Data-centric policies and practice: Implications for publicly funded arts and cultural organisations in England

Christian Joel Butterworth, BA (Hons), MA, MRes

HighWire Centre for Doctoral Training

School of Computing and Communications

This dissertation is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

March 2020

Declaration

This thesis has not been submitted in support of an application for another degree at this or any other university. It is the result of my own work and includes nothing that is the outcome of work done in collaboration except where specifically indicated.

Funding Statement

Abstract

In this thesis, I examine organisational responses to data-centric policy changes in publicly funded arts and cultural organisations in England (ACOs). This research examines a period of time (2015–16) when ACOs were implementing Arts Council England's (ACE) requirements to share audience data and engage with data analysis tools, the aim of which was to promote a 'healthy and competitive sector' and ensure that 'more and more people up and down the country enjoy great art and culture' (Arts Council England, 2015, p.15). This data sharing policy (DSP) sits within the context of a big data discourse in the arts and cultural sector to promote 'data-driven decision-making' (Lilley and Moore, 2013), leading to the emergence of an arts 'data culture' (Arvanitis et al., 2016).

This research takes an interdisciplinary approach, drawing principally on arts management and organisation theory, and employs empirical evidence collected through semi-structured interviews with senior managers in the publicly funded arts and cultural sector. Analysis of the data highlights four key insights relating to the work of arts managers in the context of implementing ACE's data sharing policy and the wider 'datafication' of the arts and cultural sector. First, the emergence of an arts data culture is the product of long-standing data subcultures[1] gaining prominence following greater dialogue, opportunities, and policy pressures for ACOs to utilise data effectively across their organisational decision making. Second, while some arts managers are proficient in 'data-centric' practices, there remains a significant gap in data literacy and data handling sensitivity among a number of arts managers working in the sector. Third, the new-found emphasis on data-driven decision making challenges arts managers' perceptions of their own professional identity and sense of agency as leaders of artistic organisations when making artistic decisions, as their experience and tacit knowledge may hold less weight than the objective 'facts' provided by data. Finally, ACE's data sharing policy challenges arts managers' and their organisations' ability to satisfy the opposing legitimacy requirements of the multiple actors they are accountable to, leaving them 'stuck in the middle' of policy requirements.

[1] See page 235 for an overview of how the term is applied to this thesis.

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Acknowledgements

If you had asked me at the start of my A-level qualifications where I would be in twelve years' time, I'd have never guessed it would be writing the acknowledgements page of my PhD thesis.

I would like to extend sincere thanks to my supervision team, Dr Kathryn Fahy and Dr Roger Whitham, for their unwavering support, guidance, and faith that I could deliver this thesis. I think it's safe to say that a cross-disciplinary approach is not without its challenges; still, I have thoroughly enjoyed the useful challenge they brought to my research, but most of all, I'd like to thank them for the pastoral care they have offered me along this journey.

There are many others I owe endless thanks to, but a few deserve a special mention here. Firstly, to Marion Plowright, my teacher, colleague, and friend who helped me realise that my theatrical interests went beyond a sound and lighting desk. Secondly, pursuing academic endeavours are not without their challenges; however special thanks are owed to Terri Burnett and Awena Carter who gave me their skills, time, and patience to help me find my ability - not disability - as a dyslexic student. Thirdly, to Nicola Aitken, my first line manager in the Civil Service, who went above and beyond to support me getting this thesis over the line while I was working in a fast-paced policy role. Fourthly, to the many research participants in this study; this project would not have been possible without your valuable insight.

Finally, to my family and friends for keeping me in good spirits through some of the lowest lows and highest heights of this academic journey; particularly Mandy, Daniel, and Tish. Thank you for your love and support.

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

ACO   Arts and Cultural Organisation in England (venue based)

DSP   Data Sharing Policy/Policies

DPP   Data Pool Platforms

DSA   Data Sharing Agreements

ACE   Arts Council England

GDPR General Data Protection Regulation

CCD   Customer Contact Data

NPO   National Portfolio Organisations

TTC   Touring Theatre Companies

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1 Introduction

This thesis investigates the role of data-centric policies and an increasing 'data culture' in publicly funded arts and cultural organisations in England. It examines a period of time (2015–16) in which arts and cultural organisations (ACOs) in England were in need of implementing a new set of 'data sharing' requirements introduced by Arts Council England (ACE) – their principle funding body. As such, this thesis aims to contribute to the literature on 'arts data' and arts management by taking a qualitative interpretivist approach to examining arts managers' perceptions of these formalised data-centric policies, in addition to analysing how such policies are understood in relation to their work as arts professionals within an 'arts data culture'. In order to do so, the thesis takes an interdisciplinary approach by drawing on arts management and organisation theory to frame the research.

This chapter will outline the study's purpose and aims, the researcher's personal motivation for conducting the research, and the context in which the research is positioned, in addition to providing a brief overview of the research setting and design and the thesis structure.

1.1 Purpose and Aims

All National Portfolio organisations are expected to contribute to developing a bigger and more informed audience for the arts and culture as a whole. In order to help achieve that, [they] will be committed to shared approaches (across arts and museums) to the capture, sharing, and reporting of audience data [...] (ACE, 2015, p.15).

Publicly funded arts and cultural organisations (ACOs) are 'dedicated to the arts' and aim to place 'the artistic project [at] the centre of the[ir] mission' (Colbert, cited in Daigle and Rouleau, 2010, p.13). However, like any subsidised organisation, ACOs need to legitimate themselves in order to be seen as relevant by the public and receive funding (Larsen, 2014). In mid-2014, ACE announced that it would introduce new funding conditions for the ACOs they subsidise, which required them to *engage* with online data pooling platforms (DPPs) and *demonstrate* how they capture, report, and share their audience and performance data with other regularly funded ACOs and partner organisations (Arts Council England, 2015). In other words, ACOs would need to share contact and demographic data about their audiences with other ACOs (in line with relevant data protection laws). In this thesis, I refer to these new data sharing activities and requirements as a data sharing policy (DSP), the justification for which was to promote a healthy and competitive sector; increase partnership between organisations; give more power to customers; and help form an 'accurate picture' of the areas that benefit from Arts Council England investment so that 'more and more people up and down the country enjoy great art and culture' (Arts Council England, 2016b, p.1). The purpose and aims of this research are therefore to understand the effects of a formalised data sharing policy and practices on the management of publicly funded arts and cultural organisations in England.

1.1.1 Defining the research problem

In recent years, there has been increasing interest in the demands for ACOs to become 'digital organizations' (Wong, 2012, p.60). In this regard, seen as an integral part of the creative economy

(Higgs, Cunningham and Bakhshi, 2008), ACOs have faced mounting calls to 'exploit' the opportunities of technology to collect, analyse, and apply the data available to their organisation in cost-effective ways (Arts Council England, 2013). Arts Council England has sought to build 'digital' into all aspects of its work, seeing it as an enabler for the sector to be more innovative, creative and resilient by disrupting established practices and creating new opportunities (Mowlah et al., 2014, p.44). To this end, ACE has increasingly required its funded organisations to become more strategic in their use of digital tools and data (Department for Culture, Media & Sport, 2017, p.38).

This commitment to digital tools is reflected in the significant investment Arts Council England has made in companies that specialise in the development of digital arts and cultural products and services. For example, since its launch in 2012, The Audience Agency, a charity that supports cultural organisations to gain a deeper understanding of current and potential audiences, has been continuously funded by Arts Council England[2], receiving £265,158 in 2013/14, peaking to over £1.5m per year in 2015/16. This investment aided the development and maintenance of their principle product, the Audience Finder platform (see 3.2.2.2) that enables 'cultural organisations to use national data [collected by the Audience Agency] to increase their relevance, reach and resilience' (Audience Agency, 2019).

While it may seem clear that funders want organisations embrace digital across all their funded activities, scholars have suggested that such a move to become 'digital' will require time, leadership, and significant investment in in-house skills and expertise (Lilley and Moore, 2013; Gilmore, Arvanitis and Albert, 2018). Similarly, the promise of big data opportunities (Kitchin, 2014a; 2014b) has also led scholars, practitioners, and funders to consider how ACOs' diverse datasets – a potential product of the introduction of the computerised box office systems (Ellerton, 2018) – can be processed to harness considerable financial and operational benefits (Lilley and

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[2] The Arts Council requires all NPOs to use Audience Finder, a national audience data and development tool developed by the Audience Agency" (Department for Culture, Media & Sport, 2019, p.38)

Moore, 2013). To date, these proposed benefits include the ability to understand existing and potential audiences and their behaviours; targeting marketing and fundraising more effectively (Arts Council England, 2013; Carlucci, Schiuma and Santarsiero, 2018); analysing practices to inform organisational decision making (Mateos-Garcia, 2014; Arvanitis et al., 2016); and measuring the impact of arts and cultural investment on society in terms of social capital and cultural value creation (Lilley and Moore, 2013; Gilmore, Glow and Johanson, 2017; Gilmore, Arvanitis and Albert, 2018).

As above, this research focuses on the new conditions placed on ACOs to adopt data sharing practices and engage with data-driven tools. The notion of data sharing policy was first announced at the 2013 'Digital First' Conference, where Sir Peter Bazalgette, the then chair of Arts Council England noted how data should be considered an asset, and that there should be greater collaboration and sharing of data across the sector, explaining how this would become a core requirement in the next investment round (Unitt, 2013). Following this speech, data sharing proposals became a frequent part of arts policy discourse in key industry publications such as *The Stage* (Merrifield, 2014a, 2014b) and *Arts Professional* (see for example: Romer, 2015., Fletcher, 2015) which also included broader narratives around the concept of data-driven decision-making in the arts sector (Nabarro, 2015). While the aim of this research is not to conduct a review of grey literature sources, from a simple review of these articles it can be seen that at this time (2014-2016) the concept of data sharing emerged as a divisive issue in the arts sector, and highlighted a "contention between venue-based organisations keen to protect their audience catchment areas, and touring companies wanting to build direct relationships with those who attend their shows" (Hill, 2015).

While in recent years there has been a growing body of literature that recognises the importance of 'data' as part of organisational culture in the arts management research (Arvanitis et al., 2016; Ellerton, 2018), there has been little discussion about what the implementation of these new-found data opportunities means for the work of arts managers in ACOs in England; in addition, very little is currently known about the effects, if any, of new policies designed to facilitate

opportunities (i.e. the DSP and DPPs). Such a gap in knowledge motivates two of my three research questions:

- **RQ01**: How do arts and cultural managers understand formalised data policies and practices in relation to their work as arts professionals?

- **RQ02**: What are the adoption barriers to enhanced data usage and sharing across the publicly funded arts and cultural sector?

This research also sits alongside broader debates surrounding the use of public investment in the development and implementation of tools to measure and evaluate the 'quality' of artistic experiences. For example, there has been much debate surrounding the funding and introduction of projects such as 'Culture Metrics' (see pp. XYZ) which aim to test the value of a 'co-produced metric set and system of opinion-based data collection, including triangulation of large-scale data on how cultural organisations, their peers and the public assess the quality of work' which can be enable data driven decision making to positively shape cultural and commercial practices (http://www.culturemetricsresearch.com/about-the-project). Industry professionals have been cited as saying how the use of data metrics in these ways can create 'a conflict between facts and values. There are lots of useful things the arts council can and should do about quantitative data – who is involved and engaged, where they come from and so on. But it's obvious that you can't measure art qualitatively' (Dan Rebellato, cited in The Guardian).

Even within academic circles, there is much debate surrounding the use of metrics to capture perceptions of artistic quality. For example, Phiddan et al (2017) take a position that 'metric-based approaches to understand the value of culture imply homogeneity of artistic purpose, invite political manipulation and demand time, money and attention from cultural organisations without proven benefit' (pp.174) and that cultural policy-makers need a more robust appreciation of the limits of data metrics. However, other Scholar's such as Throsby (2017) refute these claims, and take a stance that the assessment of quality has an important role in the decision-making of arts companies, cultural institutions and arts funding agencies, and that taking a position that art is

subjective and individual and therefore cannot be measured is not a credible stance - People are making absolute and comparative judgements about art all the time (Throsby, 2017).

To that end, there is increasing concern that as data-led opportunities emerge (i.e. DPPs and DSP), an ACOs ability to demonstrate and uphold its 'status' as a legitimate organisation with all its stakeholders – most notably Arts Council England – will become more complicated. For ACOs in England, legitimacy is usually achieved when they can show evidence of their 'impacts' and 'outcomes' (Miller and Rose, 2008; cited in Prince, 2014, p.751), which are usually assessed against Arts Council England's five strategic goals: (1) building audiences; (2) artistic excellence; (3) resilience and sustainability; (4) tools and a skilled workforce; and (5) children and young people (Arts Council England, 2010; 2013). However, while the aforementioned data-led opportunities may help ACOs improve how they deliver these five funder goals (e.g. developing audiences), much uncertainty still exists about the relationship between the data they capture and generate and how this may be used to measure and assess an ACOs work against these goals.

Although there is already a well-established body of research in the arts management and cultural policy literature on the assessment – or performance measurement – of ACOs (see, for example, Evans, 2000; Voss and Voss, 2000; Behn, 2003; Turbide and Laurin, 2009), a long-standing debate remains about how such measurement of an ACO's activities can fully capture and account for the different types of 'value' these organisations create, especially when the UK government and ACE have shown an 'ostensible commitment […] towards evidence-based policymaking' (Belfiore and Bennett, 2010, p.122). 'Cultural value' then is most often used to describe a way of thinking about the various routes ACOs produce value (Carnwath and Brown, 2014). Building on the work of Throsby (2001), Holden (2004; 2006; 2009) and Holden and Balta (2012) see 'cultural value' as a blend of three discrete modes: *intrinsic, institutional*, and *instrumental* value. However, scholars (e.g. Selwood, 2002; 2005; Belfiore and Bennett, 2007a; O'Brien, 2015) argue that the assessment of cultural value too often focuses on those instrumental values – the ancillary effects of culture (Holden, 2004) – that are 'easy' to measure and use in evidence-based policymaking to justify public spending (Belfiore and Bennett, 2010; see also Solesbury, 2001;

Wyatt, 2002; Mowlah et al., 2014). Although researchers are now working with and proposing novel methodologies to utilise the opportunities of data for capturing and measuring other types of cultural value that ACOs create (Gilmore et al., 2017; 2018), important questions still remain about how such data-centric attitudes and approaches are understood in relation to arts managers' work as arts professionals (**RQ01**). Thus, the idea of upholding legitimacy with key stakeholders – such as ACE – in light of data-centric practices motivates a third research question:

- **RQ03**: What does the increasing use of data and data-centric practices in the arts and cultural sector mean for an ACOs relationship with its stakeholders?

1.1.2 Research contributions

There are several important areas where this study makes an original contribution to the arts management literature. First, by building a holistic understanding of the data collection and application practices taking place in ACOs around 2015/16, and the perceived motivations for introducing policies to facilitate data sharing, the research contributes to the arts 'data culture' literature by describing and documenting how this culture has gained prominence in the sector as a response to a greater dialogue around data both in and outside of organisational life, greater opportunities for arts managers to use data-centric skills in their organisational lives, and greater policy pressures on ACOs to engage and utilise data effectively.

Second, this research contributes towards our understanding of current data skills in ACOs by pointing out that while some arts managers are proficient in 'data-centric' practices, there remains a significant gap in data literacy/data handling sensitivities amongst a number of arts managers working in the sector, which subsequently results in tensions amongst colleagues.

Third, it identifies how pressures to utilise data are understood to impact on decision-making processes for three key aspects of arts managers' work: reaching audiences, organisational resilience, and artistic excellence. In doing so, this develops our understanding of how 'data-centric' attitudes towards data-driven decision making can challenge arts managers' perceived

value and sense of agency as leaders of artistic organisations when making artistic decisions, as their subjective opinions may hold less weight than the objective 'facts' made available by the data sharing policy.

Finally, it considers the effects of the DSP on how organisations demonstrate and uphold organisational legitimacy to their stakeholders. By drawing on aspects of management theory to help understand these effects – particularly in relation to the application of a legitimacy judgement model (Tost, 2011) – it shows that, in its current form (2015–16), Arts Council England's data sharing policy requires organisations to satisfy a number of divergent, and often competing, legitimacy demands. Such demands challenge the ability of ACOs to demonstrate and maintain organisational legitimacy with their key stakeholders, i.e. funding and regulatory bodies, their peers, and their audiences.

1.2 Personal Motivations for the Research

The motivation for this research came from three main areas. First, as a trained theatre sound engineer, production manager, and producer, I have engaged with for-profit, amateur, and publicly funded arts and cultural organisation for over a decade and have witnessed the challenges faced by the latter in light of significant cuts to their public subsidies. I have also worked in corporate information technology development teams and have seen the benefits afforded to data-driven or data-centric organisations. As such, I wanted to bring these two worlds together and develop an empirically-based understanding of how publicly funded ACOs perceive 'data' in relation to their work. In this regard, the introduction of Arts Council England's data sharing policy provided an excellent opportunity to conduct such empirical work. Second, when I began this study, there was limited academic research in areas such as arts 'data culture' and the effects of data-centric arts and cultural policy. Furthermore, I was motivated to conduct research as an arts professional positioned in the arts management field of study and borrow elements from traditional management theory in order to understand the challenges faced by these organisations.

Finally, and perhaps selfishly, I was motivated to undertake this research to show that academic pathways are not set during undergraduate studies. My vocational training was by no means 'academic', but I became deeply interested in the 'management' of arts organisations in my final undergraduate year, conducing my dissertation on the 'commercialisation' of publicly funded theatre, which instilled in me the love for research. Two master's degrees later, I am still asked, 'Why are you doing a PhD when you could be working in the West End?' For the answer to this, I turn to the Wyndham Report (Travers, 1998), which concludes that: 'A healthy West End is good for the entire [arts] industry, just as a healthy regional theatre scene is of great importance to the continuing health of the West End'.

1.3 Research Setting, Design, and Approach

The research setting was 14 publicly funded arts and cultural organisations in England. It is these organisations that can be described as being at the mouth of the river as it enters the sea - in other words, these are the organisations who are the point of consumption for artistic work by the public. The selected ACOs can be broadly grouped into small, medium, and large organisations based on their level of subsidy from Arts Council England. All organisations were venue-based (i.e. operating from their own premises) and fell under either of Arts Council England's 'theatre' or 'combined arts' labels – the latter being funded to 'create something new and exciting across outdoor arts, carnival, festivals, spectacle, interdisciplinary work, live art and participatory and social art practice' (Arts Council England, 2017). The organisations also shared a number of other characteristics, for example almost all of the organisations either produced their own artistic work in-house or engaged in co-productions with other like-minded organisations; had multiple performance spaces, creating the flexibility to programme a variety of productions; programmed touring work in their venues; and offered extensive education and development programmes for the artists and the wider public to engage with.

Organisations were chosen from across England to ensure that a variety of views were captured, and the study was not just focused on one particular geographic area. This was important given

that contentions surrounding the uneven distribution of arts funding in England, while not the focus of this thesis, could have an impact on an ACOs ability to engage with the DSP and DPPs. A fuller description of each organisation is included in Appendix X. It should be noted, however, that there are a range of other organisation 'types' which receive public funding from Arts Council England, including music; dance; visual arts; and literature – these were excluded from the study as my research motivation is driven by a theatrical and combined arts background. To this end, the findings presented in this thesis are not indicative of the whole publicly funded, National Portfolio sector.

 In total, a purposive sample of 16 arts managers from across these organisations participated in the research, who were all members of their organisations' senior management team: chief executives, executive directors, artistic directors, marketing managers, box office managers, and a data insight manager. This focus on senior managers is important as they are the ones who are most likely aware of and responsible for implementing policy changes introduced by the Arts Council. In addition to these 16 participants from ACOs, a senior leader in Arts Council England was interviewed to account for DSP policy objectives that may not have been explicitly made or communicated through the policy documentation read by the participants and the researcher. A number of unstructured and often casual conversations with people across the theatre industry and academia also took place over the course of this research, which helped complement my existing knowledge. However, these conversations were not recorded.

In considering the research setting, it is important for you, the reader, to understand that this research into the effects of data sharing in ACOs is situated against a background of changing attitudes towards data protection both in the UK and wider EU member states. Although interviews used in this research were conducted while the Data Protection 1998 was current legislation, many participants were aware of forthcoming changes to these laws to incorporate the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) directive. GDPR is a legal framework that sets guidelines for the collection and processing of personal information (e.g. customer contact, demographic, etc.) from individuals who live in the European Union, and is primarily in response

to a perceived lack of trust and security in the ways companies processed personal data Although GDPR was not introduced for over a year after this research concluded, it should be acknowledged that these responses presented in this thesis are likely to be influenced by the ongoing debates around enhanced data protection regulation and practice.

All primary data for this empirical study was collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews and analysed in an interpretivist way using elements of the 'Gioia' (Gioia, Corley and Hamilton, 2013) method, which is a relatively new take on grounded theory methodology. As interpretivist research, this thesis serves to 'create new, richer understandings and interpretations of social worlds and contexts' (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2015, p.140) and adopts an ontological and epistemological assumption that the social world [reality] is not objective but is socially constructed and given meaning by people (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2012, p.56). In this sense, the aim of the present study is *not* to gather 'facts' and measure how often certain patterns occur but to appreciate the different structures and meanings people place upon their experiences (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, 2012, p.59). In this regard, the use of semi-structured, in-depth interviewing was an appropriate method for this research as I am looking to understand *how* arts managers understand and interpret Arts Council England's data sharing policies and how that effects their organisations and 'world'.

