of enabling people to experience music for its own sake. There are, however, equally strong convictions regarding an extrinsic instrumental value of music, for example, to improve wellbeing.

The fourth category of what interviewees value about community music concerns the practice of community music itself, and values that are fundamental to interviewees' conceptualisation of community music and beliefs they have about the nature and intention of the practice. Many interviewees value that there is a community of practice amongst UK community musicians that has a shared sense of purpose and a social identification with other community musicians, yet also acknowledges the plurality and range of practice that falls under the banner of community music. What interviewees value aligns to their definitions of community music, such as community music is inclusive of everyone, is led by people, respects their autonomy, and that the music making process is more important than a defined outcome or end-product.

The importance of what interviewees value about community music to investigating their perspectives on evaluation, is that community music practice is orientated around furthering social justice and has extrinsic value through its capabilities to make people's lives better and ameliorate deficits in society (such as lack of social connection in communities), whilst also, for example, including everyone, empowering people and respecting their autonomy. These are lofty ideals, and how such ambitions fit with interviewees' perceptions of evaluation is to be explored.

5.2.3 A plurality of practice and a community of practice in community music

It is a commonly accepted idea in the UK community music sector that the term *community music* encompasses a plurality of practice (Bowman, 2009; Camlin, 2018), and this notion is crucial to the analysis described later. Several interviewees emphasised the varied nature of community music practice as important to its definition. Both Felix's and Debbie's quotes (in section 5.2.1) regarding definition highlight that the amorphous nature of community music is important to them.

Interviewees' work and professional specialisms were very varied. Although some interviewees now specialise in one kind of work, they all have a background and experience in different kinds of community music and music education practice, and for most, this sits alongside professional music performance and/or creation. Many of the interviewees followed a portfolio career of different kinds of work. All interviewees did one or more types of community music activity categorised as:

- **Targeted projects:** often time-limited project-based work where the community musician works with people over time who have a shared characteristic or experience (for example disability, refugee, adopted children, live in a specific geographical area) where the aim is to support personal development or learning for individuals or to support relationships between people such as within families or groups of people who share characteristics.

- **Gig:** a community music workshop as a "gig" – a one-off experience for people where the purpose is usually to bring people together to have fun and experience making music.

- **Celebration:** a time-limited project that works towards a celebratory community performance, also where the purpose is to bring people together to have fun and enjoy making music.

- **Alternative to music education:** a kind of music education where community musicians are facilitators (rather than teachers that follow a curriculum) that

happens outside of schools, is an alternative to music making in schools, or where it does take place in schools, it is peripheral or additional to music curricula taught in schools.

- **Mentoring relationship:** using music as a basis for a mentoring relationship between an adult musician and a young person, with personal development goals for the individual.

- **Social justice and equity:** music making for social justice where there is an aim to address inequity in music making provision by offering something that caters for the needs of people who are excluded from other music making opportunities (often excluded for reasons such as poverty, cultural background or disability).

This plurality of practice is one reason that many community musicians are comfortable with the resistance to definition common in UK community music. Kate spoke about how the lack of definition was entirely appropriate for a practice that is led by participants and communities:

> *There's a quote by Lee Higgins that says, the very nature of community music defies tightly constructed labels or something like that, and I think the word defy is actually really crucial in that, because I think the fact that I love community music and the reason why I went into it and I didn't go into music education (…) was because it doesn't fit into these tightly constructed boxes – that there is so much freedom, so much choice, and if we're being participant-led, community-led, you know, there isn't any UK community music curriculum.* (Kate's interview)

Several interviewees emphasised the varied nature of community music practice as important to its definition. It is this plurality that they value about working as a community musician. Felix gives a detailed account of this:

> *I value (…) the breadth of it and the variety within it. I found it really interesting being around that Sound Sense table and listening to people who work with older people or people who work in prisons and that we can take so much from one another. I value that a lot. I value the fact that there's not a way. There's not one way. Sorry, to clarify that, what was Kathryn Deane's phrase? A way, not the way. There isn't one way of doing community music. We find the way that works best for the project that we're doing. (…) I value that it gives me flexibility and freedom to be responsive to what's going on.* (Felix's interview)

Felix's final sentence in this quote captures the essence of what community music is – a flexible practice that responds to what the people doing the music require.

Felix illustrates a further aspect of community music that is important to the forthcoming analysis – he perceives that there is a community of practice amongst community musicians. The origin of the term *communities of practice* is attributed to Lave and Wenger (1991), defined as a process of social learning where "groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly" (Wenger-Trayner, Wenger-Trayner, Reid and Bruderlein, 2023, p.11). There are three components that are necessary for a community of practice: a shared domain of interest, that members of the community interact with each other to share information or to undertake shared activities, and that members are *practitioners* who are practising within the domain (David, 2014). A further example that illustrates the importance of a community of practice to some comes from Owen, who speaks about the common purpose of community musicians which creates a community:

> *I value the community of it amongst community musicians, you know, whenever we get together, however different our approaches might be or our specialist areas are, everybody's in it for those, those moments of success that you have with people where music has unlocked something, shifted their perspective of themselves, changed their feeling of identity.*
> (Owen's interview)

Owen is describing a community of practice that aligns to the definition above – there is the domain of community music, there is interaction and sharing of approaches between community music *practitioners* and there is a shared enterprise of wanting to enable social outcomes for people through music. It is important to state that the notion of a community of practice was not expressed universally by all interviewees. Felix explicitly used the term community of practice and Owen described a situation of sharing amongst a community of practitioners, however, some interviewees did not mention it and others conveyed a sense of isolation in their work and of not being connected to others. Nevertheless, it is important to note the concept amongst community music discourse.

Section 5.2 of the thesis has described interviewees' conceptualisations of community music to set the scene for considering evaluation in community music. Many points will be revisited as the analysis progresses – the defining features of community music, what interviewees value about the practice, the varied nature of community music activities, and how a community of practice is important to some interviewees.

5.3 Multiple dimensions of evaluation

One of the three themes generated through the thematic analysis process was *multiple dimensions of evaluation*, which arose from interviewees' descriptions and definitions of evaluation. The metaphor of multiple dimensions was employed to convey the various elements and layers of complexity in how community musicians conceptualise and experience evaluation. It is vitally important to state that the interviewees did not have homogenous views or experiences of evaluation. It was apparent in the interview texts that interviewees were speaking about different aspects of evaluation, and within those aspects there were further layers of difference between their perspectives. The thematic analysis labelled the four main dimensions as:

- What

- Why

- How

- Affect.

There is an interconnectedness between all these dimensions which will be explored after they have all been described.

5.3.1 What community musicians do when they evaluate

Firstly, the *what* of evaluation concerns what interviewees think evaluation is and what they do when they evaluate. Again, although definitions from the academic literature have been considered, as a concept central to the research, interviewees' own definitions of evaluation are important for contextualising the analysis that follows. In the interviews, an elicitation activity asked everyone to respond to a Word Association game by stating some words or short phrases that came to mind when thinking about evaluation. This prompted some articulate descriptions and definitions of evaluation, for example:

> *When you're evaluating something, you are seeing how effective it is, you're gathering opinions and viewpoints. You're evaluating in order, I would say, to reflect and make improvements or changes or adaptations.*
> (Izzy's interview)

Many interviewees shared Izzy's perspective that evaluation involves judgements about effectiveness, collecting participant feedback, reflecting on the practice and adapting in response. However, in contrast, other interviewees such as Debbie, found it more difficult to express their thoughts, indicated by the filler words and pauses:

> *Erm [long pause]. Unease [laughs]. But also, er, like, validation. And...*
> *[long pause]. Er, development. Participatory.* (Debbie's interview)

It was notable in the interviewees' responses that they were speaking about evaluation in different ways, and this became central to the analysis.

There are many different activities that people do which interviewees recognised as evaluation. Although the term *evaluation* was commonly employed in the singular, evaluation was clearly not a singular activity but involved a multitude of actions, and there were differences in what interviewees understood evaluation to be. One example of these differences is how several interviewees' perception of evaluation included evaluation as a thing (a noun) or an event that takes place at a moment in time, whereas others saw evaluation more as an action that people take (a verb) or an ongoing process. Evaluation as a noun or event is illustrated by people speaking about an evaluation report or handing out a feedback form to participants as "the evaluation".   One example from Chris's interview shows how he speaks of evaluation as a noun/event:

> *There have been occasions that the evaluation has been just negative and*
> *quite hurtful.* (Chris's interview)

Here, Chris is talking about "the evaluation" which was some feedback he received from a teacher about a workshop he did in a school. In contrast to Chris's view of evaluation as a noun/event, Jenny speaks of evaluation as a process:

> *I think about evaluation as a continuous process, reflective, erm,*
> *formative, erm, important, embedded in my practice. Erm, this ground*
> *from which I grow the next lot of ideas.* (Jenny's interview)

Jenny is perhaps the interviewee whose viewpoint of evaluation as a verb/process is strongest and most different from Chris. The analysis considered all the interviewees in this characterisation of noun/event or verb/process. They did not fit neatly into binary categories of viewing evaluation as only a noun/event or only as a verb/process, but there was a spectrum of difference in how much interviewees viewed evaluation as a noun/event or verb/process. An example of an interviewee who is more central in this spectrum is Mark, who at times speaks about "the evaluation" meaning an evaluation report. However,

at other places in his interview he talks of evaluation in ways that acknowledge the action of evaluation, indicating that he sees evaluation both as a noun/event and verb/process:

> *I don't think it matters what the evaluation says. (…) It can be terrible or it can be good. As long as you've got the evaluation, do you know what I mean? (…) Nothing, nothing necessarily changes as a result of the evaluation, it's just documented that, you know, that's what happened. And I think, you know, within the community arts sphere, if you like, it is acceptable for the chain to come off sometimes.* (Mark's interview)

Mark is stating that it is important that there is an evaluation report that documents a project, but he also recognises that it is the act of engaging in evaluation that is an expectation when leading community arts projects. The analysis considered where each interviewee was situated on this spectrum and explored whether there were patterns that might explain their differing positions. An exploration of reasons for different perspectives features in Chapter 6.

A second aspect of the *what* of evaluation concerns the multitude of actions that are involved in evaluation, particularly the methods interviewees utilised to gather data and processes such as reflective practice that they considered to be a type of evaluation.[14] Interviewees spoke of methods of evaluation they had encountered in their work which were coded in the analysis process as:

Bespoke digital platforms

Case studies

Evaluation and feedback forms

Individual Learning Plans

Informal verbal feedback

Interviews

Journals and reflective diaries

Observations by an external evaluator

Quantitative scales

Peer observation or peer review

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[14] Lucas (1991) defines reflective practice as "the systematic enquiry into one's own practice to improve that practice and to deepen one's understanding of it" (p.84).

Reflecting is in-the-moment evaluation to adapt to participants' needs

Reflective meetings with co-workers and partners (including facilitated by evaluator)

Reporting

Sharing with co-workers is integrated into meetings

Smiley faces

Sticky notes for feedback or writing informal comments

Sticky notes with a purpose of asking a specific question

Surveys

Video data

Wellbeing metrics

Wow moments.

This list summarises *what* interviewees do that they consider to be evaluation. There are several notable aspects about the list of methods relevant to the analysis. Firstly, that the methods are primarily qualitative. The quantitative methods were surveys, wellbeing metrics and quantitative scales. Examples of these methods interviewees specifically named in the interviews were the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale[15] and "Youth Music scales".[16] The second notable point is the recurrence of reflection as a method of evaluation that features in different ways. The concept of reflective practice was discussed by many of the interviewees, and several considered it to be a central element of their professional practice. There was evidence in the interview texts that all but two of the interviewees considered reflection or reflective practice to be a type of evaluation. The list above shows there is a wide array of data collection methods and processes that are used in the community music sector which are conceptualised as evaluation. It is an aggregated list and individual interviewees named only a few of these methods and processes as ones they engaged with, demonstrating the differences between *what* interviewees do when

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[15] The Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale is a scale-level measure of mental wellbeing that is widely used in health and social care in the UK.
https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/sci/med/research/platform/wemwbs/

[16] The UK charity Youth Music distribute funding for music making projects for children and young people. They have developed a series of scale-level questionnaires for funded organisations to use in their evaluation. https://network.youthmusic.org.uk/file/6214/download?token=i6oqKl5O

they evaluate, as one interviewee could be doing entirely different evaluation activities than another. Just as community music is a plural practice, so too is evaluation.

A further way of thinking about the *what* of evaluation is what different kinds of communication or ways of transferring information interviewees utilise in evaluation. It was noted that several interviewees said they do not ask people to write when requesting feedback for evaluation, predominantly because writing is not a form of communication that everyone can do. This observation led to greater analysis of the different kinds of communication or ways of transferring information that are at play in the different evaluation methods community musicians experience, with six categories created:

- Written communication

- Verbal communication

- Non-verbal communication

- Musical communication

- Sensing or observing

- Measurement or numeric representation.

Written communication and verbal communication are somewhat self-evident, for example, a written questionnaire and verbal interview. However, other categorisations in this list deserve explanation. Non-verbal communication is a commonly understood concept, but it is worth considering how the interviewees recognised non-verbal communication in the context of evaluation. Ann works primarily with disabled young people, and she described how someone expresses their feelings with non-verbal communication:

> *I'm just thinking of one chap who (…) has big speech and language delay, he can never find the words, even though he is quite verbal. (…) He would just come in the room and just throw his arms wide like this with the excitement of another workshop coming up.* (Ann's interview)

In terms of evaluation, Ann is interpreting the non-verbal communication of a participant gesturing with their arms as him having positive emotions about coming to the workshop. She also gives an example of musical communication:

> *The sense of community amongst the people who are participating, and it could be a very small group, it could be an individual or it could be a room full of people. And you get that moment. I don't even know if it has*

a name, but you get that moment when everybody locks in together and the music becomes bigger than the sum of its parts. (Ann's interview)

It is the last sentence in the quote that has relevance to evaluation as it demonstrates the judgement Ann is making regarding what is successful about the group's music making. Ann is interpreting "that moment" as a musical experience (possibly entrainment) which creates the social outcomes being sought – that people have a feeling of connectedness with others – which is communicated to Ann *musically* rather than through other types of communication such as people verbalising their feelings of connectedness.

The category of *sensing* may sound vague, but it fits within the social constructionist paradigm of the research. One interviewee themselves constructed sensing as a way of understanding in-the-moment evaluation of what is taking place during community music making:

> *I think we, as practitioners we're different, we're just different. So, we will look for different things and we notice different things and I guess in terms of how it's developed me, I think it's made me more aware of the fact that I'm really good at feeling, like, behaviour changes or atmosphere changes, which sounds really weird because we're on Zoom and how can you feel? But I can still sense when things are too much for, like, an individual or have gone a bit, you know, if there's a rift between participants, I can sense that.* (Debbie's interview)

The categories of sensing and observing were linked together, as there seemed to be some alignment with the "other ways of seeing" that Ann describes which she interprets as observation:

> *I think there's other ways of seeing as a workshop leader, for example, there's other ways of noticing how engaged people are. And I wouldn't always find the one-to-one interview or those kind of the sheets that you hand out and how are you feeling on the scale of one to seven or whatever, you know, it's just a bit more paperwork, it's just another adult asking questions and really what I am trying to do (...) is launch something that has some life to it. And the only way that can really happen is I need to be able to physically withdraw. So, it's not really my style, if you want, to question and find out, I'm more of an observer in a way, to see if they can just be self-starting, if they can get on with it, if they're growing in confidence and autonomy. (...) I'm just reflecting on what I've observed.* (Ann's interview)

Ann's quote makes clear that she values reflecting on actions that she observes. She uses that reflection to make judgements about intended outcomes, such as increases in

confidence, above forms of evaluation that require participants to self-reflect and verbalise their thoughts through methods such as interviews.

These two quotes from Debbie and Ann illustrate a further point relevant to the *what* of evaluation. These interviewees are not only speaking about what they do when they evaluate, which, as already stated, can vary between different people, but Ann and Debbie are speaking about differences in what they are evaluating. Debbie is speaking about evaluating the process of the workshop and making real-time adaptations in response to "behaviour changes or atmosphere changes". Ann, however, is speaking about outcomes for participants that can be observed in a workshop such as increased autonomy.

Returning to the final categorisation of different types of communication or ways of transferring information, several interviewees spoke about evaluation methods that use numeric representation to measure change in people. The Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale was named, although interviewees spoke of "evaluation scales" and "smiley faces" (meaning a series of visual images ranging from a sad face to a happy face) that were not specific named methods. There was a widespread familiarity amongst interviewees of scale-level tools that aimed to quantify participants' experience for evaluation purposes.

In summary, how interviewees conceptualise *what* evaluation of community music is, has further layers of differentiation that adds to the metaphor of multiple dimensions:

- Evaluation can be a noun/event or verb/process

- What methods and data interviewees use to evaluate

- What interviewees do to communicate or transfer information when they evaluate

- What is being evaluated – the process of the community music making or the outcomes it creates.

5.3.2 Why community musicians evaluate

The second main dimension of evaluation is *why* community musicians evaluate. The thematic analysis process created four purposes of evaluation that came from inductive

coding of the interview transcripts and how the interviewee's themselves view the purposes of evaluation:

- For practice

- For participants

- For funders, commissioners or managers

- For advocacy, celebration or sharing.

Regarding *for practice*, this concerns community musicians wanting to critique their own practice, to improve it and to understand if their work does in fact achieve what they think it does. Ann illustrates this point and why it is important to her:

> *You need to know that the journey you're on is actually useful. Or does it matter? (…) Is it really that important? I think it reflects really on the way my brain works as well. I can't just do things – I need to know. I do them and then I need to know why I'm doing them and what the consequence is of that.* (Ann's interview)

The second purpose, *for participants*, is only subtly different, where interviewees want to ensure that their work is appropriate for the people participating, for example Izzy, who primarily works with disabled young people and their families:

> *We plan to do all these activities but when you evaluate that – were those activities appropriate for the people that we we're working with? Is the setting appropriate for the people we're working with? (…) Is what we're doing appropriate for them or are we still doing something for a different group of people that we had three years ago and now the demographics have changed? So, we have to check that it's appropriate all the time.* (Izzy's interview)

Ann also works with disabled young people and shares Izzy's perspective that as disabled young people have such diverse needs, evaluation is crucial to ensuring that community music practice is appropriate for participants. However, not all evaluating *for practice* is directly focused on participants. Ann's comment above includes an example of this when she says, "you need to know that the journey you're on is actually useful". For Ann, professional understanding and satisfaction are reasons why she evaluates her own practice, in addition to evaluating *for participants*. A further example comes from Jenny, for whom evaluation is "ground from which I grow the next lot of ideas" and an important step in developing ideas for future work. Jenny also has reasons why she evaluates for

practice that do not focus on purely making improvements and adaptations for participants.

Evaluating for funding organisations, commissioners or managers is a third purpose.[17] George contrasts evaluating *for funders*, whom he says are more interested in the quality of outcomes, with evaluating *for practice* which is concerned with the quality of the process:

> *I think in community music, we often have this idea of the process. If the process is engaging, meaningful, impactful, is leading to developments in the participants, whether that be musical or personal, then that would be a quality kind of basis for evaluating the project. Often, though, (…) if the participants met X, Y and Z, then that defines the project as being quality rather than the process. I think as community musicians, we strive for process quality, and I think funders and perhaps programme managers are often really about outcome quality.* (George's interview)

George's point reiterates the dimension of *what* is being evaluated already described – the community music process or the outcome of the activity – which illustrates the interconnectedness of the different dimensions.

Beth also speaks of outcomes regarding evaluation *for funders*. She feels compelled to prove through evaluation that her work achieves the anticipated outcomes:

> *Sometimes you feel like you're reinventing the wheel and you're like, well, this project has value, so we, it's frustrating that you have to keep asking for money for something that clearly has an impact on families and organisations. But I understand that you do have to get the evaluation together to kind of prove that.* (Beth's interview)

As a worker on the project, Beth has observed the benefit for families, therefore the purpose of evaluation is to demonstrate the value to funders.

The fourth purpose of evaluation is to advocate for community music as a way of working and to share or celebrate achievements and acknowledge difficulties. Naomi acknowledges that there is a difference between evaluation she perceives as *for funders* and evaluation *for advocacy, celebration or sharing*:

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[17] For brevity, the term *for funders* is used to encompass funding organisations who distribute grants, commissioning organisations who contract music organisations to deliver a service, and managers who mediate and implement the evaluation requirements of funding and commissioning organisations.

For me, it is having a really honest representation of the project because the work's not always easy, it is genuinely about learning, if possible, but I'm not really like, that interested in evaluating just for the funders, even though it has to happen, but ultimately, because the work that we do is, I don't know if it's like left field or not, it's not necessarily, you know, community music is, it's like, you know, [in a] bubble of what it does. But I do feel like there's something in learning to advocate for this way of working and finding a thorough enough way to do that, that is motivating. And when we can show what the work is like, and also captures the stuff that's been really hard or difficult (…) it's really important that we learn from that somewhere. (Naomi's interview)

Both George and Naomi show an awareness that evaluation can be for different purposes. A comment from Owen not only echoes Ann's view that evaluation can aid professional understanding, but also shows the complexity of purposes and how they can sometimes overlap:

You're measuring efficacy. But you're also investigating, creating a framework around which you can understand whether what you're doing is working or not working or within which parameters it is or isn't working. You're holding up a mirror to it. You're being curious about what's working and what's not working. (Owen's interview)

Owen's comment about measuring efficacy points to multiple purposes, including accountability to funders. Measuring efficacy could be *for practice*, to judge whether the practice is doing what the community musician intends. It could be *for advocacy* and celebrating that the practice is effective at reaching its aims. Or it could be for all three of these purposes.

These quotes from George, Naomi and Owen show their awareness of the different purposes of evaluation, however, not all interviewees demonstrated such an awareness.

5.3.3 How community musicians evaluate

The third dimension in the thematic analysis is *how*, which is not intended to describe the methods interviewees said they used (which has already been explored as *what* they do when they evaluate) but concerns a broader over-arching approach of how they enact evaluation. This varies between interviewees primarily depending on the organisational structures they work within: who they work for; their position in the organisation; and the degree of influence they have on evaluation in each particular situation. These broad

approaches can be categorised into six different groups, with some interviewees fitting into each group. The naming of each group comes from my analysis of how interviewees enact evaluation:

- **Managed:** community musicians are required to do specific evaluation tasks by the organisation/manager they work for (George is an example who fits primarily into this category)

- **Responding to funders:** community musicians plan how to evaluate in response to what they perceive funding organisations require of them (Naomi and Ann speak of doing this)

- **Commissioning:** community musicians select and commission others to evaluate their work such as an external evaluator or a peer who has expertise in the practice (Hilary, for example)

- **Subjected to commissioned evaluation:** community musicians' work is evaluated by, or in ways designed by, others such as external evaluators who they do not choose themselves (Kate, for example)

- **Leading:** community musicians take control and lead on how they evaluate using methods and approaches that *they* select (Owen, for example)

- **Multiple modes of enacting evaluation:** some community musicians have such a varied mix of work that they enact evaluation in various ways described above (Jenny, for example).

The examples that follow illustrate some of these categories. An example of *commissioning* evaluation comes from Hilary, who prefers to select and commission an external evaluator to evaluate her company's work when project budgets allow. It is because Hilary leads her own organisation that she can make this choice, but it is not the only reason. Hilary wants the purpose of evaluation to be *for practice* – to have someone who themselves has expertise in music workshop facilitation, whose opinion she trusts and values, to critique the practice. Having an external evaluator who has the expertise to peer review the practice is important to Hilary, demonstrated in the quote below, when she comments on

others' approaches to evaluation that fulfil different purposes to the peer review kind of evaluation she finds helpful in critiquing her work:

> *We prefer it [the evaluator] to be a music professional because that's the side of the project for us. That is the most important… But if a partner does it, they will quite often appoint somebody who's just a general, either science engagement officer or arts engagement or something like that, who doesn't have any specialised knowledge. So, they are probably more inclined to take what's being said by participants and audiences as the evidence. It's just different, I think. It means that we don't get the same skill feedback, I guess.* (Hilary's interview)

When collaborating on a project with a partner organisation, Hilary is not able to exercise choices over the kind of evaluation she would like and when partners select an evaluator who does not have expertise in the practice, the experience is less useful to her.

In contrast to Hilary, Kate's experience of evaluation is *managed* and *subjected to commissioned evaluation*. Kate is a freelance community musician who works for many different organisations. For most projects, how she enacts evaluation is at the direction of others – either project managers or evaluators who are appointed by her contracting organisation:

> *My experience of evaluation has never really been direct. As a practitioner, it's often something that has happened at the end of the programme or by an independent person. Erm, from my understanding, and again, I've often not always been in the room where it's been communicated because I'm a practitioner on the project, erm, I've always got the sense, for a lot of different programmes, it's for the purpose of measuring the impact and ensuring the funding goals and aims were met in order to go back to the report.* (Kate's interview)

Kate clearly links this approach to evaluation to a purpose of reporting to funders, and it is evident that she does not get to exercise choices in how the projects she works on are evaluated.

Owen is an example of an interviewee who has taken control of evaluation by designing a bespoke digital platform so that all community musicians who work for his organisation gather and store wellbeing metrics and qualitative evaluation data from participants in the same way.

Beyond naming these six categories of how interviewees enact evaluation, the analysis explored how they respond to these different ways of enacting evaluation.

5.3.3.1 Spectrum of resistance and acquiescence to evaluation

The analysis noted an important pattern in the data across interviewees concerning how they enact evaluation. In situations where they are enacting evaluation that is directed or influenced by others, there are interviewees who acquiesce to practices they feel obliged to engage with, and there are some who show resistance. As with elsewhere where the metaphor of a spectrum is employed to describe the analysis, interviewees do not necessarily occupy fixed positions on the acquiescence-resistance spectrum. Interviewees show a tendency to dwell in one place on the spectrum, but they can adopt different positions at different times and regarding different kinds of evaluation. Considering the plurality of the *what*, *why* and *how* of evaluation, it is perhaps not surprising that interviewees adopt differing positions. The reasons that interviewees show resistance include: evaluation practices do not align with how they prefer to evaluate; a wish to evaluate for different purposes; practices that are not consistent with their values; or practices are detrimental to participants' experience. When interviewees exercise resistance, this can involve actions to enact evaluation in alternative ways rather than acquiescing to forms of evaluation they are not comfortable with.

Examples of interviewees who adopt positions at the acquiescence end of the spectrum are Mark, Felix, Paula, Beth and George. Mark and Felix appear happy to go through the motions of evaluation that are focused on reporting to funders and commissioners, and they accept the status quo of how things are. Following speaking about writing evaluation reports for funders, Mark shows his acceptance:

> *I don't kind of mind it. It's OK, it doesn't jar on me, I mean, you know, I understand, I'm a grown up, I understand there's a need for it to be there, the formal stuff, rather than, 'no, I'm not doing that'.* (Mark's interview)

Mark was then pressed to say why it needs to be there, which reveals how much he perceives evaluation to be an obligation of receiving funding:

> *Because I wouldn't get any funding to practice my work or, you know, it would be harder to get funding, to deliver work that I do. That's, as simple as that. There would be no funding, and that's true across all, you know, all the organisations that I work for.* (Mark's interview)

So, Mark acquiesces to do the kind of evaluation that he perceives will enable him to obtain funding for his work. When Mark was asked if he had a magic wand, what would he change

about evaluation, his response shows his acquiescence to practices he feels obliged to undertake:

> *From my point of view, [if] I could wave the magic wand, would be not to have to do it at all, do you know what I mean [laughs] because it is another job. But I don't mind. I don't mind doing it. But it's a, it kind of interferes with the practice sometimes. (…) All of that report writing and not really much about practice. So, I think practice is more important. You know, being able to do the job rather than write about how you would do the job if you did it again.* (Mark's interview)

Mark states that he values the practice more than he values evaluation that he perceives is *for funders,* yet he acquiesces to undertake evaluation that "interferes with the practice" even though he would prefer not to.

