

BEYOND INSTRUMENTALISM: CULTURAL LEADERSHIP, ETHICS AND VALUES

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ABSTRACT

One of the core objectives behind establishing the Institute of Cultural Capital (ICC) in 2010 was to undertake research that considers in greater depth the contribution and value of arts and culture to cross-government public policy agendas in the UK. Kerry will begin by presenting headline findings from a range of research projects that she has led at the ICC on policy-responsive cultural interventions and their outcomes, with a particular focus upon museums and libraries. She will then discuss her current and future research within the context of key contemporary debates within the cultural policy field, including overt political instrumentalisation of arts and culture; professional identities and ethics in 'networked' collaborative cultural work; and implications for workforce diversity and leadership of the sector.

Introducing the Cultural Leadership research theme at the ICC

The ICC's Cultural Leadership research strand has been developed to explore the contribution and value of the cultural sector to cross-government policy agendas in the UK. Integral to this research is the way in which cultural work is organised and practised in response to policy objectives, including professional structures, organisational and sector leadership and collaborative relationships with other relevant sectors and services. The research takes as its central premise the idea that cultural policy does not exist in isolation – ideologically or operationally - and considers the role of culture *in* policy making and government spending across the political spectrum. In reflecting upon the headline learning outcomes of this research during the past five years, the following paper will first profile three projects that effectively characterise the Cultural Leadership research theme; contextualise research findings in relation to relevant conceptual and cultural policy debates; and then outline the future direction of the research theme, prioritising professional ethics in collaborative cross-sector cultural work undertaken by museum and library sectors.

Crossing Boundaries: The value of museums in dementia care

Since 2012, the ICC has been working in collaboration with National Museums Liverpool (NML) to research the impact and value of *House of Memories*, NML's multiple award-winning dementia care training programme¹. The collaboration has included successive commissions to evaluate regional models of *House of Memories* across the North of England (Wilson and Grindrod, 2013) and Midlands (Wilson and Whelan, 2014). *House of Memories* is primarily a museums-based training intervention that combines dramatic set pieces, forum theatre, interactive facilitation, museum and gallery tours, reminiscence therapy and museum education activities, with the aim of supporting and enabling participating dementia carers to help those directly affected by the condition and their families to 'live well' with dementia. More than 7,000 health and social care workers have now participated in the programme, which is supplemented by branded training resources including the

¹ For more information please see <http://iccliverpool.ac.uk/?research=house-of-memories>

My House of Memories digital app, making explicit throughout the *cultural* content and value of the programme. One of the defining strategic elements of *House of Memories* is that it has been funded directly by the UK government's Department of Health, with other examples of cross-sector support from agencies including Health Education North West, currently funding a Tier 2² dementia care 'train the trainer' model for primary care health workers in the North West.

Significant outcomes for participating health and social care workers include enhanced feelings of wellbeing and self-efficacy as carers; increased awareness and understanding of dementia and its implications; skills development including listening, communication and professional empathy; improved capacity for individual and collective critical, reflective care practice; confidence in trying new, creative approaches to dementia care; and increased cultural engagement with museums. *House of Memories* therefore brings pertinent attention to the potential of museums to contribute to core skills development in the pastoral dimensions of health care, identified as integral to person-centred dementia care strategies and practice (Brooker, 2007). The research with NML is also enabling an in-depth exploration of policy-responsive leadership in museums and the organisational conditions and values that drive politically-engaged collaborative cultural work, including strategic consultation and engagement with health and social services; complementary, operational cross-sector partnerships with a range of arts organisations; the effective co-design and co-production of museum activities with relevant stakeholders including people with dementia and their carers; and proactive political advocacy at local and national levels from NML's leadership team (Wilson, 2015a).

Libraries Development Initiative: Public policy outcomes

Arts Council England's Libraries Development Initiative (LDI) was a national programme involving thirteen individual, collaborative projects funded between March 2012 and June 2013, which was evaluated by a team of researchers led by the ICC³. Arts Council England (ACE) acquired strategic responsibility for the development and support of libraries following the closure of the museums libraries and archives council (MLA) in October 2011. The LDI programme was subsequently launched in February 2012 as a proactive initiative designed to encourage greater synergy between public libraries and the arts, and to test innovative partnership approaches to library service delivery. The programme was structured under four key themes including 'New delivery models for arts and culture working together'; 'Books and reading'; 'Commercial partnerships'; and most significantly in relation to complementary Cultural Leadership research at the ICC, 'Coordinating partnerships to achieve national policy outcomes'.