1.4 The Structure of the Thesis

This section summarises the structure of this thesis and its seven remaining chapters.

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the research problem and grounds the research questions in the relevant literature. As such, the literature review has three core sections: data in the arts sector and wider society; measuring the 'value' of publicly funded culture; and an overview of the theoretical perspectives that inform the research.

Chapter 3 outlines the methodological approach used in this project, including researcher positionality, ethical considerations, and the methods used to collect and analyse the data.

Chapter 4 presents analysis contextualising the current data practices of arts managers and the interplay between their work and the policy of their funders (Arts Council England). The chapter begins by outlining the types of data that participant organisations currently collect (i.e. operational, demographic, and customer contact data) and how that data is used by ACOs for informing and reporting purposes. It then considers participants' understanding of ACE's policy-making process, and their perspectives on the motivations for introducing the data sharing policy. Finally, the chapter considers the process through which the data sharing policy was introduced and how this was perceived by participants.

Chapter 5 presents the second set of research findings and analyses the influence an increasing dependency on data to inform organisational processes – notably artistic decision making – has on three key aspects of an arts manager's work: reaching audiences, organisational resilience, and artistic excellence. This chapter also presents findings regarding arts managers' perceptions of their professional identity in a data-driven environment.

Chapter 6 presents my analysis of how arts managers identify and deal with the challenges of engaging with the data sharing policy in an environment that requires them to satisfy a number of divergent legitimacy demands set by the multiple legitimating actors they engage with, i.e. Arts Council England (ACE), the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), their peers (other funded arts organisations or artists), and their audiences. The first part of the chapter outlines the perceived legitimacy requirements of these actors, while the second shows how the data sharing policy generates tensions and challenges for meeting their legitimacy requirements.

Chapter 7 synthesises the findings and analyses presented in Chapters 4, 5, and 6 in order to discuss the implications of the Arts Council's data sharing policy for the arts and cultural sector across four aggregate dimensions: datafication in the arts, identities of arts managers, artistic integrity and values; and challenging stakeholder relationships.

Chapter 8 provides conclusions to the research, highlights the study's key findings, and discusses how they contribute to knowledge. The chapter also reflects on the limitations of the study's research design and signposts where future research in this space may prove fruitful. After this, the chapter ends with a closing statement on the research.

1.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter has charted the background to the research presented in this thesis. In addition, it has introduced arts management as a field of study, explained my motivations for conducting the research, and outlined the research problem it aims to address and the research questions it aims to answer, in addition to also providing a brief overview of the thesis content through a summary of each chapter.

1.6 Outputs resulting from this research

The research conducted for this thesis has been presented, in part, as developmental papers and presentations at leading conferences in the arts management and management studies fields.

1.6.1 Conference Papers and Presentations

- Butterworth, C., Fahy, K., & Whitham, R. (2017). *"Stuck in the middle": Satisfying the divergent legitimacy demands of Data Sharing Policy.* Presented at the 43rd International Conference on Social Theory, Politics and the Arts, Minneapolis.

- Butterworth, C., Fahy, K., & Whitham, R. (2016). *"We can't data everything": What does formalised data sharing policy mean for the publicly funded, UK arts sector?* Presented at the 42nd International Conference on Social Theory, Politics and the Arts, Montreal.

- Butterworth, C., Fahy, K., & Whitham, R. (2016). *Data sharing policy and organisational legitimacy in the publicly funded arts sector.* Presented at the British Academy of Management, Cultural and Creative Industries, Newcastle.

1.6.2 Awards and achievements

- **Kevin Mulchay Award for "Best Student Paper"** for *"We can't data everything": What does formalised data sharing policy mean for the publicly funded, UK arts sector?* Presented at the 42nd Social Theory, Politics, and the Arts Conference (2016)

- **Best Developmental Paper: Cultural and Creative Industries** for *Data sharing policy and organisational legitimacy in the publicly funded arts sector.* Presented at the British Academy of Management, Newcastle (2016)

2 Literature Review

The broad nature of the arts management discipline is a consequence of its rapid development as a field of study that borrows concepts from a number of perspectives, meaning that the scholarly literature is voluminous and somewhat fragmented. Furthermore, the nature of the phenomenon being studied means that literature from the fields of arts management, computing, and organisation and management studies need to be brought together and drawn on in this review. It is important to note that as this is an exploratory study that takes a grounded theory approach, I did not enter into the research with pre-conceived hypotheses or propositions. As such, this literature review outlines some of the key areas I believe are pertinent to this study.

The first section situates the phenomenon of data-centric arts policy and practice in the context of a creative economy that has encouraged arts and cultural organisations to become 'digital'. In so doing, it considers the existing yet limited literature relating to data-centric practices in the publicly funded arts and cultural sector in England, including the notion of big data and the barriers and challenges of embedding these practices within organisations. This is important as understanding the existing tensions relating to data-centric practices helps to ground this study and provide context to the environment in which data sharing policy and practices has been introduced.

The second section examines the purported opportunities for big data and data-centric practices for enabling data-driven decision making (DDDM) and new methods for measuring and assessing organisational performance, in addition to considering how 'value' is created and captured within the context of the UK cultural sector by focusing on cultural value and public value frameworks and highlighting existing tensions relating to current measurement and assessment processes. In so doing, an organisation's ability to deliver social and economic benefits is highlighted as a key assessment criterion for policymakers, and thus the literature on audience development is also considered. Recognising these tensions is important for this thesis in terms of understanding how data-centric policies and practice sit within the context of performance assessment.

In the final section, I consider different theoretical lenses to help analyse the qualitative participant data collected for this study. Based on a key theme emanating from the second section, i.e. the necessity to demonstrate organisational performance against funder and policymaker goals, this section focuses on the concept of organisational legitimacy: why it is necessary; how it is achieved, maintained, and lost; and how it has previously been applied in arts management studies.

Bringing the insights from these sections together, this chapter then concludes by drawing out some key questions/considerations relating to the introduction of Arts Council England's data sharing policy and introduction of formalised data-centric practices, in addition to how they may fundamentally impact the work of arts managers in publicly funded arts and cultural organisations in England.

2.1 Data in the Arts Sector and Wider Society

Over the past decade, the term 'data' has become engrained within various aspects of our daily lives. In this sense, individuals and companies are producing and collecting data at an accelerated pace and organisations are exploring how 'large volumes of data' can be used to 'create and capture value for individuals, businesses, communities, and government' (McKinsey Global

Institute, cited in George, Haas and Pentland, 2014, p.321). Large sets of data are thus 'fast becoming a tool' for pattern analysis and predicting the likelihood of events (ibid.), which is the reason for many organisations now opting to collect high volumes of data. For example, the social media platform Facebook collects over 500 terabytes of data about their users each day (Kern, 2012); this is just one example of the 'data trail' generated through our online movements that is increasingly being used for insights into our behaviours, actions, or desires. To this end, the boom in data is seen to be a major driving force behind digital and creative economies in the UK.

2.1.1 The digital and creative economy

The Digital Economy Act (UK Government, 2010) was introduced following the Digital Britain Report (DeVereaux, 2009), which seeks to position the UK at the forefront of digital innovation across a variety of sectors, with a particular motivation towards digital media and access therein. This movement has also led to a call for cultural organisations to become 'digital organisations', which presents a series of challenges and opportunities for organisations, including the standardisation and professionalisation of the digital delivery of cultural content, establishing new economic models utilising the digital, and building digital knowledge, skills, and resources in the sector (Wong, 2012). By embracing such advances, it is hoped that there will be a positive impact on the way arts and cultural organisations 'work, produce and engage with each other in society' (ibid.). As such, arts and cultural organisations are opting to incorporate digital delivery into their remits, a notion that has arguably been most prevalent within the publicly funded arts sector, which has sought to build and grow digital capacity for the arts.[3] These initiatives have included Digital Broadcast Cinema, comprising National Theatre Live, and Digital Theatre, which broadcasts cultural works to cinemas and steaming services across the world (Bakhshi, Mateos-Garcia and Throsby, 2010; Vladica and Davis, 2013; Bakhshi and Whitby, 2014).

The term 'creative economy' therefore encompasses the notion of culture and creativity as a 'driving force for the economy in the UK' (Wong, 2012, p.61). Closely associated with this term

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[3] See http://digitalcapacity.artscouncil.org.uk/

are the cultural and creative industries, which the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport4 (DCMS) defines as those 'which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property' (Higgs, Cunningham and Bakhshi, 2008, p.3). The arts and cultural sector is arguably one of the most important components of the creative industries, ranging 'from small one-person artistic firms to large-scale cultural organisations operating in both the commercial and non-profit sectors' (Bakhshi and Throsby, 2012, p.205). **How then have data-centric practices emerged in the arts and cultural sector, and what opportunities do they offer?**

2.1.2 Datafication in the arts and cultural sector

Datafication is the concept of transforming social action into online quantifiable data which can be used to assess, understand, and monitor an individual's behaviour (Schoenberger and Cukier, 2013; cited in van Dijck, 2014).

Using data as a tool within the arts and cultural sector is not new. Since the introduction of computerised box office systems, digitisation has enabled the 'collection of a huge amount of data regarding audience and performances' (Carlucci, Schiuma and Santarsiero, 2018, p.21), with more forward-thinking organisations opting to collect increasingly diverse datasets, including audio, video (Mateos-Garcia, 2014), and interaction data from social media platforms (Coldicutt, 2013; Hausmann and Poellmann, 2013; Procter, Voss and Lvov, 2015). Combined with new technologies to visualise and process these datasets, a growing number of organisations are using the data they capture to improve their operational efficiency and develop new ways to pursue their cultural missions (Bakhshi and Throsby, 2012), which includes the development of new strategies, the improvement of online offerings, personalised and tailored marketing, and tracking online discussion (Arts Council England, NESTA and AHRC, 2013). For example, Nesta's (2017) report *Digital Culture 2017* found that 46% (up from 43% in 2013) of ACOs used data

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4 Occasionally referred to as the Department for Culture, Media, and Sport, which was the department's name before 'Digital' was added to its remit in 2016.

analysis, segmentation, and/or profiling activities to better understand their audience, while 18% (down from 21% in 2013) used data to inform the process of developing new commercial products or services. However, it has been argued that despite operating in a world of greater data volume and variety, the arts and cultural sector has historically addressed data from too limited a perspective, with very few organisations having the skills, tools, or indeed strategic approach to make the most of data's potential (Lilley and Moore, 2013; Moore, 2016). However, there is growing consensus that when given the 'right tools', big data can help organisations build resilience while supporting creative risk-taking in an uncertain funding environment (Ellerton, 2018, p.118).

In the proceeding sections, I will (1) briefly discuss the rise and characteristics of big data in the arts and cultural sector and (2) the perceived opportunities for the application of big data in the sector for decision making and measurement/assessment, in addition to also (3) considering the barriers and challenges to datafication in the arts sector. However, given the emergent nature of this phenomenon (i.e. big data/data-centric policy and practices in the arts and cultural sector), there are only a handful of sources that consider how data policies and practices are understood in the content of the arts and cultural sector, a gap which this thesis aims to contribute to.

2.1.2.1 The rise and possibilities of big data

Increasing quantities of diverse, structured, and unstructured data –often known as big data – combined with new technological trends are rapidly changing our social and economic customs (Carlucci, Schiuma and Santarsiero, 2018, p.15). Although a term such as big data has become synonymous with our increasingly data-driven society, it has multidisciplinary connotations (ibid., p.19), with no agreed academic or industry definition (Kitchin, 2014, p.68). Big data is often assessed against three criteria: that it is (i) huge in *volume*, consisting of terabytes or petabytes of data; (ii) high in *velocity*, being created in or near real-time; and (iii) diverse in *variety* of type, being structured and unstructured in nature, and often temporally and spatially referenced (Kitchin, 2014b, p.68). To this end, sources that generate big data include internet clicks, mobile

transactions, user-generated content, social media, and other 'purposefully' generated content such as business transactions (George, Haas and Pentland, 2014), all of which is known as 'volunteered data generation' (Kitchin, 2014b).

While 'volume' appears instrumental in defining big data, other practitioners claim that the size or volume of a dataset is no longer a defining parameter (George, Haas and Pentland, 2014). Instead, big data can be characterised by the insights and knowledge extracted from any volume of data and its 'relationality to other data' (Boyd and Crawford, 2011, p.1), which is particularly important given that the largest datasets available to organisations in the arts and cultural sector are almost always 'smaller than those used by scientists, which by the industry definition, [means] none of them qualify as big data' (Gilmore, Arvanitis and Albert, 2018, p.30). To this end, a more nuanced definition of big data may be appropriate for the arts and cultural sector, where big data is understood as data that is unprecedented in scale and scope in relation to a given phenomenon or context (Schroeder, Meyer and Taylor, 2013).

However, the data context in the arts and cultural sector is shifting. While the average box office system of a publicly funded ACO contains 149,000 transactions (Ellerton, 2018, p.120), new services such as the Audience Finder ticketing data warehouse (see subsection 3.2.2.2) are facilitating the aggregation of all publicly funded ACOs transactional information so as to produce over 49 million records (Ellerton, 2018, p.120). Together, these data pooling platforms (DPPs) not only contain aggregated transactional data but also capture over 2,000 surveys per week detailing behavioural, attitudinal, and demographic data about audiences, which has 'the potential to fundamentally shift the level of insight we have about our audiences' (Ellerton, 2018, p.120). Given this potentially unprecedented scale of data and audience insight becoming available to arts and cultural organisations through free services – such as the Audience Finder – the rhetoric surrounding the big data promise to generate value is becoming more of a reality.

At a commercial industry level, the McKinsey Global Institute (2011) outlines five ways that big data can create value for organisations: (1) segmenting audiences to customise activity; (2)

creating transparency; (3) supporting/replacing human decisions; (4) enabling experimentation; and (5) innovating new business models and services. Taking inspiration from these five dimensions, Lilley and Moore (2013, pp.14–18) have mapped the potential benefit/opportunity areas of big data in the arts and cultural sector, as summarised in Table 1.

Category of benefit	Potential benefit to the arts and cultural sector
Segmenting audiences to customise activity	• Organisations can go beyond the constraints of macro-level audience segmentation models, employing more data with more detail and granularity.
Creating transparency	• An integrated big data approach has the potential to reduce delays and duplication between departments in cultural institutions. • Streamline reporting requirements by sharing data in real-time. • Support funders' and regulators' measurement of public value in order to improve governance and support change in the sector.
Supporting/replacing human decisions	• Improvement and refinement of arts managers and policymakers decision making with support from data. • Potential for sophisticated analysis to improve decision making, minimise risks, and possibly unearth valuable, hidden patterns and insights. • Help inform artistic decisions based on past trends.
Enabling experimentation	• Test and experiment with audience data for marketing and fundraising opportunities.
Innovating new business models and services	• Develop new products and services that enhance the customer experience of a performance or artistic experience.

Table 1: The Benefits of Big Data Applied to the Arts Sector (Adapted from Lilley and Moore, 2013)

While this list of potential benefit areas is by no means exhaustive, it is clear that most – if not all – of these big data opportunities are inextricably linked to organisational decision-making processes for arts and cultural organisations, in addition to the bodies that fund them. To this end, understanding how and the implications of the rise in ACOs acting on big data (Lilley and Moore,

2013) in order to pursue DDDM opportunities has gained traction in academia and industry. For example, as part of their *Culture Counts* big data project work, Gilmore et al. (2018. p.28) carefully consider the 'emerging rhetoric of big data in the sector and its application to performance measurement, self-evaluation, and data-driven decision making'.

2.1.2.2   Big data opportunities for data-driven decision making

In addition to the general perspective that with more data comes greater accuracy and truth (Crawford, 2014), big data is believed to play a fundamental role in supporting data-driven decision making (DDDM) in the arts and cultural sector (Schiuma and Carlucci, 2018, p.xxxi). In this regard, DDDM is concerned with using the data available to organisations in sophisticated ways in order to drive decisions and, more importantly, recognise the benefits of doing so that go beyond the economic (Lilley and Moore, 2013). If big data is to be characterised by the insights and knowledge that can be extracted from any volume of data (Feldman, Kenney and Lissoni, 2015), it is the potential uses of the available data to 'drive insight and change behaviour which matters' (Lilley, 2014). Similarly, ACE has also recognised the growth in data availability as an opportunity to address research and evidence gaps, such as the relationships between arts engagement and audience behaviour. For example, in their evidence review, Mowlah et al. (2014) highlight the opportunity to bring more arts data together, such as infrastructure and investment data, with audience participation and engagement data, there to understand the relationships between the supply, demand, investment, and engagement.

Aside from the opportunity to address research and evidence gaps, Mateos-Garcia (2014), building on the work of Bakhshi and Throsby (2010), identifies four areas where big data – or simply data– could be applied to areas of decision making in the arts and cultural sector: broadening and deepening relationships with audiences (see also Sashi, 2012); creating and measuring value; developing new business models; and encouraging creative experimentation. Similarly, Carlucci et al. (2018, p.20) consider using big data analytics to shape consumer

behaviour, make better decisions about audience engagement and development, and inform organisations about which products or services to market.

With regard to informing new products and services, Lilley and Moore (2013) discuss DDDM in relation to artistic programming, considering what data pooling platforms may 'tell you about your future programming choices if its aggregated data is compared to your local insights' (Lilley, 2014). They suggest that it is naive and impractical to distance artistic decisions from the wider context of audience demand (i.e. giving audiences what they want), and although the ultimate decision should still be guided by taste, personality, and experience, artistic directors may benefit from data about previous audience sizes and responses to programming choices (Lilley and Moore, 2013). In relation to the opportunities to make better decisions about audience engagement, organisations are already harnessing the possibilities of data to make decisions that enhance/develop their audiences. For example, scholars have suggested that as the size and breadth of data organisations capture increases, more sophisticated segmentation of audience databases could be used to identify audience groups who would gain most benefit and value from post-show activities (Walmsley, 2013a). Similarly, Colbert and Dantas suggest the increasing quantity and availability of data on audiences and their behaviour provides a unique opportunity to use big data techniques for yielding interesting insights around box office and philanthropic donation data (2019, p.11).

Nesta's (2017) report *Digital Culture 2017* highlights a significant increase in the proportion of organisations reporting that the use of data has had a major positive impact in relation to audiences in a number of different dimensions: audience breadth – reaching different (e.g. more diverse or younger) audiences (up from 55% in 2013 to 60% in 2017); audience width – reaching a larger audience (up from 57% to 62%); and audience depth – engaging more with current audiences (up from 52% to 60%) (Ellis et al., 2017, p.6). Therefore, related to DDDM, the advent of big data has produced new opportunities for academics and sector professionals to consider how it can be used to understand the quality of arts and cultural work that goes beyond a simple 'transactional relationship with audiences' (Gilmore, Arvanitis and Albert, 2018; Stevens, 2018, p.119).

2.1.2.3 Big data for measurement and assessment

It has become a common conception that 'as more and more behaviour is conducted electronically, more and more things can be measured more and more often (Abbott, 2000, p.298). This is certainly the case in arts and cultural organisations, who for many years, used data for a variety of organisational functions, including the measurement and assessment of the activities they receive funding for (see section 2.2.3). This notion of measuring and assessing organisational activities has become ever more acute given the scarcity of public resources, leading to an increased interest in whether existing data can be used to support benchmarking and assessment (Gilmore, Glow and Johanson, 2017). Linked with questions about data-driven decision making, scholars have noted that the cultural and creative industries have much to gain from professionalising data collection and analysis to support growth in investment, reach and quality of their activities (Smithies, 2017). To this end, close attention has been paid to the use of big data in generating adequate metrics that can be 'fruitfully exploited for measuring economic and cultural value' (Carlucci, Schiuma and Santarsiero, 2018, p.21).

Sector-wide data usage can deliver benefits for public policy, with insights generated from big data being 'extremely useful for planning and implementing effective cultural policies […with] the predictive power of a big data approach help[ing] to address the needs and wants of creative and cultural consumers and to better allocate public resources' (Carlucci, Schiuma and Santarsiero, 2018, pp.20–21). However, Mateos-Garcia (2014) argues that the use of sector-generated big data should not just be used for the creation and measurement of such *instrumental values* – the impact derived from wider social or economic benefits – but instead should also focus on the intrinsic impact of work for the audiences who experience it (see also Stevens, 2018, p.131). While there may be an agreement here that big data can be valuable for generating metrics for measuring different aspects of value (although what constitutes value is subjective) to drive decision making, a fundamental issue persists in that 'if the methodologies of measurement are inadequate, the results flowing from them are bound to be unconvincing' (Holden, 2004, p.17).

This question of adequate methodologies to exploit the benefits of data has led to many promising projects and initiatives. For example, Arts Council England's *Arts Audiences Insight* recognised the potential of increased data collection and consumption and, in doing do, identified thirteen segments of arts audiences in order to 'provide the arts sector with a better understanding, at the macro level, of its audience and still provide valuable perspective for strategic and policy-level decision-making' (Lilley and Moore, 2013, p.15).