Like Mark, George constructs a position of resignation to working with evaluation practices that are influenced by funders:

> *Because it is so ingrained into the way that projects are currently run by funding bodies, and that I work for, obviously I won't speak for everybody's practice because everybody might be different, but I think it is... It's just become an ingrained way of working so I'm quite neutral to it, I don't really have a, I don't really have a dislike or a like for it.* (George's interview)

Although George says he is "neutral" to it and it is "an ingrained way of working", it is evident from elsewhere in his interview that he feels discomfort with "ticky-box" evaluation that he perceives lacks the depth to understand what enables change for people. George also has a view that funders are interested in outcomes whereas he gives more value to the quality of processes (see earlier quote in section 5.3.2). These examples from George present conflicting accounts that illustrate the complexity of his stance. He states that he is neutral to practices that he accepts because they are "ingrained" in funding structures, yet he also recognises that evaluation *for funders* has a focus that can be at odds with how he values the process of community music. This neutrality is acquiescence to a form of evaluation that does not foreground improving practice or participant experience.

Some interviewees are aware of their acquiescence, and they are far from comfortable with it. The quote below is an example of the relevance of Foucauldian Discourse Analysis in the research's theoretical framework as Paula's choice of words "corporate hat on" intentionally has an underlying meaning that alludes to the power status of her employing organisation when she has to represent the organisation's evaluation practices:

Obviously I put on my, I would say, corporate hat on, you know, it's something that I say, these are the ILPs[18], this is how it works within [name of organisation]. And it's a chance for us to have a two-way conversation and for me to help you understand how the session's gone for you and for you to tell me what you notice, what went well for you during the session. So obviously, putting my corporate hat on, that's, that's how I position it. But uptake is low. (Paula's interview)

Paula's use of the metaphor "put on my corporate hat" has the effect of distancing herself from her actions. What she means here is that she enacts a role which is in the interests of the organisation when she acquiesces to do the practices she does not agree with (asking participants to complete an ILP form).

At the other end of the resistance-acquiescence spectrum, the interviewees who most strongly resist practices they are not comfortable with are Owen and Kate. Owen says he refuses to ask people to complete forms, which shows his strength of feeling about one particular method of gathering evaluation data:

The ability to be able to capture video data, which is a hundred times better than a bloody feedback form. I don't do feedback forms as a matter of course, like as a matter of principle, I'm just like no, not doing them, they're rubbish. It's, it's like, it just makes me feel 'eurgh'. But if you are building technology that facilitates the ability to utilise phones, to be able to easily capture video feedback where people are being honest and just talking and words and things are tumbling out of them. (Owen's interview)

What marks Owen out amongst the interviewees is how he not only resists certain practices he is not comfortable with, but he has developed alternative methods and his own systems to record data using digital films so that he does not have to acquiesce to evaluation that he is not comfortable with. Also notable from Owen's resistance, is the leadership he shows which rejects traditional power dynamics between commissioners and community music organisations:

We spend quite a lot of time of pushing back actually and saying, no, we're not going to capture that the way you want it. We're going to do it this way because it's better. And this is why it's better. And you can back it up with the academic understanding and the academic referencing and convince them, because they also often don't know what they're doing. Let's be clear. And what they're looking for is reassurance. (Owen's interview)

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[18] ILP is an abbreviation for Individual Learning Plan.

Owen's confidence in "pushing back" comes from the satisfaction he has with the evaluation methods and systems he has developed for his work, which he believes adequately convey the high quality of his work to commissioners. His resistance to practices that he is not comfortable with have led to developing alternatives that are better suited to the context of his work.

Kate describes a situation where she tried to resist particular methods of data collection that she considered to be unethical, but she was not successful in influencing evaluation:

> *I've also been on programmes where I felt sometimes they can be actually unethical and, you know, there's been language barriers and, you know, even on the programme recently, erm, it was very important for women to give consent and they didn't have the language to understand the form and it was down to me and my co-practitioner to try and explain and I didn't, I didn't really feel comfortable about that. And when I raised it, (…) it was like, no, this is something we have to do. It's very difficult in terms of paperwork-heavy and tick boxes, but this is just something we have to do. And it was, it was awkward and it was difficult. (…) I felt like as a community organisation and as a community music practice, it is our moral responsibility to address inaccessible evaluation processes.* (Kate's interview)

Kate is describing practices that conflict with her values and an evaluator overrides Kate's attempts to influence evaluation, resulting in her acquiescing to "unethical" implementation of methods to which participants cannot truly consent.

Izzy speaks of acquiescing to collecting quantitative data for the organisation that has commissioned her work, even though it is of no value to her:

> *And we can do it. Like, for example, if we work for a music service, we can produce the statistics. We can say this number of people access the session. This percentage of people said it had a positive influence, you know, I can do all of those things. And I understand that they're necessary for somebody. I don't know who. But I, it's just a process that you have to do in order to be able to deliver the work that actually matters.* (Izzy's interview)

Izzy explains why she acquiesces even though doing so is not consistent with her values:

> *Our main focus is the people that we're working with and that's our value – our value is, that what we want to do, we want to do it as well as we can do. (…) So, you know, we know that what we're doing, that person will never get that hour of their life back, so we need to make it the best hour that it can be. And we also know that that person might not be alive next year. And that's a real thing because, you know, they've got complex medical needs. So, we know that if we've got to do that piece of paper to allow that hour to happen, we want that hour to be the best that it is. But*

we, I suppose you could say we've got a very person-centred practice and that might make us seem like we've got tunnel vision to all of these external things that need to happen. But we realise that these need to happen to make this happen. (Izzy's interview)

Izzy is showing her pragmatism by balancing evaluation that is focused on what is important to her, with evaluation that enables the work to be funded or commissioned.

5.3.4 Affect of evaluation on community musicians

The affect of evaluation on community musicians is the fourth dimension. The choice of the term *affect* for this dimension encompasses the feelings and emotions that interviewees experience when doing or thinking about evaluation, but also draws on the meaning of affect from the discipline of psychology, recognising that the affective underlying state that evaluation can have for community musicians is more complex than acutely felt emotions. Drew (2023) describes the difference between affect and emotion, with affect being a basic feeling state which is felt at a person's "core", that is often unconscious and pervasive, but less intense and more sustained than emotion. In contrast, he describes emotion as "complex psychological states that are often more consciously and acutely felt, but which then fade away more quickly" that are "often tied to specific external stimuli" (Drew, 2023, no pagination). Again, there were multiple layers to this dimension: feelings and emotions, investment in evaluation, and the lack of agency, control and influence regarding evaluation.

5.3.4.1 Affect, feelings and emotions

The analysis does not delve deeply into distinguishing what interviewees are speaking of as either emotion, feelings or affects, but considers that acutely felt emotions are intertwined with more pervasive affective states that are associated with previous repeated experiences of evaluation. The emotions and feelings expressed by the interviewees when they spoke about evaluation were very evident. Chris's response to the Word Association activity primarily included definitional aspects of evaluation:

Formal. Assessment. Argh. Informal. Erm. Professional development. Argh. Demands. Monitoring. Erm, forms. Discussions. (…) Formative and summative. (Chris's interview)

However, inclusion of the words "Argh. Demands" strays from definition with Chris constructing how evaluation makes him feel. Chris's non-linguistic vocalisation "Argh" communicates, through his tone of voice and volume in the interview recording, a recoiling from the unpleasant demanding nature of evaluation to him.

Debbie's response to the Word Association activity (quoted earlier in section 5.3.1) also includes a description of how she feels about evaluation, "unease". Many interviewees include feelings they experience when they respond to *evaluation* in the Word Association activity. Jenny's feelings are explicit as she begins her response with the adverb "sadly":

Sadly, the first word that comes into my head is reporting and monitoring which isn't really what I want to think about when I think about evaluation. (Jenny's interview)

As the interviews progress, another emotion common to several interviewees is frustration, although there are different things that they find frustrating. Beth experiences frustration when she feels that evaluation does not convey the quality of the work and can misinterpret feedback:

Love quality and, and I think that's why I find myself so frustrated, because I think feeding back and evaluations can be really fantastic things, erm, but my history with them has been quite frustrating and I understand the value of doing that, of getting all that information in and reporting, and it being quality (…) to find that mistranslated and misunderstood is frustrating. (Beth's interview)

The phrase "my history with them" makes explicit that Beth's frustration is rooted in previous experience. Similarly, Izzy expresses frustration that stems from experiences of when learning comes from an evaluation, but circumstances do not allow the learning to be acted on:

Yeah, I think, the difficulty is if an evaluation happens, evaluations are only good, if then what you find out from the evaluation actually happens, you do something with that and it affects the practice or affects the way that the organisation runs or, you know, and, err, and sometimes that's not possible because the funding is not there or sometimes that's not possible because the times don't allow, the workforce is not there. So, then you just do an evaluation and you know how you want it to be, but then it's not possible to be that way. So, it just becomes really frustrating. (Izzy's interview)

Both Izzy and Beth's previous experiences of evaluation that caused frustration, show how emotions can be associated with sustained affective states that are not necessarily tied to one incident and have an enduring effect.

Emotion and affects such as sadness, unease and frustration that come from experiences of evaluation demonstrate instances when evaluation has not been a worthwhile and positive endeavour in the eyes of the interviewees, which can impact on interviewees' investment in evaluation.

5.3.4.2 Investment in evaluation

One notable difference between the interviewees was the overall sense in their interview of how much they seemed interested and engaged in evaluating their work and of critiquing and developing evaluation practices – how invested they were in evaluation. There were four broad stances on the extent of investment in evaluation generally, which were named in the thematic analysis as:

- Uninterested and accepting

- Uncertain and questioning

- Conflicted, questioning and developing

- Confident, committed and innovating.

Those in the *uninterested and accepting* category were typified as doing what is required of them by managers, commissioners or funders, but with little interest or investment in evaluation – they accept that there is a professional expectation that community musicians evaluate their work, or it is something they must do to get funding, so they do it. An *uninterested and accepting* position is shown in this account by Mark:

> *I'm fortunate in as much that, yes, I do develop my own work and I've got my own direct work, but then I also work for other organisations and they take care of all of that, do you know what I mean? I just turn up as the artist, do the job, send the invoice and go, you know, I don't have to get involved in the evaluation side of things. There are some things (…) where occasionally I do have to do evaluation, but it's not so often these days. So, for example, we did a project over [name of place]. (…) I wrote a report, you know, which included all of those things: it was video footage, there was photos, there was statistics, there was budget breakdown,*

there was feedback from participants. So, you know, I'm aware that was a requirement of the funding. I'm aware that it needs to be done. And once I get into writing an evaluation report, it ends up being a, you know, a proper job with all sorts of statistics and graphics and stories and all the rest of it. So, you know, if I'm asked to do it, I don't, I don't mind doing it. (Mark's interview)

Mark has an acceptance that writing an evaluation report can be a funding requirement and he also appreciates when he is not required to do that on the occasions when he works for other organisations.

The *uncertain and questioning* category describes people who think more about evaluation. They question why we evaluate and what it is for, but generally they find it quite challenging. Paula's comment which opens the thesis demonstrates that she is currently dissatisfied, but she has no solutions to the challenges she experiences:

Is there a solution to evaluation out there for music making, because if there is, I want it. I want it now. I think it's something we're all struggling with in community music. (Paula's interview)

A further example of *uncertain and questioning* comes from Debbie, who was quoted earlier as responding to the Word Association activity with "unease" around evaluation:

I try to make evaluation a big part of individual sessions, but I think I said unease because at the moment I'm really struggling with some of my non-verbal participants. I sometimes feel like I don't receive the same level of feedback from them that I would like. (…) I don't feel like I find a way of allowing them to feedback in a way that's more suitable and equivalent to, say, if there was someone else who was speaking. Um, I think that's where the unease comes from (…) because it is important to me (…) it does come from the participants first and foremost. Because you can get feedback from parents and carers and things like that, but I think it's so important to let the participants shape future sessions as much as possible. So yeah, I think the unease comes from just not having as good an evaluation system as I'd like to at the moment. (Debbie's interview)

The view Debbie is expressing in this quote shows greater interest in evaluating her work than the quote from Mark conveys. Later in the interview, Debbie speaks about how she would like more guidance on evaluation and for there to be an evaluation framework that every organisation uses so that community musicians have consistency between organisations. However, she recognises that such a framework would need to be flexible to meet different people's needs. These two examples show Debbie's position: she places importance on evaluating her work, and she wants to develop, but she demonstrates an uncertainty over how to do so. It is important to highlight that Debbie is speaking about

one particular aspect of evaluation in the quote: the difficulty of obtaining feedback for evaluation directly from non-verbal participants. As she states, this is an aspect of evaluation that she values highly, therefore, the unease she feels over this one type of evaluation creates an affective state around evaluation generally.

Next there are interviewees in the category of *conflicted, questioning and developing*. These people are critically questioning the evaluation practices they encounter and have made some headway with seeking solutions. They view evaluation as essential to ensuring that their work is good, appropriate for the people they are working with and person-centred – but they experience some discomfort in practices they are involved in. They feel they have an obligation to their employers, project managers or funders to do evaluation in a certain way such as asking people to fill in evaluation forms, even though they feel it detracts from people's experiences or does not make any difference. They feel that evaluation can be inappropriate, tokenistic – even unethical – and they feel a frustration that learning that comes from evaluation is not acted on. Naomi gives an example of *conflicted, questioning and developing*:

> *Sometimes I feel like we need to talk about it more, always, because [there's] always more to explore with the project and the practice. (…) We're getting better. At the moment we're trying to streamline the evaluation across the whole organisation, because we're still quite, like, funder-led (…) the projects are big, there's multiple funders and so the evaluation is really complex. (…) I'd be like, oh my god, have we done the groundwork? Are the plans in place? What should we be gathering? Have we been able to gather it, what we needed to do? I think, erm, I'm really invested in it, but I'm also, I find it hard to, like the process of it always feels like, errch [screeching sound].* (Naomi's interview)

It is evident that Naomi gives a lot of attention to evaluation, that she would like to give it even more attention, and she values how evaluation can develop the practice. But the overall sense of the quote above is that she is not content with the current situation. She does not feel comfortable with being "funder-led" and her company is striving to develop their practices to address this discomfort. Naomi's final sentence shows the emotion that is associated with her position of *conflicted, questioning and developing.* Although she struggles to find the words, the screeching vocalisation "errch" was interpreted as imitating a car breaking sharply so not to travel in the wrong direction, which, along with "I find it hard", shows the difficulty Naomi feels currently towards evaluation.

Confident, committed and innovating are people who are very aware that evaluation is integral to their practice. They are committed to it, they have developed lots of skill, they think about it a lot, and they have adapted and innovated so that the evaluation practices they do are relevant and appropriate to *their* practice and the contexts in which they work. Owen is the interviewee who most strongly and consistently expresses a position that could be described as *confident, committed and innovating*. When asked about how he feels about evaluation, he responds:

> *I'm genuinely excited about it [laughs], which I imagine is not the answer that you get, because data is king. Data is everything. (…) The whole point of this, community music, is to get, for me, social outcomes. (…) If you understand how you do it and what works and what doesn't work, then it gets better and you get more of those smiles and transformative moments and changes in people's lives. So why would you not embrace it and get excited about it?* (Owen's interview)

Owen's confidence and commitment regarding evaluation is evident. Elsewhere in the interview he speaks at length about the bespoke digital platform he has developed to record evaluation data and how particular data methods have been effective at demonstrating the intended outcomes of the work. Owen has innovated and developed his evaluation practice tailored to his work which is a contrast to interviewees in the other categories. Owen being "excited" by evaluation constructs a positivity about evaluation not present in the majority of interviews.

As with other aspects of the analysis, the metaphor of a spectrum of difference is employed – from *uninterested and accepting* to *confident, committed and innovating.* There were not neatly constructed boundaries between one category and another, but as with any attempt at typologising a group of people, there is some fuzziness. Several interviewees were placed between the *conflicted, questioning and developing* and *confident, committed and innovating* categories, such as Jenny, Ann and Hilary.

These categories of investment in evaluation are linked to interviewees' affective state and feelings regarding evaluation, along with the dimension of evaluation explored in the next section – a common lack of agency, control and influence over evaluation in their work.

5.3.4.3 Lack of agency, control and influence

A key element of many interviewees' affective state regarding evaluation were their feelings of a lack of agency and control regarding evaluation, and many were dissatisfied with the level of influence they had over how they evaluate their work. George's comment paints a stark picture of his situation:

> *These decisions are often made by somebody else and it's just a case of just following them.* (George's interview)

This quote conveys a sense of powerlessness which George seems to accept. Ann gives two reasons why there is a lack of agency in how she evaluates – working with the support of specific funding organisations and working in settings such as schools:

> *Because I have had a lot of Youth Music funding, so you have to follow that model, don't you? I'm not pointing the finger, but yeah, I suppose I'm thinking about that community of practice. And also having worked in schools and special schools as well, I suppose. I've been quite affected by that culture, too, because I'm sure as you know, every single little thing gets written down and documented and there's all these constant rounds of targets that young people have to meet.* (Ann's interview)

Kate spoke about a lack of agency regarding evaluation due to a requirement to only consider data that evidences outcomes:

> *I'm not sure I do feel like I have agency in the way my work is evaluated because... [long pause] [sigh]. The problem is, with something like an evaluation, so like, the one I'm doing at the moment, which is collecting data from reflective diaries, is only collecting specifics that are meeting the outcome. So, there is so much that is not being collected, you know, that I have been requested to leave out....* (Kate's interview)

A probing question asking who requested her to leave things out prompted an extensive reflection from Kate about how important aspects of a project did not get documented as they had no relevance to proving the intended outcomes promised to funders. Kate reveals that the experiences she is recalling concern the dynamic between a project manager and her as the community musician:

> *I sometimes feel like there is a lack of practitioner awareness within the workforce. So, if I've got a project manager who is initiating evaluation or some sort of, you know, structure to the programme that requires evaluation or reflection, and they show to me very little awareness of practitioners' experience and role, then it's immediately quite difficult to have a [pause] a positive input or for me to feel any sense of agency at all.* (Kate's interview)

The institutional power dynamic between the manager and community musician that is evident here shows the complexity of power relationships. As Kate is the professional with practitioner knowledge (Meerabeau, 1995) in this situation, one might think that she is higher in a power hierarchy. However, that is not the case, as the manager has greater power and more traditional positions of duties and rights are on display. Kate appears used to her practitioner knowledge and the expertise that brings not being recognised in intra-personal interactions.

Kate's lack of agency and influence comes from her direct experience. She speaks throughout the interview of a project she worked on with an external evaluator that was a hugely positive experience, and she contrasts many other experiences negatively against this:

> *I'm comparing that negative experience with how differently I have felt when it's been a positive experience because, you know, for five years, [name of evaluator], who led the evaluation, she just was absolutely, like she was an independent in the sense of like she was contracted in to do it, but in executing the whole programme, we were a team. We were completely a team and that, and it just doesn't feel like that, [laughs] it just doesn't feel like that as a whole in, in other areas of my work, unfortunately.* (Kate's interview)

Again, this highlights an interdimensional aspect: feelings and emotions are linked to a lack of agency, control and influence. In the quote above Kate uses benign words like "positive" and "negative", but there are many examples of interviewees using more emotive words to describe their feelings regarding a lack of agency and influence: "frustrating" (George), "disheartening" and "demoralised" (Kate), and "struggling" (Paula). Interviewees also use metaphors to convey their feelings and experiences, for example, when Paula talks about the requirement to complete ILPs (Individual Learning Plans), her choice of words communicates her feelings of powerlessness:

> *In fact, I've got my ILP training tomorrow for the new ILP, which launches in September. I know it's thrilling, isn't it, this new ILP is coming out. So, I'm going to have to put my jolly face on and talk about it.* (Paula's interview)

The phrase "jolly face" means that she disguises how she really feels and her genuine thoughts on the inappropriateness of an ILP in evaluating the work she does with families. Paula is forced into a position by her employing organisation that involves her implementing an evaluation method that she does not value.

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It was notable amongst the interviewees who felt a lack of agency and control over how their work is evaluated, that they had no solutions to their difficulties and could not see how to get beyond their current situation and frustrations. Naomi gives an example:

> *I think a lot of this I don't really have the answer to, but I think it's really important that we keep discussing it and, keep pushing back on kind of having, like, pretty pictures of people singing or any of that kind of stuff (…) which doesn't lift up the communities that we're working with.* (Naomi's interview)

Owen is an interviewee who does not feel a lack of agency, control and influence, but he shows some insight as to why other community musicians might experience this lack:

> *Although I understand people's frustrations with it, I think that's because that they've experienced it being delivered badly and the evaluations are imposed, often by people who have completely different agendas to community musicians. And I think if you can control it for your benefit, then it becomes this unbelievably powerful tool that solves all your problems, solves my funding problems, solves my outcomes problems, solves my ability to demonstrate what the organisation does problems, makes us better at what we do, makes us stand out, makes our musicians understand the efficacy of their work, makes them buy into what the organisation does even more.* (Owen's interview)

In acknowledging "people's frustrations", Owen shows an awareness that not all community musicians share his enthusiasm for evaluation, and he highlights reasons for people feeling frustrated, due to experiences of poor evaluation that they do not control. The phrase "completely different agendas" references the varying purposes of evaluation, with Owen speaking of evaluation *for funders* as different from the priorities of community musicians.

An example of actions interviewees take to exert control over how they evaluate comes from Paula. She does comply with the data gathering her employing organisation requires of her. However, she operates a parallel system of data gathering where she keeps notes for her own practice and planning, and she asks parents in her family groups to "send me an email" with any feedback they have which she documents:

> *So, I guess I've got my official evaluation that [name of employing organisation] does. We've got an evaluation form, we've got the ILP and this is how we're doing. (…) And then there's my evaluation which is for me to help my learners move to the next stage, to inform my practice, the notes that I make, just a few notes after the session so that I know on my scheme of work, when we come to do it again in the next term, there's*

> *things there that I can add in. So, there's the official evaluation and there's my evaluation [laughs].* (Paula's interview)

Paula is showing control over evaluation that is *for practice* and *for participants*, although her overall affective state regarding evaluation is one of powerlessness and despondency, evidenced by the earlier quote where she says she is struggling with evaluation and she wants solutions. Interviewees seeking solutions to their difficulties and frustrations over evaluation was not common. However, all interviewees who were asked if they would welcome having more influence over evaluation in their work said that they would.

5.3.5 Interdimensional connectedness between what, why, how and affect

Whilst the metaphor of multiple dimensions is effective for explaining the analysis, there has been repeated reflection on whether it is appropriate or risks oversimplifying the complexity of the data. One area where I questioned if the metaphor stood up to scrutiny, was that it may conjure images of separateness which was not my intention. The dimensions of what, why, how and affect are not siloed but have an interconnectedness. It feels vital to categorise and name the four dimensions to enable understanding of how interviewees conceptualise evaluation, however, expanding the metaphor to include an interdimensional aspect acknowledges the complexity of the connectedness between the four dimensions.

An example that illustrates the connectedness of dimensions comes from the intersection between how interviewees conceptualise *what* evaluation is, in terms of what the methods they use, and to what *purpose* they are using those methods. The methods may have different or multiple purposes. One or more of the four purposes identified is the intent when putting evaluation methods into action, for example, keeping a reflective diary is *what* they do but there could be differences in the *purpose* of keeping a diary. Interviewees spoke of choosing themselves to keep a reflective diary for their own practice at times, yet there were also occasions when they were required to do so by a manager as a method of documenting evaluation evidence for a report to funders.

5.4 Abstracting positions towards evaluation

So far, the analysis presented in this chapter has laid out a great deal of supporting evidence for the thematic analysis that led to conceptualising evaluation as multiple dimensions and what those dimensions are. Whilst this has included descriptive "surface" analysis and topic summaries, for example, aggregating a list of methods community musicians say they use, there has also been generation of latent themes that clearly have the interpretation of the researcher stamped upon them. The spectrum of resistance to acquiescence is one example. There has been categorising of aspects of the dimensions of evaluation with the intention to summarise the extensive variation in evaluation practices that interviewees have experienced. Data presented to support the analysis have named individual interviewees whose interviews illustrate the points made and occasionally grouped them in relation to the aspects of the four dimensions. To move towards the "deeper understanding" sought in the research questions, this concluding section of Chapter 5 brings together all the seemingly disparate categorisations described so far, to offer one typology that gives five broad positions that the interviewees take on evaluation named as: *accepting pragmatists*, *uncertain questioners*, *conflicted developers*, *curious reflectors* and *highly engaged innovators*. What most characterises these positions that people adopt is shown below.

Accepting pragmatists: Pragmatic acceptance of evaluation practices they do not value

Uncertain questioners: Want to do evaluation well but find it difficult and do not know how to develop

Conflicted developers: Experience internal conflicts as they want to do evaluation better than their current practice, although they have somewhat progressed solutions to difficulties

Curious reflectors: Foreground reflective practice as a valued kind of evaluation

Highly engaged innovators: Innovate and adapt evaluation to the context of their work.

This typology has arisen from the analysis presented so far. Interpretation of the analysis identifies an interplay between these five broad positions and the four dimensions of evaluation that have been described in Chapter 5, represented in the diagram in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Diagram of interplay between positions and dimensions
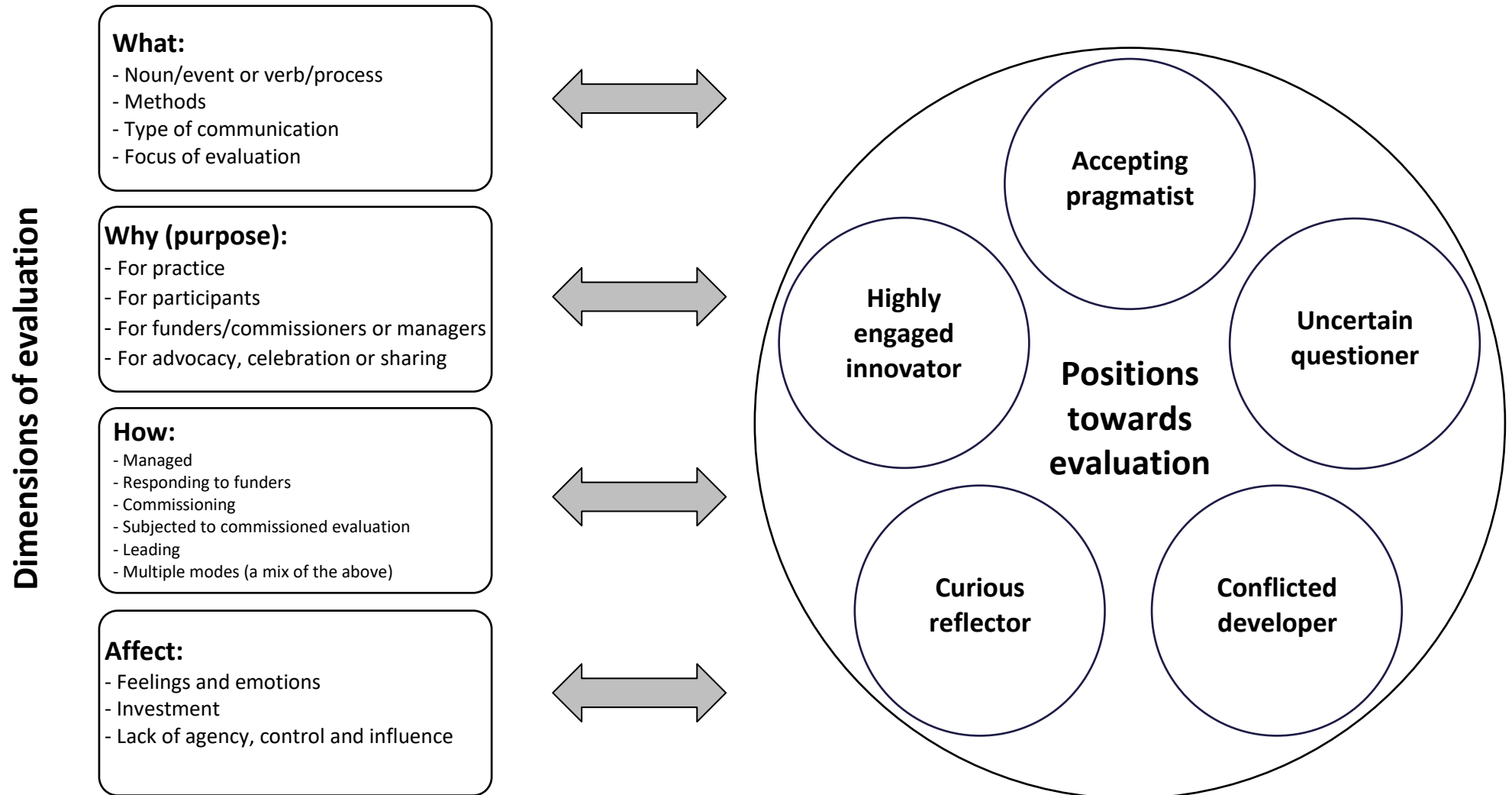
There is not any one causal direction implied between the positions and dimensions: the position a community musician takes towards evaluation does not necessarily determine the what, why, how or affect of evaluation for them, nor do the dimensions necessarily determine the position an individual primarily takes towards evaluation. The point is, there is an interplay between the dimensions and positions that influence each other.