Artwork, led by Derby City Libraries, was a notable LDI project funded under the national policy outcomes theme. Artwork sought to enhance an existing Job Club initiative run by Derby City Libraries in partnership with Jobcentre Plus and The Shaw Trust. The existing service was focused upon providing functional support for people seeking employment, including job searches, writing job applications and CVs. Working in partnership with Derby-based arts organisation QUAD, Artwork aimed to enhance this offer by running complementary, stimulating arts workshops designed to build confidence, self-esteem and presentation skills. The project had a discernible impact upon participants' self-development, which was credited to the creative approaches undertaken, and the degree of trust engendered by the library service, both in terms of staff support and congeniality offered by the physical library space. Results showed a four-fold increase in self-rated presentation skills by participants before and after the course, with similar outcomes in relation to interview skills

² Dementia Core Skills Education and Training Framework: <http://www.skillsforhealth.org.uk/news/latest-news/item/335-new-dementia-core-skills-education-and-training-framework>

³ Evaluation of Arts Council England's Libraries Development Initiative: <http://iccliverpool.ac.uk/?research=libraries-development-initiative>

and personal confidence. 40% had gained temporary or permanent employment after participating in the programme.

Using a Realistic Evaluation approach, the research considered in depth the strategic elements of the programme under ACE's leadership and the operational contexts and mechanisms of individually funded LDI projects. The unique value of libraries in the context of new collaborative working was actively considered throughout, with defining qualities such as access, reach and trust being regularly cited, but in a non-sentimental capacity due to the clear impact these qualities have in reinforcing collaborative relationships and engaging a breadth of stakeholders and service users. The 'connecting' quality of libraries therefore both within communities and as central links between different professional sectors emerged as a key asset, including their traditional information and reader service roles, and the specialist knowledge and expertise of library staff. Such 'core' values were collectively enhanced by LDI in the shape of improved commercial awareness and versatility; evidence of staff skills development including project management and renewed job satisfaction; and significant new and improved partnerships at local and national levels, each enabling real leadership and advocacy potential for the sector. Across the LDI, there were several examples of commercial viability and social impact in relation to public policy agendas (e.g. unemployment and health and wellbeing) from individual projects.

The Art of Social Prescribing

Alongside research projects exploring the value of individual sectors, organisations and interventions, the ICC has also undertaken developmental research designed to proactively shape cultural policy development within the wider realm of public policy agendas. A leading example is the *Art of Social Prescribing* project⁴, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council 2014-15. The aim of the project was to convene a network of research, policy and practice communities to consider the efficacy of social prescribing as a fully integrated commissioning model across arts and health services in the city of Liverpool. Research objectives and questions considered throughout included identification of the key characteristics and lived experiences of 'successful' social prescribing and arts on prescription schemes; consideration of the ways in which research is undertaken in this area, including relationships between independent studies and commissioned evaluation research, and the role of arts and humanities scholarship; along with discussion on the relationship between research, policy and practice in an 'integrated' commissioning model, and how this affects the way that the value of arts and culture is articulated and understood within and across those professional communities.

Discussions centred on a number of strategic imperatives to explicate and promote the 'uniquely cultural' elements of arts-based social prescribing and arts and health practice more broadly, including their value to the cross-sector collaborative relationship. These were defined by the research as *aesthetic, professional and political* imperatives. As many studies in the arts and health domain "fail to identify arts-specific aspects of the programme" (Coulter, 2001), there is an *aesthetic* imperative within future research in this area to understand the unique characteristics of the *creative experience* and relative impact upon participants beyond each programme's social enterprise associations. The identification of uniquely creative characteristics and their impact can furthermore help to develop *professional* practice and identity within the field of arts, health and wellbeing; define the unique contribution of cultural and creative practice to health and wellbeing objectives; leading to scalable interventions and enhanced capacity building across sectors. At the

⁴ The Art of Social Prescribing: Informing policy of creative interventions in mental health care
<http://iccliverpool.ac.uk/?research=the-art-of-social-prescribing-informing-policy-on-creative-interventions-in-mental-health-care>

macro-level, research evidence on the uniquely cultural impact of this type of cultural work can help to justify the public subsidy of arts and health programmes; demonstrate value to health commissioners; encourage greater cross-sector collaborative working; and ultimately improve the *political* policy making process.