However, perhaps the most promising approach to new data methodologies for measuring aspects of value is the *Culture Metrics* project, which has been running in the UK since 2013 and builds on a previous *Quality Metrics* project run by Arts Council England (Culture Metrics, 2015; see also Arvanitis et al., 2016; Gilmore, Glow and Johanson, 2017; Gilmore, Arvanitis and Albert, 2018; Stevens, 2018). Both Culture Metrics and Quality Metrics are based on the Culture Counts methodology, which is an evaluation system and digital platform that claims to provide a democratic tool for quality measurement of art, with the aim of demonstrating the value of public funding. This methodology speaks directly to areas of interest highlighted by ACE, who have been keen to explore "ways of capturing accounts of the quality that could be used by funders, the arts and culture sector to tell a richer story about the value of arts and culture" (Arts Council England, 2013a) To do this, the Culture Counts methodology combines standardised evaluation survey data from different stakeholder groups (e.g. organisations, audiences, critics, funders and peers) to compare and triangulate data and present it in an accessible format (Gilmore et al., 2017, p.282). In other words, *Quality Metrics and Culture Metrics (and their previous derivatives),* aim to evaluate the quality of arts experiences in ways other than a binary yes/no assessment by creating a dataset to 'test metrics, understood as 'quality dimensions' as tools for arts and cultural organisations to benchmark and improve their work and to report to public funders' (Gilmore, Arvanitis and Albert, 2018, p.32). The *Quality Metrics and Culture Metrics* projects therefore aimed to replace top–down targets that McMaster (2008) argues constrained excellence, innovation, and risk taking by instead introducing an assessment framework based around self-assessment and peer review that enables greater engagement by the cultural sector to experiment,

challenge, and drive new ideas and insights for potentially better cultural outcomes (Smithies, 2017).

However, the findings from research surrounding the *Culture Metrics* project suggests that while it was willingly endorsed and publicly funded by the Arts Council as an evaluation tool, there has been mixed, and a somewhat lively debate around the application and development of the Culture Counts methodology (see for example Selwood, 2015; 2017; Balshaw et al., 2016; Mayrick et al., 2016; and Mowlah, 2017). To this end, the application of big data and machine logic for evaluating the arts remains bound in significant tensions surrounding the use of quantitative data for this purpose, in addition to the limited resources available in organisations for analysis (Gilmore, Arvanitis and Albert, 2018, p.28). To this end, it appears that there are a series of barriers and challenges standing in the way – rightly or wrongly – of a datafied arts and cultural sector in England. Such barriers to data adoption are of course not unique to the arts and cultural sector, and therefore the next section will explore both wider and sector-specific barriers.

2.1.2.4 Barriers and challenges to datafication in the arts sector

As with big data initiatives in the private sector, there are a series of discrete challenges and philosophical questions posed by such new trends for the arts and cultural sector that must be considered, notably the speed at which technologies are adopted, the skills of people to engage with and understand them, and broader questions about the wider organisational affects they can introduce.

Technology is not adopted all at once, and many factors can inhibit adoption when introducing technological innovations, despite the many benefits they afford. Individuals and organisations who adopt new technologies can be placed into one of five categories: innovators, early adopters, early majority adopters, late majority adopters, and laggards (Rogers, 2010). The former is indicative of the daring individuals or organisations that are willing to take the financial risk of adopting a new technology, while the latter is reflective of those who are highly suspicious of innovation, often lacking in knowledge or skills, and who will wait until they are forced to adopt

(Rogers, 2010, pp.88– 89). Where organisations fit on this scale often hinges on the *complexity* of an innovation, with highly complex innovations having a negative effect on adoption (ibid.). In the context of big data, complexity often relates to an organisation's technical proficiency for 'access, processing, and storage' of data (Bulger, Taylor and Schroeder, 2014, p.47), as well as any financial barriers to initial set-up and ongoing data management. Together, these act as a 'brake' on an organisation's adoption of new data-led innovations (Kitchin, 2014b, p.57).

Drawing on Roger's (2010) categories of technological adoption, when it comes to non-performative technologies (e.g. big data rather than, for example, lighting or sound equipment), the majority of arts organisation fall into the 'laggards' category when considering the notion of 'data readiness' and their in-house skills and aptitude to engage with data constructively. For example, *Culture Counts* outlines three different categories of organisation (throughout England and Australia) and their 'data readiness', across which 'laggards' are akin to the **'data shy'** – the 80% of ACOs who make little investment; 'early majority adopters' as comparable to the **'data ready'** – the 15% of ACOs who make modest investment; and 'innovators' mirror the **'data driven'** – the 5% of ACOs who make significant investment (Knell et al., 2015, p.38). Based on these findings, the majority of arts and cultural managers are far from being categorised as 'cultural digirati', who (1) undertake a wider range of digital activities; (2) are twice as likely as their counterparts to be creating standalone born-digital work; (3) continue to introduce new digital activities; and (4) are significantly more likely to make use of data-driven marketing techniques (Arts Council England, NESTA and AHRC, 2013). **Why is this the case and what does it mean for the adoption of data-centric practices?**

One of the key barriers to organisations engaging with data, no matter the size, is a lack of skills in the sector, with those who make decisions about an arts organisation's activities often having little relevant experience, especially in terms of data collection, processing, and analysis (Lilley and Moore, 2013; Moore, 2016), which results in 'poor strategies concerning what, if any, data to collect' (Lilley and Moore, 2013, p.28) and what to then do with it. While data analysis skills have improved in the sector in recent years (34% in 2017, up from 29% in 2013), the majority of

arts and cultural organisations still do not use data for important purposes such as understanding their audiences better through data analysis and profiling (Ellis et al., 2017). To this end, scholars suggest that failure to make significant improvements and investment in in-house skills and analytical expertise will hinder the adoption of, and limit the benefits from, a truly big data culture in the arts (Gilmore, Arvanitis and Albert, 2018, p.37). More recently, research has sought to break down the silos and cultural barriers of big data (Ellerton, 2018; Moore, 2018) in three leading London arts organisations and 'assess how far data could be used to change and reframe cultural behaviour within these complex organisations' (Moore, 2018, p.53), finding 'that data, big data, [or] whatever we wish to label it, is only as useful, and as powerful, as the human systems we embed it in' (Moore, 2016, p.114).

Experience and capacity are not the only challenges to adopting data-centric practices. Applications of big data in the arts can also evoke a more fundamental tension relating to measurement and assessment and how these are expressed in organisational decision making. While the broader literature relating to these tensions is addressed in subsection 2.2.3, a few examples in the literature are pertinent here for highlighting the promise of big data.

Moving towards a data-driven decision-making culture is cited as one of the key opportunities of big data and a data-centric culture. However, with an 'ever-growing body of evidence', it has been argued that the arts and cultural sectors have lost sight of two factors: (1) data is not knowledge; and (2) even the best 'objective' data 'fails to account fully for why culture should be funded' (Holden, 2004, p.21). Instead, it is argued that arts and cultural organisations, and the policymakers who set policy, should focus on producing better evidence, i.e. not just data but 'knowledge that people can act on' (ibid.). Given these contentions, the general acceptance of big data (or just data) applications for decision making in the arts and cultural sector will, apparently, happen medium to long term: 'the creation of a culture of data-driven decision-making will take time, strategic leadership and skills development' (Lilley and Moore, 2013, p.28). However, there are still challenges to overcome when data-driven approaches become more widely accepted. For example, there is a perceived risk that the 'human element' may be lost in future decision-making

processes as they will 'no longer rely on specialist knowledge and expertise', given that algorithms based on large-scale datasets will 'take the 'knowledge' out of knowledge production' (Chandler, 2015, cited in Gilmore, Arvanitis and Albert, 2018, p.37). In fact, the very language used to discuss applications of big data and data-centric processes may feed these challenges. Terms such as 'data-driven decision making' have been observed to generate tensions for many leaders in the publicly funded arts and cultural sector, who 'believe that the use of such language and techniques is the top of a slippery slope leading to a purely commercial, transactional relationship with audiences and the cultural sector becoming just another part of consumer society' (Ellerton, 2018, p.119).

With regard to the tensions relating to measurement and assessment, while there is an increasing focus on projects that aim to break down the perceived complexities and challenges of big data and data-centric practices, for example *Culture Counts* or the Diffusion of Innovation framework, Rogers (2010) suggests that unless the lack of knowledge or skills around a complex innovation like big data is resolved, it is likely that cultural professionals will wait until they are forced to adopt the innovation before acquiring the necessary skills needed to utilise it.

Together, this section has highlighted how big data is an emergent trend across the arts and cultural sector. However, there remains a significant gap in the literature between theory and practice about how the arts and cultural sector can successfully embrace big data applications while also mitigating the tensions the technology evokes – notably measurement, assessment, and decision making. With this in mind, it is appropriate to explore where these tensions emanate from in the context of the arts and cultural sector.

2.2 Measuring the 'Value' of Publicly Funded Culture

The relationship between public subsidy and publicly funded arts and cultural organisations is hierarchical. In this sense, to earn bigger budgets or avoid funding cuts, organisations at the bottom must present evidence of their impacts and outcomes – or 'value' – to those at the top

(Miller and Rose, 2008; cited in Prince, 2014, p.751). In this section, I consider how evidence about impacts and outcomes resulting from artistic products is measured and assessed through the lenses of cultural and public value frameworks and the tensions these activities create within the sector. This is important to consider given the growing rhetoric surrounding the possibilities of big data for measurement and assessment outlined in Section 2.1.

Culture is 'one of the two or three most complicated words in the English Language' (Williams, cited in Holden, 2006, p.11), and in political discourse 'culture' has been broadly used to describe 'the arts' (Mulcahy, 2006). In the England, investment for publicly funded arts and cultural organisations falls under the authority of Arts Council England, an executive non-departmental public body of the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). By definition, Arts Council England is a non-departmental public body (NDPB), which 'has a role in the process of national government but is not a government department or part of one, and which accordingly operates to a greater or lesser extent at arm's length from ministers' (Cabinet Office, 2013). This 'arm's-length' relationship between the DCMS and the Arts Council mimics the relationship that exists between the UK Treasury and DCMS, with an understanding that public funding is released by the Treasury, with the expectation that DCMS, and in turn Arts Council England, fulfil agreed targets and deliver against policy objectives (Prince, 2014). 'Cultural policy' thus can be succinctly explained as 'the area of public policymaking that governs activities related to the arts and culture' (Mulcahy, 2017, p.xlvi). **How then do we 'assess' if these targets have been met? How do we 'measure' the impact of government investment? How do we 'value' the art and cultural experiences created?**

Cultural value and its links to the notion of measurement have been examined by a well-developed body of literature. What this review is not is a critique of these debates, which has already been well articulated by others (e.g. O'Brien, 2010). Instead, the proceeding sections outline two of the most commonly drawn-upon frameworks through which we might understand both 'cultural' and 'public value'. This is important given that the focus of this exploratory study is to understand the effects of data-centric policies, and such existing frameworks provide useful (and manageable)

lenses through which to consider the phenomenon at a macro-level, which will be useful in identifying core issues and future research opportunities in more granular detail.

2.2.1 Cultural value
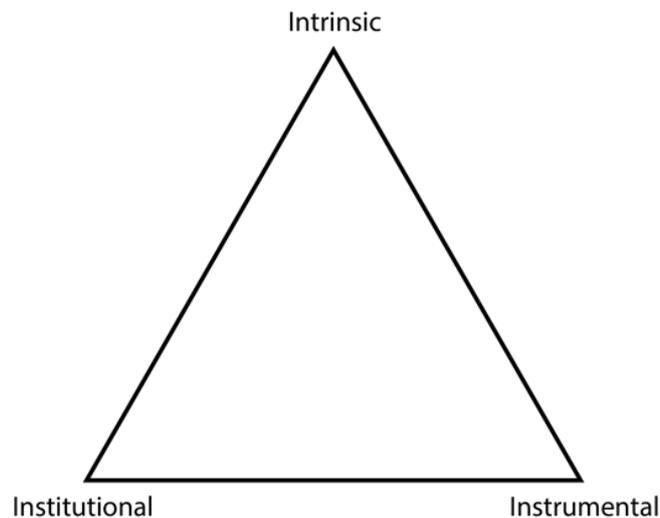
Figure 1: The Value Triangle (Holden, 2006)

While 'data' can be used to understand the 'marginal utility' for determining 'value', such crude economics are criticised for not taking into account the fact that 'value' is socially constructed (Throsby, 2001, p.22). Therefore, measuring 'willingness to pay' inadequately captures the value of culture experienced or consumed by the consumer (Throsby, 2001, p.32). Cultural value can be broken down into several core components 'in such a way that its importance alongside economic value can be more vigorously asserted' (Throsby, 2001, p.31), which include aesthetic, spiritual, social, historical, symbolic, educational, and authenticity values. Linked to cultural value is the notion of *cultural capital*, which refers to the 'tangible and intangible manifestations of culture [that can] be articulated as long-lasting stores of value and providers of benefits for individuals and groups' (Throsby, 2001, p.44). Put simply, it is easy to value physical assets such as paintings, but intangible cultural phenomena such as languages and traditions can also be considered as assets. **So how then can the aforementioned promise of big data for measurement and assessment lend itself to valuing 'intangible cultural phenomena'?**

'Cultural value' describes a way of thinking about the various routes through which cultural organisations produce value (Carnwath and Brown, 2014). While Throsby's (2001) core components of cultural value are indeed useful, by drawing on Holden (2004; 2006; 2009; 2012) in this thesis, I regard cultural value as being a blend of three discrete modes – *intrinsic, institutional*, and *instrumental* value – with each of these modes acting as a specific lens to evaluate culture and originating from the perspectives of different stakeholder groups: government, cultural institutions, and the public. For the sake of simplicity, these different modes can be expressed in the shape of an equilateral triangle or contextual scheme (Hewison, 2006, p.23; see Figure 1), which has become synonymous with cultural value in much of the academic and practitioner discourse. To this end, as the purpose of this thesis is to explore how data-centric activities affect the work and management of publicly funded arts and cultural organisations, the conceptual resource of the cultural value triangle and the modes of value it depicts provide a useful backdrop for framing any emergent issues.

2.2.1.1 Intrinsic value

Investigating the holistic impacts of the arts on the public and the communities they engage with is a relatively recent policy focus, however it is the ways through which the public affected and transformed by virtue of participating that is at the core of the value system (Brown and Novak-Leonard, 2013). *Intrinsic values* relate to the subjective experience of culture at intellectual, emotional, and spiritual levels with the public, values that should be thought of 'as the capacity and potential of culture to affect us' (Holden, 2006, pp.14–15) rather than measurable fixed stocks of worth. One of the main issues relating to *intrinsic value* is that because it is experienced at an individual – subjective – level, it is difficult to express in the language of 'mass outcomes' (Holden, 2006, p.14). Another challenge with intrinsic values is that the 'aesthetic dimension of public policy has never been widely perceived as intuitively obvious or politically imperative' (Mulcahy, 2006, p.326). These issues then can be expressed as series of questions: 'How do we develop a consistent language to express intrinsic value? How do personal experiences translate into social phenomena and political priorities? Are there standards of quality that can be shared?

What is the role of expert opinion?' (Holden, 2006, p.14). While there is strong support for more 'effective measurement of intrinsic value, which connects that measurement directly to the public's experience of culture and what they value' (Knell and Taylor, 2011, p.19), **how are these questions answered in relation to the phenomenon of big data and data-centric practices?** This is especially pertinent when intrinsic value is typically captured in 'personal testimony, qualitative assessments, anecdotes, case studies and critical reviews' (Holden, 2006, pp.14–15).

2.2.1.2   Instrumental value

Instrumental value encompasses both economic and social values and is closely associated with the prevailing view that the publicly funded arts are value to the public because they promote broad social and economic goals such as economic regeneration, improved exam results, or better patient recovery times (McCarthy et al., 2001; Holden, 2009). For this reason, instrumental values are typically measured as *'impacts'*, *'outcomes'*, and *'benefits'*; in addition, they are often regarded as the primary focus of cultural policymaking (see Belfiore, 2004) and are therefore the focus of much debate amongst cultural professionals (McCarthy et al., 2001; Selwood, 2005; Bakhshi, Freeman and Hitchen, 2009). For example, Holden (2004) is critical of instrumental value measurement in the cultural sector, suggesting that policymakers tend to select criteria that are the easiest to measure – such as audience demographics or economic impact goals. As touched upon in subsection 2.1.2, much of the current literature focusing on data-centric practices in the arts and cultural sector recognises – rightly or wrongly – the potential of big data for measurement and assessment activities. **What then does this mean for a sector where the *'impacts'*, *'outcomes'*, and *'benefits'* of the artistic products produced are not 'easy to measure'?** (Holden, 2004, p.17).

2.2.1.3   Institutional value

Institutional value is created by the bonds between arts and cultural organisations and their various publics (O'Brien, 2015) and is related to the way cultural organisations act and the value they provide that goes above and beyond the value of their products (i.e. cultural offerings) (Holden,

2009). This notion of institutional value builds on the work of Moore (1995) and his concept of public value (as discussed below) and is based on the premise that arts and cultural organisations should not just be considered as 'sites of experience' but as 'creators of value in their own right' (Holden, 2006, p.18). Institutional value therefore situates organisations 'not simply as mediators between politicians and the public, but as active agents in the creation – or destruction – of what the public values' (Holden, 2006. p.18). This interaction between the institution and the public can be expressed in terms of three different kinds of relationship: engagement – the interaction between a cultural organisation and its audience when it puts on a performance; service – how organisations relate to their stakeholders and their audiences in ways that extend beyond performance; and trust – a sense of identification between the organisation and those to whom it relates, which can be expressed as a feeling of 'ownership' on the part of the public (see Holden, 2006, pp.31–33 for a full breakdown). **What then do data-centric policies and practices mean for the way arts and cultural organisations create institutional value for the public?**

It is important to reiterate that these three types of value are not distinct buckets that experiences or artforms can be placed into – they are viewpoints or perspectives of equal validity and therefore should be considered together (Holden, 2009). For example, a schoolchild may visit the Imperial War Museum (IWM) and have a moving emotional experience that could be framed as intrinsic value, while also being taught about a specific historic battle, the knowledge of which is used in the exam room and could therefore be framed as a measurable instrumental value. Finally, the child might get a sense of civic or national pride from this museum and see it as a public place they are entitled to share with others, which could be framed as institutional value. **How then can data sharing policies support organisations in the creation of these cultural values and avoid giving prominence to any one of them?**

Another consideration pertinent to this thesis is that each vertex of the cultural value triangle is inextricably linked to an organisation's key stakeholders. For example, politicians and policymakers are primarily concerned with instrumental outcomes, cultural professionals are primarily concerned with intrinsic value, and the public is primarily concerned with intrinsic and

with institutional value. In this regard, recognising the interconnections between these modes of value and the stakeholders they typically align with is helpful for generating insights into where the 'cultural system' is failing to realise or articulate value (Holden, 2006, p.32). Again, this is a useful resource to draw upon when considering the potential motivating factors behind data-centric policies.

2.2.2 Public value
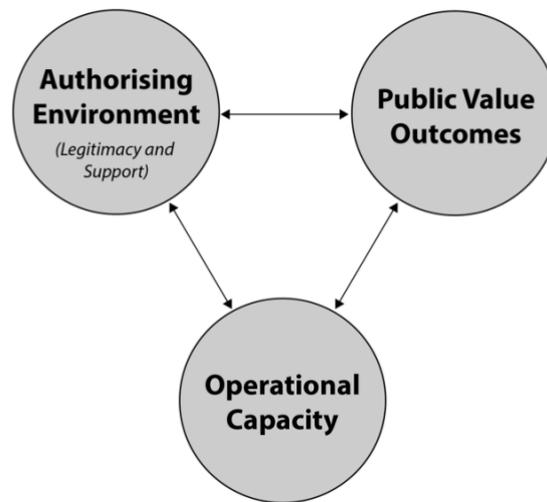
Figure 2: Strategic Triangle of Public Value (Moore and Khagram, 2004)

Public value is concerned with the kinds of value that are produced by managers of public services as opposed to those of commercial businesses (Holden, 2006, p.27). The notion of public value in the arts has gained traction in recent years as the publicly funded arts and cultural sector 'faces the same challenges of relevance, equity and accountability as other public services' (Keaney, 2006, p.30). Public value has been the focus of an Arts Council England inquiry (see Bunting, 2006; 2007), and there has been a wealth of work examining how public value relates to cultural funding (see, for example, O'Brien, 2013a; 2013b). In the context of this thesis, it is important to explore public value, as many artists and arts organisations are regarded as primary creators of public value (Bunting, 2006), and therefore a question arises about how data-centric policies and practices interact with public value creation.

Public value is the value that the government and public sector add to society – it is 'the difference between what citizens give to and what they receive from public bodies' (Holden, 2004, p.42). When achieved, public value can 'initiate and reshape public sector enterprises in ways that increase their value to the public in both the short and the long term' (Moore, 1995, p.10). Moore (2004) expresses his theory of public value as a strategic triangle (see Figure 2), which identifies three distinct but interdependent processes necessary for the creation of public value: public value outcomes, legitimacy and support (the authorising environment), and operational capacity. This triangle serves as a reminder to public managers that each of the three areas should be treated equally and that 'solutions to one problem in the triangle have to 'fit' with the solutions to the other parts of the triangle' (Keaney, 2006, p.10). More specifically, the function of the triangle is to focus governmental and public sector managers' attention on three complex issues that must be considered while committing to a particular course of action (Moore and Khagram, 2004):

Public value outcomes: Managers must consider the important '**public value**' their organisation seeks to produce, which is usually expressed as 'the overall mission and purpose of an organisation in terms of public values; these are high order concepts such as promoting equity, fairness and trust' (Holden, 2004, p.43).

Legitimacy and support (authorising environment): Managers must consider the 'sources of legitimacy and support' that would be needed in order to authorise their organisations to take action and provide the resources necessary to sustain their effort to create that value, which includes 'articulating the sources of support and legitimacy that sustain society's commitment to the organisation (such as taxes and opinion polls)' (Holden, 2004, p.43). However, legitimacy and support is more than just material and financial support; it is also concerned with a type of social and political 'legitimacy' relating to how an organisation maintains its right to operate in a 'particular social and political environment as well as economic viability or financial sustainability' (Moore and Khagram, 2004, p.11).