The formation of this typology examined many factors in the data for potential patterns. The factors where there is an evident pattern are:

> Evaluation as a noun/event or verb/process
>
> How they most commonly enact evaluation
>
> Level of investment/interest/engagement in evaluation
>
> Degree of acquiescence or resistance
>
> Level of agency, control and influence over evaluation in their work
>
> Level of critique of current evaluation practice
>
> Level of confidence in their evaluation practice
>
> Evaluation's position within their community music practice.

One area that was explored but no evident pattern was found concerned whether interviewees valued one purpose of evaluation more than another, due to the majority of interviewees speaking of engaging in different forms of evaluation. Additionally, all interviewees perceived reflective practice as a kind of evaluation and spoke of engaging in reflective practice, therefore, that had no bearing on the typology of positions.

Appendix 11 shows the detail of how the factors listed coalesce around the five positions, for example: an accepting pragmatist position is characterised by viewing evaluation as a noun/event; a low level of interest or engagement in evaluation; some critique of current evaluation practices (but less than other positions); acquiescence to evaluation they do not value; a low level of control/agency over evaluation; evaluation thought of as adjunct to community music practice; and practitioners commonly having multiple professional roles. A second example concerns a highly engaged innovator position, characterised by: viewing evaluation as a verb/process; leading or commissioning evaluation (rather than being subjected to it by a manager/commissioner); a high level of interest/engagement in evaluation; a high level of critique of evaluation practices; resistance to evaluation they do

not value; confidence in their evaluation practice; evaluation is integral to community music practice; and expression of strong moral values that influence their work.

This abstraction of the factors associated with the differing positions is intended to move beyond considering the individual interviewees to give a more generalised pattern. However, it must be acknowledged that any typology draws on abstractions and generalisations, applying a broad brush which unavoidably creates overlapping and blurred boundaries. Not all interviewees completely fitted into one category but nevertheless, the patterns in the data were strong enough to arrive at this typology which usefully characterises different positions interviewees take towards evaluation.

The analysis placed each interviewee where they best fit into this typology, by considering their positions on each of these factors (shown in the final row in the table in Appendix 11) Those taking a primarily *accepting pragmatist* position were Chris, Lucy, Mark and Felix; primarily an *uncertain questioner* position: Beth, Debbie and Eric; primarily a *conflicted developer* position: George, Kate, Paula and Naomi; primarily a *curious reflector* position: Ann, Hilary and Jenny; and primarily a *highly engaged innovator* position: Owen and Izzy. Referring back to the theoretical framework outlined in Chapter 3, in positioning theory positions are not fixed but assigned, claimed and sometimes rejected. Through how they represent themselves in their interviews, the discourse constructed by each interviewee shows them adopting one or more of the five positions.

5.5 Chapter summary

Chapter 5 has described how interviewees conceptualise community music relevant to evaluation, and the multiple dimensions of what, why, how and affect of evaluation. These four dimensions acknowledge the variation amongst interviewees' experiences, actions and ways of conceptualising evaluation, and the plurality of evaluation practice evident in the interview data. To draw together these many aspects of variation in interviewees' evaluation practices, a typology of positions they take towards evaluation names five broad positions. Constructing the dimensions of evaluation and the typology of positions, and highlighting the interplay between them, is a key element of the analysis that will be developed in Chapter 6 as factors that influence the different positions are explored.

Chapter 6: Exploring reasons for differing perspectives and positions

6.1 Factors that influence interviewees' positions towards evaluation

In addition to describing how interviewees conceptualise evaluation as four interconnected dimensions, and the naming of five broad positions that interviewees take towards evaluation, the analysis has explored potential patterns in the data that would suggest reasons for differences in the *what, why, how* and *affect,* and how they are associated with different positions. Where patterns are evident, there are four broad areas of association: 1) interviewees' education, training and community music experience; 2) the different intentions and kinds of community music in their work; 3) their position within the organisational structures that they work and/or the nature of their relationships with funders; and 4) their strength of values. Whilst it cannot be claimed that the patterns are universal for all interviewees, there is enough of a pattern to be noteworthy.

As stated in Chapter 5, interviewees often speak of evaluation in the singular, with the plurality of evaluation frequently unacknowledged. It should be borne in mind when reading Chapter 6 that interviewees use the term *evaluation* to refer to many different practices. At times, interviewees show awareness that they are speaking about one kind of evaluation or one aspect of evaluation rather than another. However, more commonly, evaluation is used as a term to describe an array of practices or the totality of activity that interviewees conceptualise as evaluation. It is not always possible to understand from the transcripts if interviewees are speaking of evaluation as a homogenous entity or as a particular type of evaluation with a distinct purpose. Where distinctions are evident, this is highlighted, but otherwise the perspectives and positions considered in Chapter 6 generalise interviewees' positions from their overall contribution to the research.

6.1.1 Education, training and experience influences positions towards evaluation

At first examination, there did not appear to be any patterns associated with the length of time interviewees had been working as community musicians, which ranged from three-and-a-half years to over 40 years, and the differences in the aspects of evaluation explored in the four dimensions and interviewees' positions towards evaluation. Regarding the *uninterested/accepting* to *confident/committed/innovating* spectrum (in the *affect* dimension) and *evaluation as a noun/event* to *verb/process* spectrum (the *what* dimension), there were people who had been practising for over 20 years at both ends of these spectra and at various points in between, perhaps suggesting no pattern. However, on further consideration, all the interviewees who were considered to be *accepting pragmatists* (and therefore their investment in evaluation was *uninterested/accepting* and they viewed the *what* as a *noun/event*) were all people who had many years of experience as community musicians (17 years, 26 years and 30 years for two others). This suggests that some interviewees who have been community musicians for a long time have a low level of interest and engagement in evaluation when they are so well established and experienced. Additionally, it may be that some people who started out working in community music a long time ago did not have evaluation as a part of their work early on, and so have not changed the way they work as norms and expectations around evaluation in the field of community music have developed over the years. In contrast, there were other interviewees with many years of experience who were far more interested or questioning of evaluation and viewed evaluation more as a process than an event. To be clear, whilst all interviewees who were *accepting pragmatists* had many years of experience, not all those who had many years of experience were *accepting pragmatists.*

A further point to note about length of time practising concerns those who had the least experience. The interviewees who had been practising for the shortest length of time (Debbie – three-and-a-half years and Paula – four years) all featured in the *uncertain questioners* group. The supposition above, that some interviewees who have been practising for many years were not enculturated into evaluation early in their career and have not changed their practice as evaluation norms have developed, is analogous to the premise that interviewees with the least experience show an awareness of their relative inexperience and have a wish to develop their practice through their *uncertain and*

questioning position. People who are recent entrants into the profession are assimilated into the current field of evaluation in community music. This is the first observable pattern pertaining to interviewees' positions on evaluation: there is an association with length of experience working as a community musician.

The next association is regarding education and training. The interviewees were a varied mix of people with undergraduate and Masters degrees in relevant subjects (music, community music, education), to people with no formal training at all. The level of interviewees' education suggests a pattern with the typology of positions. It was notable that a significant proportion of interviewees (nine out of 16) either had Masters level qualifications and/or had a current interest in research through currently doing a Masters degree or PhD or were considering undertaking a PhD. Only one of the *accepting pragmatists* were amongst those with a higher degree whilst the majority of those in the *uncertain questioners*, *conflicted developer* and *highly engaged innovator* groups had a higher degree. This suggests some relationship between the critique interviewees give to evaluation, and a motivation to develop their work through postgraduate study. Conversely, skills developed through higher-level study support critical thinking about aspects of their professional practice, which could be the driver for critiquing evaluation practice. This association between critiquing evaluation and higher-level study or an interest in research, is evidenced by Owen, who is the interviewee who shows the most *confident/committed/innovating* position. When Owen is speaking about how others engage in evaluation practices he considers to be poor, it is evident that one reason for his perspective is that he recognises evaluation as a kind of research, and that he values academic research:

> *I don't think they're doing it intentionally, often, but I think figures get tweaked. And people will try and present the best-case scenario with very, very limited information like they're trying to draw conclusions and claims with three case studies. Alright. Which is a nonsense, which is why we're not, as a sector taken very seriously. So, I'm interested in taking, there's also quite a, not much of a link between practice and academia research. I think within research you have these ethical boundaries, you have these methodologies that have been built from a scientific perspective to be able to make realistic claims. And then a healthy culture of critical thinking around those so that people can rebut or confirm them.*
> (Owen's interview)

The information Owen gave in the Expression of Interest form shows that he has studied for a Masters degree in education, and, from his interview transcript, he is clearly

conversant with academic theory and research, speaking about Bourdieu, Green's research on informal musical learning (Green, 2008) and the psychological concept of self-determination theory (Deci and Ryan, 2000).

In summary, the second observable association with interviewees' overall positions towards evaluation is that postgraduate study and an interest in research is associated with greater interest in evaluation and critique, although no causal direction is evident.

6.1.2 Different intentions and kinds of community music practice influence positions towards evaluation

As noted earlier in the thesis, the plurality of community music practice is a widely accepted concept. The analysis explored four different patterns of how community music practice varies regarding its intentions, that have associations which go some way to explaining different positions interviewees take towards evaluation: 1) whether work is targeted at specific groups of people; 2) whether the musician has multiple roles; 3) whether the work is intended as an alternative to established music education; and 4) whether there are intentions of personal change for people. One might expect that the patterns in these four associations are due to different kinds of evaluation that have different purposes and methods, providing an explanation for the differing positions, however, analysis and interpretation do not lead to this conclusion as the picture is more complex.

The first notable pattern concerns whether or not interviewees' practice focuses on targeted work, that is, community music that is for people who experience or share particular characteristics, for example, disabled young people. The interviewees whose practice involves a lot of work in mainstream schools (and not predominantly focused on community music targeted at particular people who share characteristics or experiences) were more likely to be *accepting pragmatists* and *uncertain questioners*. Two out of the three *accepting pragmatists* do many one-off workshops in schools which do not require the evaluation that funded project-based work can. This was described as "gig work" by one interviewee, with no requirement by the contracting schools for any evaluation to take place. Again, there is no causal direction being suggested – do community musicians who are *accepting pragmatists* select work that has no requirement for evaluation, or does no requirement for evaluation lead to an uninterest in it? But the association is evident.

Interviewees who show greater interest in critiquing or developing evaluation have more focus on funded project-based work and/or work that targets participants due to their circumstances or characteristics. Community musicians who work in situations where evaluation is expected of them or is the norm, are more likely to critique it than those who do not. Dividing interviewees into those who focus on targeted work and those who do not needs caution, as most interviewees' work involves a mix, either currently or in the past. This mix and the multiple roles musicians take is the second point to note in the analysis.

Community musicians commonly have portfolio careers which involve multiple professional roles, in fact, it is necessary to have a wide experience to acquire the skills needed to be a community musician. In addition to community music, interviewees had experience of working as performing musicians, composers, brass band conductors, peripatetic instrumental tutors, secondary school music teachers, primary school teachers, youth workers, disability advocates and facilitators in other artforms (dance and storytelling). The nature of interviewees' current work varied, with some having a mixed portfolio of work which involved multiple roles, whilst others focused on one type of work. Not all, but many of the interviewees who had formed their own organisation had arrived at a narrower focus of targeted work with participants who share particular characteristics. This difference between interviewees who continued to have multiple roles and those whose work was more focused, was associated with different positions towards evaluation. Generally, those with multiple roles were placed at the *uninterested/accepting* and *noun/event* ends of the spectrums than other interviewees. The analysis considered how having multiple roles might affect interviewees' position towards evaluation, with two delineated positions evident. For some, they were less invested in evaluation due to capacity as they were undertaking several different professional roles, some of which had requirements or expectations for more formal evaluation practices and some that did not. Mark provides a good example of this point, where he speaks about evaluation being "another job" in addition to being the community musician:

> *From my point of view, [if] I could wave the magic wand, would be not to have to do it at all, do you know what I mean? [laughs] Because it is another job. But I don't mind. I don't mind doing it. But it's a, it kind of interferes with the practice sometimes.* (Mark's interview)

Mark is not unusual amongst the interviewees in having multiple professional roles, but he is an example of someone who undertakes lots of different kinds of work – one-off "gig"

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workshops, work with prisoners and their families, young people in care, open-access community workshops, and working as a performing musician. Mark works as a freelancer for many other organisations in addition to running his own small organisation to manage some of his work. With such a pattern of work, it is understandable that Mark would rather not have "another job", as he perceives it, added to his workload.   This highlights a crucial difference in how interviewees conceptualise evaluation that is linked to the idea of a *noun/event* or *process/verb* spectrum. For some interviewees, evaluation is an adjunct to the practice of community music, whereas for others it is integral to their practice. Mark does not only mean that evaluation is another job in terms of tasks to do, but he also distinguishes it as a specialised role that requires specific knowledge or skills – and therefore separate to being a community music practitioner:

> *It's somebody's job, you know, in the same way that if you got a, you know, somebody that looks after the website or someone who develops the project or something, you know, it is a job in itself, or it can be – the evaluator is a job.* (Mark's interview)

Ann has also experienced multiple roles and echoes Mark's view of evaluation as an additional role. There is one section of her interview where she talks about a project managed by the small organisation she runs. Ann is the project manager in addition to being one of a team of community musicians working on the project. She highlights the multiple roles she undertakes in this one project to illustrate why evaluation can be challenging for community musicians amongst the plethora of tasks required of them:

> *The problem being, I think if you're actually leading on a project and you're doing the evaluation and monitoring and you're leading the workshop as well, and making the tea, you know, and sweeping the floor, you've got a lot going on, so you need models that you can use that are very quick and easy.* (Ann's interview)

Ann also shares Mark's perspective that evaluation involves specialised skills, however, where Ann's position differs, is that she wants to find solutions to the challenges of evaluation rather than Mark's wish to "not to have to do it at all":

> *It keeps coming back to the fact that I would have liked a bit more training, really. (…) As a musician, (…) I'm expected to have all these skills, and evaluation is a very specific skill. I'm not just saying that because I'm talking to you, but I think that's true. And that's why we would always want to have a bit of money in a project to get an external evaluator in, someone who has got a very clear, disassociated voice, if you want, to come in and use their professional toolkits on your work to validate what*

*you feel is going well or not. (…) Every project should have a trained
evaluator who's just in the room.* (Ann's interview)

It is this striving to find solutions that places Ann further along the *uninterested/accepting*
spectrum than Mark, demonstrating a position of *curious reflector*, whereas Mark takes an
accepting pragmatist position.

Another example of how multiple roles community musicians play can influence the
positions they take on evaluation comes from Lucy, whose work includes music facilitation
in schools for Music Hubs, freelance workshops for a community music charity, and
conducting brass bands. The overall sense of Lucy's interview is that she does not get
involved in evaluation as it has not been a requirement for any of the roles she undertakes.
Initially, Lucy found it difficult to respond to the interview questions designed to elicit
understanding of how she conceptualises evaluation or how it features in her work, for
example, the introductory questions intended to warm-up interviewees for talking about
evaluation went unanswered:

*I just, I can't think of anything at the moment, I'm sorry. (…) I sort of know
in my mind, but I can't put it into words.* (Lucy's interview)

Generally, the content of Lucy's interview places her at the *uninterested/accepting* end of
the spectrum because her current work does not require evaluation such as might be
required by funders or managers. For much of the interview she finds it difficult to
formulate answers to the questions due to an apparent lack of engagement in evaluation.
However, Lucy is an example of an interviewee taking different positions on evaluation in
the same interview – and these different positions relate to different kinds of community
music work. Although interviewees were assigned to a best-fit position in the table in
Appendix 11, a central tenet of positioning theory is that positions are not fixed – people
can reject positions, change positions or even hold contradictory positions. This could be
a reason why no distinguishing patterns were evident regarding the purposes of evaluation:
interviewees take differing positions as they have multiple professional roles in work that
has different intentions. Much of Lucy's work is not targeted at particular participants,
such as facilitating in schools and leading brass bands. Later in the interview when she is
prompted to recall past experiences, Lucy speaks about certain kinds of work where
developing evaluation *for herself*, that focuses on reflective practice, has been fruitful. She

spoke about how when she first worked in a Pupil Referral Unit (PRU)[19] she did not know what to expect or "even how to go about it", therefore, whilst it was not required by the charity for whom she was working, she wrote "self-evaluations" that she likened to a reflective diary to document children's progress and to help her plan subsequent sessions in the PRU. Lucy shared these "self-evaluations" with the organisation she was working for although it was not a requirement. Engaging with targeted work for which she felt less experienced prompted Lucy to autonomously initiate evaluation for the purpose of *for practice*. In this situation, Lucy was not an *accepting pragmatist*, but a *curious reflector*. It is also important to highlight that the *what* of evaluation (reflection) was not associated with the nature of targeted work – as all interviewees viewed reflective practice as a form of evaluation and utilised it in many different kinds of work – but the choice of a reflective diary for evaluation was associated with taking a *curious reflector* position.

Recollections about her work in a PRU emboldens Lucy to consider evaluation more deeply and she showed a different position from *accepting pragmatist*, speaking about how she thinks practitioners should be involved more in evaluation than in her experience to date:

> *I think it's important, not just to evaluate what you do yourself, but to evaluate the project as a whole. And I think it would be really, really helpful to the organisation as well as yourself in making sure that the quality of what you provided is right or good. Or it might even show that things might need to be done differently. But I think because facilitators are on the ground, it does seem a shame sometimes that we're not asked to do, they probably wouldn't agree with me, but more evaluation. Because it helps everybody. We're the ones on the ground doing the work.*
> (Lucy's interview)

On the whole, Lucy's work does not involve engaging in evaluation, but where her work has a more "interventionist" (Higgins, 2012) focus, such as work with children in a PRU, she adopts reflective forms of evaluation that have a *for practice* purpose, and she shows greater investment in evaluation.

A third aspect of different intentions and kinds of community music is when there is a social justice purpose to provide accessible and inclusive music education for people who are excluded from existing provision for reasons such as disability or economic disadvantage. Often such opportunities are a response intended to mitigate against inequity in music

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[19] A Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) is a type of alternative provision school for children who are unable to attend mainstream school, commonly due to reasons such as having been permanently excluded.

education, such as Izzy's work that aims to provide disabled children with opportunities that are an alternative to traditional music service Saturday music schools. Ann's work also focuses on disabled young people, for whom there are limited other opportunities for music making groups that can support their access requirements. The strength of feeling that both Izzy and Ann have that evaluation is vital to ensuring that their work has the effect for participants that they think it does (discussed in detail in section 5.3.2), is a position they take because they have a clear purpose in their work: they have a wish to counteract the inequity that exists in music education. This strength of feeling that motivates interviewees to take action to right the wrongs they perceive in society, is a factor in their positions towards evaluation. Ann and Izzy are two examples, but there are other interviewees such as Kate, Jenny and Owen who are similarly motivated to further social justice through their action, and there is a commonality in their perceptions and investment in evaluation – evaluation as a *verb/process* and *conflicted, questioning and developing* to *confident, committed and innovating*.

Similar but subtly different from the third point above about community music as an alternative to music education, a fourth aspect of different intentions that influence positions on evaluation is when there are explicit goals of personal change for people through participation in community music. For interviewees whose work focuses on enabling personal change, evaluation involves understanding if and what personal change has occurred. The interviewees who most exemplify this position are Owen, Jenny and Kate, however, the nature of these three interviewees' evaluation is quite different from each other's. The analysis considered if it is the nature of evaluation itself that is associated with the different intentions that influences positions. However, it is clear that it is the intention of the practice that influences positions, rather than one purpose or form of evaluation that is associated with evaluating community music that has an intention of personal change.

Owen's work has a strong focus on enabling personal change for individual young people. His work is primarily supported by contracts for a commissioned service rather than through grant funding, which influences his evaluation to focus on evidencing that the work enables the intended change for young people. Jenny similarly speaks of enabling change for people, however, her work differs from Owen's in that her business model does not involve the commissioning of services and does not have such a defined structure. Jenny jestfully speaks of her idealised evaluation as a "census of experience":

Impact is not about how many people you deliver a project to. It's about the individual impact on the individual human beings who've been in the space and understanding that if you've made a massive change for that one person, maybe only one person turned up, but whatever you do for that one person will affect every single person they ever meet in their entire life. (…) There's a limited interest in that, isn't there, because how do you quantify that? (…) I would wish that there was a rethink in what it means to... A kind of, asking people to remember how many people they meet in their life, how many people they interact with and how the experiences they've had in their life colour those interactions that affect them and then say, right, so that's how many people one positive interaction impacts. (…) Maybe we could have a national census of experience instead of asking people what colour their skin is, who they fancy, maybe we should have a national census, what was the moment that made you, that created the passion? (Jenny's interview)

Although the kind of evaluation Jenny does in her work varies from the structured bespoke system Owen has created, her commitment to evaluation and ideas for innovating are equally evident. Jenny's comments demonstrate the complexity of how community music that affects personal change for people can influence their lives: a kind of butterfly effect that could impact on every aspect of their life due to one change or experience. Her idea of a "census of experience" also shows her understanding of the complexity of evaluating such far-reaching change that participation in community music can have for some people.

These four facets of plurality in community music all influence positions interviewees take towards evaluation related to the different intentions and kinds of community music practice.

6.1.3 Positions within organisational structures and relationships with funding organisations affects positions towards evaluation

To notice patterns in the data across cases, the predominant modes of each interviewee's work were considered. There was a fairly even spread of different organisational structures that dominated interviewees' types of employment or self-employment. Again, the analysis named categories of interviewees to characterise the differences:

Leads a directly funded/commissioned company

Leads an indirectly funded company

Employee of an organisation

Freelances for multiple organisations

Mixture.

The interviewees who *lead a directly funded/commissioned company* work predominantly through their own small not-for-profit organisations which they established, for example, a Community Interest Company or registered charity that directly receives grants or secures commissions and service contracts from health, social care and educational organisations (Owen, Ann, Izzy, Naomi, Hilary). Felix also works through a small organisation that he established and runs, but as the business structure is a limited company of which he is the sole director, the company is not eligible to directly receive funding to support his community music work. Consequently, Felix accepts commissions where his company is contracted by another (non-profit) organisation who applies for and receives funds for his projects. This business model means that Felix is not responsible for the governance and financial management of grants that support his work, and therefore he does not have any direct relationship with funders or obligations for any specific evaluation activity or reporting for funders (the *leads an indirectly funded company* category). George, Beth, Lucy and Paula were all *employees of an organisation* that provided the majority of their community music work. Kate, Debbie, Chris and Eric's work was entirely *freelance for multiple organisations*. Jenny and Mark did a *mixture* of work through their own small organisation and freelancing for others. It is not only whether interviewees run their own organisation that is associated with adopting different positions on evaluation, but the degree of directness in their relationships with the organisations that finance their work is also an important factor.

Where Felix (*leads an indirectly funded company*) is asked to undertake evaluation tasks requested by a project's commissioning organisation, he obliges. But the distance that Felix has from funding organisations due to his business structure, mirrors his position of less investment in evaluation compared with the other interviewees who run their own organisations:

> *Often the evaluation that I do is driven by the funders. Generally, as a model we don't apply for funding. Other people commission us to do work. So, if they tell us they need to know a thing, then we'll ask that.*
> (Felix's interview)

Felix's acquiescence to practices that are not useful to him is illustrated by his account of administering feedback forms which he describes as "perfunctory" and his admission that

he does not necessarily respond to feedback as he has confidence in his own practice and leadership (discussed later in section 7.1.1). Felix's position best fits the *accepting pragmatist* typology. However, he has a higher level of confidence regarding evaluation than other interviewees who primarily take an *accepting pragmatist* position.

For some, a consequence of their direct relationship with funders and commissioners is a greater engagement with evaluation than interviewees who have less direct contact. Many interviewees speak of "the funders" as though they were a monolithic anonymous entity. Generally, there is little text in the interviews of interviewees speaking of funders as individual people or of funding organisations as a group of people. The exception is Naomi, who talks about grant officers from different organisations with whom she has conversations in the course of her work:

> *We just got more used to talking to our, what do they call them, like your grant officer, from different places. I think we've learned to have those conversations and also, I think now, we're just more upfront to be like, we couldn't gather this, it was inappropriate, or like, for these reasons this didn't happen. And I think that's something you just kind of learn – that they are people on the other side, because a lot of time it's paperwork and forms and it doesn't necessarily feel like there's a conversation in it, but most times I think there is. You just have to learn that. I think we've got better, like, that was the best in that situation and this is what we've got from it. So far, no one's come back to say that's not enough or that's not good enough. So, I definitely took quite a few years of being like, oh, I'm really sorry we didn't do this rather than just being like, this is how it panned out in different ways.* (Naomi's interview)

Naomi talking about conversations with individual people within funding organisations is rare amongst the interviewees. Her acknowledgement of the human face of funding when she says, "they are people on the other side" is a contrast to other interviewees who characterise funders as only caring about outcomes or are not interested in seeing the work they are funding. Naomi's experience of relationships with individual people in funding organisations who show understanding of difficulties in evaluation, has emboldened her not to acquiesce to evaluation she presumes funding organisations expect, but to find other ways of collecting evaluation data that are pragmatic and in keeping with the values of community music. Naomi's position is a *conflicted developer,* and it is her experience of running an organisation whose projects are supported by grant funding, which involves communicating with individuals who work in grant administration roles, that has influenced her position. Running her own organisation enables her to have autonomy and confidence to reject planned evaluation where it conflicts with values of the work and to adapt

evaluation to be more tailored to participants. It seems that the human connection that occurs when community musicians are personally in touch with grant managers affects their positioning regarding evaluation *for funders*.

Owen's situation illustrates a further dimension to the nuance regarding organisational structures and relationships, as his organisation's business model focuses on contracts for services rather than receiving grant funding. Owen speaks about intentionally not seeking grant funding so he could have autonomy over the work without undue influence of funding organisations' priorities:

> *[Name of Owen's organisation] concentrated on contract funding rather than grant funding for the first eight years. In those years, I was militant about not accepting any grant funding for a whole bunch of reasons, mainly because of those things I mentioned earlier – where other people's agendas were playing into what you were being told to do, which resulted in mission drift in what you were doing. And if you have multiple funders, it just gets confusing and messy and you're not in control of doing what you know works.* (Owen's interview)

Evaluation played a vital role in the success of Owen's contract rather than grant model. Owen feels that taking control of evaluation, rather than it being influenced by funders, was key to the success of a contract business model as it meant that evaluation could focus on providing evidence of personal change for participants and show the effectiveness of the work:

> *What enabled us to go out and get the contract funding was impact capture and analysis to be able to demonstrate the efficacy of what we were doing. So, it becomes the tool by which you are able to go and get more work.* (Owen's interview)

Owen's confidence in the evaluation system he has developed for his organisation makes him stand out amongst the interviewees as the one with the most confidence, innovation and autonomy regarding how his work is evaluated – a *highly engaged innovator* position. Owen believes that incorporating the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale into his organisation's evaluation practices, adds a level of trustworthiness to his evaluation that reassures people who contract his organisation, such as health service Clinical Commissioning Group commissioners. Owen is not requesting grant funding but is selling his organisation's services. He describes his evaluation as "allows us to control the narrative" when communicating the efficacy of his organisation's work to commissioners. It is running his own organisation which enables Owen to successfully take control of

evaluation, which then influences the relationships with those who finance his work, as indicated in this passage quoted earlier:

> *Because they also often don't know what they're doing. Let's be clear. And what they're looking for is reassurance.* (Owen's interview)

Owen has moved beyond the powerlessness that many other interviewees experience. This is a chicken and egg situation – it is not possible from the interview text to know with certainty which came first, Owen's high level of interest and engagement in evaluation, his resistance to practices he is not comfortable with, his confidence to innovate, his control over evaluation – but there is a clear association with running his own organisation that secures contracts for services and his *highly engaged innovator* position.