A policy framework for an asset based model of *cultural prescribing* for the city of Liverpool was developed through the project, drawing upon learning from selected case study social prescribing and arts on prescription schemes. An accompanying research framework was also developed, providing guidelines on assessing the holistic value of cultural prescribing, including health and wellbeing outcomes, social and economic value, and humanities-based heuristic research on the unique value of the creative experience. The *Art of Social Prescribing* project highlighted the potential value of social prescribing in consolidating collaborative relationships between arts and health services and providing a holistic, strategic framework for understanding the socially-located cultural determinants of wellbeing. The efficacy of such an approach however is dependent upon healthy existing networks, collaborative infrastructures and a shared commitment to evidencing and promoting its uniquely *cultural* value.

Given the Cultural Leadership research strand's interest in professional structures and sector leadership, museum and library sectors provide particularly significant case study platforms for the development of this research area going forward. Both have established professional identities, defined by professional associations the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) and the Museums Association; prescribed entry levels and qualification frameworks; continuing professional development structures, including routes to chartered status for library professionals. Where public library services are concerned, their status as statutory local government services creates another interesting structural condition to consider. Future research (described in more detail below) will focus on how these sectors utilise and promote their unique professional identities and cultural value in policy-responsive forms of collaborative practice, in order to fully achieve outcomes such as those described above. It is also important to refine these ideas within the context of contemporary policy developments for both sectors and relevant conceptual frameworks.

The thorny instrumental issue

Clearly therefore in considering the cultural sector's cross-sector value, the Cultural Leadership research strand works to the hypothesis that cultural work has another socio-economic purpose beyond 'being cultural'. The overt political 'instrumentalisation' of arts and culture gained considerable traction under New Labour governments in the UK (1997-2010) – a policy which in turn has faced considerable criticism from researchers in the field. Gray (2008) describes a process of museums being used as a tool for the attainment of policy objectives that were traditionally 'a peripheral concern of the sector', leading to a practice of 'policy attachment' whereby cultural sectors aligned themselves with 'other' policy areas to garner 'scarce resources and political credibility'. This has been interpreted as a response to an imposed, top down instrumental agenda, causing a dramatic shift in the government's responsibilities towards supporting the arts and expectations of the sector to evidence its impact, creating a form of rhetorically weak 'defensive instrumentalism' (Belfiore, 2012). Targets became an emblem of New Labour's instrumentalism, 'forcing artists to jump through hoops that were not of their own choosing' (Hewison, 2014). The main concerns with instrumentalism therefore, were about protecting the autonomy of the arts from direct policy imposition, especially given the nervousness about proving that instrumental objectives had been met. The range of objectives seemingly assigned to the sector under New Labour's umbrella social inclusion remit – neighbourhood renewal, community cohesion, cultural diversity, health AND regeneration - added an extra layer of complexity and confusion (Hesmondalgh et al, 2015).

Much of the academic commentary on instrumental cultural policy in the UK however overlooks the extent to which this overt political movement was positively *embraced* by some parts of the sector. Research undertaken with a sample of cultural leaders in Australia⁵ and the UK in 2009-10 (Wilson, 2015b) illustrates that instrumental agendas encouraged a sense of empowerment through enhanced political visibility for arts and culture and ‘renewed social relevance’. Instrumentalism inspired new forms of multi-agency working and collaborative leadership that enabled a ‘united front’ in campaigning for the sector and its social value. This was very much dependent however on the social and political orientations and predispositions of leaders and their relative sectors and organisations, including organisational mission and values, track records in socially responsive programming and demographic reach. The sense that instrumentalism has galvanised cultural leadership to a certain extent is reiterated throughout research undertaken at the ICC. In the case of NML and *House of Memories*, this initiative embodies the organisational principles defined by NML’s mission statement and values and responsive leadership traits of the core programme team.

What do we mean by cultural leadership anyway?

Although arguably underdeveloped in theoretical terms, cultural leadership has been a ubiquitous term of reference in arts and cultural policy in recent years, especially with regards to professional development within formal arts management structures. This has been symbolised by national initiatives including the Cultural Leadership Programme (led by Arts Council England, Creative & Cultural Skills and the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council 2006-11); the Clore Leadership Programme⁶ (2004-); and a small collection of postgraduate courses offered by universities including Liverpool John Moores University (LJMU – now closed) and City University London (2007-). These programmes have positioned cultural leadership as a distinct, often solitary form of managerial practice, hence necessitating dedicated training opportunities. The LJMU Masters degree for example was marketed as an MBA programme designed specifically for arts and cultural practitioners already working at a middle-management level. In reality, much of the course content included standard, textbook organisational management and leadership material, which was then ‘applied’ to students’ own professional environments or by using arts and cultural case studies.