Operational Capabilities: Managers must consider what '**operational capabilities**' (including new investments and innovations) their organisation needs to rely on (or have to develop) to deliver their desired results. Here, organisational capacity, corporate standards, and leadership strength are crucial for demonstrating how declared objectives may be achieved (Holden, 2004, p.43).

Central to the concept of public value is an open-ended discussion between organisations and the various stakeholders they engage with so as to help the organisation allocate its resources and perform its operations in a way that will create the most value. To this end, public value should be seen as a process and not a state to achieve. However, because the external environments in which organisations are aiming to create value are continually changing, the process of public value creation must follow suit (Holden, 2004, pp.44–45; Keaney, 2006).

Public value theory is often applied to the arts and cultural sector as it typically forgoes the quantitative measurement and assessment of audience numbers and instead enables a more thorough understanding of how arts organisations deliver value to, and maintain relationships with, their stakeholders (Holden, 2004). As such, Moore further developed his theory to apply the notion of public value to arts and cultural organisations (Moore and Williams Moore, 2005). Although this work considers the vertexes of the strategic triangle in detail (Public Value > Authorising Environment > Operational Capacity), it is their guidance for navigating the authorising environment that is pertinent to this thesis. For example, identifying the different legitimating actors – or stakeholders – organisations are accountable to in the delivery of public value may help frame the different impacts data-centric policies and practices have on the management of publicly funded arts and cultural organisations and how these are understood in relation to their work as arts professionals. To this end, the three 'strata' of authorisers are:

- Those who directly grant the authority and money. In the England, this equates to local authorities and Arts Council England.

- Those who influence those who make these decisions. In the UK, this equates to governmental departments who set priorities, such as the DCMS, the Department for Health, and the Department for Education, in addition to the arts and cultural organisations who are granted authority and money.

- The general public, i.e. citizens and taxpayers, whose attention is often guided by the media.

Artists and arts organisations are positioned as critical stakeholders and deliverers of public value (Keaney, 2006) and are considered as key players in the authorising environment because when

the arts funder and arts community have a strong and healthy relationship, the arts community becomes the arts funders' most active, committed, and effective advocate (Moore, 2005, cited in Keaney, 2006). **How then, do the data-centric policies and practices this thesis focuses on help facilitate these relationships?** To help understand how data-centric policies and practices may help facilitate an arts and cultural organisations relationship with key stakeholders, it is useful to consider how the measurement of cultural value has been typically approached in the past.

2.2.3 Performance measurement and evaluation

Publicly funded arts and cultural organisations serve multiple purposes which can be judged on measures such as excellence, access, innovation, and participation (DiMaggio, 1987). Arts organisations around the world are increasingly required to conduct performance measurement on their organisational activities, often extending to the measurement of artistic excellence, or, "artistic vibrancy" (Bailey and Richardson, 2010). However, the ability to understand, measure, and communicate the impact of cultural activities and the value it creates is challenging, but doing so has still emerged as a focal point in cultural policymaking (MacDowall, 2015; Stevens, 2018). Since the 1980s, this focus on measurement has been based on the contribution the arts cultural sector can make to social and economic goals (O'Brien, 2010), typical of *instrumental value*. As such, there is an ever-increasing need for publicly funded arts and cultural organisations, and their funding bodies (e.g. Arts Council England), to understand, evidence, and communicate the value of their activities (Stevens, 2018, pp.130–131). There are three prevalent value discourses in cultural policymaking: economic, ideological/political, and social (Pratt, 2005), from which the economic lens is applied the most often in the analysis of the cultural sector, which is indicative of policymakers opting to channel investment to where social or political benefits are being seen to be produced (Caust, 2003; Pratt, 2005; Holden, 2006). For example, significant attention has been paid to the identification and use of quantifiable indicators for assessing audience attendance and diversity, revenue, funds and sponsorships, and so on (Carlucci, Schiuma and Santarsiero, 2018, p.21). However, focusing on such quantifiable indicators in order to evidence 'impact' is seen to favour *instrumental values* as a way of fulfilling other, non-artistic, policy objectives over

the other types of value the artistic product creates (Selwood, 2002; Belfiore, 2004; Belfiore and Bennett, 2007b). As such, both arts professionals and academics have called for more focus on the *intrinsic* and *institutional* values created by cultural activities, warning that when public funding decisions rely on measurable results rather than valuable outcomes, cultural policy risks falling back into 'the bind of instrumentality' (Scott, cited in Walmsley, 2018, p.273). For example, in his earlier work, Ben Walmsley notes how arts organisations 'struggle to evaluate their strategic performance because of the tensions and gaps between their artistic objectives and the ways in which these are measured' (2013b, p,13); and has sought to challenge claims that the cultural sector should demonstrate its value in an economic language of political appraisal and evaluation, and instead proposed a 'balanced scorecard' approach that offers an alternative method for evaluating the drivers, impact and value of engagement in the arts that recognises intrinsic and instrumental benefits (Walmsley, 2012, p.325). Fundamentally, the author argues that 'cultural policy should be evaluated not on return on investment but rather against a balanced range of objectives and articulated in a language that reflects artistic practice and speaks directly to existing and potential audiences' (ibid).

Researchers (e.g. Gilhespy, 1999; 2001) have also considered whether quantifiable methods of performance measurement are appropriate and sensitive mechanisms for evaluating the performance – or value – of arts and cultural organisations against a set of policy objectives (e.g. access maximisation, diversity/multiculturalism, education, innovation, excellence, and social cohesion). However, qualitative research with arts managers has found these performance indicators – especially in relation to 'excellence' – to be a 'demotion of the arts [and] a distraction from the artistic activity itself' (Gilhespy, 2001, p.56). Similarly, in an attempt to identify better metrics for evaluation, an independent report for the UK Government recommends that 'excellence' and quality (linked to intrinsic values) can and should be measured instead of 'top-down targets' (McMaster, 2008); however, it has been argued that these proposals fail to account for the fact that such values are entirely subjective (Eckersley, 2008). Instead, they reinforce the notion that instrumental cultural policy stems from a 'need for arts and cultural policies to

demonstrate' (Gray, 2007, p.203) a benefit beyond the aesthetic for the creation of culture. Linked to the earlier literature on the Culture Counts methodology, this too has seen significant challenge by scholars and practitioners who see comparative methods to assess 'quality' struggle to not only take into account the breadth of arts and cultural organisations writ large (i.e. different locations and missions/ values of each venue that is difficult to compare with numeric scaling); but also flag the political manipulation it potentially invites, suggesting how metrical scores tend to look objective even when reflecting buried assumptions of those consuming the metrics (e.g. Government) (Mayrick et al., 2016). To this end, if quantifiable *instrumental value* has continued to dominate the measurement of so-called 'impact', and other quantifiable methods have been rejected as a method for measuring excellence and quality,[5] **what do new data-centric policies and practices mean for the measurement and assessment of arts and cultural activities?** Over a decade ago, the collection and analysis of data was regarded as a 'spurious exercise' that needed to be 'carried out more accurately and objectively' in order to recognise the two other types of cultural value, i.e. institutional and intrinsic value (Selwood, 2002; Knell and Taylor, 2011; Edelman and Šorli, 2015). **How then do new data-centric policies and practices mitigate against these tensions?**

Taken together with the literature touting big data and data-centric processes as an opportunity to broaden and deepen relationships with audiences and for making better decisions about audience engagement and development (Mateos-Garcia, 2014; Carlucci, Schiuma and Santarsiero, 2018), the literature reviewed in this section relating to the measurement and assessment of social and economic goals highlights audience development as a key focus area for both policymaker and arts and cultural organisations. With this in mind, the following section will examine some of the audience development literature.

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[5] This does not include the *Culture Metrics* project discussed earlier, which has developed a positive method for using quantifiable metrics to measure the value of cultural work.

2.2.4 Audience development

Audience development is a vital part of the work undertaken by arts and cultural organisations (Hadley, 2017), but it is a complex system, with policymakers and practitioners sharing responsibility for it (Bollo et al., 2017a, p.7). Effective audience development can create value for all stakeholders, and it is used as an umbrella term to encompass organisations' financial, artistic, social, and educational efforts to address audiences in new ways. Fundamentally, audience development serves to build a relationship between an individual and the arts through holistic and integrative activities that require the interdisciplinary skills of marketing, education, and programming (Maitland 1997, cited in Hayes, 2003).

Increasing public engagement with the arts (i.e. audience development) has been a core aspect of Arts Council England's mission since 1946, reflecting the organisation's dual responsibility to support quality in artistic practice and increase the accessibility of the arts to the public (Keaney, 2008). However, this notion has become synonymous with *instrumental* aims and objectives, with the discourse developing from increasing the supply of artistic experiences in order to achieve 'equity' across the country in the 1940s to 1960s to using social policy to emphasise the 'importance of culture as a tool for achieving social inclusion' from the 1990s onwards (Hayes, 2003, p.6, pp.28–29).

It is no surprise then that audience development remains a core part of Arts Council England's ten-year *Achieving Great Art for Everyone* framework. In this regard, two of its five long-term goals are that 'more people experience and are inspired by the arts' and 'every child and young person has the opportunity to experience the richness of the arts' (Arts Council England, 2010, p.12). However, in contrast to the rhetoric of audience development exclusively focusing on those from a socially deprived or low educational background, Arts Council England's current framework seeks to engage a more diverse audience for the arts, irrespective of their socio-economic or educational background (Arts Council England, 2010, p.31). **How then are these audience development 'gaps' identified?** To date, quantitative data collection and analysis has

most often been applied to spotting audience development gaps. In the UK, one of the biggest sources of quantitative data is the joint DCMS and Arts Council England *Taking Part* survey, which polls over 16,000 (Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, 2019) adults to provide a comprehensive picture of engagement in arts, culture, and sporting activities and to identify the motivations and barriers to such engagement (Keaney, 2008). While qualitative audience development research has also been conducted, such as Arts Council England's 2006 *Arts Debate* (Keaney, 2008), quantitative research and analysis remains the preferred choice in terms of value-for-money frameworks.

No matter the research method adopted, audience development can be broken down into four categories: taste cultivation, audience education, extended marketing, and social inclusion/outreach (Kawashima, 2000). These categories, alongside their purpose and target

	Target	Form	Purpose[a]
Extended Marketing	Potential attendee; lapsed attendee	The same product offered, but with improvements to cater for the target.	Financial; artistic
Taste Cultivation	Existing audience	Introduction to different art forms and genres.	Artistic; financial; educational
Audience Education	Existing audience	The same product offered with extensive education.	Educational; financial
Social Inclusion/ Outreach	People unlikely to attend (e.g. deprived communities)	Bringing arts projects (often participatory) outside.	Social
Note: [a] Only refers to the main purpose(s) but not excluding others.			

Table 2: The Different Types of Audience Development (Adapted from Kawashima, 2000, p.8)

audience, are summarised in Table 2. More recently 'theatre for development' has emerged as another category, which aims to empower disadvantaged communities through the application of theatre methodologies and utilising their own culture and language to 'strategize solutions to their

problems' (Kerr, cited in Lindelof, 2015, p.203). Thus, audience development is about broadening an audience base in both quantitative and qualitative terms while also enriching the experience of audience members (Kawashima, 2000).

Audience development has also attracted attention in the European Commission, which has conducted a report aiming to shift organisations towards 'audience centricity' and finding an appropriate balance between audience and artistic objectives and identifying alternative measurement systems to assess the impact of participatory strategies that forgo 'the number' of diverse visitors as an indicator of success (Bollo et al., 2017a; 2017b; 2017c). The report highlights five challenges arts and cultural organisations (and policymakers) should consider in their future audience development strategies (2017c pp. 8-11):

1. **Who are you? Who do you want to meet?** Organisations need to be clear about their objectives and avoid mistakes such as trying to reach 'everybody' without prioritising, i.e. reaching out to new audiences without considering those you already have.

2. **Balancing priorities – audiences needs and your own:** Organisations need to decide how far they are willing to go to meet audience goals and if they are coherent with their values and artistic vision.

3. **Focusing, listening, and understanding:** Organisations need to focus on who they want to work for/with, as the only effective and measurable way to engage with audiences is to target them, and they need to recognise that they will most likely not have the resources to target all possible visitors at the same time.

4. **Questioning, 'Am I able to do that?'** Organisations need to consider if their staff have the necessary skills, and if not, to train them in marketing, communication, and facilitation.

5. **Foreseeing the consequences:** Organisations need to consider what impact will this have on their organisation over time, questioning whether they can afford it and whether they can cope with an intense flow of visitors, extended opening hours, audiences with access needs, etc.

In reviewing the literature, a change in the audience development discourse can be perceived, moving away from a principle focus on attendance (for example, extended marketing to broaden the audience base) towards an instrumental focus on participation (outreach/social diversity).

There are also calls for policymakers (such as Arts Council England) to use qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis in tandem in order to develop a more sophisticated understanding of arts attendance and participation, and in doing so to develop better policy (Keaney, 2008). **How are big data and data-centric policies and practices seen in relation to typically instrumentally-driven audience development? Do they support or challenge an arts managers' work to meet these goals and objectives?**

From the above review, it is clear that arts and cultural organisations, and the works they produce, must be accountable to all their stakeholders (i.e. not just those who fund them but also the audiences who consume their cultural offerings). In addition, they must be seen to promote 'the creation of artistic, cultural, community, and educational value for all of the stakeholders' (Poisson-de-Haro and Menot, 2014, p.2). **How then do organisations satisfy the accountability needs of key stakeholders when those needs are potentially at odds with one another?** In considering this question, the next section will turn to certain theoretical perspectives prominent in organisation and management studies which can be drawn on to help understand such efforts.

2.3 Theoretical perspectives on legitimacy

This thesis will make its principle contribution to the arts management field. However, the complexity of the phenomenon under scrutiny, i.e. the impact of data-centric policies and practices in the publicly funded arts sector, makes it necessary to draw on literature and perspectives from a diverse range of disciplines, such as computing and innovation. As arts management is a relatively new discipline, like other scholars working in this area, I will borrow theoretical perspectives and concepts (namely legitimacy) applied in the management and organisation studies literature. By using concepts and perspectives from such disciplines, I hope that my approach will make a robust contribution to the arts management field.

Like any organisation, publicly funded arts and cultural organisations (ACOs) need to legitimate themselves in order to be seen as relevant by the public and receive funding (Larsen, 2014). The

concept of legitimacy has an important place in organisational and institutional analysis (Zucker, 1987; Suchman, 1995; Suddaby and Greenwood, 2005; Deephouse and Suchman, 2008; Bitektine and Haack, 2014) and can be defined as 'a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions' (Suchman, 1995, p.574); in addition, it is understood that organisational legitimacy is critical for organisational survival and success (Suchman, 1995; Deephouse and Suchman, 2008; Aldrich, 2010). In this thesis, legitimacy is understood as a status achieved by or given to ACOs when the actions they take are agreeable with their key stakeholders, such as Arts Council England. As above, it is important to understand how ACOs can achieve (or indeed lose) legitimacy as such a status is crucial for organisational longevity and survival.

Legitimacy is dynamic and changes with the nature of the domain and organisation (Suchman, 1995b), and while there are different theoretical frameworks to identify and analyse forms of legitimacy in organisations, this thesis draws on Tost's (2011) approach when analysing the participant data. In this regard, Tost's (2011) recent work develops early theory on the bases of legitimacy (e.g. Scott, 1995; Suchman, 1995; Deephouse and Suchman, 2008) to help identify the context that underpins an individual's, group's, or entity's legitimacy judgement, as well as a model of the process through which their judgements develop and change. For Tost (2011), legitimacy judgements are based on evaluations that fall along three dimensions: instrumental, relational, and moral grounds:

- **Instrumental grounds** when it is perceived to 'facilitate the individual's or group's attempts to reach self-defined or internalized goals or outcomes' (Tost, 2011, p.693) – these include beliefs related to an entity's effectiveness, efficiency, or utility.

- **Relational grounds** when it is perceived to 'affirm the social identity and self-worth of individuals or social groups' (Tost, 2011, p.693) and to ensure they are treated with respect and as equals – these include beliefs relating to fairness, benevolence, and communality.

- **Moral grounds** when it is perceived to be 'consistent with the evaluators moral and ethical values' (Tost, 2011, p.694) – these include beliefs related to the morality, ethicality, or integrity of the entity.

It is important to highlight that these three different dimensions are not mutually exclusive, i.e. 'entities may be evaluated simultaneously on all three dimensions' (Tost, 2011, p.694), and that they may overlap in that 'specific beliefs and perceptions that underlie any given legitimacy judgement may fall into one or more categories' (ibid., p.694). Furthermore, the amount of overlap across these dimensions is moderated by a number of criteria, such as organisational culture and individual value orientations (Tost, 2011). In this thesis, I use Tost's (2011) framework of legitimacy judgements to frame my analysis as it is a useful way to conceptualise the different challenges arts and cultural organisations may face when trying to implement the requirements of the data sharing policy and data-centric practices, in addition to highlighting whether different dimensions of legitimacy are more important to particular stakeholder or authorising actors and in relation to different issues.

The concept of organisational legitimacy is not new to the arts management field of study. Arts and cultural organisations compete not only for customers and resources but also for political power and institutional legitimacy (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). However, gaining and maintaining legitimacy can become a major issue for social and political structures such as publicly funded arts and cultural organisations, especially when those without legitimacy tend not to be successful in attracting grants, subsidies, and sponsorships (Minahan, 2005). Althought it takes takes time for organisations to gain the legitimacy they need to function, once obtained an organisation can 'maintain its legitimate status long after their raison d'être has been lost' (Scott, 1995 cited in Minahan, 2005 p.136). For example, citizens may believe a legitimate arts organisation will always be in the community and will campaign for its maintenance and subsidy regardless of its current social value to those citizens (Minahan, 2005, pp.135-136).

For these reasons, organisational legitimacy in the arts and cultural sector has attracted increasing attention. For example, Blomkamp (2014) has explored the relationship between legitimacy and

evidence-based cultural policymaking in Australia and New Zealand, Prikk (2017) has examined the relationship between legitimacy and social impact in the context of changing public cultural organisations in mainland Europe, and Larsen (2014) has considered how organisations communicate their relevance to the public in order to achieve legitimacy. Minahan (2005) also reflects on how the Bauhaus movement sought and managed legitimacy and the role the state and other actors played in granting it, in addition to providing a useful summary of the relevance of legitimacy to arts and cultural organisations. Further, Minahan (2005) notes how 'understanding legitimacy may provide insight into how an organisation survives. For example, arts organisations need to gain and maintain legitimacy to obtain the necessary resources to operate' (p.134).

Together with the literature highlighting the ongoing datafication in the arts (subsection 2.1.2) and a seemingly ostensible commitment from both the government and Arts Council England to measure the 'value' of culture (subsection 2.2.1), it is possible to see how these actions have the potential to change the way the legitimacy of publicly funded ACOs is evaluated by different stakeholders. Utilising a legitimacy perspective in this research can therefore highlight some critical challenges for these ACOs in regard to dealing with changing legitimacy demands.

2.4 Conclusion

This literature review has drawn together three key areas of literature pertinent to the thesis' focus on the introduction of Arts Council England's data sharing policy and move towards embedding data-centric practices in arts and cultural organisations. Throughout the sections in this chapter, a series questions and comments were raised to help inform and motivate the three research questions presented in Chapter 1.

The chapter began by highlighting the growth of data applications across the arts and cultural sector and wider society (see Section 2.1), in addition to providing context to this thesis' interest in publicly funded ACOs by outlining the current digital landscape in the UK and raising questions about how data-centric practices have emerged in ACOs and what, if any, opportunities

they offer. As such, subsection 2.1.2 considered the different developments in data collection and analysis following the introduction of the computerised box office system and the culmination of the big data boom. In the arts and cultural sector, this review highlighted both the possibilities of big data in terms of organisational data-driven decision making, as well as the measurement and assessment of cultural activities, before considering how the complexity of data innovations, the lack of in-house skills to use data, and fears of crude measurement and assessment of organisational activities may act as potential barriers and challenges to adopting such practices within the publicly funded arts and cultural sector.

Given that fear of measurement and assessment emerged as a critical barrier, I then considered measurement in the broader context of publicly funded culture (Section 2.2). This section highlighted a long-standing process of measuring the 'value' of culture in order to gain or maintain public subsidy from those in positions of power (i.e. ACE and DCMS) and explored the existing frameworks through which 'value' can be created to help understand possible tensions between such measurement and the new possibilities afforded by big data applications. In addition, concepts of cultural value (subsection 2.2.1) and public value (subsection 2.2.2) were reviewed, in addition to how, if at all, big data and data-centric practices could support the measurement of often 'intangible cultural phenomenon' as well as facilitating the relationships between stakeholders necessary to demonstrate value creation. The following subsection (2.2.3) highlighted how instrumental value – the impact derived from wider social or economic benefits – was often a key area used by funders to measure the impact of their investments. As such, the notion of audience development was examined in subsection 2.2.4, given that effective audience development can create 'value' for all stakeholders, especially when considered against the shifts towards big data analytics. Moreover, the literature highlighted how quantifiable data collection and analysis was the favoured approach to identify 'gaps' in audiences, which are in turn used to drive policy objectives away from simple 'growth' in audience numbers towards an instrumental focus on participation (i.e. outreach and social inclusion), again raising questions about how, if at all, data could support the work of arts managers to meet these goals.