Further evidence from the analysis about organisational structures and relationships comes from Kate, an interviewee who does not run her own organisation but does entirely freelance work for many different organisations. Kate's work does not involve applying for funding or reporting to funders. Any connection she has with the organisations that fund the work she does is mediated by a project manager and sometimes an evaluator. When speaking about a situation where she felt evaluation forms were inaccessible to participants, and concerns she raised with the project manager were dismissed, Kate acknowledges her lack of connection with the funding organisation:

> *So, when I questioned things like the inaccessibility of the form and for it to be immediately, immediately cut off, erm, and I felt quite demoralising really. (…) If I had been project managing that project, I would have felt like it was a moral duty to go back to the lead funders to say this evaluation data that is compulsory, (…) I would have fed back how destructive that could have been.* (Kate's interview)

Kate speaks about her lack of autonomy in evaluation, the frustrations that brings her, how it conflicts with her values, and that she would welcome more autonomy. The hierarchical nature of evaluation being steered by a project manager or evaluator has limited Kate's ability to discuss evaluation with funders as she has no direct relationship with them. Due to this lack of a direct relationship with funders, Kate feels powerless, and she exhibits quite a degree of dissatisfaction with evaluation practices that are contrary to her values.

Most of the interviewees who primarily work as employees for one organisation (George, Beth and Paula) have similar positions on evaluation to Kate: they lack autonomy in their evaluation and are *uncertain/questioning* to *conflicted/questioning/developing* in their level of investment. They have no direct relationship with funding organisations, and they

position "the funders" as a bureaucratic homogenous entity that has no genuine interest in the work.

As an employee in a large organisation, Beth constructs a narrative of hierarchy in her organisation which impacts on how equipped she is to undertake evaluation that her organisation requires of her:

> *For some of the evaluation training, (…) definitely had to be higher up in the organisation to get that. And then you had to feed that back to your team. Which is tricky when you've only had one day training, to be honest, to be able to feed that back effectively and implement that within your team. Yeah, (…) actually would have been better if the musicians who are doing, gathering the evaluation in were the ones that were in the room and not upstairs. But that's just how that was.* (Beth's interview)

Beth is resigned to being lower in the hierarchy of who is trained in evaluation, a factor in her taking an *uncertain questioner* position.

Although the interviewees who work through their own organisations have different experiences, there is a commonality which influences their positions: the structure of working through their own organisation, on the whole, gives interviewees a more direct relationship with commissioning or funding organisations that provides opportunities for direct communications about evaluation which gives a greater degree of agency and control to interviewees.

6.1.4 Strength of values

The fourth pattern in the data associated with how interviewees position themselves towards evaluation concerns their strength of values. The coding of interview texts identified many passages where interviewees displayed their personal or professional values – a moral code that guides their work. For some interviewees, how they spoke about aspects of their work showed particularly strong moral values that had a tangible influence on their work and on their evaluation. One example of an interviewee speaking about how her values around inclusion and integrity effects the choices of what work she is and is not prepared to do comes from Izzy:

> *For example, we're working with a music service who asked us if we could do some projects based around Chinese New Year, Diwali and Bonfire Night. And we said, whilst we're happy to work on those sound worlds,*

for example, pentatonic scales and Hindustani ragas, we work as an inclusive organisation and we think that attributing, for example, religious affiliation to those things would make it exclusive. And because we've already made, we might sound like we overthink everything, but we want to make decisions so that we have integrity in our delivery. So, we have to say to them, no, (…) we can't do that. And we'd rather say no and perhaps chance losing the work than put ourselves in a position where our delivery and what we do is compromised. (Izzy's interview)

Izzy is very aware that this story illustrates her moral values that she applies to her work:

You can probably tell I've got really strong values that I've thought about and I don't try to do something because it's on trend or I don't just do something because, err, I haven't thought about it yet, I've really made conscious choices. (Izzy's interview)

These strong values not only influence what work Izzy accepts but also how she evaluates, in terms of the methods she uses and the purpose of her evaluation. In the quote below Izzy gives an example of how her values around inclusion influence her methods when she talks about how using a scale of pictures of faces that display emotions is a method she uses to get feedback from non-verbal participants:

I think evaluation, as much as it could be, can be, should be inclusive to the participants. So, one way we've used evaluation before is to do those faces and for the children to identify if they're feeling, how they feel in the session, how they feel today, those kind of things. (Izzy's interview)

The importance to Izzy of having direct feedback from young disabled participants is expanded on further in the quote below, along with Izzy stating that the *purpose* of evaluation for her is *for participants* and *for practice*:

The point of evaluation and gathering feedback and opinions, again, is so that what you're doing actually is meaningful for the people that you are doing it for. (…) Our evaluation process is very much about the evaluation being from the people that we work with and their opinions and again, this is going to sound really dismissive, but like I, we are not bothered what everybody else thinks if the people that we're working for, it's working for. And because people with learning disabilities are so different as a population, that work we do is going to be tailored specifically for those people. So, getting their opinions and their feedback and obviously having, sometimes having to use their advocates because they might be non-verbal, so their parents or carers, but having it directly from them, I think is really valuable to us. (Izzy's interview)

This quote also illustrates why Izzy's interest and engagement in evaluation was characterised as *confident, committed and innovating*. Being "not bothered what everybody else thinks" shows the confidence she has to develop her evaluation practice to

suit the context of her work. Jenny is a second example of an interviewee whose strong moral values are important to her work:

> I'm kind of quite an analytical person, so... And I also, you know, I'm not kind of floating over the surface of this practice that I do. It's who I am, it's deeply entrenched in who I am. I'm sure if I wanted to do a different kind of work, I would be richer [laughs]. (Jenny's interview)

Jenny's interest and engagement in evaluation is also characterised as *confident, committed and innovating* although she best fits into the *curious reflector* position. In an earlier quote she describes evaluation as "embedded in my practice".   Jenny reflects on how her evaluation aligns with her values:

> I think it fits together really well. I don't think there are any tensions. (…) Part of everything that you do, it's going, "oh wow", or "oh no". We evaluate. It is part of the human experience to weigh up whether we liked something, whether we didn't. So, I don't think there is tension in it. I think if it's inbuilt… it only becomes a problem if people suddenly realise they should have been paying attention to what they were doing. (Jenny's interview)

It needs to be noted, however, that Jenny is speaking here of a process of in-the-moment reflective evaluation. A subsequent quote reveals how Jenny positions others (who she describes as "a lot of people") as partaking in evaluation that is solely *for funders*:

> For a lot of people, the idea of, erm, evaluating things is merely so that you can get funding and justify why you had it and then move on. But I think evaluation's a lot more important than that. I think we should be constantly evaluating our work. Evaluating the projects, it should be collaborative, we should be asking other people, our participants, to be part of that collaborative process. (Jenny's interview)

Jenny's values create a disdain for evaluation that she perceives is directed by others and does not include reflecting on one's own practice:

> What I don't like is when it is a tokenistic, we're doing this evaluation because we've been told we have to. And the actual people undertaking that kind of level of evaluation don't really understand it, don't really understand why they're doing it, what they're doing it for, if, if the people think they're only doing evaluation because they've got to prove they've spent some money in an appropriate manner, that's where it falls apart for me. Which is why I think that evaluation's really important and it should be embedded in everybody's practice. (Jenny's interview)

Certain kinds of evaluation, such as a process of practice-focused reflective evaluation, are consistent with Jenny's values, whereas other kinds, such as accountability to funding organisations in ways that they prescribe, are not.

There were four interviewees where a heightened sense of values was evident in their transcripts: Izzy, Owen, Jenny and Kate. Of these interviewees, all but Kate were amongst those who are most confident and innovating in their evaluation and took *curious reflector* or *highly engaged innovator* positions. Kate showed a high degree of trying to resist evaluation practices that conflicted with her values. The obvious difference between Kate and the three other interviewees named above, is that Kate does not run her own organisation whereas all the others do. Kate's strength of values matches those of Izzy, Owen and Jenny, and her values clearly influence her position towards evaluation: she does attempt to resist uncomfortable practices but without the resulting impact she hopes for. Here she speaks about evaluation methods that she considers to be "inaccessible" to participants, for example, because they do not accommodate language barriers:

> *I felt like as a community organisation and as a community music practice, it is our moral responsibility to address inaccessible evaluation processes. And I think things that interfere with what we're doing should definitely be addressed. And by not doing that, I think we lose a bit, a lot of value of what community arts practice is, particularly in the idea that, you know, we're people-led and roots of social activism, I start to question a lot of that. And I guess that that's how I felt a lot of the way.* (Kate's interview)

What is perhaps not evident in the interview transcript but can be interpreted from Kate's vocal expression in the interview recording, is the forcefulness with which she feels the "moral responsibility", and the sadness and frustration she experiences at the situation she is describing where practice jars with her moral values. Kate gives another reason why there can be inconsistency between evaluation and values. Kate's values are universal to all her community music work, yet she feels that evaluation changes depending on how projects are funded:

> *I personally am guided by my own values of being a community musician because I freelance for lots of different people, so it changes all the time and it usually changes within the organisation because it's usually quite focused on that current funding programme. And I've worked, I've sometimes worked on the same programme, you know, at times for several years and the evaluation has changed because the money has come from different places. So, there might be a, you know, at the moment, the mental health project I'm on has been funded by MIND. In the past it came from lottery. When it came from the Arts Council it had really different music aspects, you know, but my personal practitioner reflection of what I'm doing doesn't really change because I'm, I feel value focused. (…) I feel that's what is missing sometimes in evaluation. So, you know, an evaluation, if it's only for that specific funding then you're missing an opportunity to be part of what you've always been, a*

> *community arts practice that has been built on certain stepping stones of values.* (Kate's interview)

Kate lacks power within the organisations she works for to address the aspects of evaluation that conflict with her values. She is content that her "personal practitioner reflection" (i.e. her *for practice* evaluation) is consistent with her values, but her situation of undertaking evaluation *for funders* is not necessarily consistent with her values. Elsewhere in her interview Kate describes a situation where she had pushed back against evaluation forms she felt were unethical, only to be instructed by an evaluator that they were necessary.

Working within their own organisations enables other interviewees to have more control of evaluation that enables them to focus on purposes and methods that are consistent with their strong moral values. This co-occurrence of factors such as strong moral values and running one's own organisation highlights that it can be an interplay of experiences and circumstances that influence the four dimensions of evaluation and positions.

Where an interviewee's strong moral values were evident in their interviews, it was notable that interest and engagement in evaluation *per se*, but particularly regarding *for practice* evaluation, was further towards the *confident/committed/innovating* end of the spectrum (with a *curious reflector* or *highly engaged innovator* position) than interviewees for whom their values were not so evident. That is not to say that other interviewees had weak moral values – it was just that the content of the interviews did not include discussion of moral values in the way that Kate, Izzy, Jenny and Owen's did.

6.2 Adding factors for differing positions to the analysis

At the end of Chapter 5, the analysis summarised an interplay between the dimensions of evaluation and the positions interviewees take towards evaluation. Building on that analysis further by adding factors that influence differing positions that have been described in Chapter 6, leads to another stage of the analysis: these four factors – education, training and experience; intentions and kinds of practice; organisational structures and relationships; strength of values – all influence the dimensions of evaluation, the positions towards evaluation and the interplay between them. A visual representation of this is shown in the diagram in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Diagram of factors that influence dimensions and positions towards evaluation

Factors that influence positions towards evaluation and dimensions of evaluation

- **Education, training and experience**
- **Types of community music and intentions of practice**
- **Organisational structures and funding relationships**
- **Strength of values**

Dimensions of evaluation

What:
- Noun/event or verb/process
- Methods
- Type of communication
- Focus of evaluation

How:
- Managed
- Responding to funders
- Commissioning
- Subjected to commissioned evaluation
- Leading
- Multiple modes (a mix of the above)

Why (purpose):
- For practice
- For participants
- For funders/commissioners or managers
- For advocacy, celebration or sharing

Affect:
- Feelings and emotions
- Investment
- Lack of agency, control and influence

Positions towards evaluation

- Accepting pragmatist
- Uncertain questioner
- Conflicted developer
- Curious reflector
- Highly engaged innovator

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The analysis is not claiming the factors are direct causal mechanisms on the positions and dimensions of evaluation, but there was a strong enough pattern to extrapolate some associations. The wealth and complexity of personal and professional experiences, skills, values and worldviews that community musicians bring to their work is much more diverse than these four factors, but these are the factors where there is a clear patterning in the data that shows some association in the interview texts that partially explains reasons for differing positions towards evaluation.

Important to reiterate is that an interviewee may adopt more than one position. Positions are not fixed entities but are fluid, and intra-personal interactions may position people in certain ways within a discourse, where they may accept or reject such positioning. For example, the account of Lucy, described in section 6.1.2, shows her taking an *accepting pragmatist* position influenced by being primarily an employee who undertakes managed evaluation, yet has multiple professional roles, with low levels of investment in evaluation and a lack of agency. Yet at times, Lucy rejects this position as an *accepting pragmatist* and takes a *curious reflector* position where she leads on evaluation by asserting agency and keeping a reflective diary that is focused on developing her practice, influenced by the kind of community music work (targeted in a PRU).

Beth's comment in section 6.1.3 about who in the organisational hierarchy receives evaluation training, illustrates the interplay between the dimensions, the positions, and the factors that influence positions. Beth's low position in the organisation is a factor that influences the affect of evaluation that is associated with her *uncertain questioner* position. Regarding affect, Beth constructs a narrative of a lack of agency, control and influence, and the intonation of her voice on the audio-recording[20] when she says, "but that's just how that was" portrays feelings of despondency. Whilst it is not possible to prove any causal mechanisms that explain Beth's stance, recognising the complex interplay of factors, dimensions and positions, adds to understanding of how interviewees conceptualise evaluation through constructions of their experiences of evaluation.

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[20] Another occasion where the process of transcription fails to capture non-linguistic information that is relevant to the analysis.

6.3 Chapter summary

Chapter 6 has examined possible explanations for why interviewees take the positions towards evaluation that they do. Where the patterning in the data is strong enough, four associations have been highlighted. These associations only provide a partial explanation as the complexity of community musicians' experiences and perspectives does not enable further abstraction.

Next, Chapter 7 notes further patterns related to the five broad positions when considering what approaches to evaluation interviewees value, how they position themselves and others regarding the quality and standards of evaluation, and the limitations of evaluation they perceive.

Chapter 7: The relationship between evaluation and community music practice

7.1 When community musicians value evaluation

Aside from when they take an *accepting pragmatist* position, the analysis found that interviewees value the overall concept of evaluation in their work and that they were strongly committed to doing it in some form. Interviewees spoke of several ways that evaluation influences their community music practice. There were also other reasons why evaluation is beneficial to community musicians, even when there is no tangible influence on practice itself.

7.1.1 Approaches to evaluation that influence practice

As already stated, all interviewees viewed reflective practice as a form of evaluation. Practitioner reflection[21] was a form of evaluation that was valued by many, particularly the *curious reflectors*. It informs both planning for future work and the quality of the work. For Ann, practitioner reflection generates ideas for how projects can develop:

> *And just the very act of having to think like that, reflect on the session when everybody's left and the music leaders are sitting together doing a debrief, and I'm making my notes, just the discussion around who did what and how does it fit into that, we'll quite often in the room come up with ideas for what we're going to do next as a result.* (Ann's interview)

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[21] Practitioner reflection is not the same as evaluation with a purpose of *for practice*. Whilst practitioner reflection is commonly focused on improving practice, it can be utilised for other purposes, for example, Kate speaks about extracting entries in reflective diaries as evidence of outcomes for reporting to funders.

A further point from Ann, of how practitioner group reflection can influence the practice, concerns the cohesiveness of co-workers and the quality of how they work together which has an impact for participants:

> *There's a set of standards. So, you would expect the people you work with to be reading from the same page on that, that they understand what they are being paid to do, they're not just coming to have a bit of a jam and make some music happen, we're in tune as a team, if you want. So, there's benefits for your co-workers, if you're lucky enough to have them, but then there's also direct benefits for the individuals in your group.* (Ann's interview)

This quote shows a level of insight from Ann about *how* practitioner reflection influences practice – it can aid the quality of practice to help community musicians work as a team which ultimately benefits participants. Another form of practitioner reflection that interviewees spoke of was reflective diaries. George gave an example of where discussing his reflective diary entries with a co-worker sparked ideas of how to more effectively engage children in the music making:

> *Something that we both noted, but it was only when we were chatting about reflection diaries, how we both like, oh actually we should use that next week to get them engaged straight away, because (…) it can be quite tricky to get them fully immersed into the music making process because it's such an early start for them. And so, we were like, oh yeah, maybe if we start with that next week, then we can engage them straightaway. So, I think those reflection diaries have been really critical to helping us really notice stuff like songs that have worked, activities that have worked, how the participants' interests are developing through the sessions.* (George's interview)

In this example, it is not just the act of recording reflections in a diary that is the mechanism for influencing future practice, but the discussion with a co-worker is also an element of how evaluation leads to developing practice.

Similar to Ann, Debbie also works with a group of practitioners. The benefits of collaborative reflection with her co-workers are that it develops her own confidence and practice. Here she is speaking about doing workshops online early in the coronavirus pandemic:

> *It was a very new thing, doing workshops online. (…) I felt very out of my depth for quite a long time, and I think in terms of that kind of collaborative reflection, we just all noticed different things and sometimes it might be that I've done something really well, but I felt like it's not really been communicated well with the participants, but then someone else might say that it has, and that can be really, sort of, a confidence boost.*

> *Or on the reverse, you know, maybe someone has made a suggestion about how I could improve that and that's really helpful.* (Debbie's interview)

Debbie's comment shows insight into three aspects of *how* practitioner reflection evaluation can influence practice. Firstly, that a community musician might notice something that a co-worker has not and hearing a different perspective can be helpful. Secondly, group reflection can involve peer review that, when it highlights that a practitioner has done something well, can boost their professional confidence. Thirdly, when peer review involves critique that is aimed at improving a co-worker's practice, that can lead to development.

Peer review, where another practitioner offers feedback or guidance, is also a form of evaluation that influences Hilary's practice. She gives a lengthy account of a situation where the observations of an external evaluator made her realise that children's engagement in her workshops was dependent on the level of teacher engagement, however, Hilary wanted all children to be highly engaged in the workshops irrespective of the involvement of their teacher:

> *It really brought home to me that somehow, we needed to find a way of making the workshop elements work in a better way so that even if the teachers couldn't or wouldn't engage (…) we had a sort of middle ground, if you like, that would also then take the weight off the teachers who were doing probably too much.* (Hilary's interview)

Peer review evaluation prompted her to change how the workshops were structured so that teachers' levels of engagement did not influence the children's experience. External evaluators do not necessarily provide peer review, but elsewhere in her interview, Hilary describes how she selects external evaluators specifically for their expertise in music workshop facilitation so that there is critique from someone whose opinion she values.

These are examples of how two specific forms of evaluation that they valued, practitioner reflection and peer review, were identified by interviewees as making a tangible difference to how they did their work. There were several ways that practitioner reflection is enacted: individual or collective, verbal or written. Note that the interviewees quoted to illustrate these points primarily take *curious reflector* positions (Ann and Hilary), or *uncertain questioner* (Debbie) or *conflicted developer* (George) positions that are more questioning and critical than an *accepting pragmatist* position. This can be contrasted to an example of when Felix, taking an *accepting pragmatist* position, is clear that evaluation does not

always influence practice when he says, "I think most of the time, it doesn't influence how I do the work". Felix elaborates that evaluation activities that take place in his work, such as asking participants for feedback, often do not make a difference because he has confidence in his practice. He has been doing this work a long time and has acquired a great deal of experience and expertise:

> *So, if you're doing an evaluation, looking at all the responses is really important, but there's something in leadership for me about saying, this is my ship and we're going that way, and if we responded to everyone altering course, we'd never go anywhere. (…) I think it's OK to be confident enough in your practice and work to say, I disagree with that feedback.* (Felix's interview)

Similarly, when speaking about collecting feedback from participants for evaluation that he perceives as *for funders*, Felix is clear that it makes no difference to practice:

> *So, sometimes it can be quite perfunctory, I suppose, and quite functional and [you] do just do it because you should do it, rather than do it because it's always useful, is an honest answer, I guess.* (Felix's interview)

Felix reveals that this kind of evaluation is not "useful" to him, although he recognises the obligation and accepts that evaluation is an expectation he must fulfil working in the field of community music.

Where interviewees spoke of evaluation influencing practice, it has been described here. There was no evidence in the interviews that other forms of evaluation influence practice for these interviewees.

7.1.2 Benefits of evaluation beyond influencing practice

In addition to giving tangible examples of how evaluation influences practice, there were other reasons why interviewees thought evaluation was valuable and worthwhile, even though no direct impact on practice was evident. Evaluation with a purpose of *for advocacy, celebration or sharing* has a role in enabling interviewees to have a professional satisfaction in their work and an acknowledgement of the benefits of the work. Jenny feels that evaluation can contribute to pride in achievements:

> *You can have those moments of evaluation, that reflective evaluation where you go, yeah, we did that thing, wasn't that fantastic.* (Jenny's interview)

Jenny is clear that it is *reflective* evaluation that brings these feelings of professional satisfaction and validation.

Izzy also talks about how reflective evaluation is an important process for community musicians to celebrate their work and to manage the difficult aspects of maintaining a career as a community musician:

> *And I always talk about reflective practice, and I think it's very important to acknowledge the things that you could improve, but also to celebrate all of the things that you've done. Because if you're working in this job, to be sustained in the work in that way, and giving so much output, you really need to spend some of your reflective practice thinking about the positives that happened in the session because you can't keep doing the job forever because it'll be too hard work if you never celebrated it.* (Izzy's interview)

For Izzy, evaluation is a critical process: she talks about improvement but is sensitive to the challenges of working as a community musician, particularly the high levels of personal investment and emotional labour involved in being a community musician. Evaluation can help to celebrate achievements, which is important and contributes to supporting community musicians to provide that emotional labour and hard work. Other interviewees work directly with people experiencing difficult circumstances (for example, refugees, young people permanently excluded from school and children with complex health conditions and disabilities). Jenny spoke of how other professions have supervision to support them in the difficult work they do:

> *If you were doing social work, you would be getting supervision. You would be getting to talk to people about some of the traumatic experiences that you go through. So, for me, a lot of the evaluative process is about that.* (Jenny's interview)

For Jenny, evaluation fulfils the role of supervision.

A further aspect of evaluation *for advocacy, celebration or sharing* is described by Ann, for whom the process of writing an evaluation report for a time limited project gives her "closure" at the end of projects and helps with professional satisfaction. She laments the lack of closure for work that ended abruptly due to the coronavirus pandemic:

> *You may not actually end up writing a final report, but I'd get quite twitchy if I didn't have to because otherwise there's no closure. And that's been really difficult this year because everything stopped in a week. You know, all the work just stopped. And there was no closure. There was no closure for the people and there was no closure for me as a professional. (…) It*

should have a shape and it should have a conclusion and it should have a
reflection. And you should take away what you learn for your next piece
of work or at the very least, to just share it with emerging music leaders.
(Ann's interview)

In addition to being a community musician, Ann takes the role of project manager for much of her work which involves self-evaluation and writing reports. For Ann, the formal process of writing a report enables her to reflect on a project at the end. The quote above highlights two facets of *for practice* evaluation – that learning is documented so it can shape future work, and that learning can be shared with other community musicians who have less experience so they can learn from others' experiences and develop their practice.

All three examples above concern practitioner reflection, as does a further point from Ann's interview – that reflective evaluation was how she learnt to be a community musician. After many years of creating and performing music, Ann primarily learnt how to be a community musician from on-the-job experience supported by short training courses. Following a detailed account of her route into becoming a community musician 23 years ago, and the numerous work opportunities that grew her experience, Ann says she was "thrown in, in a way that people wouldn't be now" as she had no qualifications or training:

So, I was working a lot every day. Day and evening. And obviously it
wasn't all brilliant because I wasn't formally trained really, but I was lucky
and I managed to work with some really amazing groups and amazing
people – and through evaluation – this is the point, I was taught to reflect
on what I was doing, and that was what enabled me to learn. So really, I
got to where I was through experience. (Ann's interview)

Reflection was a form of evaluation that was an important process in how Ann learnt to be a community musician.

In summary, it appears that the reflective forms of evaluation are those that interviewees value the most, that have a tangible influence on practice and are valued for other benefits of evaluation, such as celebrating achievements, even though there may be no influence on practice.

7.2 Quality and standards of evaluation within community music practice

An aspect of evaluation where interviewees spoke of difficulty and unease, is an inconsistency in standards of evaluation amongst the UK community music sector, with positioning evident in the narratives constructed. There were several interviewees who considered that other community musicians' or organisations' evaluation was of lesser quality than evaluation they did themselves. Interviewees felt that others had less integrity in their evaluation, for example, Izzy:

> *The thing is, I'm going to be honest, I think a lot of people just make up their evaluations, erm, and I know that other people make up their evaluations. We don't make up our evaluation, but we just do it in line with our view of the people are important. But you, you know, you can tell any story that you want to tell. So, you really should ask the people who've been part of the project because they'll tell you the real story.*
> (Izzy's interview)

Izzy is not specific about who she knows that "make up" their evaluation. She is clearly not speaking about only one programme or organisation, as her phrase "a lot of people" suggests that she thinks it is a widespread occurrence. Izzy very strongly takes a position that her evaluation is better than others' evaluation and reflects a reality that others lack:

> *Yeah, well, I think it's fake, if I'm being honest. I don't think it's real. And I think I can see that people jump through hoops because they've got to meet, do this evaluation or they've got to say that they've done this. And, and a really great perspective I've got on this is that I work with people with Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities, and they don't care about that kind of stuff. And that's not real to them.* (Izzy's interview)

Izzy acknowledges the pressure of accountability that some community musicians experience with "they've got to say they've done this", however, this quote expresses disdain for people who "jump through hoops" as such actions are irrelevant to the participants with whom Izzy works. The stance Izzy is taking here is first order positioning. Izzy is claiming a position of someone who has integrity in their evaluation and a moral superiority to unidentified others.   In the context of a research interview, these unidentified others are not able to accept or refuse Izzy's positioning. Izzy is not alone amongst the interviewees as doing this first order positioning. There is a widespread view amongst the interviewees that evaluation done by others is of lesser quality than their own,

so widespread that it could be considered a discourse. Owen also perceives himself as doing good evaluation that is more considered than others' evaluation:

> *I think I'm really interested in transparency – not overclaiming. I think the sector's appalling for that. I think the sector's dreadful at impact capturing analysis, woefully so, criminally so, frankly. Not literally, but the reason that we don't, you know, we're at the back of the queue when funding issues occur is because we've been so dreadful at proving the efficacy of what we do.* (Owen's interview)

By referring to "the sector", Owen is also saying that lower quality evaluation is widespread, as Izzy does. However, where Owen's position differs from Izzy's is that his focus for evaluation is "proving the efficacy" rather than Izzy's foregrounding of the person-centred nature of her community music practice that takes precedence over any proving of outcomes. Owen also references the pressure of accountability that Izzy highlights, with perceptions that others overclaim in their evaluation:

> *I don't think they're doing it intentionally, often, but I think figures get tweaked. And people will try and present the best-case scenario with very, very limited information like they're trying to draw conclusions and claims with three case studies.* (Owen's interview)

His view that others overclaim is one reason why Owen perceives others' evaluation to be of lesser quality than his own, but there are other reasons too: the purpose of the evaluation and the methods are different. He spoke at length in his interview about the bespoke system he has developed which uses wellbeing scales and video capture, which aims to prove the efficacy of the work to commissioners. This is a form of evaluation that has a very different purpose from the intention of methods such as case studies, which he disparages.[22] Owen perceives a hierarchy of methods, with case studies producing lesser quality evaluation than other methods. There is a further reason that may account for the disparity in Owen's evaluation and the evaluation of others: the plurality of community music practice. If one were to consider the learning disabled young people Ann works with, whom she describes in the quote in the forthcoming section 7.3.3, their experiences of community music are diverse due to their receptive language and cognitive differences. In addition, information acquired through evaluation methods that require questioning has

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[22] "A case study is an intensive study of a single case or small number of cases that draws on observational data to shed light onto a larger population of cases" (Gerring, 2019, p.28). "A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the "case") in depth and within its real-world context" (Yin, 2013, p.16).

poor validity due to the young people's cognitive differences and inability to self-reflect. Therefore, evaluation for this cohort of young people that involved standardised wellbeing scales may not be worthwhile due to the diversity of their cognitive abilities and language skills. Observational data, of the kind utilised in case studies, may be the most effective and highest-quality evaluation method for the context of Ann's work, but the way that Owen is positioning people who use case studies as doing poor quality evaluation does not acknowledge these differences in practice.