A scoping study of leadership development needs in England’s cultural sector commissioned by the Clore programme (TBR, 2013) highlighted demand for training in lobbying, advocacy and influencing, fundraising and philanthropy and continued demand in strategic planning. These requirements resonate with messages created by The Cultural Leadership Reader (Kay and Venner, 2010), which sought to create theories of cultural leadership based on individual testimonies and reflections from the sector. Again, this was too similar to long-standing trait theories of leadership from within the critical management field to fulfil its own objectives, and it is difficult to see how both publications create a case for the uniqueness of cultural leadership other than the need to strongly advocate and proactively fundraise. Bolden et al (2011) offer a more useful reference point for ICC research in their description of ‘modes’ of cultural leadership (quoted in Wilson and O’Brien, 2012). These include descriptions of cultural leader attributes driven by different professional motives (see figure 1), reinforcing the idea that not all are or can be expected to be predisposed to collaborative, instrumental practice and that there is not one mutually exclusive model of cultural leadership.

⁵ During its time in government 2007-13, the Australian Labor Party (ALP) emulated much of New Labour’s social policy narrative, especially with reference to social inclusion as a cross-cutting priority. This also impacted upon cultural policy and arts funding in Australia. The ‘Social Policy, Belief and Responsibility in the Arts’ research project was designed to compare the political experiences of cultural leaders in both countries.

⁶ <http://www.cloreleadership.org/>

Mode	Features	Attributes
Societal perspectives - Relative to place	Community Identity Belonging	Cultural leaders seen as 'one of us'
Aesthetic perspectives - Driven by cultural value	Intrinsic value Professionally- driven Cultivating	Cultural leaders seen as 'agents of change'
Advocacy perspectives - Seeking to influence	Agenda- driven Political Visible	Cultural leaders seen as 'figure heads'

Figure 1 – Modes of cultural leadership adapted from Bolden et al (2011)

The networked cultural leader

Coming back to the ICC's research with NML, initial social network analysis (SNA) with the *House of Memories* team highlights the intensity of collaborative effort that has gone into developing and sustaining the programme. Team members have been asked to identify regional and national 'influencers', 'collaborators' and 'beneficiaries'. Influencers are described as people and organisations that have been instrumental in relation to securing funding; promoting and raising awareness of *House of Memories*; lobbying and political campaigning. Collaborators are people and organisations that have helped in the design, development, and delivery of the programme and in building the evidence base. Beneficiaries are those who have participated and engaged in the programme. Responses include organisations from across the health and social care spectrum along with collaborating museum services.

Using SNA graphics, Figures 2 and 3 show NML at the centre of an integrated health and social service workforce. Reflecting back on critiques of instrumental cultural policy, this is not a cultural organisation shoe-horning their arts or cultural practice in to a particular agenda to win funding, or presenting themselves as ancillary offers to health services to win political favour. Negotiating common and shared purpose is a fundamental aspect of successful collaborative working, including the articulation of shared vision and values, particularly in the context of multiagency initiatives (Williams, 2012: 104). Crafting a vision that provides 'a coherent focus for collective action' is regarded as especially difficult and complex within public sector settings – the team at NML has achieved this outcome with notable affect. In this respect, the *House of Memories* team has helped to position museums as the ultimate 'boundary spanners', characterised by the ability to engage with others; deploy relational and interpersonal competencies; and to acknowledge and value difference outside own professional circles (Peck and Dickinson, 2008). There is a paradox therefore between defensive narratives of 'surviving' as an arts organisation and the type of leadership required and practised to opportunistically navigate the contemporary political landscape, based on ideological similarities between cultural and other public service sectors, not difference. The NML example reflects more accurately Bolden's notion of politically adaptive leadership in specific circumstances - the challenge is in selling the unique *added value* of the cultural offer.