Finally, given the overarching theme of accountability to stakeholders identified across the chapter, the concept of legitimacy was examined in Section 2.3 in order to understand how arts managers and ACOs may navigate the datafication of the sector, and what this means for their work as arts professionals in light of the DSP. The section also introduced Tost's (2011) framework of legitimacy judgements – which will be used to frame the analysis of research participants' data – and highlighted where the concept of legitimacy had previously been deployed in arts management research.

3 Methodology

This research is an exploratory study to understand the effects of formalised data sharing policies on the management of publicly funded arts and cultural organisations in England. There are a number of ways to conduct exploratory research, which include but are not limited to desk-based literature reviews, interviewing 'experts' in the field, conducting focus groups, or undertaking a number of in-depth individual interviews. However, one of the key advantages of exploratory research is that 'it is flexible and adaptable to change' (Saunders et al., 2015, p.175). In this study, I adopt a qualitative interpretivist approach in order to examine the phenomenon, and therefore I will begin this chapter by outlining my epistemological position.

3.1 Ontology and Epistemology

Epistemology is concerned with the philosophical assumptions about how 'we come to understand the world and then communicate this understanding as knowledge to fellow human beings' (Burrell and Morgan, 1979, p.1) or simply 'what it means to know' (Gray, 2014, p.17). In this regard, it represents a general set of assumptions influencing and informing the tools and techniques that researchers choose to adopt for their inquiry into the nature of reality (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012, p.60), which form the 'philosophical foundations that support scientific knowledge and, by extension, claims to scientific truth' (Paquette and Redaelli, 2015, p.92).

In the social sciences, there is no governing conception of what constitutes 'scientific work', and by association there is arguably no dominant paradigm – or epistemological landscape – in arts management and cultural policy research (Paquette and Redaelli, 2015, p.94). However, research in the arts management field tends to adopt one of five traditions or theories of knowledge: positivism, critical theory, post-structuralism, pragmatism, and conventionalism (Paquette and Redaelli, 2015, pp.95–96). It should be noted that the latter is akin to interpretivism, which is the language more commonly used within the field of organisation studies. Therefore, since I draw on concepts from organisation studies in this thesis, I adopt the language of interpretivism. Given my interest in how arts managers understand data-centric policies and practices in relation to their work as arts professionals (see **RQ01**), an interpretive research approach is appropriate. In a similar way, this study seeks to understand the tensions and barriers to data-centric practices in organisations as perceived by the arts managers embedded within them (see **RQ0** and **RQ02**), which also fits well with the interpretivist standpoint that people – or agents – create their world and its meaning (Paquette and Redaelli, 2015, p.95). In the following section, I will outline interpretivism in more detail.

3.1.1 Interpretivism

Interpretivism, or social constructionism (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012, pp.58–9) is widely adopted by organisation studies and arts management scholars (Gilhespy, 2001; Ravasi and Schultz, 2006; Brown, 2015; Blomkamp, 2014; Jancovich, 2015; Johansson and Jyrämä, 2016; Abdullah et al., 2018). Interpretivists are interested in the syntheses of understanding rather than the measuring of averages, as is typical within a *positivist* stance (H. J. Rubin and I. S. Rubin, 2012, p.29). As such, interpretivist research can enhance and create new, richer understandings and interpretations of social worlds and contexts (Saunders et al., 2015, p.140) by accessing how groups – and individuals within them – create and apply meaning to their social working life and the situation or phenomenon under study (Hatch and Yanow, 2005).

Interpretivist research thus provides a unique opportunity to investigate previously unexplored questions and pursue research that generates new forms of knowledge about management and organisations (Sandberg, 2005). Interpretivist approaches help achieve this as they focus on organisations from the perspectives of different groups of people (Hatch and Yanow, 2005), are conducted by researchers with an open mind, and not constrained by propositions or hypotheses (Given, 2008, p.41). In this regard, the interpretive research tradition adopts an ontological and epistemological assumption that rejects the existence of an 'objective knowable reality beyond the human mind' and instead views knowledge as established through individuals' and groups' 'lived experience of reality' (Sandberg, 2005, pp.43-44). In other words, the social world [reality] is not objective and exterior but is socially constructed and given meaning by people (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012, p.58). To this end, the duty of the researcher is to make sense of group' or individuals' experiences in their world and uncover the meanings and motivations behind social actions (Paquette and Redaelli, 2015, p.100); thus, instead of gathering facts and measuring how often certain patterns occur, the focus is to appreciate the different constructions and meanings that people place upon their own distinct experiences as well as understandings and interpretations of their peers' experiences (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012, p.59; H. J. Rubin and I. S. Rubin, 2012, p.29). This is important for the research conducted in this thesis, as it fundamentally seeks to understand how arts managers – the agents who are living their experiences of reality – understand and give meaning to data-centric policies and processes that shape their social world.

Rather than imposing views on a reality that is already lived-in and meaningful to agents – in this case arts managers – it is fundamental that researchers approach their reality in a respectful manner. In this sense, interpretive researchers are faced with the difficult task of accessing agents' (arts managers) own interpretations and filtering them through their own conceptual apparatus and then communicating a version of the events back to others (Walsham, 1995). To achieve this, interpretivists seek to emphasise the importance of language, culture, and history (Crotty, 1998) when shaping their interpretations of agents' experiences of their organisational and social worlds (Saunders et al., 2015, p.141). However, it is important to remember that by focusing on the

complexity, richness, multiple interpretations, and meaning-making of research participants, interpretivism is explicitly subjectivist, and researchers must recognise that their interpretations of research materials and data – and thus their own values and beliefs – will inevitably play an important role in the research process and will likely influence the potential findings (Saunders et al., 2015, p.141). Ways to mitigate this will be discussed in Section 3.3.3.

However, while I situate myself primarily within the interpretivist paradigm, I also consider that elements of my research may be regarded as pragmatic in that 'concepts are only relevant where they support action' (Saunders et al., 2015, p.143). Pragmatism is similar in nature to interpretivism in that my research and processes as a researcher seek to consider the ways that agents attempt to make sense of the world around them by looking at the fundamental meanings attached to organisation life. Arts management researchers thus tend to pay significant attention to 'structures' as processes or as a 'relational space for human interaction' (Paquette and Redaelli, 2015, p.107). Pragmatism tends to attract more attention in the arts management field for the simple reason that it is a 'rich American philosophical tradition' that has dominated much of the arts management research to date. For this reason, it is perhaps apt that this research takes a primarily interpretivist orientation while also leaning, on occasion, on a pragmatistic approach.

In this section, I have outlined my philosophical position as an interpretivist researcher who adopts certain pragmatist traits and the implication of these different positions for this study. With this in mind, I will now discuss my role as the researcher in more detail in the following section.

3.1.2 Positionality and role of the researcher

I am a young person with an extensive background working in the cultural sector, in addition to also being professionally trained in lighting and sound design and production management. Moreover, I have also managed my own production company, which produced musicals in professional venues across the UK. For these reasons, I have preconceived assumptions that will have affected the research, such as the belief that using data is an essential tool for business and audience building. Carrying out research with participants who, like me, were knowledgeable of

the cultural sector allowed me to understand cultural representation and the language used by this particular group, which allowed for an insider perspective.

While undertaking this interpretive study, it was important that I understood my role and influence as researcher. As outlined above, I acknowledge that by taking an interpretivist approach, I will have inevitably influenced the interpretations of those I was researching (Walsham, 1995), which Giddens (1984) refers to as 'double hermeneutics'.

As an interpretivist researcher, I adopted the role of an *outside observer*, which enabled me to preserve distance from the participants. However, given my past experience working in arts and cultural organisations, I do have some 'insider' knowledge. Although I may have understood the cultural representation and the language used by the participants, this did not automatically translate to being an 'insider'. As such, I needed to be mindful that participants may not have regarded me as one of them but as an outsider (Walsham, 1995). On the one hand, this can be viewed as a positive factor because the participants would have regarded me as not having any direct personal stake in the interpretation of their views, thus empowering them to be relatively frank in what they said and shared during the interviews (ibid.). However, taking such an outsider perspective had two key disadvantages. First, I was not present on many occasions – e.g. directly after strategy or artistic programming meetings – and therefore did not get a direct sense of participants understandings of the phenomenon as they experienced them in the 'field' (Walsham, 1995). Second, as an outsider, participants may not have shared certain issues and insights with me as they could have been seen as too confidential or sensitive (ibid.).

Understanding my role as the researcher was particularly important when both constructing the questions I asked participants and how I then interpreted their answers (Rubin and Rubin, 2012). As an interpretive researcher, I did not need to drop my own cultural assumptions in favour of those of the participants; however, I did need to be careful that my cultural assumptions did not mask or overshadow the participants' meanings, a risk highlighted by Gergen (cited in Rubin and Rubin, 2012, p.29), who notes that 'the ability to get into the world of someone who does not

share one's own lenses requires an ability to first recognise and suspend one's own cultural assumptions long enough to see and understand another's'. On reflection, this proved to be tricky as, given my prior professional background (see Section 1.2), it would be naïve to think that my assumptions, say towards data literacy and skills, did not filter through into the data analysis in some way or another.

While my background in the arts and cultural sector meant that I was acquainted with the research setting, I needed to be mindful that, when engaging with and interviewing participants, the terminology they used, although familiar to me, may have in fact carried completely different meanings (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998). In this sense, Rubin and Rubin (2012, p.18) maintain that 'even when the interviewer [researcher] and interviewee [participant] seem to be speaking the same language, the words they use may have different cultural connotations'. To mitigate against this when conducting the interviews, it was important to ask participants to explain how they understood the data sharing policy and the role of 'data' more broadly – the phenomenon being studied – as well to describe their role within the organisation (see Section 3.3), the aim of which was to make sure that my understanding, for example of the role of the marketing manager, aligned with their own.

3.2 Research Setting and Sites

In this section, I will outline the setting in which this research was conducted, including details relating to the types of organisations in the scope of the research, the policy context in which the research was undertaken, and the sampling method used to select participants for the study.

3.2.1 National Portfolio organisations

Arts Council England (ACE) introduced National Portfolio organisations (NPOs) in 2012 as a vehicle to help the organisation achieve the goals outlined in its 10-year strategic plan *Achieving Great Art for Everyone* (2010), later updated as *Great Art and Culture for Everyone* (2013), which are to ensure that talent and artistic excellence thrive and are celebrated; more people experience

and are inspired by the arts; the arts are sustainable, resilient, and innovative; and every child and young person has the opportunity to experience the richness of the arts. The organisations within the National Portfolio range in discipline, including theatre, combined arts, dance, visual arts, music, and literature. To this end, the National Portfolio is:

> […] made up of a rich variety of organisations across the country, reflecting the quality and excellence of the arts in England. These organisations differ in size, artform practice, business model and governance, but they all play a role in achieving our long-term goals for the arts (Arts Council England, 2011b).

The shift from the legacy Regularly Funded Organisations (RFO) model to the National Portfolio model was met with significant criticism, given that over 100 organisations that had long-standing RFO status lost their funding when the National Portfolio came into being. NPO status is granted in blocks of three- or four-year funding cycles, and since the launch of the portfolio, annual funding commitments from grant-in-aid and National Lottery funding have been fairly consistent (see Table 3).

Table 3: Arts Council England funding for the NPO programme since 2012.

	2012–15[1]	2015–18[2]	2018–22[3]
Average yearly funding	£336m	£339m	408m
Number in portfolio	689	670	829*

[1] https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130201183831/http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/our-investment/funding-programmes/national-portfolio-funding-programme/national-portfolio-facts-and-figures/
[2] https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/arts-council-announces-investment-plans-2015-2018
[3] https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/about-us/how-and-where-we-invest-public-money

*includes for the first-time museums and libraries as part of the portfolio.

National Portfolio organisations are interesting sites to study as they operate in a dichotomy, whereby they receive significant public subsidies to deliver their work, which is bound to a set of policy deliverables (e.g. building audiences; artistic excellence; resilience and sustainability; tools and a skilled workforce; and children and young people), yet still need to generate ticket revenues.

Currently, this need to generate revenue is less pronounced than in other countries, for example the USA, where limited public subsidies require the need to demonstrate direct public benefit (Mulcahy, 2017, p.185). However, as the idea of 'cultural Darwinism' – i.e. survival of the fittest arts organisations – has become commonplace in the USA (Mulcahy, 2017, p.185), it is interesting that 'resilience' has emerged as a policy goal for NPOs in the UK. To that end, NPOs provide an interesting context in which to explore how cultural institutions are becoming increasingly market driven in their need for supplementary funds and as a justification for continuing public support (Mulcahy, 2017, p.185), especially when combined with the data sharing polices and data-centric tools explored in this thesis.

Table 4: Arts Council England requirements for NPO funding since 2012.

	2012–15[1]	2015–18[2]	2018–22[3]
Requirements of funded organisations	Annual survey	Annual survey	Annual survey
	Equality requirements	Equality requirements	Equality and diversity
	Internships	Internships	Internships
	Environmental sustainability	Environmental sustainability	Environmental sustainability
	-	-	Business plan review
	Artistic assessment	Artistic and quality assessment	Artistic and quality assessment
	-	Data sharing requirements, including reference to the Audience Finder	Data sharing requirements
	-	-	Audience data requirements

[1]https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130201181902/http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/information-funded-organisations/npos-mpms-museum-development-providers-nymos/
[2]https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20160204145304/http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/information-funded-organisations/national-portfolio-organisations-major-partner-museums-and-museu/
[3]https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/npompm-funding-relationships-2018-22/npompm-funding-requirments#section-10

3.2.2 The policy context

Arts Council England has a strict set of requirements that NPOs must fulfil on a year-to-year basis in order to maintain their portfolio status and, in turn, their funding. While a number of the core requirements have been included in each of the funding rounds – such as the need to complete an annual survey and demonstrate environmental sustainability and a commitment to equality and diversity – my research focuses on a period of time (2014–2017) when Arts Council England was both preparing and implementing new policies on how the National Portfolio organisations they fund capture, use, and share data about their cultural events and audiences (see Table 4). During the data collection, all participating organisations had recently received confirmation of their NPO status for 2015–18. As such, they were all required to have met or to meet these new data sharing requirements over the course of my data collection.

3.2.2.1 The data sharing policy

At the time this study was being designed and initial data collection had begun, the policy wording issued by ACE for its data sharing policy was as follows:

> All National Portfolio organisations are expected to contribute to developing a bigger and more informed audience for the arts and culture as a whole. In order to help achieve that, [they] will be committed to shared approaches (across arts and museums) to the capture, sharing, and reporting of audience data […] (Arts Council England, 2015, p.15).

> National Portfolio organisations must enter into mutually agreed data sharing agreements with other relevant Arts Council funded organisations and follow best practice principles on data sharing. NPOs will need to be in a position to share personal customer data (to allow for direct marketing) with partner Arts Council funded organisations by 1 April 2016 (Arts Council England, 2016b, p1).

However, during the data collection phase, Arts Council England issued updated guidance, adding the following into the second statement (Arts Council England, 2016b):

> […] Or, where such agreements do not exist, you will introduce a specific 'opt in' at transaction stage to ensure as far as possible that customers' contact details are shared with relevant Arts Council funded company, promoter, or venue they are booking for. You will pass these customer contact details to the visiting company or presenting venue at a mutually agreed time and in a mutually agreed format. This requirement will be waived if:

- *The customer has stated that they do not wish their details to be shared with the promoter, venue, space or company; or*

- *The company, venue or promoter is unable to comply with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998 and other relevant legal requirements for holding personal information and therefore does not hold such information.*

This updated guidance note also outlined the expectations for the types of data that organisations were expected to share, including a breakdown of ticket sales, basic audience profiling, and engagement at other events/frequency. As discussed above, it also noted how the 25 organisations who received the most Arts Council subsidies would also be expected to report on a sample of audiences' ethnicity, age, gender, and disability status (Arts Council England, 2016b).

3.2.2.2   The Audience Finder platform

In parallel with the data sharing policy above, Arts Council England's changes to their funding agreements also required public facing organisations to sign up and use a new audience data pooling platform called the Audience Finder, which is a 'free national audience data and development tool, enabling cultural organisations to understand, compare and apply audience insight' across 'the fastest growing data sharing network in the cultural sector' (The Audience Agency, 2018). This tool is developed and managed by The Audience Agency, in collaboration with the cultural sector, and receives significant funding through Arts Council England grants.

To recap, at the time of data collection, the above statements on the data sharing policy and The Audience Finder (the policy context) were the only pieces of information available both publicly and directly to National Portfolio organisations. However, it should be noted that after this research was conducted, more information has been made available for organisations, most notably through the website audiencedatasharing.org.

3.3 Data Collection

For this research, I conducted a series of semi-structured, qualitative interviews with sixteen arts managers working in publicly funded arts and cultural organisations. In qualitative research, the 'adoption of strategies and data collection methods tends to be highly flexible […] it is not a case of adopting one strategy rather than another, but often the combining of several strategies and methods within a research design' (Gray, 2014, p.162). Although there are contrasting accounts of how we may approach interpretive research – for example, scholars may choose to focus on interpretive ethnographies – interpretive approaches do not have to rely on 'total immersion in a setting' (Mason, 2002). Therefore it is perfectly reasonable for an interpretive study to use interview methods where the 'aim is to explore people's individual and collective understandings, reasoning processes, social norms, and so on' (Mason, 2002, p.56). Furthermore, qualitative interviews are compatible with my ontological position that people's knowledge, views, understandings, interpretations, experiences, and interactions are meaningful properties of social reality (Mason, 2002, p.63), in addition to also being compatible with my epistemological (interpretivist) stance that appreciating 'the different constructions and meanings that people place upon their experience' (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012, p.59) is a legitimate way to generate data.

Given my interest in how arts managers understand formalised data policies in relation to their work as arts professionals, a research design incorporating qualitative interviews as its data source was appropriate.

3.3.1 Interviews with NPOs

This study featured 16 participants across 14 different arts organisations (research sites) that, at the time of data collection, received grant-in-aid funding through Arts Council England's National Portfolio programme. This was a crucial factor in selecting participants, as the research sought to understand how changes to Arts Council England's data policies were perceived by the

organisations they funded. The artistic discipline of the selected organisations was limited to either theatre or combined arts, and each organisation (site) was typically represented by one participant, except on two occasions where two participants from different roles provided interviews at the same time. Although such a scenario is not ideal, each participant had a distinct role in the organisation and spoke about the phenomenon from their own perspective, and for this reason they were treated as individual participants. Furthermore, the presence of two participants in the same interview offered some interesting insights into knowledge dissemination within the organisation (see the findings on page 143).

Sampling for this thesis was purposive, in that I used my own judgement to select research sites/participants that would be best placed to help answer my research questions and meet my objectives (Saunders et al., 2015, p.301). The chosen sample took both a homogenous and heterogeneous approach – homogenous in that I chose to focus on one specific sub-group of arts managers who are all similar in terms of their organisational hierarchy (Saunders et al., 2015, p.302) and heterogeneous in that I used my judgement (positionality) to select participants with 'sufficiently diverse characteristics to provide the maximum variation possible in the data collected' (ibid.) from within the homogenous sample. Such an approach allowed me to describe and explain key themes in the data, as patterns that emerged were likely to be of interest as they were formed from a diverse range of positions/perspectives on the same phenomenon (Patton, cited in Saunders et al., 2015, p.301). Diverse characteristics that were taken into account, but which were not necessarily carried over into the analysis when selecting the cases, included organisation size, artistic type, location, and level of grant-in-aid funding.

Participants were then selected based on two key criteria: that they held a position as a senior manager/leader in their respective organisations and they were available and willing to participate in the research. While the latter may not seem to be a key criteria, finding participants willing to talk about Arts Council policy was particularly difficult. Although there was no clear reason for this, it was suggested by some of the participants that organisations were concerned about being seen as criticising their funders.

Selecting participants from senior positions was crucial for this study, as those in such positions were most likely to be aware of, and strategised for, changes to Arts Council policy. In this regard, participants all held senior strategic or artistic positions, including artistic directors, marketing managers, data insight managers, executive directors, and chief executives (a full breakdown of roles and organisations can be seen in Table 5). Although I recognise that other members of the organisation who were not part of the senior management or leadership teams could have offered useful insights into the phenomenon, I judged that because the data collection was being conducted early on in the policy introduction process (and the launch of the Audience Finder), such participants would not have been sufficiently exposed to the policy/tool so as to discuss its impact in a meaningful way.

The size of participating organisations was also important in selecting the sample, as different organisations receive different levels of funding and have different numbers of senior management interacting with data. To this end, it was important to have representative organisations with differing resource levels in case the data highlighted that this was a critical factor in participants' willingness to engage in data sharing policies. In this regard, organisations were separated into small, medium, or large organisations depending on their level of subsidy from the Arts Council: small organisations received less the £1.5 million, medium organisations between £1.5m and £3 million, and large organisations over £3 million. While there were other ways to have assessed the size of an organisation (such as staffing numbers), the level of subsidy received by an organisation was a recognised indicator of scale. For example, under the data sharing policy, Arts Council England had different reporting requirements for 'the 25 NPOs that receive the highest funding levels, and all major partner museums are also asked to report back on a sample of audiences by ethnicity, age, gender and disability status' (Arts Council England, 2016b, p.2), which demonstrates how the organisation expects those with higher levels of subsidy to do more due to the additional resources available to them.