When Kate speaks about an "unethical" situation of participants being asked for feedback in inaccessible ways due to language differences, her lack of influence in how evaluation is conducted leads to feelings that she is complicit in poor practice. It is noteworthy that Kate speaks in the first-person plural such as "our" and "we", indicating that she includes herself in a group that undertakes poor evaluation practice. Other interviewees also use the first-person plural "we" to include themselves when they speak about community musicians collectively. There is a strong sense amongst many interviewees of a community music sector and, despite the diversity and plurality of interviewees' practices, a sense of a community of practice amongst community musicians. However, what the perspectives of the interviewees quoted show, is that there is not solidarity amongst community musicians of how evaluation is part of any community of practice. The views that evaluation within community music can be unethical, biased, poor quality, overclaiming and lacking in transparency and integrity, shows perceptions of an inconsistency in standards of evaluation in what interviewees consider to be a "sector" and community of practice. These perceptions of others' evaluation practice being of lower quality may not be considering the plurality of practice and the diverse nature of community music and the people who participate.

There is more evidence in the interviews about what leads to low quality evaluation. Felix suggests that funders play a role in shaping the field so that community musicians are not able to be honest or undertake evaluation as a genuine critique:

> *Anecdotally, at least from people that I trust, and don't for a minute think*
> *would not tell the truth about this, I think funders are often too interested*
> *in positives and not prepared for people to be honest about projects.*
> (Felix's interview)

Here, Felix is positioning funders as contributing to a lack of integrity in evaluation. Other interviewees consider the influence of funders on evaluation when they speak about how

organisations they work for shape evaluation to focus on the interests of funding organisations. Kate's experience of evaluation practices directed by her employing organisation is that important points are not acknowledged because they are not within the scope of evaluation that focuses on intended outcomes linked to funding:

> *I have to extract words that are matching the outcomes for the project's outcomes. (…) So, this is an example, only one participant turned up, they commented that they were really lonely and disappointed that no one else turned up, which is a common thing (…) which is a bit of an enlightening moment, I'm like, oh, this is happening. (…) There is nowhere for that material to go because the data collection that I'm doing at the moment is specific to the funding outcomes, so it's specific to wellbeing outcomes, which have all been de-categorised into different elements, and that's the material that I've been, sort of, mapping. So, there is, you know, there's a huge sense of bias is my feeling, because I don't think it takes everything and I think we have to not work like that.* (Kate's interview)

Kate's view that the evaluation she describes in this example is "biased" shows a lack of awareness or understanding of different approaches to evaluation and the different purposes. Kate identifies that evaluation on this project is geared towards evidencing intended outcomes. Outcomes evaluation is a common approach to evaluation in the cultural sector, particularly in participatory arts. Her sense of bias comes from working on evaluation that only focuses on "specific wellbeing outcomes" rather than also considering wider contexts and effects of project activity – in this example, a lonely individual coming to a group activity that has failed to engage enough people, and therefore does not alleviate their loneliness and improve their wellbeing, is an important facet of the project that is impacting on outcomes being met. That there is no space for this to be considered in evaluation, Kate feels is "biased". With reference to the four purposes of evaluation described in Chapter 5, the focus on evidencing outcomes could be considered as evaluation that has a *for funders* purpose, and the critique of a project structure or management that fails to create an environment where intended outcomes can potentially be achieved could be considered as evaluation whose purpose is *for practice*. The situation Kate describes in this quote does not enable both purposes of evaluation to concur which is responsible for her view that evaluation is inadequate. Jenny shares Kate's view that evaluation which foregrounds accountability to funders by proving outcomes is inadequate and poor-quality evaluation. This shows a clear disparity amongst the interviewees about proving efficacy as part of accountability to funders/commissioners. For some, evidencing that work achieves its intended outcomes is good quality evaluation, whilst for others, evaluation that focuses on proving outcomes is not good quality evaluation.

In summary, there is a discourse of evaluation in community music commonly being of poor quality due to others, that is, other community music organisations and funding organisations. Those who speak of this lower quality evaluation position themselves as doing evaluation that is of higher quality than others. This is an example of where considering how multiple realities are constructed is crucial to the analysis. It is probably fair to assume that the others who are positioned by interviewees do not themselves view their evaluation as poor quality or lacking integrity: they just have a different reality. Furthermore, this positioning is not accounting for differing methodological approaches to evaluation or fully accommodating the plurality of community music practice.

7.3 Limitations of evaluation

In addition to issues of evaluation standards, there were two ways that interviewees perceived evaluation to be unsatisfactory. Firstly, there were particular methods or practices that were perceived to be incompatible with what interviewees considered to be worthwhile or meaningful evaluation – the emphasis here is on *some* practices. Secondly, there were *some* interviewees who viewed evaluation as inherently unable to capture the complexity of community music.

7.3.1 Some practices are irreconcilable with meaningful evaluation

Linking back to what interviewees said they value about the practice of community music – such as music's intrinsic value for enabling playfulness and creating eudemonic feelings; its extrinsic value for wellbeing; its contribution to human flourishing through empowering people; enabling change and encouraging self-expression; and community building through bringing people together, supporting social interaction and developing connections between people – it was evident that some interviewees encountered evaluation practices that were inconsistent with what they valued about community music. Throughout the interviews, there are examples of interviewees placing value on particular purposes and forms of evaluation. These examples show there are interviewees who want evaluation to be meaningful, that is, they want it to be constructive, useful, effective at helping to develop their practice, celebratory or enabling of professional satisfaction and confidence,

and they express frustration when it is not possible to act on learning that comes from evaluation. Many interviewees speak of the overall concept of evaluation as a vital process to ensuring that their work is good and appropriate for the people who participate in their community music work. However, some interviewees communicate that *some* evaluation practices they have encountered are not useful or worthwhile, as they are a mismatch with the kind of evaluation they value. Mark, for example, perceives that evaluation required by funders focuses on numeric data of how many people participated and demographic monitoring data:

> *I guess there's formal evaluation, which is this many people turned up and this many people did this and la-di-da, and then there's that kind of informal thing where it is just, again, documenting that journey that I talked about earlier on. (…) It's not statistics based, it's more about experience based. (…) I guess that's quite difficult to measure because you can't say, you know, if this many people come to the workshop and it cost this much, that's good. But you can't say this person moved through their journey by six, the same way that you can say there were six people at the workshop.* (Mark's interview)

Mark is being somewhat reductive and flippant here, but he is clearly referring to scale-level measurement tools such as those that ask participants to assign a numeric score to indicate their level of self-confidence, and how such tools fail to capture the complexity of people's experiences. It is the quantification of experience that Mark feels is irreconcilable with meaningful evaluation. Mark is an interviewee identified as primarily taking an *accepting pragmatist* position, yet here he is questioning practices and finding them lacking. However, Mark does not really move beyond these practices he finds unsatisfactory, falling back to pragmatically accepting and acquiescing to partake in such practices.

Izzy also speaks about evaluation for funding organisations which she feels are not concerned with understanding people's experience of community music. For the young people she works with, many of whom have multiple disabilities and complex support needs, significant progression can be signified by seemingly small changes in participants' behaviour, which can only be appreciated through direct observation. Other methods are not adequate for understanding effects of community music activity:

> *I understand that a lot of funding is based on an evaluation process. And I think that a lot of the things that happen in a session can't be captured in that process, especially for the community music sessions that we deliver – unless you're there. I always wish that evaluation could be*

somebody from that organisation just comes to your session and just sees it and just knows that like, what's happening is working. Like, I think that would be really great instead of, like, the processes of the forms, because you can't, I can't capture the fact that one person's been coming for two years and never sat in a circle. And now, they've just come and sat in a circle and that's just an absolutely fantastic thing. (Izzy's interview)

The examples that Mark and Izzy give focus on particular methods (feedback forms and scale-level measurement tools) as being irreconcilable with evaluation that is meaningful in the context of their work. For evaluation to be meaningful, it needs to be contextually situated within the community music practice, which is going to vary according to the nature of the community music activity and the people who are participating.

Interviewees give further examples of practices that have limitations or failings regarding meaningful evaluation. Differences in English language proficiency between participants and those seeking information for evaluation are exemplified by Kate whose work includes music projects where participants are women for whom English is not their first language. She recounts a situation where participants did not understand what was being asked of them due to language differences:

They didn't have the language to understand the form and it was down to me and my co-practitioner to try and explain and I didn't, I didn't really feel comfortable about that. And when I raised it (…) it was like, no, this is something we have to do. (Kate's interview)

Kate questions the legitimacy of evaluation methods that do not accommodate participants' language differences as it is not possible for people to express what they really think.

Debbie's work with disabled young people considers how differences in verbal communication give her feelings of unease regarding evaluation, as the only evaluation method she has for non-verbal young people, is to ask for feedback from parents and carers, but that is not consistent with her person-centred ethos. She does not have evaluation methods that enable non-verbal participants to have the same influence as those who can speak, which is what she desires for evaluation to be useful to her.

Ann delves deeper into the issues involved in getting feedback from disabled young people which are not limited to participants being non-verbal, but also concerns their receptive language skills and the cognitive processes involved in responding to questioning:

I have a bee in my bonnet as a result of having worked with a lot of speech and language approaches. I don't like questioning, so I tend to not question. So therefore, a lot of what I would be doing is observing. (…) But I always used to get to this point where I felt that a lot of evaluation was driven by direct questioning of individuals about their experience or asking them to self-reflect in a way that I felt they weren't actually capable of doing. And I think that our brains work in two ways. When we are questioned, either we respond to the questioner and say what we think they want to hear or we go into a sort of mild panic mode of what are my choices, what are the answers that I could give? And you don't always come out with the one that is real. You might come out with one that's top of the list or one that has worked in the past because someone's given you an affirmation when you've answered the question. (Ann's interview)

Ann avoids questioning as an evaluation method as she perceives it produces unreliable data, therefore it is not a worthwhile practice.

The final point raised in the interviews concerning practices that are irreconcilable with meaningful evaluation comes from Kate's interview and the importance she places on the *community* of community music. Kate speaks about methods such as those that ask people to rate their wellbeing which, by their nature, require people to consider their individual experience. Such methods place an emphasis on personal change for individuals rather than community and collective change for a group of people, which is Kate's intention in her *community* music work:

I feel like there is a bit of a loss of community emphasis, erm, and I don't think the evaluation helps that, because it encourages this, you know, like my current evaluation one is like, how have you felt over the last week, have you had a sense of isolation, have you felt close to others. And (…) it's always this really drummed in on their individual, their personal journey. (…) I do think there is a strong loss of sense of community and understanding yourself within a community. And I think that, I feel like we need to get that back as a community arts. (…) I don't think it's a good thing or it certainly has negative foundational issues because I think it encourages this sense of own responsibility and this, sort of, idea that everyone's responsible for their own self. And, you know, if you're having a crap week, that means that it's your fault you're having a crap week. And, whereas, I think, you know, this idea of decentralising an individuals and really pushing a collective voice moves away from that. (Kate's interview)

Kate illustrates how evaluation methods that centre on change for individuals are incongruous with evaluating activity that has community development aims for a group of people, and even contributes to the problem of community arts having become too focused on experiences of individuals.

What is notable about the examples given for practices that are irreconcilable with meaningful evaluation is that there are examples from interviewees who take all of the five broad positions towards evaluation in the typology. It appears that experiences of practices that are not worthwhile or not capable of evaluating what interviewees perceive community music can do, are widespread and not associated with a particular position.

7.3.2 When evaluation cannot capture community music's complexity

Building further on the idea of evaluation not being worthwhile or meaningful, several interviewees spoke of how the effect of community music is so complex that evaluation, *per se*, cannot adequately capture and convey such complexity. They raise epistemological questions over how any kind of evaluation can understand how people experience community music and the impact it has on their lives.

Jenny's choice of words, "paradigm shift", shows her perception of the enormous personal change community music can have for people:

> *It's about the individual impact on the individual human beings who've been in the space and understanding that if you've made a massive change for that one person, maybe only one person turned up, but whatever you do for that one person will affect every single person they ever meet in their entire life. So, if we're doing this because (…) you can make some kind of paradigm shift, if you can change things, if you can do that by a musical intervention, then in theory that human being is different and everything they ever do from that moment on will be different. That's impact.* (Jenny's interview)

Jenny is suggesting that it is impossible to capture the seismic change some people experience from community music participation in a way that can be communicated in evaluation reporting to funders – she perceives there are no evaluation methods that could express the impact of how a person's life can be changed.

Ann adds further perspectives about the complexity of the effect community music can have for people. Evaluating intangible effects of community music, such as a "sense of community" is very difficult:

> *The sense of community amongst the people who are participating (…) you get that moment, I don't even know if it has a name, but you get that moment when everybody locks in together and the music becomes bigger than the sum of its parts.* (Ann's interview)

Ann is alluding to a eudaimonic feeling that arises from making music with other people and creates a "sense of community" which she perceives as having intrinsic value. She goes on to speak about the elusivity of capturing such effects of music making:

> *It's essential to know that what you're doing is making a difference and isn't just something that you're enjoying and ticks some boxes because that's what your funding applications said you'd do. But actually, grabs the essence of the value to that group, it's a little bit like casting your seed into the wind.* (Ann's interview)

Although Ann feels it is important to understand that community music is having the effect community musicians perceive it to have, she presents a dichotomy, as her metaphor of "casting your seed into the wind" suggests the impossibility of knowing what will occur when the seed is cast. Ann articulates reasons why such impossibility exists – because her participants' needs and experiences are so diverse:

> *It's so hard to do because, let me think of a typical group that I might work with, which may be 15 young people with a range of additional needs, and they are all presenting with completely different experiences and challenges and impairments and personalities that are very, very strong. And although you're providing them all with an activity that they're all participating in, at the same time doing the same thing, they're having a completely unique experience because of their circumstances and who they are, and their worlds are very, very different. So, the outcome is going to be totally diverse in that group.* (Ann's interview)

Ann recognises the complexity of human experience and feels that evaluation practices that she has available to her are not capable of capturing that diversity of experience. Ann goes on to highlight the distinction between the community musician's intent and the actual effect on people. The reception of community music activity by participants may be different for different people, even though they have all taken part in the same activity.[23] How is it possible to meaningfully evaluate everyone's experience, when those experiences are so diverse, remains an unanswered question for Ann.

Ann and Jenny both take a position of *curious reflector*, so it is perhaps not surprising for them to consider philosophical questions over how evaluation can possibly understand the

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[23] This echoes Willis's (1990) assertion that the reception of cultural production will vary for different people. Any message which is conveyed by a cultural artefact or commodity is made in the reception of it and is dependent on the context. The meaning will be constructed by the receiver and influenced by their identity, experience, social position, membership of social groups and factors such as gender, race, class and age. No matter what the message intended by the creator, it may be received differently by different people depending on their socio-cultural experiences.

complexity of how community music affects people. Felix also speaks of the inadequacy of evaluation for understanding the effect of community music, showing some insight into reasons for taking an *accepting pragmatist* position. The nature of evaluation he currently does, administering feedback forms to participants on behalf of his commissioning organisation, is not going to evidence the positive impact his work has for people:

> *I'm interested in finding a way of doing big, robust evaluations of things. I'm quite interested in doing a PhD and looking at the impacts of the projects because I, I will argue strongly that our projects are really valuable and they do stuff, that they make an impact on kids and are good for the community and for the school and for the participants and their families. I'd quite like to prove that one day. I know that I won't with a form on a project we do at the minute.* (Felix's interview)

So, Felix does believe that it is possible to prove the difference his projects make through evaluation, but it would require the size and depth of a doctoral research project to do so, rather than current evaluation methods that are available to him. He is not currently taking action to develop or innovate in the way that some interviewees are and falls back to a pragmatic acceptance of continuing with the unsatisfactory methods he administers on behalf of his commissioning organisations based on the requirements of funders.

The relationship between evaluation and community music practice can, therefore, be one which is limited by certain methods or approaches to evaluation, or by epistemological questions over the possibility that evaluation has the capacity to capture and express the complexity of community music practice and the substantial effect it can have on people's lives.

7.4 Chapter summary

Chapter 7 has explored approaches to evaluation that do and do not influence practice, positioning regarding the standards of evaluation in the community music sector, and limitations of evaluation. Considering the analysis described in Chapter 7 alongside that in Chapters 5 and 6, adds a further layer to the findings and the picture of complexity regarding how community musicians conceptualise and construct evaluation. The common thread throughout the analysis is, when examined through a discursive lens, the positioning that takes place and the differing positions interviewees take towards evaluation, are important to recognise and understand in addressing the research questions.

Chapter 8: Discussion of research findings

8.1 Introduction to the discussion

Chapter 8 examines the findings presented in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 that are most pertinent to the research questions and thesis argument, with a discussion of how the research aligns to or advances what is known about evaluation in community music, grouped into three topics: the ontological challenges of evaluation, what is evaluation actually for, and cohesiveness within the community music sector regarding evaluation. Discussion of each of these topics arrives at persistent problems or tensions for community music evaluation.

8.2 Evaluation – elusivity, futility or impossibility?

8.2.1 Evaluation as contextually situated practices

What can be seen from the analysis is that evaluation in community music is a multifarious morass of intentions, purposes, methods, methodological standpoints and practices, and that community music is a complex phenomenon. The thesis opens with a quote from Paula, where she expresses a desire for a "solution" for how to do evaluation as she perceives that many community musicians struggle with evaluation. Paula is not alone in wanting solutions – Debbie and Ann also speak of wanting frameworks to help ease evaluation. However, the multiple ways that people conceptualise evaluation and the diversity of community music makes finding easily adopted solutions unlikely. Owen positions himself as having found solutions through the methods and practices he has developed – but they are contextual to his work and not universal across all community music. The methods and practices Owen has developed have, as he puts it, solved his problems, but the methods he uses would be of little use to Izzy who works with non-verbal young people with Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities. As Belfiore notes:

> Any impact evaluation toolkit that promises to evaluate the transformative power of any form of aesthetic experience in '10 easy replicable steps', thus bypassing or refusing to address such complexity, is likely to be – let us be honest – bullshit. (Belfiore, 2009, p.355)

The findings of this study concur with Belfiore, that there is a wish for "toolkits" to simplify evaluation, yet evaluation which fails to account for the multiple contexts, mechanisms and diverse ways that people experience community music is not satisfactory. A reductive or simplified approach does not recognise evaluation as plural contextually situated practices.

8.2.2 Acknowledging the complexity of community music

The potential for any evaluation to understand and articulate the complex effects of community music is called into question by several interviewees. Again, this aligns to arguments in the academic literature. Mechanisms and processes that affect outcomes are not generic for all community music as it is contextually situated, and professional researchers struggle to comprehend and express how community music achieves outcomes (Brown, Higham and Rimmer, 2014). Where academics have ventured to understand the complex mechanisms of community music, they fall short, such as Bartleet's (2023) framework for understanding the social impact of community music that does an excellent job of articulating *what* the social impacts can be but fails in her endeavour to understand *how* they are achieved. Dunphy's (2015) pursuit of creating a holistic framework for evaluating arts participation is admirable and does not shy from embracing complexity with 42 outcome indicators in six outcome domains with three elements of change. However, by deconstructing arts participation in this way, the framework fails to grapple with the ontological intricacies of aesthetic experiences. Galloway (2009) states that aesthetic experiences cannot be reduced to simple variables, therefore it is better to acknowledge the specificity and complexity of arts experiences without attempting a reductive explanation. Camlin's (2023) characterisation of music as a "complex adaptive system" adds to Galloway's claims, by theorising and naming a useful way to think about the complexity, which recognises there are not straightforward cause and effect mechanisms that can be understood in isolation from each other. One of Lonie's (2018) criticisms of evaluation practice is that it oversimplifies cause and effect without recognising the complexity and diversity of community music. The discourses of evaluation as unable to capture the complexity of community music constructed by this study's

interviewees very much match how evaluation and the effects of music making are constituted in the existing literature.

A desire for solutions to evaluation amongst the interviewees that account for the complexity of community music is evident. Those who take a *highly engaged innovator* position are classified as having created solutions that are contextual to their practice, although those who take other positions such as *accepting pragmatist* and *uncertain questioner* have not. Therefore, for the *accepting pragmatists* and *uncertain questioners*, there remains dissatisfaction with the limitations of evaluation methods available to them that do not encompass the complexity of community music, hence the questioning of whether meaningful and satisfactory evaluation is elusive or even impossible for some community musicians without ways to account for the complexity.

8.2.3 Expectations of community musicians' role in evaluation

The varying ways that interviewees enact evaluation (see the typology of *managed*, *responding to funders*, *commissioning*, *subjected to commissioned evaluation* or *leading* in section 5.3.3) all respond to an expectation to evaluate, and in some cases an obligation to evaluate. As Stake (2012) states, "professional work is infused with evaluation" (p.189) and judgments about the quality of that work. What remains a challenge for community musicians is the extent to which evaluation is an inherent element of good community music practice or something more, that takes them beyond being a community musician and into an additional role of evaluator, for which they may not have been trained. Ann specifically acknowledges that she would have liked more training for the task of evaluation and there were many interviewees who spoke of little or no theoretical or methodological knowledge regarding evaluation. Except for Owen and George, it was surprising how little knowledge interviewees had of specific evaluation tools, models or theoretical frameworks for evaluation within their work. This lack of familiarity is indicative of not having learnt or engaged with such paraphernalia of evaluation, and it shows in the positioning of others, where those doing the positioning perceive their own methodological standpoints to be the norm and good quality evaluation. Again, this reflects what is found in the literature, with writers viewing their methodological standpoints for community arts evaluation as superior to others, such as Hacking *et al.* (2018) whose use of quantitative survey methods

is intended to address a "lack of appropriate instruments related to the aims of projects" (p.639) in previous community arts and health studies, and they conclude that further "high-quality research" that involves control groups and sample sizes likely to show statistical significance, would provide more conclusive evidence than previous research. In contrast, Mackney and Young's (2022) view is that in evaluation of participatory arts' "reliance on quantitative methods can be particularly limiting and reductive" (p.398), and they portray traditional methods such as interviews, focus groups and surveys as insufficient to understand "tensions and contradictions within evaluation" (p.399).

This study claims that evaluation should be accepted as plural contextually situated practices that acknowledge the complexity of community music practice and the varied roles that community musicians take in evaluation, not all of which they are equipped to fulfil. There are, therefore, no "solutions" to community music evaluation as some interviewees wish for, other than to work towards evaluation practices that are appropriate for the context of a particular community music activity, acknowledge the complexity of community music, and acknowledge that different methodological positions towards evaluation can be adopted. This creates somewhat of an impasse, as those interviewees who spoke of evaluation as being unable to capture the complexity of community music, are likely to remain with a perception that evaluating community music is elusive, futile or impossible, without a path to progress from their current position.

8.3 What is evaluation actually for?

It is Duffy's (2017) view that evaluation has become a tool of governance and power over subjects, and she encourages people to reclaim evaluation as a critical process to improve practice and policy. The findings of this study somewhat match Duffy's view – but only partially, as interviewees adopt a range of positions in response to evaluation requirements and expectations. An *accepting pragmatist* position accepts being subjected to evaluation, yet there are also positions that interviewees adopt where they reject being subjugated and assert their agency to take more control over evaluation. Those who take a *highly engaged innovator* position have taken control and have sought to shape evaluation to fit the context of their practice and participants. Additionally, there are interviewees taking a

curious reflector position who are not constructing narratives of subjugation and are already approaching evaluation as a critical process to improve their practice.

The second point Duffy makes – evaluation should be reclaimed as a critical process to improve practice and policy – does not apply to some purposes of evaluation identified by the analysis or to some of the positions interviewees take towards evaluation, as there is already criticality for improving practice. *For funders, commissioners or managers,* is one of four purposes where community musicians *can* be subjugated to evaluation, however, not for those who take a *highly engaged innovator* position and have taken action to control evaluation. Furthermore, two of the other three purposes of evaluation (*for practice* and *for participants*) shows positions of constituting evaluation as focused on criticality for improving practice. So, within community music the picture is more complex than a broad claim that evaluation is a tool of governance that exerts power over subjects that should focus more on criticality. Which leads to questioning, what is evaluation actually for? There are three aspects of what evaluation is for that deserve deeper consideration: proving that community music does achieve its professed outcomes; valuing in community music; and striving for quality of practice.

8.3.1 Proving outcomes

Within community music, outcomes are predominantly considered to be changes for participants and communities that those providing the activity hope will occur, with an expectation that they can be evidenced. It is common for funders of community music to expressly require instigators of projects to articulate their intended outcomes as part of an application process (for an example see Youth Music's (2014) *Taking an outcomes approach* guidance) and evaluate whether the outcomes are achieved by the funded work. Some funding organisations stipulate what outcomes they wish funded work to achieve. This conceptualisation of outcomes is part of community music discourse, with Lonie (2018) using the phrase "outcomes turn" to highlight that community music evaluation came to be dominated by a focus on evidencing outcomes. Discourse in the interviews reflects this, with interviewees commonly constructing one purpose of evaluation as being to *prove* that community music work achieves its intended effects.

Whilst it is common across the interviewees that they constitute evaluation to be concerned with *proving* outcomes, there are differing perspectives over the appropriateness of this. For example, Beth (primarily an *uncertain questioner*) expresses frustration at feeling compelled to prove through evaluation that her work achieves the anticipated outcomes. In marked contrast, Owen's narrative of evaluation as a "powerful tool that solves all your problems" shows that he very much believes that evaluation can and does prove outcomes.

So, there is very much a discourse that evaluation is concerned with proving outcomes, with interviewees reproducing the dominant discourse of funding organisations. Some interviewees demonstrate a "chameleonic" (Brown, Higham and Rimmer, 2014) "policy attachment" (Gray, 2002) in how they construct evaluation. But what views such as Beth's show, is that having to prove outcomes is constituted as a chore that should not be necessary because it is already understood by her that her work is beneficial. This reflects themes in the literature where community music's professed effects are critiqued. The phrase "mythologies of practice" by Brown, Higham and Rimmer (2014) describes the faith community musicians have that community music achieves outcomes but without an understanding of *how*. Kertz-Welzel (2016) calls community music an ideology with "oversimplified notions regarding people and musical activities" (p.120). However, what can be understood from the discourses reproduced in the interviews is that interviewees' assertions of outcomes are not based on an ideology of beliefs and values, but on their direct experiences of community music work. The outcomes of community music are observed by community musicians through their practice but cannot necessarily be *proved*. As Izzy states:

> *I understand that a lot of funding is based on an evaluation process. And I think that a lot of the things that happen in a session can't be captured in that process, especially for the community music sessions that we deliver – unless you're there. I always wish that evaluation could be somebody from that organisation just comes to your session and just sees it and just knows that like, what's happening is working.* (Izzy's interview)

This all circles back to considering if evaluation can, in fact, prove outcomes in all contexts and adequately understand the complex mechanisms of community music.