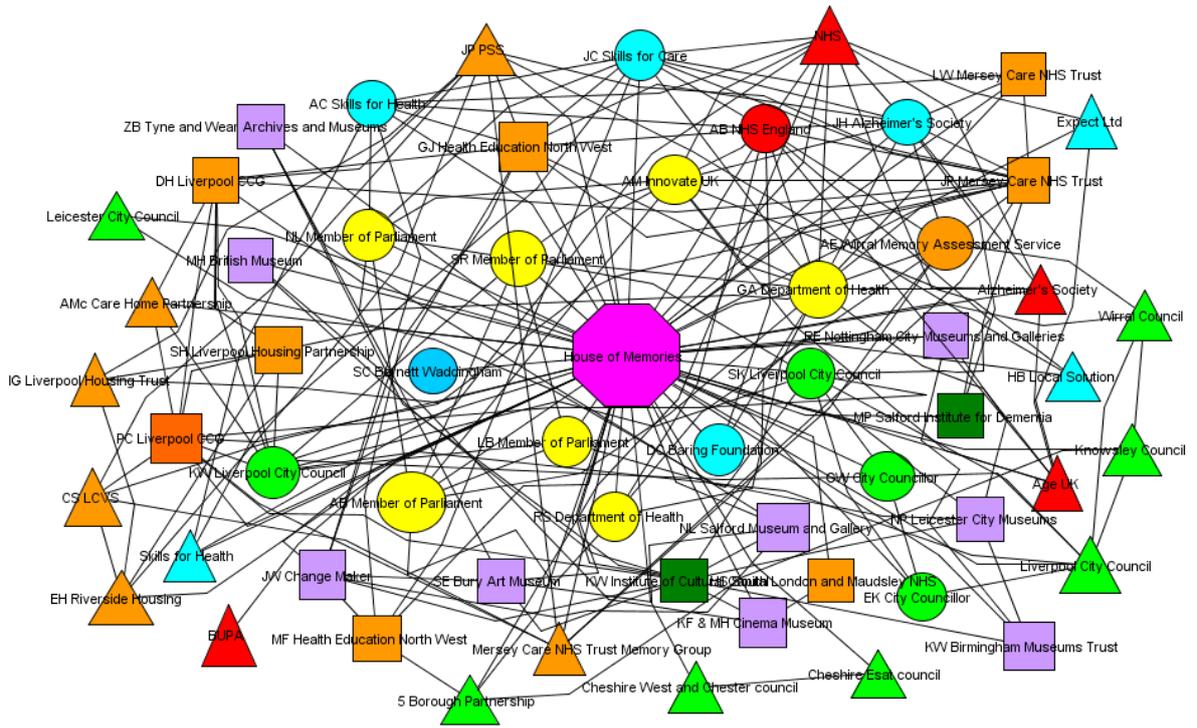


Figure 2- NML's House of Memories collaborative professional network

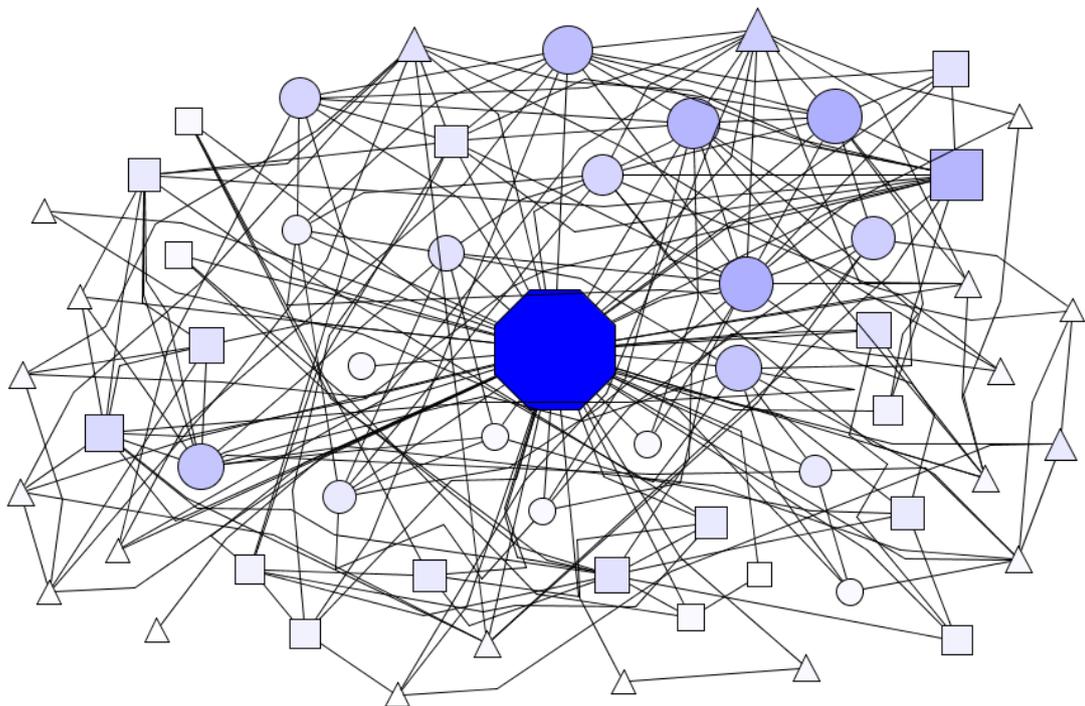


Figure 3 – Centrality measure: number of connected edges

As inferred earlier in the paper, the established professional identities of museum and library sectors add a particular dynamic to collaborative cultural work and to political representation and sector leadership more broadly. Campaign groups such as the Speak up for Libraries⁷ movement for example advocate for public libraries as statutory services. This requires a nuanced understanding of local government and the capacity to situate and defend a cultural offer within a comprehensive public service environment. More recent writing on cultural leadership continues to borrow heavily from critical management studies within the context of leadership of independent arts organisations, including well-worn theories of lateral and distributed leadership (Muller, 2015). Literature on the sociology of the professions potentially adds a different perspective, including ideas on the 'claim' of professional jurisdiction (Abbott, 1998) and professions as social actors (Friedson, 1994; MacDonald, 1995). Paquette (2012) explicitly associates professional identity with positive engagement with instrumental agendas in arts and culture:

“Occupational areas such as learning programmes... and others have thrived under the New Labour era, and professionals have come to identify with the values of the policy...therefore providing a form of policy coordination through the professionals”.

Professional identities as a question of ethics

In taking this research forward, 'next steps' for the Cultural Leadership research theme include an in-depth comparative study of the relationship between professional ethics and collaborative cultural work in museum and library sectors. Both sectors have a Code of Ethics and/or a Code of Professional Practice via CILIP and the Museums Association. The former's Code of Professional Practice⁸ applies agreed ethical principles 'to the different groups and interests to which CILIP members must relate', including personal responsibilities; responsibilities to information and its users; to colleagues and the information community; and responsibilities to society. The Museums Association has recently published a revised Code of Ethics⁹, following a substantial public consultation with members. The code is structured around public engagement and public benefit; stewardship of collections; and individual and institutional integrity. During a consultation workshop with members in June 2015, the code was described as the sector's "social contract" with the public by the Museum Association's President David Fleming.