For this study, I chose to label participants under one of three categories based on their listed role within their organisation: Artistic, those whose role was primarily concerned with artistic decisions; Marketers, whose roles centred around marketing or communication functions; and Executives, whose principle role was the strategic oversight/leadership of the organisation. Table 5 outlines the listed roles of participants against the category I gave them in this study, the labelling of which was mainly for the purpose of expediency when describing trends in and discussing the research findings. A fuller description of each organisation, excluding ORG10, has been included in Appendix 5.

Table 5: Participant codes, organisation size, and roles.

Ref Code	Org Size	Region*	Listed role	Role category
ORG1a	Small	North West	Executive Administrator	Executive
ORG1b			Marketing Manager	Marketer
ORG2	Medium	South West	Executive Director	Executive
ORG3	Small	North West	Chief Executive	Executive
ORG4	Medium	North West	Chief Executive	Executive
ORG5a	Small	East Midlands	Executive Director	Executive
ORG5b			Marketing Manager	Marketer
ORG6	Large	Yorkshire	Marketing and Communications Director	Marketer
ORG7	Medium	North West	Artistic Director	Artistic
ORG8	Medium	North West	Artistic Director	Artistic
ORG9	Large	West Midlands	Data Insight Manager	Marketer
ORG10	Arts Council England Senior Representative			
ORG11	Medium	London	Marketing Director	Marketer
ORG12	Small	London	Executive Director	Executive
ORG13	Medium	Yorkshire	Director of Communications	Marketer
ORG14	Medium	London	Box Office Manager	Marketer
ORG15	Small	North West	Artistic Director	Artistic

3.3.2 Interview with an Arts Council representative

In addition to the 16 participants from National Portfolio organisations, I also interviewed a senior leader in Arts Council England (listed as Organisation 10) in order to understand the policy-making process and intentions from the funder's perspective. Gaining access to the senior representative was easy to achieve; however, I was also keen to speak with other, less senior ACE officials who had worked on the development of the data sharing policy, but requests for the contact details of these individuals was denied by the representative. As this means that only one interview from a policy perspective was included in the data, my subsequent analysis treats it as just that – the opinion of one individual.

3.3.3 Qualitative interviewing

My primary source of data for this thesis was qualitative interviews with arts professionals, so it is important to discuss how I approached this method of data collection. The aim of qualitative interviews is to collect information and insights that capture the meaning and interpretation of a phenomenon in relation to participants' worldviews (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012). Qualitative interviewing describes a breadth of interview types, ranging from open and loosely structured (hereafter 'semi-structured') interviews to those that are structured, wherein a series of questions are formulated by researcher, even if they are not necessarily relevant to the participant being interviewed (Mason, 2002, p.62; Easterby-Smith et al., 2012, p.144). All qualitative interviews have a degree of structure across this scale, and it is generally accepted that the notion of 'unstructured' interviews is a 'misnomer because no research interviewer can be completely lacking in some form of structure' (Mason, 2002, p.62). Interview types that lean more towards the open, semi-structured format are often regarded as being 'in-depth', where the aim is to encourage and prompt participants to talk in-depth about the phenomenon without the use of short-answer or focused questions (Cook, 2008). As such, in-depth interviews typically have three core features: (1) the research generated will be rich and detailed and built on examples, experiences, and narrative; (2) the questions asked during an interview are open-ended; and (3)

the interviewer does not need to stick to a given set of questions and can omit or rephrase questions if needed (Rubin and Rubin, 2012). To this end, in-depth interviews – either semi-structured or open-ended – are appropriate methods when:

- It is necessary to understand the constructs that the respondent [participant] uses as a basis for his or her opinions and beliefs about a particular matter or situation;

- The aim of the interview is to develop an understanding of the respondent's 'world' so that the researcher might influence it […]; and

- The step-by-step logic of a situation is not clear; the subject matter is highly confidential or commercially sensitive; and there are issues about which the interviewee may be reluctant to be truthful other than confidentially in a one-to-one situation (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012).

It is also important to recognise that qualitative, semi-structured interviewing has its own character, and despite certain divergences in style, a number of core features (Mason, 2002):

- **An interactional exchange of dialogue** on either a one-on-one or larger group basis that takes place face-to-face, over the phone, or online;

- **A relatively informal style,** where interviews come across as conversations rather than a formal question and answer format;

- **A thematic, topic-centred, biographical or narrative approach**, where the researcher has a number of topics they wish to cover or a set of starting points that can be used for a fluid discussion; and

- **Meanings and understandings are created during the interaction**, i.e. a form of co-production between the researcher and the interviewee.

However, it is important to keep in mind that interviews will generally be constrained by the participants 'capacity to verbalise, interact, conceptualise, and remember' (ibid., p.64). It was therefore important that, as the researcher, I treated the understandings generated in the interview not as direct reflections of the phenomenon – such as an archaeological excavation– but as a subjective view like a painting in an art gallery that means different things to different people.

Given the focus of this research, and based on the above principles and features, semi-structured interviewing was an appropriate method for collecting my research data as I was seeking to

understand how arts managers understand and interpret data-centric policies and processes and how these effect their organisation and 'world'. Furthermore, as the research was being conducted during the early stages of the data sharing policy, and there was a risk that not all the participants would be fully aware of the policy details, a semi-structured approach to the interview process allowed me to guide the participants where needed, but with the flexibility for them to share their understandings of the phenomenon in the way most appropriate to them.

3.3.4 Conducting the semi-structured interviews

Before detailing *how* I conduced the semi-structured interviews, I will briefly outline the policy context that is the focus of the research phenomenon. The Arts Council of England's policy wording for the data sharing requirements (DSP), obtained through open access means, was used to frame the semi-structured interviews. In this regard, participants were specifically asked about the two key changes to Arts Council England's expected requirements for NPOs: data sharing and engagement with the Audience Finder platform.

3.3.4.1 Data sharing requirements

Participants were asked to read two data policy statements (guidance) from Arts Council England (discussed above and repeated here for expediency) and to talk about what these statements meant to them and their organisations:

> All National Portfolio organisations are expected to contribute to developing a bigger and more informed audience for the arts and culture as a whole. In order to help achieve that, [they] will be committed to shared approaches (across arts and museums) to the capture, sharing, and reporting of audience data […] (Arts Council England, 2015, p.15).

> National Portfolio organisations must enter into mutually agreed data sharing agreements with other relevant Arts Council funded organisations and follow best practice principles on data sharing. NPOs will need to be in a position to share personal customer data (to allow for direct marketing) with partner Arts Council funded organisations by 1 April 2016 (Arts Council England, 2016b).

3.3.4.2 Interview process and technique

Before commencing the data collection interviews, I first drafted a series of questions to use during the semi-structured interviews based on my own interpretation of Arts Council England's policy statements above. Once I had a draft set of questions, I decided to test them during a pilot interview with two participants from the same organisation: a marketing manager and an executive administrator. This interview is identified as Org 1a and Org 1b in Table 5. The main goal of the pilot interview was to become familiar with the key issues relating to the data sharing policy from the perspectives of a very small NPO (a key reason for selecting it for the pilot study). This helped to ensure that my questions covered issues pertinent to small organisations, which would be overshadowed by other larger organisations who may not have considered them as issues for them. During this interview, the semi-structured interview questions were tested, with initial analysis of the data used to refine existing, and inform new, interview questions for the forthcoming data collection sessions.

Following question refinement, the remainder of the semi-structured interviews followed a similar order. First, opening questions aimed to learn more about the participants' daily routines, their understandings of their roles in the organisations, and their initial thoughts about their roles' relationships with data. This was important as it allowed me to confirm whether my judgement for their selection was merited, i.e. that they interacted with data (to a greater or lesser extent) at a senior level.

Then, the main body of questions focused on the two key topics: the data sharing policy statements and the Audience Finder platform, with follow-up questions including perceptions of artistic risk, perceived implications for audience-organisation relationships, benchmarking, and overall thoughts on the notion of data-driven decision making. Questions were also designed to allow for 'laddering', which is a way for researchers to help the participants move on from just factual statements or descriptions of an event by unpacking the original question in the hope of uncovering their value base. However, like the pilot interviews, the questions were often adapted

following each formal interview to (1) account for the specifics of each interview (such as the type of participant being interviewed or the size of the organisation) and (2) allow for emergent themes from prior interviews (e.g. the notion of 'professional development') to be unpacked in more depth (Clark et al., 2010). A copy of the semi-structured interview questions can be found in Appendix 3; however, the questions inevitably differed from what was planned due to the participants' answers.

All participants were reassured that the interviews were anonymous, and they were reminded of their rights to make off-the-record statements and to withdraw from the research post-interview. When I read out the policy statements to the participants, I also provided them with a printed copy so that they could reflect on the statement when providing their answers. When asking questions, I aimed to employ the critical incident technique, whereby I asked the participants to reflect on a particular activity or event that was directly related to the phenomenon (Easterby-Smith et al., 2012, p.150; Saunders et al., 2015, p.407), for example, 'Can you recall a time when you used data to inform an artistic decision?' Where participants' responses lacked sufficient detail, I would use prompts to try and yield more detail, such as using follow-up expressions (e.g. 'Ah' and 'Oh') or more explicit questions (e.g. 'Will you please tell me more?' or 'When did this happen?'). When necessary, I would also try to summarise and test understanding with the participants by outlining my understanding of what they had said, thus giving them the opportunity to clarify points or add more detail if required. While almost all participants were engaged and happy to participate, a couple of participants were difficult to interview, with the participant from Arts Council England being one such individual; however, the difficultly in interviewing this participant was likely linked to them being defensive of their policy-making, tending to provide single 'yes' and 'no' answers at the beginning of the interview. This required me to carefully use follow-up questions and to re-state the fact that all answers were anonymous. Although it was not clear which of my actions resolved the issue, the participant became more relaxed during the interview and open to answering questions with detailed accounts.

I recorded all interviews on a digital Dictaphone, and I uploaded and stored the files on a secure cloud server immediately after the interview. The audio files were then securely transferred to a third-party transcription service (who had signed a non-disclosure agreement). The use of a transcription service, rather than self-transcribing, was done to help me manage my dyslexia. Once receiving copies of the transcriptions, I listened to the audio recordings again while reading the transcription in order to check for accuracy, making corrections as necessary.

3.4 Data Analysis

This section will explain how all the participant data was analysed in an interpretivist way, using elements of the 'Gioia' (Gioia, Corley and Hamilton, 2013) method, which is a relatively new take on grounded theory methodology. In this section, I first outline the overarching analytical toolkit applied to this research before providing a step-by-step account of my data analysis using elements of both Gioia and grounded theory methods.

3.4.1 A note on grounded theory

Having established the philosophical foundations on which this research is conducted at the beginning of this chapter, my analytical toolkit adopted elements of grounded theory. While the term grounded theory can refer to a number of applications – such as a methodological approach, a method of inquiry, or simply the result of a research process (Saunders et al., 2015, p.193) – I refer to grounded theory as a form of research strategy in this section. However, it should be made clear that I do not consider this research to follow a traditional 'grounded theory' research design. For me, this thesis is an interpretivist, qualitative, research study that borrows elements of grounded theory, in the traditional sense, as well as newer variants of the research strategy, notably that of Gioia, Corley and Hamilton (2013).

Grounded theory consists of a set of logical but flexible guidelines for conducting inductive qualitative inquiry (Charmaz and Bryant, 2008). The notion of grounded theory was first developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) as a 'response to the 'extreme positivism' of much social

research at that time' (Suddaby, cited in Saunders et al., 2015, p.193). Glaser and Strauss reject the notion that research in the social world should be constrained by a paradigm 'based on a premise that theory will reveal a pre-existing theory' (Saunders et al., 2015, p.193) as in positivism. Although positivism is appropriate within the natural sciences, Glaser and Strauss believed that social research lends itself to a different philosophy, to which end, in applying interpretivism to social research, the notion of 'reality' is regarded as 'socially constructed through meanings that social actors ascribe to their experiences' (ibid.). To address this application of interpretivism in social research, grounded theory was developed as a process to 'analyse, interpret and explain the meanings that social actors construct to make sense of their everyday experiences in specific situations' (Saunders et al., 2015, p.193).

Grounded theory has frequently been used to develop theoretical explanations of social interactions and processes in a wide range of contexts, including business and management. As both business and management is about the behaviour of people, grounded theory strategies have been used to explore a range of management issues, including those in the arts and cultural sector (e.g. Gilhespy, 1999; Walmsley, 2013).

Grounded theory can be characterised by a number of key elements. First, unlike quantitative research, where a complete data set is collected and then analysed, qualitative research lends itself to being analysed as it is collected, a core element of a grounded theory approach, providing a systematic and emergent strategy to undertake qualitative research. This cyclic approach of grounded theory is often referred to as inductive – where the research is data-driven, beginning with observations from which theories are proposed towards the end of the research process. However, it can also be abductive, whereby theory development is approached by collecting data to explore a phenomenon, identifying themes, and explaining patterns to generate new – or modify existing – theory. As a researcher using a grounded theory methodology, the aim is to 'collect and analyse data simultaneously, developing analytical codes as these emerge from the data in order to recognise (fragment) these data into categories' (Saunders et al., 2015, p.193). In this sense,

the analysis process typically adopts a three-stage coding process in the pursuit of theoretical saturation, which are discussed in detail in Section 3.4.2.1.

While there are a number of other intricacies in a grounded theory research approach, I do not apply grounded theory in a purist way in this research. Instead, I borrow and apply elements from the Gioia method (Gioia, Corley and Hamilton, 2013), which is a relatively new take on traditional grounded theory and has become a key emergent 'template' for conducting organisation studies research (Langley and Abdallah, 2011). However, the Gioia method is yet to attract much attention within arts management research (see, for example, Thibodeau and Rüling, 2015).

The Gioia method pursues a systematic approach to new concept development and grounded theory and addresses one of the frequent criticisms of grounded theory, i.e. its rigour.

> It is clear, though, that we should have approaches or methods that can generate new concepts and grounded theories not only via impressionistic studies, but also via qualitatively rigorous inductive studies. We have tried to articulate one such approach in this article by tracing out some of the features of an evolving methodology designed to enable both creative imagination and systematic rigor in conducting qualitative, grounded theory research (Gioia, Corley and Hamilton, 2013, p.26).

In the Gioia method, the research design and data collection steps are moderate variations on traditional grounded theory approaches, while the process for data analysis is the main distinctive features of the approach (Gioia, Corley and Hamilton, 2013). Drawing on elements of the Gioia method – and by extension grounded theory – was an ideal fit for my epistemological position in that they employ the basic assumption that the organisational world is socially constructed. In this sense, as the researcher, I should see myself as a 'glorified reporter' whose role is to provide an 'adequate account' of the participants' explanations of a phenomenon when I write up and present the research account (ibid.).

Furthermore, the Gioia method draws on a crucial and actionable assumption that those participating in the research – those constructing and informing me of their organisational realities – are 'knowledgeable agents'. For Gioia, Corley and Hamilton (2013), these agents are people –

or participants – in organisations who know *what* they are trying to do and who are able to explain their thoughts, intentions, and actions. This was key in that I wanted the research to yield useful, actionable findings that could be fed back to these knowledgeable agents. Finally, and on a process management note, the unique data structure approach of the Gioia method (as discussed below) was attractive in the way it enabled me as both a novice – and dyslexic – researcher to map out and visualise my data and to help reach that all important theoretical saturation point.

To conclude, the above note on grounded theory and the elements of the 'Gioia method' used in this research is by no means perfect or complete. In this sense, a full discussion of the grounded theory research approach can be found in Saunders et al. (2015). Furthermore, aspects of the grounded theory and Gioia methods are discussed throughout the sections below. However, one thing that is clear is that grounded theory, and by extension the Gioia method, research designs do not need to be followed rigidly. In fact, Saunders et al. (2015, p.194) note that, in practice, 'grounded theory procedures are 'messy' and require researchers to develop a tacit feel for their research to make judgments about issues such as when theoretical saturation is achieved'. In concluding this research, this is a sentiment I strongly agree with.

3.4.2 Analytical procedures and relationship with the literature

In qualitative research, data analysis is a process of making meaning out of data in order to answer the research questions. Just as the researcher is required to tease out and collect the data, the answers from that data – or rather the themes, patterns, and findings – must also be carefully formed and constructed. The data analysis process is an 'active, flexible and systematic process that involves lots of iterative movement between cases and data sets in order to build theory that is 'good' because it is a close and plausible fit with the data' (Kay, 2014, p.108). At its core, the data analysis process involves the organisation of the data itself, and then the identification and classification of codes and themes from within the data that are used to underpin and answer the research questions in the form of a discussion (Creswell, 2007).

Returning to the 'mechanics' of my data analysis, interview transcriptions were uploaded into computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (Atlas.ti),[6] which enabled me to better manage the coding process and create new versions of the data as the research developed. This was a useful tool when employing an open coding process (as discussed below) as it allowed me to change the codes and categories applied to the data with ease and uniformity.

In the preceding subsections, I will outline the step-by-step analytical procedures applied to the data, how the findings and themes affected my relationship with the literature, and how the findings are presented in the remainder of this thesis.

3.4.2.1 Step-by-step analytical procedures

As above, this study borrows elements of the 'Gioia' method to 'create rich opportunities for discovery of new concepts rather than affirming existing ones' when analysing the participant data (Gioia, Corley and Hamilton, 2013, p.17). The Gioia method recognises the positionality of the researcher as being knowledgeable not necessarily in the subject area, but in recognising and highlighting patterns in the data and teasing out concepts and relationships that the participants do not notice in order to create theoretically relevant terms.

The Gioia method closely resembles many of the coding processes outlined by Strauss and Corbin (2014). In this step-by-step outline, I lead with the methods described by Gioia, Corley and Hamilton (2013) and signpost where these are akin to the Strauss and Corbin (2014) method. This approach works on the belief that the process of collecting and analysing data happens simultaneously. At a high level, the Gioia method consists of three main processes: identifying first-order codes and categories from participant data; organising these first-order concepts into second-order themes; and abstracting/distilling the second-order themes into structural dimensions.

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[6] https://atlasti.com/

1. **Performing initial data coding and maintaining the integrity of first-order (information-centric) categories.**

Following the first interview, I began to analyse the data using an open coding procedure, which involved a line-by-line analysis of the transcripts, wherein I questioned the data, asking 'What is this?' or 'What does this represent?' in order to identify a number of discrete incidents, ideas, or events that emerged early in the research process. Gioia, Corley and Hamilton (2013) refer to this as first-order analysis, in which the aim of the process is not to produce a succinct list of similar codes but instead to faithfully note down all the terms used by the participants [informants], even if this results in an 'explosion' of 100+ categories. In this study, I identified in excess of 350 first-order terms. Although this number is rather high, it was expected given that I am an inexperienced researcher still learning to discern appropriate cues in interview data. Despite such a high number, Gioia, Corley and Hamilton (2013) suggest that this can be the norm with this method, where the sheer number of categories identified can appear overwhelming. To this end, they claim that researchers have to 'get lost before [they] can get found' (Gioia, 2004). Examples of my first-order categories are outlined in Box 1.

BOX 1: FIRST-ORDER CATEGORIES

1st Order Concept: 'A duty of care to protect audience data' informed by:

- o 'Legal constraints'
- o 'Legislation that we have to comply with'
- o 'Operating within the law'

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2. **Develop a comprehensive compendium of first-order terms**

The next stage of the data analysis was to try to reduce the number of first-order terms to a manageable number of relevant categories (25 to 30 are recommended) by searching for both the similarities and differences amongst the data. This process is similar to that of Strauss and

Corbin's (2014) notion of axial coding. Once identified, I then attached labels or phrasal descriptors to the categories that, where possible, retained the verbatim terms used by the participants. As discussed above, by retaining verbatim terms, my aim was to preserve the voice of the participants, providing an adequate account of their experience throughout the data analysis.

3. Organise first-order codes into second-order (theory-centric) themes

Once I had established the more manageable set of first-order categories, I then had to use the labels and descriptors I had attached to them to consider whether there was a deeper structure or connections between the data – known as second-order themes. For Gioia, Corley and Hamilton (2013), this is where I needed to position myself as a knowledgeable agent and simultaneously think about the data at multiples levels, including the on-the-ground level of the participant terms and codes but also the more abstract second-order theoretical level of themes, dimensions, and the overall narrative. Across this process, I was always seeking to theoretically answer the question 'What is going on here?'

It is important to note that answering the 'What is going on here?' question is an extremely iterative process. As I developed tentative answers to this question throughout my analysis, I was able to use this thinking to formulate new – or refine existing – interview questions. I used the reframed interview questions in subsequent interviews to peruse subjects, concepts, and tentative relationships that were emerging from the interviews I had conducted to date. This process is akin to Glaser and Strauss's (1967) notion of theoretical sampling, whereby the researcher develops a theory through continuous comparative analysis of the data collected by collecting more data to examine categories and their relationships as they emerge.

Gioia, Corley and Hamilton (2013) suggest that this process of second-order analysis required me to move into the 'theoretical realm', where I needed to look for, and ask, whether the emerging themes suggested concepts that could help me describe and explain the phenomenon I was observing. Throughout this process, my aim was to highlight nascent concepts that did not appear to be well reflected in the existing literature *or* existing theoretical concepts that, from my data,

leapt out as relevant in a new domain (in this instance, data policies in the publicly funded arts and cultural sector).

4. Distil second-order themes into overarching theoretical dimensions

Once I had developed a workable set of themes and concepts that had reached 'theoretical saturation' (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) – whereby the data collection ceases to reveal any new data relevant to a category and the categories have become well developed and understood – the next process was to distil the second-order themes into what Gioia, Corley and Hamilton (2013) refer to as 'aggregate dimensions'.