8.3.2 Evaluation is about valuing

Evaluation is defined as "the action of appraising or valuing" (OED, 2024), therefore, to claim that evaluation is about valuing risks stating the obvious. However, what this means in the context of this research is consideration of *who* is doing the valuing or *whose* values are used for the appraisal of community music. Values inherent in government agendas are filtered through policy making and funding programmes or commissioning of services. Much interventionist (Higgins, 2012) community music activity only takes place due to financial support that is contingent on project instigators and practitioners adopting and reproducing the values of funding programmes' or commissioned services' priorities. Brown, Higham and Rimmer (2014) note that community music has a "chameleonic" nature as practitioners adapt their values to be pragmatic about accepting funding from different sources:

> I think [this] is key to CM; if you don't like its values, then it's got others, and they'd be perfectly valid ones because they're all about what music does. (Brown, Higham and Rimmer, 2014, p.25)

The theorising about positions towards evaluation in this study aligns to this idea of practitioners adapting to cope with the prevailing conditions in which they work. As previously stated, positions are not fixed but can be assigned, claimed and rejected, and this somewhat, but not entirely, fits the metaphor of a "chameleonic" practice, as some community musicians take a stance against being flexible in their values and adopting the values of funding programmes. Additionally, the values associated with community music are also not fixed, as can be seen in Krönig's (2019) work on changing discourses in community music, from discourse reflective of the positive psychology movement with discursively prominent phrases such as transformation and ownership, to neo-liberal discourse that emphasises individualism and responsibility through language such as autonomy and self-determination, to advanced liberal discourse of citizenship, inclusion, engagement and participation.

These two ideas from the literature – dominant discourses of values associated with community music that change over time (Krönig, 2019) and how community musicians can adapt their own values (Brown, Higham and Rimmer, 2014) – are evident in the way interviewees in this study discursively constituted what community music can enable for participants. Kate's comment in section 6.1.4 articulates how she deals with fluctuating values linked to varying funding sources – by being unwavering to the differing values and

priorities of funders and remaining focused on what she describes as the values of community arts practice that are universal to all her work.

From the early days of community arts evaluation, Matarasso (1996) argued that evaluation needs to make explicit whose values are used to do the valuing:

> It is obvious, though not always remembered, that evaluation is fundamentally about values. (…) The important, and essentially political question, is which value system is used to provide benchmarks against which work will be measured – in other words, who defines value. (Matarasso, 1996, p.2)

Interviewees who take *uncertain questioner* and *conflicted developer* positions disassociate themselves from their values which they recognise as not being the values of whoever provides funds for the work, which can be embodied in particular kinds of evaluation. If the community music sector is to progress evaluation practices, then it is necessary to acknowledge whose values are being foregrounded when evaluating.

How the analysis constructs differing positions towards evaluation illuminates how some community musicians construct a steadfastness in their own values and how some take a more pragmatic acceptance of adopting the values of funding programmes in criteria for evaluation.

8.3.3 Evaluation is about quality of practice

Apart from when they take an *accepting pragmatist* position, interviewees constitute evaluation as crucial to ensuring the quality of their work and to understanding that it does have the effect they intend. The majority of interviewees construct evaluation as a process that enables them to improve their practice. Reflective forms of evaluation and peer review are identified by the analysis as the most effective at improving practice. It is within community musicians' means to reflect on their work with the purpose of improvement or development, although choice regarding other kinds of evaluation may not be within their sphere of influence. For example, Kate describes a situation where she has no influence over a particular kind of survey which is mandated by an evaluator and insisted upon by a project manager, even though she raises concerns about the accessibility of the survey for participants. For community musicians who find themselves in such situations, it is understandable that they might choose to focus on forms of evaluation that they know

may help to improve the quality of practice, rather than forms of evaluation they perceive as unable to capture community music's complexity, are focused on proving outcomes, or are centred on someone else's values. This point is not reflected in the existing literature. Whilst there are many writers who highlight that evaluation methodology and methods can be ineffective at capturing the complexity of community arts or are overly focused on evidencing outcomes (Clements, 2007; Galloway, 2009; Belfiore and Bennett, 2010; Lonie, 2018), the finding that reflective and peer review forms of evaluation are most effective at improving practice, and are more likely to be within community musicians' sphere of influence, add to what is already known in the literature.

8.4 Cohesiveness over evaluation in the community music sector

One important issue that arises from the findings relevant to the research aim of amplifying the perspectives of community musicians for the benefit of the community music sector, is the degree of cohesiveness over evaluation. Considering the range of practice, the different methodological standpoints and all the problems and tensions regarding evaluation in community music identified in the literature review, it was not a surprise to find that there were differences in practice and points of view regarding evaluation amongst the interviewees. An aspect of the findings that was unanticipated was the vehement positioning of others – other community musicians and community music organisations – but also colleagues such as project managers. Given the discursive representation of a community music sector and communities of practice that occurred in several interviews, it was contrarian for interviewees to be positioning others in this way, pointing towards a lack of cohesiveness and consensus amongst community musicians. There are two aspects of this worthy of deeper exploration: unacknowledged issues of power and integrity in evaluation practices.

8.4.1 Issues of power are unacknowledged

Given the theoretical influence of Foucauldian Discourse Analysis, it is hardly surprising to generate an analysis that finds issues of power relationships when one is alert to power dynamics in a professional field. However, there are several aspects of power dynamics that are seemingly unacknowledged or unconsidered amongst the interviewees. The analysis identified discursive formations of imbalances of power amongst interviewees' accounts, although interviewees themselves did not use the vocabulary of power. One example comes from Beth's position in a hierarchical organisation (described in section 6.1.3) where only those who are "higher up" received training in evaluation, which Beth thinks is inadequate as it is musicians who work directly with participants who undertake evaluation. Also indicative of the power relationships is Beth's resignation to this unsatisfactory situation, as she recognises she is not able to influence change due to not being an "upstairs" project manager. So, although Beth is using language to construct organisational power hierarchies – "higher up" and "upstairs" – she does not use the vocabulary of power or explicitly acknowledge power relationships.

A second example of how power imbalances are unacknowledged concerns how some interviewees position others as doing evaluation that is of lesser quality than their own. There are accusations of overclaiming in evaluation and "I know that other people make up their evaluations" (Izzy's interview). Owen speaks of people presenting a "best-case scenario (…) and claims with three case studies", which Lonie (2018) recognises as evaluation overclaiming in its interpretation of evidence. What these interviewees' accounts do not consider are the issues of power that might explain why such instances occur. Those accused of making up or overclaiming in evaluation may not be able to resist the pressure of accountability to managers, funders or commissioners, with community musicians being ungenerous in their critique of others' quality of evaluation when they may not be able to resist the pressure of accountability. Such a situation aligns to the findings in Jancovich and Stevenson's (2023) research where their interviewees confess to lying in evaluations, as the financial and reputational risks of admitting failure are too great. The power over subjects exercised in evaluation that Duffy (2017) writes of is also relevant here, where some people feel subjugated and the influence of those with power is so great that subjects feel compelled to overclaim in evaluation.

A further way that power can be seen but is unacknowledged, is within how some forms of evaluation are constructed as more scientific, with certain forms of evaluation spoken of as lesser than others, and those who subscribe to a methodological stance that utilises quantitative methods, for example Owen's use of the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale, positioning such methods as superior to other qualitative methods. Again, this reflects a point highlighted in the literature review: there are clearly divergent views over appropriate methodological stances and methods for evaluating and evidencing the effect of community music participation. Postpositive paradigms and quantitative survey methods are perceived as superior by some (Hacking *et al*., 2018), whilst others take a contrasting position, such as perceiving evaluation that reduces arts experiences to simple variables as "ill judged" (Galloway, 2009), or that survey methods are not capable of allowing for complexity and critical reflection, whereas arts-based methods can (Mackney and Young, 2022). How this concerns power relations is there is a dominant discourse that gives more credence to quantitative methods.

How particular forms of knowledge are valued over others similarly shows issues of power, also unacknowledged, with practitioner knowledge seen as inferior. Kate gives an example of how her position as a community music practitioner was not valued when the project manager insisted that methods requested by an evaluator, be enacted against Kate's knowledge of her participants and their capacity to respond to particular methods that did not accommodate English being their second language. Again, this reflects claims in the literature that evaluation systems undermine practical knowledge and do not value practitioners by creating "micro accountability structures" that are tools of governance that undermine professional judgement and discretion (Dahler-Larsen, 2012). Community arts evaluation is designed at an "executive level" rather than by practitioners who are doing the work (Jennings and Baldwin, 2010). This presents a dichotomy when considered with the earlier discussion on community musicians' role in evaluation. Beth's comment notes that those "upstairs" are the executive level workers who get training so they can lead and design evaluation. Whilst this is possibly well-intentioned so that community musicians can focus on their role of making music with participants, the experience of interviewees who are *subjected to managed evaluation* is that they are the ones enacting evaluation yet are not necessarily trained to do it or enabled to have input into *how* evaluation is enacted. Neither Beth nor other interviewees who construct similar stories are framing the issue as a hierarchical imbalance of power. Lonie (2018) notes that evaluation takes place at a

policy level and a micro level – a distinction that was not evident in how this study's interviewees constructed evaluation.

8.4.2 Integrity of evaluation

A second aspect of cohesiveness amongst the community music sector regarding evaluation concerns the integrity and quality of evaluation. Writers alleged many areas of methodological weakness in evaluation (see section 2.4.3.2 of the literature review), however, there are few who raise issues of integrity in evaluation (Jancovich and Stevenson, 2023).

Matarasso (1996) argues that evaluation is fundamentally subjective and Clements (2007) states that neutrality in evaluation is symbolic rather than real, as most often those doing the evaluating are also advocates for the work. There were several instances of interviewees portraying others as lacking neutrality or perceiving that their own evaluation was biased as they were evaluating their own work. These constructions raise issues of epistemology and how a person doing evaluation can understand the object of evaluation. If one considers evaluation from a constructionist perspective, then evaluation involves multiple realities. Constructing one's own or someone else's evaluation as biased or lacking neutrality, does not take account of evaluation being a social and political practice (UK Evaluation Society, n.d.) that is always going to be contextualised by the values and viewpoint of whoever is doing the evaluating. Izzy recognises these multiple realities when she says, "you can tell any story you want to tell" – and she goes on to question the objectivity of evaluation. This illustrates that the varied ways that interviewees construct evaluation as biased or overclaiming or "telling any story", shows that people think there should be an integrity or set of standards to evaluation; however, there currently is no set of standards within community music regarding evaluation. What people perceive as acceptable evaluation differs, and is based on their constructions of evaluation and their own methodological standpoint. Evaluation is a socially negotiated practice that can evolve, not a "sociohistorical constant" (Dahler-Larsen, 2012, p.167). As Bowman (2009) writes:

> Practices are habits that are intersubjectively or consensually constituted, intersubjectively validated and consensually maintained.

They change over time in response to tensions or resistances they encounter. (Bowman, 2009, p.113)

This study is not claiming that there *should* be cohesiveness within the community music sector regarding evaluation in terms of adopting common approaches to evaluation – that would be contradictory to the call for evaluation to be better understood as contextually situated practices and for recognition of how the varied experiences and factors influence community musicians' positions on evaluation. However, the apparent lack of cohesiveness regarding evaluation is at odds with a commonly painted picture of a community music *sector* and communities of practice amongst community musicians. Therefore, it is the assertion of this study that there should be a cohesiveness amongst the sector about wanting to progress evaluation and address some of the problems this research has explored. What such an exploration would involve, at the very least, is acknowledging issues of power relations and different perceptions of the quality and integrity of evaluation amongst community musicians, and potentially working towards a shared negotiated understanding of quality in community music evaluation.

8.5 Chapter summary

The discussion chapter has considered the findings of the analysis in relation to the published literature and themes explored in the literature review. There is a large degree of concurrence between the analysis of interviewees' contributions to this research and existing knowledge about community music evaluation evident in published literature. The discussion synthesises many strands of the analysis into three key areas that need consideration if evaluation in community music is to progress: 1) the ontological intricacies of evaluation that require evaluation to be understood as multiplicitous contextually situated practices, that acknowledges the complexity of how community music can affect people's lives and community musicians' role in evaluation; 2) what evaluation is for, such as endeavouring to prove that outcomes such as social change occur, the value that evaluation attributes to community music practice, and improving the quality of practice; and 3) the cohesiveness regarding evaluation amongst the community music sector when power relationships are unacknowledged and there are no agreed standards for evaluation.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

9.1 Revisiting the research questions and aims

This study has addressed all aspects of the research questions:

How can a deeper understanding of community musicians' perspectives on evaluation inform how evaluation is thought about and enacted in the UK community music sector?

a) How do community musicians construct the concept of evaluation?

b) How do community musicians perceive the influence of evaluation on their own work and on the culture and practice of community music more widely, and how do they negotiate those evaluation practices?

c) What influences community musicians' conceptualisation and practice of evaluation in their work?

Regarding how the concept of evaluation is constructed, the analysis presents the four dimensions of evaluation (*what*, *why*, *how* and *affect*) to classify the multiple different facets of evaluation and the myriad of practices that constituted evaluation for these interviewees. However, interviewees commonly spoke of evaluation in the singular, being unclear about different forms and purposes of evaluation or homogenising various practices under one term. There was relatively little knowledge and appreciation amongst interviewees of different theoretical and methodological approaches in how they conceptualised evaluation.

There are many ways that evaluation influences interviewees' own work. Evaluation helps with understanding if practice achieves its intentions, with planning and generating ideas for future work, and ensuring that practice is of good quality and appropriate for participants. Additionally, for some interviewees evaluation is an element of professional learning as reflecting on practice (either individually or with co-workers) and peer review forms of evaluation benefit learning and boost practitioners' confidence. Evaluation can aid collaboration between co-workers. There are ways that evaluation is beneficial that do not directly influence practice such as celebrating achievements and fulfilling the role of

supervision to help cope with the emotional labour of community music. For some interviewees, they constitute evaluation as demonstrating that their work achieves its intended outcomes, which benefits their professional confidence, their understanding of how the work enables outcomes, and their ability to acquire funds or commissions for their work. Some evaluation practices, such as methods perceived as inaccessible to participants, can have adverse effects on interviewees' practice, creating pervasive affective states of frustration or despondency, and a lack of agency, control and influence over how they evaluate. Some interviewees construct evaluation as detrimental to participants' experiences, tokenistic, unethical, inconsistent with their own values, and unable to account for the complexity of community music. There are ways that evaluation does not influence the work, such as when interviewees have a high level of experience and confidence in their practice, therefore they do not feel the need to adapt in response to participant feedback.

Beyond interviewees' own practice, there are ways that evaluation influences the culture of community music. Interviewees construct a lack of consistency over what constitutes good evaluation, where their own evaluation practices are their benchmark for how evaluation should be done, and others are positioned as doing evaluation of a lesser standard. This positioning lacks generosity in acknowledging the plurality of community music practices and the reasons community musicians might take differing positions towards evaluation or different methodological approaches, such as power imbalances between community musicians and other actors in the sector. Some interviewees used discursive practices to paint a picture of a community music sector as a *community*, however, when it comes to evaluation, there is a lack of cohesiveness in the sector. This is how evaluation influences the culture of community music.

A key aspect of the analysis concerns how interviewees negotiate evaluation in their work. Where they encounter practices that jar with their values or that they constitute as detrimental to participants' experiences, interviewees show degrees of resistance to acquiescence to those practices. The analysis generates a typology of five different positions interviewees adopt: *accepting pragmatists*, *uncertain questioners*, *conflicted developers*, *curious reflectors* and *highly engaged innovators.* These positions are not fixed, and whilst practitioners tend to primarily adopt one position, they can adopt different positions at different times or even take contradictory positions.

What influences interviewees' differing positions and their conceptualisation of evaluation, is a complex web of experiences and approaches to practice. The analysis identified four factors associated with positions interviewees take towards evaluation: the kind of community music work they do; their education/training and length of experience; their place within organisational structures and the directness of relationships with funders; and their strength of values.

These findings address the overarching research question and the first research aim: *to reach a deeper understanding about evaluation in community music* through a deeper understanding of community musicians' constructions of evaluation. How this deeper understanding can be utilised amongst the community music sector involves progressing evaluation through communities of practice, explored further in section 9.2 that follows.

How the second research aim, *to generate new theory about evaluation in community music which could inform new models, frameworks and future approaches to evaluation*, has been addressed is through the theorising in the analysis and interpretation, which could be thought of as a new conceptual framework for evaluation in community music (see Figure 2 in section 6.2). The conceptual framework of multiple dimensions, five positions and factors that influence positions, provides a foundation to the argument for evaluation to be understood as a multitude of contextually situated practices where practitioners have greater agency and influence, and more value to be given to reflective forms of evaluation that critique and improve practice. A next step to enable the sector to utilise the findings for the benefit of practice is to shape the conceptual framework and the three elements of this argument (contextualised evaluation, more practitioner agency, reflective evaluation for critiquing/improving practice) into something that looks like a useable model or framework for evaluation. It is not simply enough to proclaim that the community music sector *should* embrace these findings without offering a way for the theory to be translated into practice, but creating a framework that builds on the new theory generated by this research is a next stage that goes beyond the scope of this study.

The third research aim, *to stimulate discussion and debate in the community music sector about contemporary evaluation practices*, has been achieved in several ways. Disseminating the emerging findings of the research through conference presentations has prompted discussion and debate within the community music sector and encouraged

community musicians to scrutinise evaluation in their own practice.[24] Some interviewees commented that they had never before discussed evaluation in such depth as the interview prompted. The co-construction that took place in the research interview spurred critical reflection on their own practice for interviewees. During the timeframe of this study, I have encountered many people through my work as an evaluator who expressed great interest and a wish to know more about the research findings. Disseminating the findings has potential to stimulate further discussion and debate.

9.2 A way forwards to progress evaluation practices in community music

This section of the thesis explores the implications for practice that have arisen from the research and posits some ways that the community music sector[25] might seek to progress evaluation practices utilising the findings. The findings summarised in section 9.1 articulate facets of evaluation in a way that has not been done before. The thematic analysis created several typologies and developed a vocabulary to describe them. This provides people within the community music sector with a new conceptual framework and vocabulary to discuss and understand evaluation, which adds to discourses of evaluation in community music through enabling new ways of thinking about evaluation: the multiple dimensions, the five positions towards evaluation, and the conclusions that call for more framing of evaluation as multiple contextually situated practices, based on the findings that evaluation is a multifarious entanglement of intentions, purposes, methods, methodological standpoints and practices that strive to understand the effects of a complex phenomenon. There is potential for the vocabulary employed in the analysis to become discursively prominent within the community music sector, thereby shifting the discourse from, for example, others doing lesser quality evaluation to a spirit of empathy for others who take

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[24] I did a presentation at a Sound Sense gathering in 2022, followed by a round-table discussion where people in different professional roles were asked to consider how my emerging findings related to their work. I have presented my work at several student research symposia organised by the International Centre for Community Music, a research centre at York St John University.

[25] To reiterate what is meant by *community music sector* in this context, as described in the thesis introduction – all those who have a professional role in UK interventionist (Higgins, 2012) approaches to community music that have explicit intentions of social or personal change, or music education practices that utilise community music approaches to learning.

differing positions due to a lack of agency caused by power relations within their work. Operating within established discourses can constrain how people act within the discourse, as can be seen by those interviewees who acquiesce to practices that are at odds with their values. If one accepts that discourse constitutes reality rather than merely reflecting it, then shifting the discourse is a way to affect change and potentially reduce the lack of control, agency and influence many interviewees constructed, which they associated with feelings of frustration and demoralisation that impinge on professional confidence and satisfaction. Within a discourse that constitutes evaluation as multiple contextually situated practices that community musicians take differing positions towards, people may be emboldened to move from one position to another when they understand the possibility of claiming agency and developing methods that are contextual to their practice, as others have done. This thesis argues that evaluation is not a "sociohistorical constant" (Dahler-Larsen, 2012, p.167) but a "social and political practice" (UK Evaluation Society, n.d.) that is "consensually constituted" and changes over time (Bowman, 2009, p.113). Examining and potentially challenging dominant discourses, such as evaluation as a mechanism for *proving* outcomes in community music (which not all interviewees thought that it could), enables practice to progress and better capture the value of community music. That practice is "consensually constituted" by the sector is important, as it involves a balancing of power salient to the ethos of community music.

Turning to consider exactly *how* such discussion and potential change within discourses might happen, this study suggests that development of communities of practice concerning evaluation in community music could be an effective way for the findings of this study to be utilised for the benefit of practice. The analysis noted that several, but not all, interviewees considered community music to be a community of practice, with some greatly valuing the connections, diversity of practice and community within community music. Developing communities of practice could be a way for the sector to examine dominant discourses of evaluation, learn about others' practice, develop a shared understanding, give community musicians a stronger collective voice, and affect change for more influence and autonomy to enact evaluation practices that are consistent with practitioners' values and focused on practice. Given the plurality, diversity and situatedness of community music, communities of practice might naturally vary in focus due to different community musicians' interests and practices.

The activism origins of community music and its continuing positioning as an outsider practice were important to many interviewees. Additionally, it was common that interviewees constructed current evaluation as prioritising the interests of funders rather than what they valued about community music. Therefore, for any communities of practice to represent and be aligned with the values of community musicians, it should be a grass-roots bottom-up endeavour steered by community musicians, rather than a top-down initiative that is led by funding organisations. However, it is not for community musicians to address this unassisted – other actors such as people within funding organisations can play a vital role as they are also part of the discourse. It was common for interviewees to position "the funders" as a single entity that prioritised their interests over those of participants. But where interviewees had a more direct relationship with funders and commissioners as they ran their own organisations, their interactions with individuals changed the power dynamic in their relationships. Owen spoke of providing "reassurance" to commissioners. Naomi spoke of becoming more confident, through direct interactions and conversations with her individual grant officers, to state that evaluation had not turned out as planned, rather than being apologetic. Funding and commissioning organisations are part of the discourse, and problems and tensions will not be solved by community musicians alone. Communities of practice around evaluation in community music should include other actors in the sector. It is for the community music sector to change practices through negotiated means, to acknowledge the power dynamics that exist within the sector regarding evaluation and to make space for community musicians' perspectives to be heard, understood and enacted upon.

What communities of practice around evaluation in community music might achieve is threefold. Firstly, communities of practice might enable community musicians to position themselves differently and there is the possibility for them to take a more critical stance towards evaluation rather than, for example, adopting an *accepting pragmatist* position. This would give community musicians the greater agency, control and influence over evaluation that many interviewees stated they would like. Can community music, as a sector, create environments and working practices where community musicians do not get positioned as accepting pragmatists but are supported to take other positions that have more criticality and agency? Attending to the power dynamics within the sector that can leave community musicians lacking agency and influence over how their work is evaluated, could enable the community music sector to create evaluation approaches that encompass

community musicians' differing perspectives, enabling them to embrace rather than resist or acquiesce to practices that do not align with their values. More awareness of power relationships and exploration of who is leading evaluation could create more balanced power relationships between actors in the sector.

Secondly, communities of practice could enable more sharing of knowledge, and furthering understanding and recognition of different methodological approaches towards evaluation in the community music sector. Most interviewees had little knowledge of the theoretical foundations of evaluation. The benefits of greater knowledge would be potentially raising the quality of evaluation practices, or reducing any undue positioning of others as undertaking lower quality evaluation due to the person doing the positioning lacking knowledge or awareness of alternative evaluation approaches.

Thirdly, communities of practice are a method of social learning (Wenger-Trayner *et al.*, 2023). The research found that some community musicians did not feel they were adequately trained for evaluation in their work. If there is a need for more training or support for community musicians to fulfil evaluation roles that are expected of them, then communities of practice are a way for learning to take place.

A significant implication for practice that arises from the findings of this study is to consider if evaluation is adequately resourced within the community music sector. As Mark said, the evaluator "is another job" – meaning the specialist skills of an evaluator are not necessarily the skillset of community musicians. Resources not only concern community musicians' knowledge and skills for evaluation, but also financial resources for people's time to evaluate. Ann speaks of a desire for "quick and easy" models as community musicians are "making the tea and sweeping the floor" in addition to leading the music making. However, embracing evaluation as contextually situated practices that are unlikely to have off-the-peg frameworks that offer solutions, means that resources to support adequate time for evaluation are essential.

9.3 The contribution of the research

The strength of this study is that it has investigated evaluation through a sample of practitioners in the community music sector with a depth that has not been done before,

in a way that has not been done before. Whilst others have researched evaluation in the arts and community music, this has concerned artforms other than music such as visual arts (Melville, 2017), arts and health (Gray, 2020), focused on specific community music initiatives (Baker, Bull and Taylor, 2018; Rimmer, 2018a), considered evaluation in community music although evaluation has not been the focus (Brown, Higham and Rimmer, 2014), or has taken an action research case study approach to examine the researcher's own community music practice (White, 2005). This research is the first doctoral study to focus on evaluation in UK community music from the perspectives of a range of community musicians.

The methodological approach of examining community musicians' accounts of evaluation through reflexive thematic analysis informed by discourse analysis and positioning theory, created new insights. The analytic approach of reflexive thematic analysis facilitated the generation of latent themes, enabling the analysis to go "beyond the semantic content of the data, (…) to identify or examine the underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualisations" (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.13). The "analytic mentality" (Billig, 1988 cited in Coyle, 2016b) of examining discursive practices, the constructionist lens, and the interpretative work inherent in reflexive thematic analysis, enabled findings and conclusions that may have not arisen from alternative research approaches. One example that illustrates this concerns the positioning of others as doing evaluation of lesser quality or that lacks integrity. The constructionist stance did not take what interviewees said as a single truth, with comments such as "I know that other people make up their evaluations" (Izzy's interview) considered with "suspicious interpretation" (Willig, 2012). The analysis could not verify if what Izzy said was true in any objective sense, but nor was it trying to. Examining discourse looked deeper at how language was used in positioning others which created a sub-theme in the thematic analysis that included *positioning others as doing evaluation that is of lesser quality than their own*. Considering this sub-theme alongside other findings such as a relatively low level of knowledge amongst interviewees about evaluation theory and different methodological approaches, and how doing targeted community music work influences positions towards evaluation, led to the conclusion that there needs to be more cohesiveness in the community music sector regarding evaluation.

There are findings and conclusions that make a contribution to the field of community music. An example amongst the findings includes how evaluation has benefits for community musicians other than through directly influencing practice. One benefit

concerned fulfilling the role of professional supervision, to help community musicians cope with the emotional labour and high levels of personal investment they have in their work. Supervision is a standard practice for other professions such as social work, but the multiple professional roles that community musicians often have, and the common pattern of running their own organisation or their work being freelance for many organisations, means that many community musicians have no structures that support them in the way that more formal supervision might. Reflective forms of evaluation and evaluation that is for *advocacy, celebration and sharing*, helps them to deal with the difficult aspects of their work and celebrate what it achieves. Findings such as this helps the community music sector to understand community musicians' perspectives and the importance of evaluation to them. People whose professional roles are concomitant to community musicians, such as project managers, evaluators and grants managers, should endeavour to understand community musicians' perspectives so they can support their evaluation and be responsive to addressing difficulties and unease where it exists, such as pervasive affective states like a lack of agency, control and influence, or feelings of frustration or of being demoralised.

The contribution of this research has relevance to public policy. This study has focused on evaluation in "interventionist" forms of community music which have become a mechanism in the UK to meet policy objectives in education, health and social policy. Community music for children and young people has become an important complement to traditional kinds of formal music education in the UK. This can be seen in policy documents such as the Music Manifesto (Rogers, 2006), the National Plan for Music Education (HM Government, 2022) and the Welsh Government's National Plan for Music Education (Welsh Government, 2022), with community music recognised for its inclusivity and alternative pedagogical approaches. Policy is also directing public funding to young people's music making where there are explicit intentions of social, personal and wellbeing outcomes with the continued funding of Youth Music by Arts Council England. Policy initiatives to address issues such as youth violence and offending and young people's mental health, utilise community music making for personal and social change. Community music also supports health and social care for adults, such as choirs for people living with dementia or those in mental health and addiction recovery.   It is, therefore, important that community music remains a strong complement to education and health and social care services; and it is vital that there is a workforce of community musicians able to fulfil the needs of the role community music plays in society. This research identifies persistent problems and

tensions community musicians face. By becoming more aware of these problems and tensions, all actors in the community music sector can play a role in resolving them and supporting community musicians in their work.