'Instrumental Values: contemporary professional ethics in collaborative cultural practice' will interrogate the appropriateness, application and efficacy of each code within two areas of collaborative cultural work in two different public policy contexts. This will continue to include museums working in partnership with health care sectors, in comparison with prison library services and cultural work in the criminal justice arena. The research will develop case studies on the relationship between defined Codes of Ethics and those serendipitously developed between collaborating professionals and organisations as 'new' communities of practice mature. Research questions to consider throughout will include the extent of work assimilation and forging of new professional identities and values within and across sectors; identification of 'shared repertoires', artefacts and symbols of collaborative professional learning; the social construction of new professional knowledge and skills; the allocation and assumption of leadership roles; the influence of sectoral policy and governance agendas on the developing community of practice. Responsiveness to new audiences and working patterns creates opportunities for museums to 'stay relevant', sustainable and demonstrate their value to 'communities and society at large' (Ocello, 2011: 199). Professional ethics and values must therefore be integral to ongoing debates on the extent to which

⁷ <http://speakupforlibraries.org/>

⁸ <http://www.cilip.org.uk/cilip/about/ethics/code-professional-practice>

⁹ <http://www.museumsassociation.org/ethics/code-of-ethics>

culture effects change, and therefore generates cultural value (instrumental or otherwise) and how this is measured and understood.

Other pertinent, emerging questions link to current debates on equality, diversity and workforce development in the cultural sector. In a recent report on inequality in the consumption and production of cultural value (O'Brien and Oakley, 2015), an 'undeniable connection between cultural value and inequality' is suggested, albeit tentatively, as more work is needed 'that connects the economic and geographical analysis of how funding is distributed, via the sociological concern with the stratification of production and consumption'. Diversity and equality are perennial problems to museum and library sectors precisely because of their professional status, including associated issues with qualifications causing a 'professional bar' and routine graduate underemployment in para-professional or front of house roles. Pre-ICC research undertaken at the University of Sheffield on the public library sector's contribution to social inclusion policy¹⁰ (2006-2008) highlighted significant organisational development barriers in recruitment and training, including a resolutely mono-cultural workforce and considerable occupational stress. The Instrumental Values research will investigate how cross-sector work environments affect these issues, assessing whether sites of diverse cultural practice facilitate responsive, representative workforce diversity.

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¹⁰ The Right Man for the Job? The role of empathy in community librarianship:
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