5. Assemble terms, themes, and dimensions into a 'data structure'

The final stage of this data analysis process was to 'present' the data. One of the key features of Gioia, Corley and Hamilton's (2013) method is presenting the data analysis in the form of a 'data structure' (Figure 3), with the aim of 'configure[ing] the data into a sensible visual aid [that] provides a graphic representation of how [I] progressed from raw data to terms and themes in conducting the analysis' (ibid. p.20), a process that is a key component for demonstrating rigour in qualitative research (ibid.).

Following the Gioia method, the process of constructing a data structure served two purposes. First, it compelled me to think about the data theoretically and not just methodically. Second, by abstracting the data, I was able to 'lay the foundation' for balancing the participants on the ground viewpoints/lived experience of the phenomenon with the necessary '30,000-ft' view of the data required to draw out the key theoretical insights.

Data structure

| | 1st Order Concepts | 2nd Order Themes | Aggregate Dimensions |

1st Order Concepts | **2nd Order Themes** | **Aggregate Dimensions**

- Living in an evidence based world of 'cold facts'
- Informing operational and reporting activities
- Data functions and activities

Data resource

- Data is a pathway to philanthropic donors
- Audience growth is crucial for the survival of the sector.
- Data is "vitally important" in programming decisions.
- Data 'interrogation' activities becoming reliant on in-house data-experts

Data dependency

Datafication

- 'We can't data everything' when it comes to artistic programming.
- Growing sense that data sharing policy will be used for measurement and assessment.
- Highlighting the value of the artistic work produced

Core purpose

- Not making decisions based on assumption
- Focus on artistic work of the organisation
- Creating 'bland' artistic experiences
- Programming 'safe bets'

Risk-taking

Values

- Focus on organisations becoming more 'business-like'
- Having an active voice in the planning of artistic pro-grams
- Using data to 'underpin artistic & business decisions'

Ambition

- Professional expertise is trumped by box office reports and audience segmentation models
- The role responsibilities of arts managers
- 'Stacking up' against' thousands of data points'
- Willingness to share knowledge and experience of data

Knowledge & experience

Professional Identity

- Shared concern that the audience / venue relationship may fracture due
- Losing control over their audience / customer data to others
- Perception that venue-based organisations 'have a better deal'

Relational issues

- A duty of care to protect audience data.
- Acting in a 'professional manner'
- Being a trustworthy organisation

Moral issues

Stakeholder Legitimacy

- Being compliant with policy
- Shared concerns regarding data protection compliance
- The need to achieve data equality

Instrumental issues

Figure 3: Data Structure

3.4.2.2   Relationship with the literature

As described above, is was necessary to cycle between the emergent data, themes, concepts, and dimensions and the arts management/management studies literature throughout the data analysis process. By constantly circling between these different positions, my aim was to highlight areas where my findings not only spoke to existing concepts but also where I may have discovered new ones.

Adopting a stance of semi-ignorance or enforced ignorance towards the existing literature until I entered the data structure phase was beneficial as it helped me avoid bringing in any prior hypothesis bias or constraining the research within the parameters of the existing literature (Gioia, Corley and Hamilton, 2013). To that end, when I consulted the literature, the research process shifted from being inductive – observations that are specific and limited in scope – to abductive – whereby I considered my data and existing theory in tandem (ibid.). However, it should be noted that, as in the previous section on positionality, I was never completely ignorant of prior work in this area. For this reason, Gioia, Corley and Hamilton (2013) have labelled the stance I took as a 'willing suspension of belief' of any pervious theorising in this research domain.

3.4.3   Presentation of the data

While the Gioia method informed my analytical procedures, it has not necessarily informed the way in which the findings are presented. Instead, the empirical findings of this research will be presented and structured in a way that broadly follows the research questions outlined in Section 1.3. In this sense, Chapter 4 addresses **RQ01**, Chapter 5 addresses both **RQ01** and **RQ02**, and Chapter 6 addresses **RQ03**. However, it should be noted that certain themes highlighted in the findings naturally sit across research questions, with the findings presented across these three chapters helping to address the overarching research aim which is to understand the *effects of formalised data sharing policy and practice on the management of publicly funded arts and cultural organisations in England.*

Chapters 4 and 5 follow a more traditional structure in that they present the findings under a number of 'themes' with only limited in-line analysis. To this end, the primary analysis of Chapters 4 and 5 is saved for the discussion in Chapter 7 . Chapter 6, on the other hand, adopts a different structure to account for the fact that I have adopted particular theoretical resources in making sense of legitimacy demands; as such, I have chosen to integrate these theoretical observations in presenting my findings in this chapter.

The decision to embed analysis and discussion alongside the presentation of the findings is due to the fact that the chapter exclusively explores the notion of legitimacy judgements made by participants in relation to the data sharing policy, which emerged as a key theme during the data analysis. The findings are presented and analysed under a series of discrete tensions, which in turn reflect the types of legitimacy judgements proposed by Tost's (2011) model of legitimacy judgements. Based on the tensions found in my data analysis, I include a model designed to help the reader navigate the chapter, and thus it is as clear as possible when conclusions are being drawn in relation to other work.

With regard to overall style, I write in the first person where appropriate throughout these chapters as I believe that this is an accurate position to take in relation to my own interpretation of the data in line with my methodological position. Data excerpts have been presented in a clear way, with appropriate reference given to either the participants' listed role or category as given by the research. Furthermore, the focus of the data presented is not the manner of speech but the ideas expressed by participants; therefore, there are occasions when only one example from the participant data that was particularly representative of the theme or sub-theme is used to encompass all instances.

3.5 Ethics

When undertaking any form of research, there is a fundamental obligation for the researcher to take into account the ethical implications of the research they are about to undertake. The ideas

behind 'ethics' draws close parallels with those of morality,[7] concerning the 'system of moral principles by which individuals can judge their actions as right or wrong, good or bad' (Denscombe, 2009, p.59). With regard to ethics at a practical level, they deal with what ought to be done as opposed to what ought not to be done. This notion needs to be considered by researchers and can thus instigate change in their research approach. The incentive for researchers to operate on ethical grounds falls mainly under the area of professional integrity (ibid.).

The ethics committee of the University of Lancaster granted ethical approval for the research presented in this thesis. The university's ethical approval process considered a number of variables, including the anonymity of the research participants; the ways in which they would be recruited for the study; where the data collection would take place; and the ways through which I would ensure that the participants fully understood the nature of the research before agreeing to participate. With regard to the latter point, all participants, when contacted to participate in the research, were sent an information sheet outlining the research project and their expected level of participation (see Appendix 2). All interviews were recorded, transcribed, and securely stored on the university's cloud infrastructure, and each participant was given the opportunity to provide 'off the record' statements that were not included in the analysis. Furthermore, due to the potential sensitive nature of the data being collected – such as opinions on their organisations – anonymity was applied at both an organisational and participant level in order to protect all involved (Yin and Yin, 2009, pp.181–182).

Once participants had agreed to take part in the research, they were asked to sign a participant consent form detailing how their data would be handled and informing them that they could withdraw from the research at any time. However, participants were advised that if they chose to withdraw, certain aspects of their interviews may remain in the final research due to the data analysis process. For example, the nature of the Gioia method applied to my data analysis (see Section 3.5) meant that the data obtained from the participants needed to be analysed soon after

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[7] Behaviour conforming to moral law or accepted moral standards

the interview in order to identify the first-order categories and second-order themes that would, in turn, inform subsequent interviews. To this end, it would be very difficult for the data provided by the participants to be abstracted and removed from the data analysis once this had begun.

4 Making Sense of the Data Sharing Policy – Interplay and Context

In this first findings chapter, I analyse the qualitative data collected from the semi-structured interviews of 17 arts professionals working in publicly funded arts and cultural organisations (ACOs) from across England. My analysis highlights these research participants' understandings of Arts Council England's (ACE) data sharing policy (DSP) and the current data practices (excluding the use of the Audience Finder platform, which is reserved for Chapter 5) undertaken in their organisations at the time this research was conducted (September 2016 – January 2017). This analysis is important as it helps to understand and contextualise participants' responses and actions relating to the DSP presented and discussed in subsequent chapters.

There are five strands of analysis. Section 4.1 highlights the different types of data currently collected in participants' organisations in the run-up to and during the implementation of the DSP. Section 4.2 then considers how these different types of data are used for two core organisational functions: to inform decisions (4.2.1) and to report on activities undertaken (4.2.2). Section 4.3 then highlights participants' perceptions of policy-making processes within the publicly funded arts and cultural sector and considers the reporting relationships and dependencies between

different actors: ACOs, ACE, DCMS, and central government. Building on these perceptions, my analysis in Section 4.4 highlights two perceived motivations for introducing the DSP: to demonstrate impact (4.4.1) and to create data equality (4.4.2), while subsection 4.4.3 also considers the understanding and motivations for the DSP from the perspective of an ACE representative. Finally, Section 4.5 presents my analysis of participants' experiences of DSP introduction and highlights how policy communication and the quality of guidance issued is an important factor when considering the wider implications of a policy on a group of individuals or organisations. To help remind and orientate the reader about the data sharing policy context presented in both the introduction and methodology chapters, relevant excepts are included in boxes.

4.1 Data and Creative Organisations

Collecting data is a taken-for-granted activity across publicly funded ACOs. Every participant spoke about how capturing data was part and parcel of the daily life of their organisation, 'underpin[ning] everything we do' (ORG 7), and they discussed using data across a range of organisational activities, including 'those daily operational things' to 'those really crucial, long-term strategic ones' (ORG 4). In subsection 4.1.1, my analysis highlights three principal types of data that participants collect: 'operational' data, demographic data, and personal customer contact data. In subsections 4.2.1 and 4.2.2, I show how participants put these three types of data to use in their organisations, including data for informing decision making and data for reporting. The purpose of presenting participants' 'current' data practices is to help inform wider discussion of the data sharing policy, including whether its introduction is perceived to change these existing practices and what such changes may mean for arts managers going forward.

4.1.1 Operational data

'Operational' data is concerned with financial information about the organisations in terms of income generated by their primary and secondary activities. For example, primary activities

include the 'income [they are] getting from cinema, live by satellite, [and] from theatre' (ORG 15), while secondary income includes 'the trading income within the café' (ORG 2). A chief executive summarised this as data that 'comes from [their] ticketing system [and is] a much more detailed breakdown of […] the attendance per performance, […] the income per performance […] we can calculate spend per head for that, and then we compare it to previous performances' (ORG 3). In other words, data used for 'operational decisions' (ORG 4) is data that 'allows us [the organisation] to see how well we're doing and adjust our business plan accordingly […]' (ORG 6), in addition to acting 'as the bedrock for our business planning' (ORG 12).

Participants also spoke about 'operational' data they collected in terms of their tertiary activities:

> There are other kinds of data that are not about people that we're also gathering, which is to do with our electricity, water, and gas usage. We have a zero-to-landfill policy, so we're also managing our sustainability…green data […] (ORG 7).

Another participant discussed capturing data about the 'general footfall we get into the foyer […]' (ORG 4) and 'the number of volunteers we have at any one time' (ORG 3). Comments such as these highlight the breadth of data that ACOs collect about not only their finances but also all of the other activities they engage in. Specific examples of how ACOs use operational data is reserved for subsection 4.2.1.

4.1.2 Demographic data

ACOs regularly collect demographic data about their audience members, which forms a core part of the DSP (see Box 2). A data insight manager spoke about the 'other information we collect which is not necessarily about individuals […]', which they aggregate, anonymise, and use 'to track the kinds of people who are coming, the demographics specifically, and how representative we are of the UK' (ORG 9). Similarly, a director of communications claimed that they collected data 'to analyse everything [they] can about the audience, so where they come from, the demographics, the behaviour, attendance, [and] crossover to other shows' (ORG 6).

BOX 2: POLICY CONTEXT FOR THE DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

In terms of the data sharing policy requirements central to this research, organisations are expected to contribute demographic data to the Audience Finder platform, which was clear from the policy guidance:

> National Portfolio organisations are expected to upload a representative sample of the postcodes of [their] audiences to the Audience Finder once a year [and] we encourage you to go further than this, where possible. The 25 organisations that receive the most National Portfolio organisation funding are also required to include data on the age, gender, race and disability status of a sample of audiences (Arts Council England, 2016b).

Participants claimed that the 'demographics of the audiences we attract […] are some of the most important data we capture […]' (ORG 11). Although some participants believed that they only asked 'very basic demographic questions' (ORG 13), others suggested that the demographic data their organisation would collect included, 'where possible, their [the audiences'] postcode, disability, ethnicity, […] and employment status' (ORG 6) as well as 'some rough indication of household income so we can make sure we're offering affordable tickets to everyone' (ORG 2). However, participants also spoke about the difficulties they face when trying to capture it:

> [Demographic data] is a little trickier to get hold of because people aren't prepared to answer so many questions when they book a ticket, so we have to prioritise getting their contact information […]. We will then try to fill in the gaps with anonymised surveys in the theatre or in follow-up email surveys (ORG 14).

This account highlights the issues some ACOs face when trying to capture larger demographic datasets, noting that audience members want quick transactions when booking tickets, so only the essential contact information gets recorded.

4.1.3 Customer contact data

Customer contact data is another core component of the DSP (see Box 3). Participants regarded customer contact and box office data as 'possibly the biggest, *the* most crucial, but also the most complex' type of data ACOs collect (ORG 7). A box office manager noted how, over 'the last

decade or so […], people have realised that the customer is actually the thing that they want to know the most about…or I should say have more insight about' (ORG 14). For example, a marketing manager suggested that 'customer contact data is needed for most of our marketing campaigns' (ORG 5a), while another stated that:

> […] the contact data of our audience is like the bread and butter of the box office database […]; most, if not all, of our marketing campaigns need the ability to target individuals…so although it's the most difficult to collect and use, it's definitely the most important (ORG 11).

The assertion here that this type of data is difficult to collect and use is linked with the legal obligations ACOs adhere to under data protection law (see subsections 6.1.1 and 6.2.1).

BOX 3: POLICY CONTEXT FOR CUSTOMER CONTACT DATA

In terms of the data sharing policy requirements central to this research, organisations are expected, with permission, to share customer contact data with other National Portfolio organisations who request it, which was clear from the policy guidance:

> …you will introduce a specific 'opt in' option at transaction stage to ensure, as far as possible, that customers' contact details are shared with the relevant Arts Council funded company, promoter or venue they are booking for. You will pass these customer contact details to the visiting company or presenting venue by a mutually agreed time and in a mutually agreed format. (Arts Council England, 2016b).

Participants highlighted how customer contact data forms the backbone of customer records in their box office systems. Such data is collected 'in a number of ways' (ORG 7), ranging from 'people ringing up and book[ing] a ticket or people booking online for a ticket' (ORG 9), signing up to mailing lists, or becoming 'friends' and 'patrons' of the theatre (ORG 3). When collecting contact data for the customer record, it appears that there is crossover with the demographic data (such as age, postcode, and employment status); however, one participant clarified that, for them, contact data was 'name, full address, phone numbers, and email address, which is the most valuable piece of data to us' (ORG 5b). Asked why the email address was the most valuable data,

they noted that 'email is the most effective and cheapest way for us to target the right audiences for our productions' (ibid.).
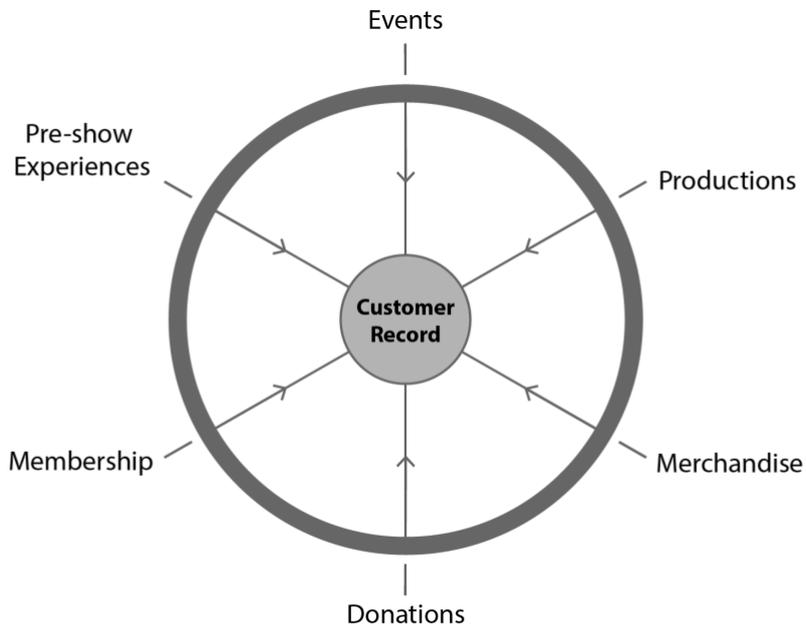
Figure 4: The Customer Record Wheel (Adapted from the account of ORG 14).

One participant anecdotally referred to the customer record (and the customer contact data) as being at the centre of a wheel, with all the other information they hold about the customer acting as the spokes that 'spur off from that core record' (ORG 14). These spokes included events, productions, merchandise sales, donations, memberships, and pre-show experiences (illustrated as Figure 4). This anecdote is a useful finding, as it provides a good overview of the perceived relationship between the customer data ACOs collect and the way it is used to promote and inform their activities.

Finally, although the brief comments above suggest that ACOs collect and store large volumes of customer data – according to one participant, they have 'database[s] [that] could even compete with IBM' (ORG 13) – others suggested that only some of the data they collect is useful. For example, the box office manager drew a diagram to illustrate the amount of customer data that is actually of use to the organisations (see Appendix 4).
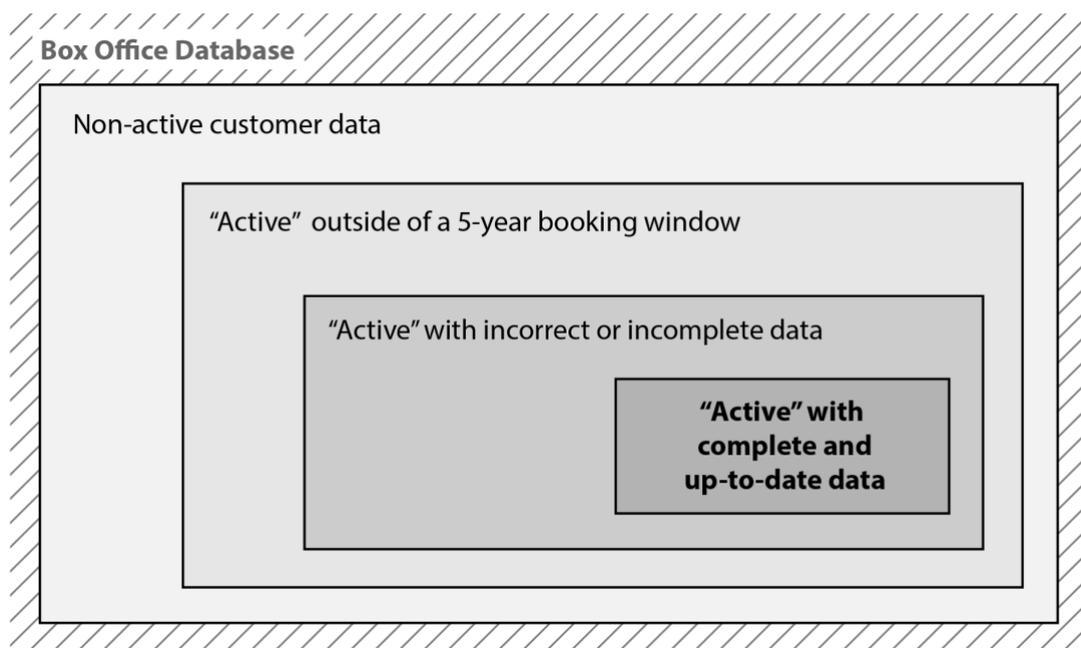
Figure 5: Diagram of Useful Arts Data (reproduced from the original: see Appendix 4)

As can be seen from the diagram, although ACOs hold a vast amount of information about audiences, 'the amount of [their] database which is actually useful is actually quite small' (ORG 14). In fact, they claimed that much of the customer data arts organisations hold is 'bad data':

> In a place like [large municipality], which is very mobile, at least half of these ['active' with incorrect or incomplete data] customers won't live in these places anymore; people are forever changing their [address]…I mean, I'm not typical; I have the same email address and phone number for about 15, 16 years now, but people…they're changing their details all over the place; it's really annoying, which means that data becomes bad, especially in [large municipality] very quickly (ORG 14).

This notion is also evident in the account of a chief executive, who suggested that getting hold of customer contact data was 'relatively straightforward' but that the challenge was, in fact, 'making sure that their details are kept up-to-date […]; it seems people change their email address and phone numbers more than they change their underwear [laughs]' (ORG 4).

In summary, these findings provide a useful overview of the types of data ACOs regularly collect, as well as the possible issues around such data collection. My analysis shows how 'operational' data was mostly linked with financial decisions and business planning, while demographic data

was regarded as the 'most important data [organisations] capture' (ORG 11) but also some of the most difficult, with participants suggesting that they would like to 'do more in terms of that form of kind of data capture; it's just that it's often quite staff intensive' (ORG 13). The final type of data, which organisations regarded as the biggest datasets they collect, was customer contact data. Participants regarded customer contact data to be the 'bread and butter' (ORG 11) of their box office databases, which was essential not only for operational tasks – such as contacting audience members if a 'performance is cancelled' (ORG 9) – but also in 'most of [their] marketing campaigns' (ORG 5b). However, it was also claimed that much of the data held within box office databases was 'bad data', e.g. not up-to-date with a customer's correct details (ORG 14).