Whilst this study has focused on evaluation in community music, the findings and conclusions have a wider relevance to arts participation and community arts generally.

9.3.1 Developments in evaluation practice in the UK arts sector during the timeframe of this research

I am not the only researcher to have been exploring evaluation in the cultural sector during this time (Walmsley *et al.*, 2022) or issues of power in community music practice (Humphrey, 2023; 2025). Although not specific to community music but concerning the cultural sector generally, the most notable development has been the inception of the Centre for Cultural Value (CCV) and their work to support the cultural sector to more effectively utilise research and evaluation to influence cultural policy. CCV's work has involved support for practitioners to critique and develop their own evaluation practice through new research, digests of existing research, case studies of practice, online evaluation training (Centre for Cultural Value, 2023), development of sector-wide evaluation principles (Centre for Cultural Value, 2021), and guidance documents and evaluation frameworks (Neelands and Garcia, 2023). This research study complements some of the work by CCV although specifically focusing on community music rather than the cultural sector generally.

9.4 Strengths and limitations of the research

A research design of constructionism, qualitative interviewing, and reflexive thematic analysis theoretically informed by Foucauldian Discourse Analysis and positioning theory, has proved to be an effective approach to meeting the aims of the study. Reflexivity has enabled the methodology to be applied consistently in all aspects of the research design and execution and, therefore, maintaining what Kidder and Fine (1987) describe as a fully qualitative "Big Q" approach.

One limitation of the study was the sampling and recruitment of research participants. I expected more people to offer to be interviewed, both in response to the open call outs on social media and the targeted recruitment. I anticipated that I would have more potential interviewees than I needed, and I would select interviewees to ensure a balanced sample in terms of experience, kind of community music work and geographical location, however, this was not the case. Whilst the concept of data saturation is redundant in the methodological and analytic approach I have taken (Braun and Clarke, 2022b), I did achieve 16 interviews, the target number stated in my research plan, although I did not have an excess of potential interviewees from which I could choose.

I intended that the research concerned UK community music; however, I did not have a balanced spread of interviewees across all four UK nations, with one interviewee based in Scotland and all others in England. Outside England, many areas of cultural, educational and social policy are devolved to the UK nations, therefore funding structures also differ. I anticipated this might reveal different perspectives across the four UK nations, but the sample of interviewees did not enable this to be explored. I did approach organisations and individuals based in Wales in my targeted recruitment but without success. The reasons for challenges in recruiting research participants are only partially known, but the circumstances of the pandemic were certainly a factor. I had email exchanges with an interviewee who needed to delay their interview due to a lack of childcare when schools and nurseries were closed. Another potential interviewee who did not participate in the end was struggling with their workload because of a colleague's long-term absence due to long covid.

Community music is such a diverse practice, there is no defined sampling frame and obtaining all possible perspectives was never an aim, nor would it have been achievable within the resources of this study. Additionally, any such aim would be inconsistent with the methodology of constructionism and reflexive thematic analysis which does not endeavour to reach generalisable conclusions based on a representative sample. For Braun and Clarke (2021), "meaning resides at the intersection of the data and the researcher's contextual and theoretically embedded interpretative practices" (p.10). Although there was a lack of geographical spread, one cannot definitively say it limited the research as it may have been irrelevant to the largely inductive analytic and interpretive work, or, as Braun and Clarke (2021) write, "we do not know what our analysis will be, until we do it" (p.10).

One criterion for judging quality in research is triangulation of methods. It was not my intention only to use interviews to gather data, but the practicalities of organising focus groups were too great during the data collection phase due to the pandemic restrictions and the challenges of recruiting participants already described. The data generated through an in-person focus group would have had conversation-like interactions between research participants akin to naturally occurring speech and therefore would have been useful for a study focusing on discourse. Additionally, whereas there is a risk that semi-structured interviews may follow the interests of the interviewer and have a "power asymmetry" (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015), focus groups shift the balance of power from the researcher to the research participants (Wilkinson, 1999). Focus groups may have enabled topics to arise through group interaction that would not emerge from a one-to-one interview (Greenbaum, 1999), or elicited data about *group* meanings, norms and consensus (Bloor, Frankland, Thomas and Robson, 2001; Morgan and Hoffman, 2018).

9.5 Opportunities for further research

It was a deliberate intention to focus on the perspectives of community musicians in this study, but investigating the perspectives of other actors such as evaluators, project managers and funding or commissioning organisations, would further illuminate the field of evaluation in community music. One aspect of the analysis and discussion that could be researched further, concerns how some interviewees position funding organisations as a monolithic homogenous entity that are not particularly interested in community music participants. Applying a discursive lens to how people in funding organisations construct their relationships with organisations they fund, and how funding organisations constitute the effects of community music for participants, would add a broader perspective to this study's focus on community musicians. This could aid the development of a community of practice around evaluation, through enhancing the sector's understanding of funding organisations' perspectives, and help to address the lack of cohesiveness this study has found. Humphrey's (2025) recent publication examines arts managers' perspectives of one funding organisation in particular, including how the managers viewed the funder's reporting requirements and language as influencing evaluation, and he calls for more research into the perspectives of funding organisations.

Data in the interview transcripts about training was relatively sparse, but it was an important finding that community musicians do not feel they are adequately trained for the role they are expected to take in evaluation, which some see as an additional role to being a community musician. As Ann said, evaluation is how she learnt to be a community musician, yet she was never taught how to evaluate. Evaluation is an important aspect of professional learning. Additionally, interviewees' positioning of others' evaluation as lacking integrity revealed a lack of understanding of differing theoretical and methodological approaches to evaluation. If community musicians are to understand and enact evaluation as multiple contextually situated practices, as this study argues for, then a broader knowledge of the theoretical foundations of evaluation may be required. Further research into how UK community musicians learn about evaluation, what they learn, and the extent to which their knowledge and skills are effective for their community music practice, would be of benefit to the whole community music sector. Again, this could contribute to more cohesiveness within the sector as other actors could enable better support for practitioners to fulfil their role.

9.6 Final reflections

Communicating the findings and the potential utility of the research to the community music sector will be key to enabling any research impact. Following the thesis submission (March 2025), it is my intention first to create an accessible summary of the research to share with the interviewees. All wished to be contacted with information about the research findings, therefore they will have a deeper understanding of other community musicians' perspectives and how the thematic analysis led to the findings and conclusions I have presented. Next, I intend to create articles for professional and academic journals to give the research a greater reach.

If one were to include the period spent musing over a research topic when developing a proposal to embark on a PhD, then this research has spanned more than eight years. That is a significant amount of time for practice to develop, however, the research topic remains worthy of investigation and the findings relevant to current practice. In many ways, evaluation practice in community music has not changed much over eight years, with established norms perpetuated by funding and commissioning organisations continuing to

influence the field. However, there have been some changes, with cultural organisations increasingly giving attention to evaluation through doing more of it, attempting to do it better, or to make it easier and less onerous.

Looking to the horizon, how might evaluation develop in the future? The use of artificial intelligence (AI) in society is at a pivotal moment, with government enthusiastically embracing AI in public service administration and signing away the rights of creators to enable Big Tech to utilise their work for training AI without recognition or recompense. I have observed AI being used in evaluation in several ways: by practitioners inexperienced in evaluation to create project outcomes, by a fellow evaluator to save time in summarising key points in evaluation reports they write, by organisations to analyse qualitative data, and by myself to save time in transcribing interviews. Given that AI is trained on what humans have already created and therefore can only imitate evaluation that has gone before, any such evaluation would not fulfil what this thesis argues for – understanding of evaluation as multiple contextually situated practices that makes space for reflective forms of evaluation and accounts for the complexity of community music. However, being optimistic that findings of the research will be taken forwards by the community music sector, perhaps the purposes of evaluation which community musicians assign less value to might be aided by AI, therefore, freeing up practitioners to focus on evaluation that *they* value, such as evaluation that helps them to understand, critique and improve their practice. A content analysis of textual data by AI within an outcomes evaluation approach might produce a perfectly adequate analysis. But the interpretation of what that analysis means in the context of the practice, is not something AI can achieve.

The new insight into evaluation in community music generated through the research has justified the academic rationale for the study and additionally has addressed my own personal motivations. I wanted to understand more about community musicians' perspectives on evaluation as I had sometimes encountered difficulties with enthusing them about evaluation in projects where I was an evaluator. This has certainly been achieved. The analysis, findings and conclusions have enabled a deeper understanding for myself, which is already benefitting my practice and the organisations and community musicians with whom I work. I have changed the way that I design evaluation frameworks for my clients, now giving greater recognition to practitioners' reflective evaluation so that project managers support it and value it, in addition to incorporating more reflection into the evaluation process for project managers. Ideas that have arisen from the process of

the research and the findings are permeating into the community music sector through the work I do with client organisations and the discussions that take place in the course of evaluation. They are, therefore, already influencing practice in a small way.

Amongst my motivations for the PhD was taking a critical stance towards current evaluation practices that I view as epistemologically or ethically inappropriate and wanting to play a role in enabling change. What I have learnt from hearing the interviewees' perspectives, and my analysis and interpretation of them, has reinforced my position that there needs to be more critical questioning of current practices within the community music sector and progression to move beyond current accepted practices. The process and the findings of the research have given me more knowledge and confidence from which to argue my position. Lonie (2018) employed the phrase "outcomes turn" to describe the focus on outcomes in community music evaluation that arose in response to the instrumentalisation of arts and culture from the late 1990s onwards. To borrow this concept, perhaps community music evaluation is about to experience a critical turn or a values turn.

The thesis opened with a quote from Paula which presented evaluation as a problem for which she was seeking solutions. To end, I again quote an interviewee that presents a very different perspective.

> *I think that evaluation's really important and it should be embedded in everybody's practice.*

(Jenny's interview)

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Expression of Interest Form

Evaluation Practices in Community Music

PhD Research Project (Nell Farrally)

Thank you for your interest in my PhD research.

I am seeking community musicians to take part in an interview about experiences and perspectives of evaluation in community music with children and young people. The interview would take place online and last around one hour. I would like to interview a range of people who have professional experience of leading community music making with children and young people in the UK.

This form is for potential interview participants to find out more about what's involved, express an interest in taking part, and to give a summary of professional experience to ensure I interview people who have a range of different backgrounds and professional experiences.

As there is a lack of a commonly accepted definition of community music, I intentionally don't have strict criteria of what I consider community music to be – although "music making with social goals" (Rimmer, 2009) is a simple description which is useful. If you consider your work to be community music, then please do consider taking part. By "professional" I mean people who have a level of expertise so that someone would pay you to lead community music making with children and young people or you could earn money on a self-employed basis. I don't want to exclude people who are not currently working as community musicians (perhaps due to COVID) but have relevant experience.

<u>Click here to see a PDF information sheet about what's involved.</u>

If you wish to find out about my background there's information on my professional website: www.nellfarrally.co.uk

If you are happy to take part in an interview, please click "next" below to give some information about you and your work.

Your personal information will be stored securely within GDPR guidelines. It will not be shared with anyone else and will only be used for the purposes of the research.

☐ I consent to my personal information being processed and stored for the purposes of the research.

Your name	
Your email address	
Your phone number	

How many years' experience of working as a community musician do you have?	
Do you have any training or qualifications in:	
Music	☐
Community music	☐
Teaching	☐
Other relevant training / qualifications (e.g. youth or community work)	☐
None of the above	☐

Please give a few details.
Where are you based / what areas of the country do you mostly work?
Do you specialise in working with particular groups of people or in particular settings?
Does your work focus on particular styles of music – if so, what?

Which best describes your work?	
Employed by an organisation	☐
Self-employed but mostly working for one organisation	☐
Self-employed and working for several / many different organisations	☐
Working through an organisation which you manage (eg. a CIC)	☐

Other – please describe.
Is there anything else you wish to say about your work which is relevant?

Thank you for your time. I will be in touch in due course. The interviews are likely to take place throughout 2021, so I may not contact you straight away.

Appendix 2: Research Participant Information Sheet

Nell Farrally PhD Research: Evaluation practices in community music

Information for interview research participants

What is the research for?

I am studying for a PhD at Bath Spa University which involves designing and carrying out an in-depth research project and writing a thesis. My research topic is the relationship between evaluation practices used in community music and community music practice itself. I want to find out what community musicians think about evaluation practices in community music with children and young people, including formal evaluation requirements they encounter in their work. The purpose of my inquiry is to address a lack of research into evaluation in community music and to amplify the voices of community musicians about how effectively evaluation can capture the value of community music.

Further into the PhD I shall present research findings at conferences and events, write articles for professional magazines and submit articles for publication in academic journals. Some people develop their PhD thesis into a book for publication (although I am not planning to do that at the moment!). I hope that by sharing my research findings, I will stimulate discussion and debate amongst the community music sector about evaluation practices in community music, potentially influencing people's ideas and practices around evaluation in their work.

Why am I being asked to take part?

I am seeking several professional community musicians to be participants in my research. I am looking for people who have experience of community music with children and young people in the UK. I would like to involve people who have different levels of experience, different kinds of experience, different approaches to community music, and different educational backgrounds and routes into becoming community musicians. There is no commonly accepted definition of "community music" or "community musician" therefore, I am not being prescriptive – if you consider yourself to be a professional community musician, then I am interested in your views and experiences. However, to offer some guidance, "music making with social goals" (Rimmer, 2009) is one definition.

What if I choose to not take part?

Taking part is entirely optional. Although you may have been given information about the research through your professional contacts or organisations you work for, you are not under any obligation to take part. No one will know if you have declined an invitation to take part.

What exactly am I being asked to do?

I need to find out different people's views and experiences of evaluation in their community music work, therefore I am seeking people who have a variety of experiences of working as professional community musicians to take part in a one-to-one interview. This will involve being interviewed by me – ideally via Zoom (or other online method such as Skype or Google Hangouts if you prefer). The Zoom call will be recorded (video and audio) and stored as digital files. If an online interview is difficult for you (for example, you're not confident using Zoom or you're in a rural area with slow broadband speeds) then an interview over the telephone will be offered. The interview will last for around one hour, although it will need around 1 ½ hours of your time including introduction time. You will need to be in a private place for the interview where you cannot be overheard and there is minimal background noise. If online or telephone interviews are not suitable for you (for example, if you have access or communication needs which make Zoom or telephone difficult) then a face-to-face interview may be possible. The interview will be arranged at a time which is convenient for you. You will also need to give a bit of time to arranging when the interview will take place and to completing a consent form beforehand.

Can I be paid for my time?

Unfortunately, no. The University's ethical guidelines state that research participants are not allowed to be paid for taking part. Your contribution to the research would be on a voluntary basis, although if you are employed by an organisation, the organisation may agree that the interview can be done in your work time. One reason I have selected online or telephone interviews is that it minimises the time I am asking people to give. If a face-to-face interview is arranged, then we will arrange for the interview to take place somewhere which is convenient for you.

What will happen to the information I give?

Audio-recordings, video-footage and transcriptions of the interview (the data) will all be stored digitally on a hard drive with a cloud storage back-up. All files will be password protected and stored securely. They will not be shared with anyone else or publicly disseminated, although they may be shown to my PhD supervisors during the data analysis process.

It will be necessary for me to keep your personal contact details to be able get in touch with you about the research. Your personal contact details will be kept separately to your data which will be anonymised.

Your data will be analysed alongside data contributed by other research participants. I may quote things you say in my thesis, conference presentations or any articles or publications.

For how long will my data be kept?

The audio-recordings, video and transcripts will be kept for 10 years. The reason this is such a long time is because the PhD will not be completed until 2024. I may then want to publish journal articles about the research, and it is good practice to keep the research data to support the validity of findings.

Will people know I've taken part in the research?

A pseudonym will be used instead of your name in the analysis, thesis, conference presentations or subsequent articles. Any other names you talk about during the interview, such as other community musicians, participants or organisations you work for will be changed to create anonymity. In addition to creating anonymity through pseudonyms, every care will be taken to omit other details which could identify you. However, you should be aware that complete anonymity cannot be guaranteed. I am hoping to involve musicians who have a range of experiences, including some who have extensive experience and a national profile due to their expertise or specialism. Community music in the UK is a relatively small professional sector, so people with a national profile should be aware that complete anonymity may not be possible.

Can I change my mind once I've said yes?

You can withdraw from taking part at any point up until one month after the interview has taken place. After this point, your data will be anonymised, collated and analysed along with data from other participants, and it will not be possible to separate and omit your data from further analysis and the final thesis. I understand that I am asking for you to donate your time to my research – but please consider if you are able to commit the time needed before agreeing to take part.

What if I have more questions or I want to contact the researcher?

I can be contacted by email (   ) or phone (   ).

Appendix 3: Online Consent Form

NELL FARRALLY PhD Research: Evaluation practices in community music

INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM
(ONLINE, TELEPHONE OR FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEWS)

To take part in the research, please tick the boxes to confirm that you are making an informed decision to voluntarily take part.

☐	I confirm that I have received a participant information sheet and I understand what participating in this research involves
☐	I confirm that I am aged 18 or over
☐	I agree to take part in the interview and I understand what my data will be used for
☐	I agree to the interview being audio and video recorded
☐	I understand the information I give during the interview will be transcribed
☐	I understand the time commitment involved in the interview and I am happy to give my time
☐	I understand that my name will not be used but complete anonymity cannot be guaranteed
☐	I understand that I can withdraw from the research up to the point when the research data starts to be analysed as after this point, it may not be possible to separate my data from that of other participants
☐	I agree to my personal data (phone number, email address etc) being kept for the purposes of organising the interview

Your name	
Date	
Phone number	
Email address	

Appendix 4: Interviewee profiles

Ann (participant 1)

Ann has worked as a community musician for 23 years. The focus of her work is community music groups for children and young people with learning disabilities, although she has also worked in schools and on projects supporting teenagers to develop their own bands. Ann has no formal musical education, being an entirely self-taught musician. Her route into community music was through a trainee role and she developed her skills through short non-accredited professional development courses in music facilitation. Ann works primarily through a small organisation which she helps to run. She also acts as fundraiser and project manager for many of her projects, in addition to being part of the music facilitation team.

Beth (participant 2)

Beth has 15 years' experience as a community musician, largely focusing on early childhood work, including projects for adoptive families with young children. Following many years of leading participatory dance for children, Beth moved into community music through a traineeship with a large music organisation where she continued to work for many years, employed to work on a variety of early childhood projects. At the time of the interview, she was studying for a MA in Community Music and focusing on establishing a freelance practice of early childhood music groups.

Chris (participant 3)

Chris's community music work has spanned 26 years. His recent work focuses on workshops in schools although in the past his work has been very varied, including leading community choirs, teaching Wider Opportunities[26] in schools and junk percussion projects.

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[26] Wider Opportunities was a programme of whole class instrumental teaching in schools by local authority music services in England from the 2000s, supported by the government's Standards Music Fund Grant. The aim of the programme was that all primary school children had the opportunity to learn to play an instrument during their Key Stage 2 education (Bamford and Glinkowski, 2009).

Following a Post Graduate Certificate in Education, Chris worked as a primary school teacher before undertaking a higher education Certificate in Music Workshop Skills. Chris primarily works as a freelancer for other organisations, although he has a small amount of experience of acquiring funds for his work himself.

Debbie (participant 4)

Debbie has been practicing as a community musician for three-and-a-half years following a community music undergraduate degree. Her work primarily involves groups for disabled and neurodivergent children and young people, although she has experience of working with women from culturally diverse backgrounds. She most often works in a team with other community musicians. Debbie's work is a combination of freelance work for various organisations and through her own small organisation which she manages.

Eric (participant 5)

Eric has 19 years' experience of community music, with a background in secondary school music teaching. He has qualified teacher status, and he is currently undertaking a PhD in music education. His work involves using music to teach English as a second language, and to support unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people and young people requiring mental health support. He is self-employed and works through various organisations.

Felix (participant 6)

Felix has been a community musician for 17 years. He trained in vocal performance (undergraduate and Masters levels) and has adult education qualifications. He built his experience through musician-in-residence roles in schools. Felix's work focuses on large-scale community singing and songwriting projects, often involving workshops in schools. All his work is through a limited company that he runs, with other organisations fundraising for projects and commissioning Felix's organisation to deliver.

George (participant 7)

Following a community music undergraduate degree, George has worked as a community musician for six years. He continued studying alongside his community music work, completing a Masters in community music and currently working towards a PhD. George's work mostly involves early years groups for families, particularly adoptive families. He is employed by a large arts organisation for some of his work, alongside some freelance work for another organisation.

Hilary (participant 8)

Hilary has worked as a community musician for 40 years alongside professional vocal performance. Her vocal training came from an undergraduate degree at a conservatoire and all her community music skills came from practical experience, starting with doing workshops in schools. Hilary runs her own small company that fundraises for celebratory community projects focusing on local cultural heritage. These projects involve working in schools and with community groups involving adults.

Izzy (participant 9)

Izzy has ten years' experience of community music following an undergraduate degree at a conservatoire that included experience of workshops with disabled people. Her work focuses on children and young people with disabilities and additional educational needs. She is a co-director of a small company that offers inclusive music groups for disabled young people. The company fundraises for some of its work in addition to being commissioned by Music Hubs. Izzy does some work on a freelance basis for a large national music education programme.

Jenny (participant 10)

Jenny has been a community musician for over 20 years. She has Masters degrees in music and in education, alongside many qualifications relevant to her community music work

such as a certificate in youth work. Jenny's work focuses on early years, children with additional needs and adult groups such as community choirs. She has multiple modes of employment – employed by an organisation, self-employed for many organisations and working through her own company.

Kate (participant 11)

Kate's community music work started 18 years previously, following an undergraduate degree at a conservatoire, then work in disability advocacy that led her to study for a Masters in community music. All of Kate's work is freelance for many organisations, focusing on children, young people and adults with additional support needs and disabilities, asylum seeking families and adult mental health service users.

Lucy (participant 12)

Lucy has been a community musician for 30 plus years. She has an undergraduate degree in creative arts and a level 4 certificate for music educators. The majority of Lucy's work involves teaching in schools (whole class, small group and individual tuition) as an employee of a Music Hub, in addition to freelance community music work for an arts charity and leading community brass bands.

Mark (participant 13)

Mark has 30 years' experience of community music – workshops in schools, groups in prisons, community groups – alongside being a performing touring musician. Mark is a self-taught musician who has built his experience through practice. He is self-employed, working for many organisations in addition to working through his own small organisation.

Naomi (participant 14)

Naomi's experience of community music stretches back 15 years. Following an undergraduate degree at a conservatoire, she trained as a teacher and was a peripatetic tutor in schools. She did a music leadership Masters degree and formed a small company with other community musicians to manage their own work with families, children with disabilities and adults in mental health recovery.

Owen (participant 15)

Owen's community music work for the past 15 years has focused on young people in challenging circumstances and music in youth work. Following many years as a touring musician alongside youth work, Owen established his own company to offer mentoring through music for young people. His work is now all as an employee of the organisation he founded. He has research Masters degree in education.

Paula (participant 16)

Paula is a multi-instrumentalist who has four years' experience of community music work with families needing support with learning. Previously she worked for many years as a primary school teacher. Paula is employed by a cultural charity who manages family learning activities which include music making groups.

Appendix 5: Summary of interviewees' professional experience

Pseudonym	Number of years as a practicing community musician	Relevant education and training	Types of community music work	Musical background	Organisational structures working in
Ann	23	Instrumental Music Facilitation (level 3). Traineeship on Youth Music funded projects. Various unaccredited CPD days and courses.	Learning disabled young people and adults. Projects for teenage all-female rock/pop bands.	Self-taught musician. Performed in bands. Taught peripatetic instrumental lessons for many years.	Self-employed and working for several different organisations. Working through an organisation they manage.
Beth	15	Undergraduate degree in dance. Traineeship on Youth Music funded early years projects. Currently doing a Masters degree in community music.	Early years and SEND.	Self-taught musician.	Self-employed and working for several different organisations.
Chris	26	O level music. Grade 5 in first instrument. PGCE (primary). Certificate in Music Workshop Skills.	No particular specialism. Mostly one-off workshops and short-term projects in schools and early years settings.	Self-taught multi-instrumentalist.	Employed by a music service and self-employed and working for several different organisations.
Debbie	3 ½	Undergraduate degree in community music.	Various with a focus on disabled and neurodivergent people.	Not specified.	Self-employed and working for several different organisations. Working through an organisation they manage.

Eric	19	Qualified Teacher Status. Currently doing a PhD in music education.	English as a second language summer schools. Unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people and work with young people requiring mental health support.	Ten years as a secondary school Head of Music before moving into youth work.	Self-employed and working for several different organisations.
Felix	17	Undergraduate and Masters degrees in music performance. Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector (PTLLS).	Large-scale celebratory singing and songwriting projects.	Studied classical vocal performance. Musician in residence in a secondary school.	Working through an organisation they manage.
George	6	Undergraduate and Masters degrees in community music. Currently doing a PhD in community music.	Early years and looked after children.	Multi-instrumentalist and vocalist.	Employed by an arts organisation and self-employed and working for several different organisations.
Hilary	40	Undergraduate degree in music. No formal training in community music – learnt by doing workshops in schools.	Celebratory community music projects that focus on cultural heritage.	Conservatoire trained singer with an interest in traditional music.	Working through an organisation they manage.
Izzy	10	Undergraduate degree in music.	Young people with disabilities and additional educational needs.	Conservatoire trained instrumentalist.	Working through an organisation they manage.
Jenny	20	Masters in music. Masters in education. Certificate in youth work. Various courses such as Kodaly and Arts Award Adviser.	Early years, SEND, children in challenging circumstances, adult community groups including choirs.	Folk/traditional musician, singer, songwriter and composer.	Self-employed and working for several different organisations. Working through an organisation they manage.

Kate	18	Undergraduate degree in music and Masters in community music. Advanced musical leadership course.	Various. Children, young people and adults with disabilities (including PMLD), asylum seeking women, adult mental health services users, early years.	Conservatoire trained instrumentalist.	Self-employed and working for several different organisations.
Lucy	30	Undergraduate degree in creative arts (music and art). Certificate for Music Educators (level 4). Colourstrings training.	Brass band leader. Music facilitator in schools (whole class, small group and individual tuition).	Long-standing brass band member and leader.	Employed by a Music Hub and self-employed and working for several different organisations.
Mark	30	None.	Ukulele, rock/pop/jazz and music tech workshops in schools, youth groups, community groups.	Self-taught musician. Professional touring musician.	Self-employed and working for several different organisations. Working through an organisation they manage.
Naomi	15	Undergraduate degree in music performance, Masters degree in music leadership, postgraduate teaching certificate.	Early years, children with disabilities, families, vulnerable adults including mental health recovery.	Conservatoire trained instrumentalist and professional performer.	Working through an organisation they manage.
Owen	15	Masters in education. Youth work training.	Digital youthwork (youth in challenging circumstances).	Self-taught musician. Professional touring musician.	Employed by an organisation.
Paula	4	Multi-instrumentalist. Qualified primary school teacher.	Early years (family learning).	Multi-instrumentalist.	Employed by an organisation.

Appendix 6: Interview guide

Introduction

You've read the information sheet and you've completed the online consent form. Is there anything you want to ask me before we start? Just to reiterate your right to withdraw – if there's any questions you don't want to answer, that's fine, just say so and we'll move on. If, after the interview, for some reason you think, I wish I hadn't said that, you can ask to withdraw completely or you could request that I don't use certain sections of the interview. But I ask that if you want to do that, do it within a month of the interview because once I start analysing interviews it would be a huge amount of work to remove a particular interviewee's contribution.

I have a list of topics and questions which I'd like to cover today. It's absolutely fine to divert from my list.

1. Community music experience

1.1 Can you tell me about your current work in community music or your most recent work?

Prompts: projects, ages or characteristics of participants, settings, organisations working for, specialisms, funders

1.2 Can you tell me about your experience of working in community music going back further than that?

Prompts: projects, ages or characteristics of participants, settings, organisations working for, specialisms, funders

1.3 How did you get into being a community musician?

Prompts: educational background – any music or teaching qualifications, studied CM, motivations, personal experiences or values.

2. Perceptions of community music

2.1 One thing I've discovered from doing this research, is that there isn't a commonly accepted definition of community music. How do *you* define community music?

Prompts: where does your definition come from? Personal definition? From other musicians you've worked with, people you trained with, writers on CM? Organisations you've work for, currently work for?

2.2 Is that your preferred term for how you describe your work or do you use other terms?

2.3 What is most important to you or what do you value most about the practice of community music?

Prompts: What motivates you to do the work you do?

[Make notes of what they say – to return to later in the interview]

2.4 Thinking about a group of children and young people you work with, what kinds of things do you think they would say about what *they* think is most important to them about the music making they do with you? What do they value most?

Prompts: maybe think about some different projects you've worked on and diversity of young people's experiences. Any specific feedback you can think of from young people?

3. Perceptions of evaluation

3.1 Word association game – evaluation. If I say *evaluation*, what words come into your head? Just words or short phrases – your instant gut reaction – I'm going to write them down.

Tell me more about the words you've chosen – why those words?

[Make notes of what they say – to return to later in the interview]

3.2 When we did that I noticed…… which could be an indication of how you feel about evaluation. Can you tell me more about that?

3.3 Word association game with different words: quality, monitoring, impact measurement, reflection, reflective practice or other words which arise in the previous question.

Tell me more about the words you've chosen – why those words?

3.4 Different evaluation methods, resources, toolkits used in community music – tell me about what experience you have of these – just list some.

Prompts: particular questionnaires, rating scales developed by funders and researchers.

Let's take some of those in turn and tell me about them.

3.5 Thinking either specifically or generally about these different methods, toolkits etc. – can you tell me about an example of where they have had an effect or influence on how you work? Why do you think that is?

[Respond to whether answer was positive or negative] and ask for a contrasting example e.g. to me, what you just said about the effects of evaluation on your work were not positive. Do you have any contrasting examples where the effects were positive or beneficial?

3.6 What effect do you think these ways evaluation influences how you work, that you've just talked about, have on other people involved – particularly children and young people?

3.7 Over the time you have worked as a community musician, how has evaluation changed?

Prompts: your perspectives and experiences, the expectations from others (funders, project managers), generally in the sector?

3.7 Think of a particular project or setting where you've worked. If there were absolutely no requirements from anyone to evaluate – funders, project managers, partner organisations – what would you do – would you do anything which you consider to be evaluation?

Prompts: can you tell me why? Would you make judgements about the quality of the work? If so, why would you do that, and how?

4. Values

4.1 *Summarise the main points of what they've said about evaluation.*

Earlier in the interview, I wrote down some of your responses about what you think is most important about community music – I want to return to that now.   Thinking of the conversation we've had about evaluation – how do these things fit with your experiences and ideas of evaluation in your work?

Prompts: how does this make you feel?   Does anything surprise you?

4.2 How is it possible to capture, document or record these things that are valued or are valuable?

Prompts: how do you capture it, or how do you think it could be captured? What is best?

4.3 Thinking very broadly about the topic – evaluation practices in community music – if you had a magic wand – what would you change?

4.4 Are there things you would keep?

5. Interview debriefing / anything else?

5.1 We're drawing to the end of the interview. I think we've explored the topic really well. Is there anything else you want to contribute or anything you want to ask me?

5.2 Some people might find picking apart their professional practice in this way quite difficult, some find it cathartic or….? So, I'm just wondering how you feel answering questions like this about your practice.

Prompts: do you have colleagues or freelance co-workers you could talk to if you need to?

5.3 Let's clarify what will happen now in terms of what I'm going to do with what you've told me.   I will transcribe your interview, analyse and include in the thesis and articles. Anonymous. Remind of right to withdraw – one month after interview. Retract certain things or all of it.

Any questions about this?

Thank you for your time, and for sharing your ideas and experiences with me. I hope you feel it's been worthwhile. It's going to be a while before I've got to the point in my PhD where I have any findings to share – but I hope to be writing about the findings and maybe talking about them at conferences. I will write a short summary to share with people like yourself you have contributed – would you like me to get in touch with you again to let you know about that?

Appendix 7: Final version of themes (table)

Theme 1 – Multiple dimensions of evaluation: what, why, how and affect

How community musicians experience evaluation has multiple dimensions: *what* they do when they evaluate, *why* they evaluate, *how* they evaluate, and the *affect* that evaluation has on community musicians.

Sub-theme 1a – what evaluation is

Evaluation is not a singular activity but involves a multitude of actions, and there are differences in what interviewees understand evaluation to be, in addition to differences in what is being evaluated – the music-making process involved in community music or the outcomes it creates.

Sub-theme 1b – why community musicians evaluate

There are four main purposes of evaluation: *for practice*, *for participants*, *for funders/commissioners or managers*, and *for advocacy, celebration or sharing*. The purpose(s) of evaluation are key to whether it influences practice.

Sub-theme 1c – how community musicians evaluate

How community musicians enact evaluation varies primarily depending on the organisational structures they work within: who they are working for, their position in the organisation, and the degree of influence they have on evaluation in each particular situation. Community musicians display degrees of resistance and acquiescence to evaluation practices required of them that do not align with community music's values.

Sub-theme 1d – the affect of evaluation on community musicians

The affect of evaluation goes beyond the acute feelings and emotions community musicians experience when doing or thinking about evaluation, to a sustained pervasive underlying state which is felt at a person's core.

Theme 2 – Values are foundational to evaluation in community music

Community musicians' values are foundational to their views of evaluation in community music.

Sub-theme 2a – Inconsistency with values of community music

Some types of evaluation are inconsistent with the values community musicians associate with community music.

Sub-theme 2b – Some practices are irreconcilable with meaningful evaluation and cannot capture community music's complexity

Community musicians seek to make evaluation meaningful and worthwhile but there are some aspects of evaluation that are irreconcilable with meaningful evaluation, and some community musicians believe that community music's complexity cannot be captured by evaluation methods.

Theme 3 – Community musicians adopt varying positions towards evaluation

Community musicians adopt different positions towards evaluation, associated with many factors including their education, training and experience; the organisational structures they work within; how direct their relationships with funders are; the kind of community music they do; the intentions of their practice; and their strength of values.

Sub-theme 3a – Education, training and experience influences positions on evaluation

Community musicians' education, training and experience is a factor that appears to influence how much they interrogate and seek to progress their evaluation practice.

Sub-theme 3b – Different intentions and kinds of community music practice influence positions on evaluation

Community musicians engage in different kinds of community music practice that have different intentions which influence their positions on evaluation.

Sub-theme 3c – Positions within organisational structures and relationships with funding organisations effects positions on evaluation

Differing positions within organisational structures, and how direct their relationships with funding organisations are, effects community musicians' positions on evaluation

Sub-theme 3d – Strength of values are associated with positions on evaluation

Community musicians' varying strength of values is associated with how they position themselves regarding evaluation, such as some being unwavering to evaluation practice they perceive as "tokenistic", and positioning others as doing evaluation that is of lesser quality than their own.

Appendix 8: Final version of themes (thematic map)

Theme One: How community musicians experience evaluation has multiple dimensions: *what* they do when they evaluate, *why* they evaluate, *how* they evaluate, and the *affect* that evaluation has on community musicians.

Sub-theme 1a: Evaluation is not a singular activity, there are differences in what interviewees understand evaluation to be, in addition to differences in what is being evaluated (process or outcomes).

Sub-theme 1b: There are four main purposes of evaluation: *for practice, for participants, for funders/commissioners or managers,* and *for advocacy, celebration or sharing.* The purpose(s) of evaluation are key to whether it influences practice.

Sub-theme 1c: How community musicians enact evaluation varies depending on the organisational structures they work within, and they display degrees of resistance and acquiescence to evaluation that do not align with community music's values.

Sub-theme 1d: The affect of evaluation goes beyond the acute feelings and emotions community musicians experience when doing or thinking about evaluation, to a sustained pervasive underlying state which is felt at a person's core.

Theme Two: Community musicians' values are foundational to their views of evaluation in community music.

Sub-theme 2a: Some types of evaluation are inconsistent with the values community musicians associate with community music.

Sub-theme 2b: Community musicians seek to make evaluation meaningful and worthwhile but there are some aspects of evaluation that are irreconcilable with meaningful evaluation, and some community musicians believe that community music's complexity cannot be captured by evaluation methods.

Theme Three: Community musicians adopt different positions towards evaluation, associated with many factors including their education, training and experience; the organisational structures they work within; how direct their relationships with funders are; the kind of community music they do; and the intentions of their practice.

Sub-theme 3a: Community musicians' education, training and experience is a factor that appears to influence how much they interogate and seek to progress their evaluation practice.

Sub-theme 3b: Community muiscians engage in different kinds of community music practice that have different intentions which influence their positions on evaluation.
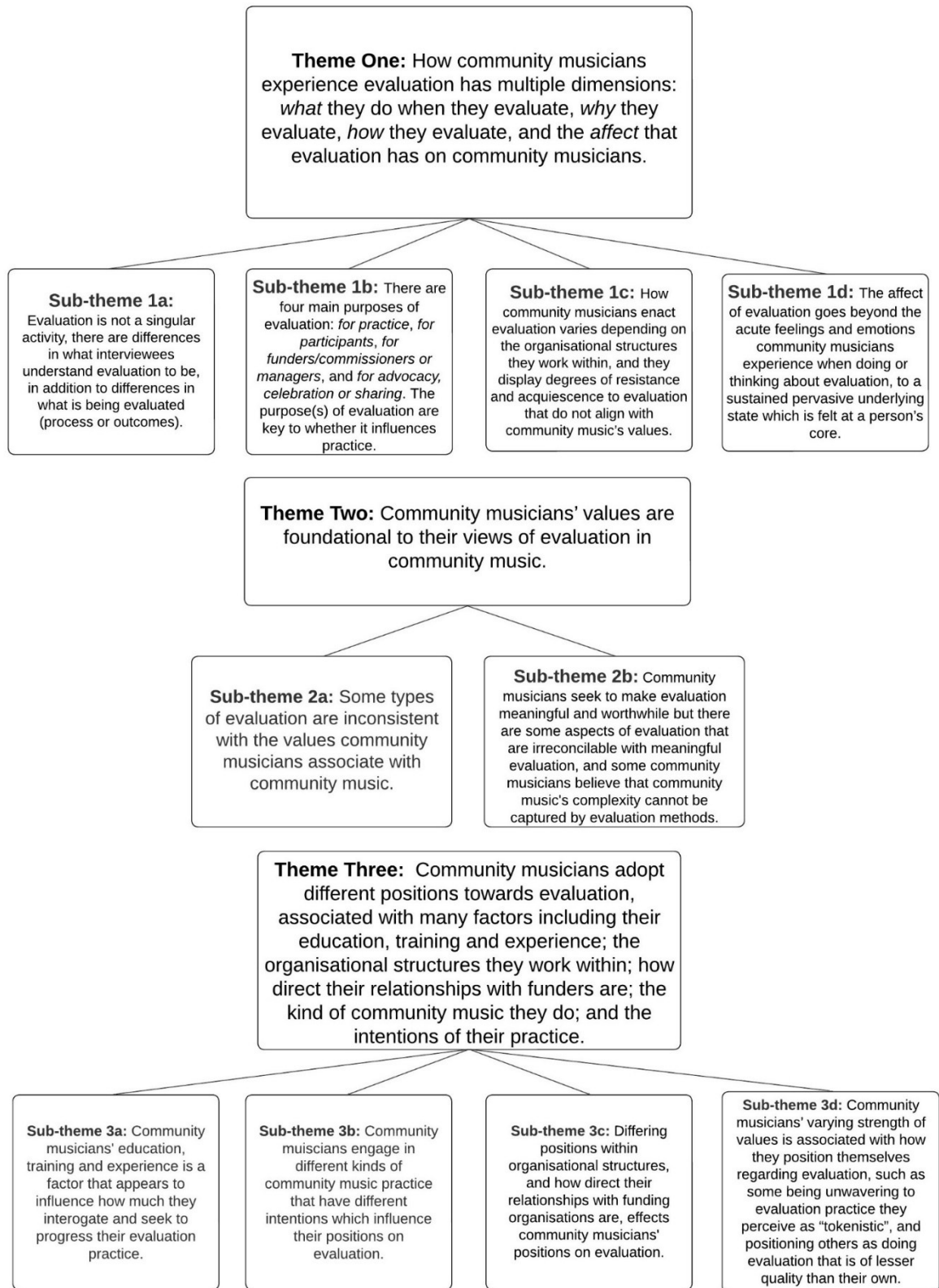
Sub-theme 3c: Differing positions within organisational structures, and how direct their relationships with funding organisations are, effects community musicians' positions on evaluation.

Sub-theme 3d: Community musicians' varying strength of values is associated with how they position themselves regarding evaluation, such as some being unwavering to evaluation practice they perceive as "tokenistic", and positioning others as doing evaluation that is of lesser quality than their own.

Appendix 9: Completed thesis summary for interviewees

Evaluation practices in community music: a constructionist approach to exploring community musicians' perspectives

Nell Farrally (Bath Spa University)

Why was the research needed? (academic rationale)

Having worked as a freelance evaluator for arts organisations for many years largely focusing on community/participatory music and music education, I'd had lots of experiences of practitioners and facilitators finding evaluation challenging and I wanted to understand more about why. My choice to focus on community musicians' perspectives was to amplify their voices, as those at the coalface of community music work are often lower in organisational hierarchies or are freelance sessional workers which can mean it is more difficult to participate in critiquing practice. My intention was that more understanding of community musicians' perspectives and experiences would not only benefit community musicians and my practice as an evaluator but also would have the potential to benefit all those in the UK community music sector – project managers, evaluators, funders, education/training providers and policy makers.

One of the requirements of a PhD is to show how the research adds to or builds on existing knowledge and research. Whilst there is a lot of published academic literature about evaluation in the cultural sector, there is relatively little that focuses specifically on evaluation in community music and nothing that explores a range of community musicians' perspectives as the focus of the research. My summary of the existing literature highlighted a number of issues that have implications for evaluation in community music: the wide variation in community music practice and practitioners' experiences and approaches; incompatible views on the appropriate methodological approach for evaluating community arts; and many problems and tensions such as the complexity of how outcomes are achieved in community music, critique of the quality of evaluation and practitioner antipathy towards evaluation.

The research questions that the research focused on were:

How can a deeper understanding of community musicians' perspectives on evaluation inform how evaluation is thought about and enacted in the UK community music sector?

a) How do community musicians construct the concept of evaluation?

b) How do community musicians perceive the influence of evaluation on their own work and on the culture and practice of community music more widely, and how do they negotiate those evaluation practices?

c) What influences community musicians' conceptualisation and practice of evaluation in their work?

How was the research done? (methodology and methods)

The research methods for gathering data were semi-structured online interviews with 16 community musicians in the UK. The approach to data analysis was reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2022) – a kind of thematic analysis that explains patterns in the data which aims to go beyond summarising topics on a surface level and explore meaning at a "latent" deeper level. A key feature of this approach is that it acknowledges the role a researcher's interpretation plays on data analysis and explicitly rejects notions from quantitative research (such as generalisability, validity, data saturation) that can seep into qualitative research.

The research methodology – an overarching framework that states what theoretical and philosophical influences guide the research – was a qualitative, social constructionist methodology theoretically informed by discourse analysis and positioning theory. Being clear about the methodological approach is crucial at doctorate level, as showing that *how* you did the research is consistent with the stated methodology is an indicator of research quality.

The important aspects of my methodology for understanding how I analysed the interview transcripts, are social constructionism and discourse analysis. The basic tenet of social constructionism is that human beings construct multiple realities depending on their own

cultural, socio-political and historical experiences – there is no single reality that can be objectively observed. Social constructionism is:

> *A critical stance towards our taken-for-granted ways of understanding the world and ourselves. It invites us to be critical of the idea that our observations of the world unproblematically yield its nature to us, to challenge the view that conventional knowledge is based upon objective, unbiased observation of the world. (Burr, 2015, p.2)*

Discourse analysis considers how language is used to construct meaning. Again, Burr provides a good definition:

> *A discourse refers to a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on that in some way together produce a particular version of events. It refers to a particular picture that is painted of an event, person or class of persons, a particular way of representing it in a certain light. (Burr, 2015, pp.74-75)*

So, analysing discourse examines how linguistic resources such as words, phrases, metaphors and clichés are used by people to construct their version of reality (Coyle, 2016). Theoretical influences in research such as discourse analysis are often described as a "lens" through which the researcher views the data. The analytic technique of reflexive thematic analysis theoretically influenced by discourse analysis, was the approach I took to analysing and theorising about the interview transcript data.

What did the research find out? (the findings)

There are many ways that evaluation influences interviewees' own work. It helps with understanding if practice achieves its intentions, with planning and generating ideas for future work, and ensuring that practice is of good quality and appropriate for participants. Additionally, for some interviewees evaluation is an element of professional learning as reflecting on practice (either individually or with co-workers) and peer review forms of evaluation benefit learning and boost practitioners' confidence. There are ways that evaluation is beneficial that do not directly influence practice such as celebrating achievements and fulfilling the role of supervision to help cope with the emotional labour of community music. For some interviewees, they constitute evaluation as demonstrating their work achieves its intended outcomes, therefore benefitting their professional confidence, their understanding of how the work enables outcomes, and their ability to acquire funds or commissions for their work.

The most important findings presented in the thesis can be summarised in six points:

1) The thesis uses the metaphor of "multiple dimensions" to classify the different facets of evaluation: **what** community musicians do when they evaluate, **why** they evaluate, **how** they evaluate and the **affect** of evaluation. Within these four dimensions, there are further layers of variation.

    a) What: There are differences in what interviewees think evaluation is – it was constituted by some interviewees more as an object or an event that takes place at a moment in time that is adjunct to their practice (for example, a report or a feedback form). For others, evaluation is an action or an ongoing process that is integral to their practice, and some interviewees can be located on a spectrum between these positions. There are also differences is what interviewees do when they evaluate (the methods they use) and what is being evaluated (process or outcomes).

    b) Why: It was evident that interviewees spoke of evaluation being for four purposes (**for practice**, **for participants**, **for funders/commissioners** and **for advocacy, celebration or sharing**). The majority of interviewees valued reflective forms of evaluation that are focused on their practice above other forms of evaluation, which have several tangible benefits to practice such as helping to plan and generate ideas, and aiding the quality of the work through developing cohesiveness amongst co-workers.

    c) How: There are two typologies within how community musicians evaluate. Firstly, how evaluation is enacted by community musicians, in terms of who instigates or controls evaluation, has five different modes: **managed** (by an employer or project manager), **responding to funders** (based on what community musicians perceive funders require), **commissioning** (where community musicians commission others to evaluate who they select), **subjected to commissioned evaluation** (where an external evaluator is selected by others) and **leading** (where they take control and lead on how they evaluate using methods and approaches that *they* select or create). There are community musicians who enact more than one mode as their work is so varied. Secondly, how community musicians evaluate involves a spectrum of resistance to acquiescence to evaluation practices required of them. Reasons for resistance or acquiescence are practices that do not align with how they would prefer to evaluate or are for different purposes, are not consistent with their values, or are detrimental to participants' experience.

    d) Affect of evaluation: The term affect is used to mean a pervasive underlying affective state that is more complex, sustained and less intense than acutely felt emotions. Some interviewees spoke of feelings such as "frustrating", "struggling" and "demoralised", which came from repeated historic experiences of evaluation,

which they constructed as detrimental to participants' experiences, tokenistic, unethical, inconsistent with their own values, and unable to account for the complexity of community music – therefore contributing to a pervasive negative affective state. There are also two typologies within the affect of evaluation. Firstly, interviewees' general investment and engagement in evaluation was categorised into four broad stances: *uninterested and accepting*; *uncertain and questioning*; *conflicted, questioning and developing*; and *confident, committed and innovating*. Secondly, interviewees experienced varying degrees of agency, control and influence in how they, or others, evaluate their work, with many feeling a lack of agency, control and influence.

2) Considering these multiple characterisations together generated a typology of five broad positions community musicians take towards evaluation: *accepting pragmatists*, *uncertain questioners*, *conflicted developers*, *curious reflectors* and *highly engaged innovators*. These positions are not fixed, and interviewees can take different positions, although they tend to primarily adopt one position. There is an interplay between the dimensions of what, why, how and affect and the five broad positions.

3) The analysis sought to explain factors that contribute to why community musicians take the positions they do and explored relationships between positions and several factors. Four key factors were identified: the kind of community music work interviewees do, their education/training and length of experience, their place within organisational structures, and their strength of values evident in the interviews. These four factors influence the interplay between the dimensions and five positions. However, there are not simple patterns of associations that provide neat explanations for an individual's position, as positions towards evaluation are influenced by a complex web of experiences and circumstances.

4) There were several interviewees who felt that some common evaluation practices are irreconcilable with meaningful evaluation. Meaningful evaluation was constituted as being constructive, useful and effective at helping to develop practice. There was frustration when findings could not be acted on or that evaluation methods could not adequately convey how seemingly small developments in participants' engagement indicated significant progression.

5) There were several interviewees who perceived that evaluation, *per se*, cannot adequately capture the complexity of community music and the effect is has for people, for example, because community music participation can affect seismic changes in people's lives. Another reason for the inadequacy of evaluation is because participants may be taking part in the *same* group activity, but cognitive differences mean they all have a unique experience in how they receive and experience community music.

6) Whilst there were several interviewees who considered community music in the UK to be a community of practice, it was clear that not all felt connected to a community of practice or identified as being part of a sector. There was an appreciation of the plurality of community music practice amongst the interviewees, but not a comparable valuing of the plurality of evaluation, with some purposes or approaches to evaluation constructed as not having equal worth to others – there was not consistency in what people considered to be good evaluation. For several interviewees, their own evaluation practices are their benchmark for how evaluation should be done, and they position others as doing evaluation of a lesser standard. This positioning can lack consideration of the reasons why community musicians might take differing positions towards evaluation or different methodological approaches, such as power imbalances between community musicians and people in other roles (for example, managers, funders or evaluators). When it comes to evaluation, there is not a cohesiveness amongst the community music sector about what evaluation is, what it is for, or consensus on what constitutes good quality evaluation, which is a mismatch between the discourse of a community of practice that some interviewees constructed.

Why is the research important and what difference could it make? (conclusions and implications for practice)

The overall argument of the thesis is that evaluation in community music should be understood as multiple contextually situated practices that acknowledge the complexity of community music, gives practitioners greater agency and influence, and gives more value to reflective forms of evaluation that critique and improve practice. By setting out all the facets of evaluation (such as the multiple dimensions and positions people take towards evaluation) the thesis invites greater scrutiny and offers a new vocabulary for the sector to discuss evaluation. Evaluation is a "social and political practice" (UKES, n.d.) and not a "sociohistorical constant" (Dahler-Larsen, 2012, p.167). As a *practice* it can change over time and is "consensually constituted" (Bowman, 2009, p.113). Therefore, there is potential for the sector to develop evaluation practices within community music, to which the findings of this research can contribute.

This study focused on evaluation in "interventionist" (Higgins, 2012) forms of community music which have become a mechanism in the UK to meet policy objectives in education, health and social policy. It is important, therefore, that community music remains a strong complement to education and health and social care services; and it is vital there is a

workforce of community musicians able to fulfil the needs of the role community music plays in society. This research identifies persistent problems and tensions community musicians face. By becoming more aware of these problems and tensions, all actors in the sector (co-workers, project managers, evaluators, funders) can play a role in resolving them and supporting community musicians in their work.

In order to progress evaluation practices in community music, the thesis argues there should be greater cohesiveness within the sector – not in the sense of everyone agreeing to adopt the same practices – but cohesiveness in appreciating the plurality of evaluation practices that are contextual to differing community music practice. A community of practice amongst community musicians regarding evaluation is suggested as a mechanism to progress evaluation that is consistent with the values and activist origins of community music.

My reflections on the research

The research has been effective at meeting the research aims. I have developed a deeper understanding about evaluation in community music that is already informing my own evaluation practice, for example, giving greater focus to reflective forms of evaluation through incorporating practitioner reflection in evaluation frameworks so that project managers adequately plan for and support reflective evaluation. New theory about evaluation in community music which could inform new models, frameworks and future approaches to evaluation has been generated through the theorising in the thesis. I also wanted to stimulate discussion and debate in the community music sector about contemporary evaluation practices – which has also been achieved through conference presentations already done, and I hope that further dissemination through journal articles and presentations will add to this now the research is completed. A requirement of a PhD is to make an original contribution to knowledge. Through investigating evaluation in community music from a range of community musicians' perspectives in the way that I have, this requirement has been fulfilled. I am extremely grateful to the community musicians who contributed to the research and enabled this new insight.

Nell Farrally (June 2025)

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Appendix 10: Categorisation of what interviewees say they value about their community music practice

Music
The effect music making has on people
Enables fun and playfulness from music making
Creates feelings of joyfulness or eudaimonia from music making
Music can be used instrumentally to improve wellbeing or quality of life
The participatory way that music is created in community music
Egalitarianism or collaboration in music making (lack of hierarchy with community musician and participants)
Enables the community musician to share their love of music with others
Introduces people to styles of music and musical experiences that are new to them
Human flourishing
Empowers people
Enables change for people
Enables communication or self-expression
Supports people's creativity
Supports relationships within families
Community-building
Intention to do good and make people's lives better
Sense of community, bringing people together, supporting social interaction, developing connections between people
Community Music Practice
Community music has a community of practice that has a shared sense of purpose
Traditional notions of quality not relevant
Inclusive of everyone
Small-scale, bespoke, person-centred, individualised
Responsive to or led by people and respects their autonomy
Plurality and range of practice
Process is more important than outcome (not necessarily a defined outcome)

Appendix 11: Table of factors that contribute to positions on evaluation

	Accepting pragmatists	Uncertain questioners	Conflicted developers	Curious reflectors	Highly engaged innovators
What most characterises this category?	Pragmatic acceptance of evaluation practices they do not value	Want to do evaluation well but find it difficult and do not know how to develop	Experience internal conflicts as they want to do evaluation better than their current practice, although they have somewhat progressed solutions to difficulties	Foreground reflective practice as a valued kind of evaluation	Innovate and adapt evaluation to the context of their work
Noun/event or verb/process	Noun/event	Verb/process	Verb/process	Verb/process	Verb/process
How	No pattern	No pattern	No pattern	Leading or commissioning Not managed or subjected to commissioned	Leading or commissioning Not managed or subjected to commissioned
Level of investment, interest, engagement in evaluation	Low interest/engagement	Higher interest/ engagement	Frustration with current evaluation	High interest/engagement	High interest/engagement
Level of critique of current evaluation practice	Some critique	Some critique	High critique	High critique	High critique
Degree of acquiescence or resistance	Acquiesce	Acquiesce	Acquiescence and Resistance	Resistance	Resistance
Level of agency, control and influence	Low control/agency	Low control/agency	Middling control/agency	Medium to high control/agency	Highest control/agency
Level of confidence in their evaluation practice	Not relevant	Low confidence	Middling confidence	Confidence in their evaluation practice	Confidence in their evaluation practice
Evaluation's position within their community music practice	Evaluation is thought of as adjunct to community music practice	Evaluation goes hand-in-hand with evaluation	Evaluation goes hand-in-hand with evaluation	Evaluation is integral to community music practice	Evaluation is integral to community music practice

	Accepting pragmatists	Uncertain questioners	Conflicted developers	Curious reflectors	Highly engaged innovators
Other things noticeable about this category	Multiple roles	Least experienced in evaluation		Vocal about moral values	Vocal about moral values
Where interviewees fit best in this categorisation	Chris Lucy Mark Felix	Beth Debbie Eric	George Kate Paula Naomi	Ann Hilary Jenny	Owen Izzy