4.2 Two Core Functions of Data in Arts Organisations

My analysis highlights two core functions of data used within publicly funded arts organisations: to inform and to report, functions that are explored below.

4.2.1 Data to inform

Data is 'essential when making organisational decisions' (ORG 13), and 'lots of operational decisions are determined by data when it comes to putting our business plan together' (ORG 4). When discussing using 'operational' data for organisational decisions, an executive director noted how 'financial data is used all the time to make decisions about what we do and what we don't do, whether that's proactive or reactive […]; it's very much used for management decision making' (ORG 5a). For example, a number of participants referred to how they used data to ensure that their ancillary offerings, such as cafés and bars, 'generated the maximum revenue possible' (ORG 2). Venues' café offerings were given as examples of how organisations use data to inform operational decisions. For example, an executive director noted how they used the data they had available to do 'some quite detailed analysis…on the trading income within the café here […]. What that highlighted was the fact that because we are tucked away [location removed], we don't really get the footfall […]. It became very clear when we looked at the peaks and the troughs that

actually keeping the café open all day was losing us money' (ORG 2). By using the data they had available from till transactions and their performance schedules, the organisation made the decision to

> try a different structure that meant we'll hit peak times, bring in some lunch trade, but then close in the afternoon; so now we open from 11:30 to 14:00 and then we open two hours before each performance, and those are the only times that we open because they're the only times that we know we will have people in the building and can actually sell stuff (ORG 2).

By using data to inform decision making around this scenario, the participant claimed that 'we've basically saved a fortune in wages [and] wasted food and still made the same amount of money […]; sure, some people were unhappy, but it was absolutely the best decision for the business' (ORG 2). Discussing a similar practice, a chief executive concluded:

> Whether you call it data, whether you call it finance, or whether you call it good decision making, it is, as a board member […] about the management of information –we need to know if this catering business, which helps to fund the charity, is successful. We need to know the margins on the cup of tea and how many were sold, when the peak times are, and if we have enough staff on and all of that […] is a form of data that's absolutely part and parcel of the decisions we make here (ORG 4).

Aside from the above examples of using data to maximise income through cafés and bars, participants also spoke about using data to inform their marketing and ticket pricing strategies. For example, a director of communications noted that 'at the most basic level, we'll use data to run a crossover report on a show to determine what we'll do for a mailing [list] for an upcoming show' (ORG 6), while a data insight manager added how 'data helps us to position our work at the right price for all our audiences' (ORG 9). Marketing managers even spoke about using data for detailed targeting on social media in order to attract audiences to their venue, noting how they 'can see if they're engaging with [them] on Facebook, or rather we can re-target people using social media…you know, if we have their email address […] basic data like that is very, very helpful' (ORG 11). An artistic director also claimed how their organisation used the data it captures to look 'at issues like returning investment, looking at ticket yield, looking at

segmentation again, lots of operational decisions, data determined by data when it comes to putting a business plan together and report to the board' (ORG 4). The notion of reporting is explored in depth in the following section.

Using data for management decision making also extends to the artistic work of the organisation (explored in detail in Chapter 5). For example, one executive director noted how they 'do a lot of audience data analysis in terms of trying to understand what we think we should programme, what we think might sell, [and] how we might sell that […]' (ORG 2), while another executive director referred to this use of data as a process of refinement:

> If something hasn't gone as well as we thought one year, then we refine [it] for the next year, and obviously we take our successes and we'll go, 'What worked really well there?' and how do we replicate that […] (ORG 1a).

These comments demonstrate how ACOs use data, in one way or another, for the curation of their artistic programmes. While it is fitting to acknowledge this type of data usage in this section, using data in artistic decision making is a significant area of contention among participants, and therefore a more detailed presentation of findings relating to this can be found in subsection 5.1.3.

4.2.2 Data for reporting

Another critical use of data in ACOs is for reporting their activities to the different stakeholders they are accountable to. Although this notion of accountability and reporting of evidence of impact is addressed in subsections 4.3 and 5.1.2, this section serves as an introduction to how ACOs use data for reporting purposes and their perceived benefits and issues relating to this practice.

Participants spoke about how collecting and preparing data for internal and external reporting purposes formed a 'significant proportion' of the work they do. For example, an artistic director suggested that one 'area of data that we gather and report on is the makeup of our own staff and governance structure, [which] enables us to make sure or keep an eye on and report on facts that

we are or aren't representative of wider society' (ORG 7). Other participants suggested that data was used to 'report on the demographics' of audiences (ORG 14) and to 'see how we're doing and to help the company strategy, the marketing strategy, [and] to help the senior managers with making decisions' (ORG 9). However, the majority of participants who held data-centric roles in their organisations (i.e. chief executives, data insight managers, and marketing officials) tended to speak about using data for reporting to external stakeholders. For example, an executive director commented on how they frequently used 'the back-end data on our ticketing database for reporting purposes and for monitoring purposes for people outside of the organisation' (ORG 5b).

Participants spoke about reporting to three main stakeholders: Arts Council England, their board of directors, and their local authority. For example, one chief executive felt that much of the data they collect would, 'through on channel or another, end up on the desk…or I should say desktop of the powers that be […], so that's the board, the Arts Council and, until a few years ago, the local authority' (ORG 12). An executive director also noted that although they 'obviously collect data to help with marketing and audience development, I bring much of that data together and turn it into reports and submissions for the board and the Arts Council' (ORG 2). Likewise, the data insight manager explained:

> […] particularly at this time of year, reporting to the Arts Council takes up a significant proportion of my time, so basically all the numbers that are not financial numbers – ticket numbers, attendances – like all the different elements of our work need to be prepared and sent to them (ORG 9).

In using data to underpin their reporting efforts, participants felt that it enabled stakeholders to 'get a feel for how we're doing and to help the company strategy' (ORG 9). For example, a chief executive stated that they 'take all this data and report it to the board…who, of course, want answers to questions, and for a lot of those answers data is the starting point' (ORG 4). Asked why they felt data was important for reporting, another chief executive claimed that as part of their NPO agreements, 'we've got to track growth, we've got to track individual performance, and we've got to track performance against targets' (ORG 12). This view was echoed by another

participant, who claimed that 'data capture is essential for us to report back to say, "Well, you know here's where we were successful [and] here is where we encountered challenge", and without data capture we've got no way to say, "Look, we did this really well…can you continue to fund it more?"' (ORG 2). These accounts show how data is regarded as an important tool for organisations to 'pull up the numbers our funders want to see' (ORG 11) and as useful 'information for funding applications or funding monitoring' (ORG 5a) – both notions are linked norms of public arts funding (see Section 4.3) – in order to maintain their status as a National Portfolio organisation.

4.2.2.1   Annual surveys and segmentation models

Of the data ACOs report on, many participants felt that audience demographics were 'the juicy stuff our funders want to get their hands on' (ORG 1a), as it was this type of data that helped to show if they were meeting 'those socio-economic goals we're funded for' (ORG 3), such as those outlined in goals 2, 4, and 5 of ACE's (2013) *Great Art and Culture for Everyone* strategy. For example, a director of communications noted that while data was a useful internal tool for understanding the demographics of their audiences, it was also used '[…] to prove back to our funders, so both the Arts Council and [a local authority], that we're doing what we said we would set out to do, [and] the data is essential for that…yes, we couldn't do our job without it' (ORG 13).

One of the regular ways ACOs 'prove back to [their] funders' that they are meeting their agreed goals is by reporting their data in the annual survey they are required to complete as part of their funding agreement with ACE. One chief executive noted how 'a huge amount of data goes into that [annual survey] for them [ACE] around audience numbers, around diversity, workforce, around financial information, and school children's participation etc., etc.' (ORG 4). A data insight manager also claimed how a lot of the figures they analyse, including ticket sales and behavioural and geographical information, went into 'reporting back to the Arts Council; for example, today I have done loads of analysis about the 80,000 bookers from last year' (ORG 9).

It is the reporting of these types of data for the annual survey that enables ACE to see how ACOs are performing against their 'funding agreement[s] and the commitments [they] have made to contribute towards the goals set out in *Great Art and Culture for Everyone'* (Arts Council England, 2016c).

Participants also suggested that the reporting requirements of the annual survey determined the segmentation model their organisation would use to understand and analyse the demographic data they captured. For example, a director of communications claimed that:

> A lot of what determines which [segmentation model] we use is which is the one endorsed by the Arts Council because that's the one they want us to report back on how we're doing […]. If the Arts Council were to endorse some new segmentation model, that's the one I'd turn to using because they're our primary funder, and we talk back to them in the language that they want (ORG 13).

Another participant spoke about how their organisation 'swapped from arts audience insight[8] to the new audience spectrum segmentation[9]', which they suggested was a 'process you've got to go' (ORG 3). These are interesting findings as they show how participants and their organisations are reactive to changes and decisions made by ACE, highlighting their perceived need to do as ACE asks (also see subsection 6.1.2). My analysis also suggests that choosing to align segmentation models with those of ACE may also be linked to the 'significant proportion' of time participants spend preparing data: choosing to align their segmentation models with those endorsed by ACE may, in turn, make annual survey reporting an easier endeavour. However, the notion of aligning segmentation models for ease of reporting was not shared by all participants. In this regard, a data insight manager claimed that they had 'championed and put forward' their own 'in-house audience segmentation model', which they felt was a 'better fit' for the organisation; however, in doing so, they recognised that 'there's a lot more work to do in June [submission deadline] to turn our different audience segments into something that fits with the

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[8] The Arts Council's former segmentation model (see Arts Council England, 2011a)
[9] The new segmentation model provided by the Audience Agency (see https://www.theaudienceagency.org/ audience-spectrum).

Arts Councils' (ORG 9). Similarly, when talking about the process of swapping to the new audience spectrum model, a chief executive felt that it increased their workload when dealing with other organisations who used different models. For example, they referred to working with a partner organisation who

> use[d] mosaic [a long-standing audience segmentation model] to report back to us, [and] we then have some work to do to correlate that [with the] audience spectra. Again, if a tourism board were to come in with its different tourism spectra, that's when it can get difficult…when you've got different agencies or support bodies who are using different models (ORG 3).

My analysis in this section has shown how ACOs regularly use the data they collect for reporting their activities to those who fund their work, be that Arts Council England, their local authority, or another stakeholder. The findings show how many participants regard Arts Council England's annual survey as the principal way they 'proved' that they were meeting their agreed goals as outlined in their funding agreement, in addition to also highlighting that participants often chose to adopt audience segmentation models used by ACE so that they could report back to the Arts Council 'in the language that they want' (ORG 13).

In the next section, I will turn to the 'norms' of public arts funding, which help to provide the context for why collecting data for reporting purposes is such an embedded activity across arts and cultural organisations.

4.3 Perceptions of the Policy-Making Process

My findings and analysis suggest that the collection of data for reporting purposes described above sits within the wider reporting relationships and dependencies between ACOs, ACE, DCMS, and central government. In this section, my analysis highlights how participants understand the upward reporting relationships between these key actors to work, and how the hierarchical dependencies between actors are used in turn to set and deliver funding and policy priorities. Such findings and analysis are important as they not only help to contextualise

participants' responses to the data sharing policy in terms of its perceived function (e.g. *why the policy has been introduced and what purpose it serves*) but also serve as a useful evidence base for understanding the effects of public arts policy.

Participants suggested that they are at the bottom of the public funding chain and that their continued public subsidy is dependent on the decisions made by actors above them. Participants spoke about how much of what they do is to satisfy the 'big players' above them who decide 'who, what, and where to fund' (ORG 12). For many of these participants, this is regarded as 'just what goes on in the publicly funded arts' (ORG 9). In this regard, participants illustrated the perceived relationship between the different 'players' in terms of funding:

> The venues report to the Arts Council to ensure they get their funding, and then the Arts Council reports to the DCMS to ensure they get their funding, and then the DCMS reports to the Treasury to ensure it gets its funding […] (ORG 12).

> It just informs everything that we're doing but gives also the Arts Council…who then report back to DCMS who are reporting back to central government…it gives the hard facts. It's not kind of, 'Oh, we think we're reaching these audiences and these people'… it's, well, it's solid…then, it's facts and figures, which is what everybody needs to make the case for great art, I think (ORG 13).

From both these perspectives, it is evident that participants perceive a funding chain exists in the publicly funded arts and cultural sector, which is further supported by a chief executive, who spoke about how 'arts organisations are always looking for approval from those who give them money, [which] extends to the Arts Council and the DCMS' (ORG 3). Likewise, the notion of funding chains was implied by the ACE representative, who, when describing their role and responsibility, felt that ACE was responsible to the public, but 'obviously we're responsible to our funders who are the DCMS, who are also funded by the public, arguably' (ORG 10). In other words, people working in the arts and cultural sector in England are conscious of the different hierarches or statuses at play when it comes to public arts funding.

While participants identified an upwards reporting process to gain support (funding) from those above them in the funding chain, they also discussed how this hierarchy of 'players' pass funding and policy priorities down to their dependencies in the funding chain. Regarding cultural policy-making, participants noted that the government are 'the ones in control of public funding [and] set the overall social and political motivations for cultural policy' as such and that 'the department [DCMS] is just there to interpret that really' (ORG 15):

> The Arts Council has always been held up as a model of the arm's length principle […] it's seen as a way of distancing itself [from the government], but, of course, the government has a very strong influence over the Arts Council – that's where the money comes from (ORG 8).

With regard to funding, my analysis shows that participants see the cascading down of policy priorities as a tool used to cut funding. For example, one participant referred to announcements made by the government in its budgets: 'promising cuts won't harm frontline services, [but] the cut goes straight to the DCMS, who then applies, apparently, the same percentage cut to the Arts Council, who passes it straight onto their NPO client' (ORG 15). It was also highlighted by another participant that while the 'government will not directly intervene in Arts Council funding decisions, the extent to which the Arts Council delivers against government policies almost inevitably affects government funding to the Arts Council' (ORG 8). Perhaps of most interest is the account from an executive administrator, who expressed their perceptions of funding cuts:

> [It's] something I've just come to accept over the years…pledges to save money happen at the top, and slowly but surely those cuts flow down the mountain, through the streams and eventually erode those at the mouth of the river…bad anecdote, but you get the idea [laughs] (ORG 1a).

In summary, my analysis has shown that participants recognise that the wider direction of arts and cultural policy is ultimately driven by central government, who cascade their policy priorities down through their dependencies (DCMS and ACE), who then translate them into funding opportunities for ACOs to deliver against those policy priorities. These findings also highlight how participants have come to accept that the norm is for pledges to save money to be made at

the top of government, which then 'flow down' through different departments and bodies before reaching those on the 'frontline' – the ACOs. In the next section, my analysis considers how these reporting relationships and dependencies relate to the introduction of the data sharing policy.

4.4 Motivations for Introducing a Data Sharing Policy

My findings and analysis have highlighted two key motivators for the introduction of a data sharing policy: political motivations to **demonstrate impact** against economic and social goals and for touring theatre companies (TTCs) who want **data equality** from the work they produce. It is important to capture these views for the thesis, as understanding the perceived motivations for a policy such as the DSP is useful for (1) providing context for the findings presented in the two subsequent chapters and (2) analysing similar policies that are introduced in the future. The section then concludes by presenting an account of an Arts Council England representative relating to their motivations for the DSP. While it is an unusual choice not to include the relevant parts of their accounts with those put forward by the other participants, it is hoped that, by presenting the ACE account separately, it will be of more use as a resource going forward given that it provides a holistic view of the DSP and the context of its introduction.

4.4.1 Demonstrating impact

Participants suggested that the motivations for the data sharing policy could have come about through political pressures placed on ACE from the 'big players' above them. For example, a chief executive commented how they '[…] don't know if there is political pressure that makes this [DSP] a priority of the Arts Council or whether it is that the Arts Council believe this is genuinely a priority way of developing audiences' (ORG 3). Another executive added that 'you never really know with the Arts Council what the motivations for their policies are… I suppose that's the nature of being a quango – it's hard to tell where the crossover is between their agenda and the DCMS's – but I suspect they've had something to do with this [the policy]' (ORG 2). Though these comments do not suggest any specific political motivation for introducing the

policy, they do show how arts managers regard the policy as being driven from a body higher up in the funding chain than ACE.

In contrast, some participants held a stronger opinion as to the political motivation for the policy – the need to capture evidence of economic impact. There was a general sense among participants that the need to capture evidence was becoming an important priority for ACE. For example, a chief executive noted how 'the Arts Council are looking at a rebalancing agenda…so more money to the north, not to London […], but they need to show what the monetary benefits of that are' (ORG 12). Another spoke about ACE needing to show how it offers 'value for money' in terms of government investment (ORG 1a). However, a few participants felt that despite the 'huge amount of data goes into that [reporting] for them [Arts Council] around audience numbers, diversity, workforce, financial information, and school children's participation, etc. […]' (ORG 4), ACE's current 'archaic ways of annual reporting no longer give them the insights they need to make their case' (ORG 14). Similarly, a data insight manager believed that 'it's the same as it's always been...we need to demonstrate we're hitting their [ACEs] objectives, but I guess the difference now is that all this data makes things much more black and white' (ORG 9), again suggesting that more data would help capture evidence of impact.

However, participants recognised that it 'must be a challenge for them [ACE] to capture a proper economic picture of how well that [government] investment is doing' (ORG 15) and how there was 'such a variety of activity going on across the arts…I don't envy the person who has to try and decipher that and see whether money has been well spent [laughs]' (ORG 9). Again, these comments highlight the perceived political pressures for upwards reporting of impact – or 'value for money' – in the arts and cultural sector, a notion well represented by one chief executive:

> They [the Arts Council] need to have that evidence base to be able to persuade people that despite the abundant and intrinsic value of the arts which you and I and most people in this building understand…what they want to hear is that for every pound we get from public funding, we put £5.76 back into the local economy. So, that type of evidence data collection is very important (ORG 4).

From this comment, the participant made it clear that, in their opinion, capturing and reporting economic evidence is more important to ACE than the 'intrinsic' value of the arts, which was also apparent in the account of an executive director who, putting it bluntly, said that 'unfortunately money motivates some more than the values we'd like to think are the most important in the arts' (ORG 2).

Aside from capturing economic impact, a couple of participants also spoke about how the DSP would contribute to 'the bigger picture in terms of the Arts Council having an overview of what's happening' across the sector, including social impact (ORG 5b). Participants claimed that 'the data this policy will generate will give the Arts Council and the DCMS a better idea of how well they're actually doing' (ORG 15) and enable them 'to report nationally or city-wide on the reach of their funded activity' (ORG 7). Regarding 'reach', a director of communications added how the DSP would help ACE 'prove that they're reaching everybody, and the only way to do that is to know postcode data […]. So, it's about being able to properly track and properly evaluate how we're all doing as a sector' (ORG 13). This notion of ACE using the DSP as a tool to capture participation information – linked with social impact – was also expressed by other participants:

> They [the Arts Council] obviously have a national portfolio to manage; it would be, I think, really important and crucial that all this information, that where participation is happening and not happening, effects that level of decision making around funding programmes (ORG 3).

> I think it's [the DSP] a step towards just collecting data which will enable organisations like the Arts Council to build up a nationwide picture of who's coming to the arts, who's not coming to the arts, areas of engagement etcetera, etc. (ORG 5a).

Taken together, these comments highlight the DSPs perceived potential to the capture social impact – or reach – of the publicly funded arts as another motivating factor for its introduction by ACE. However, not all participants agreed. Talking about capturing data about diversity, a director of communications highlighted how 'diversity was always an important word…now, whether that means that they'll [the Arts Council] be looking for that within the data [through the

Audience Finder], it is one of those things that is actually pretty much impossible to measure coming out of data' (ORG 6).

Speaking about the future policy, participants believed that ACE's (and the sector's) requirement to capture and share data would only increase. Again, on the topic of social impact, a chief executive who had previously worked in a senior capacity for ACE commented:

> […] I think the Arts Council's ever-increasing need to justify the value of investment is going to mean that it [arts data policy] is only going to increase. Yes, it's certainly going to increase. That's not necessarily about data sharing […], but we've got to understand why they [the audience] come, and we need to understand more about them and their motivations (ORG 4).

Another chief executive added:

> […] we…by that I mean the whole cultural sector…have a responsibility to meet the objectives that we're funded to do, and it can't be just about, 'I feel that our audience is diverse' or 'I feel that we're talking to a new audience' or 'I feel that we're developing new audiences'. The only thing you can really back that up with is data… (ORG 12).

These accounts provide a useful summary of the perceived political motivators for the DSP. First, they affirm ACE's position in the funding chain, noting how they need to 'justify' or, like ACOs, report back to their funders on the 'value' of their investment in the arts and cultural sector. Second, they suggest how a political motivation for the DSP is to increase understanding about those who attend these publicly funded arts and cultural offerings in order to gain insight into the success or failure of cultural policy. The second comment also offers an interesting insight as, compared to the other comments presented in this section, the participant offers a positive appraisal of data being captured and used for justification purposes and appears to critique how 'evidence' [data] provided by ACOs in the past was based on feelings rather than fact. Although this position is not shared by all participants – as will be seen later in this thesis (see subsection 5.1.3) – other participants tentatively agreed, noting that while they did not agree with 'this new trend for justifying everything [they] do', they believed that 'some NPOs have gotten away with

murder' (ORG 13). Similarly, another argued how the DSP was 'maybe a good move by the Arts Council […]; it'll reign in those who might be wasting the funding they're given' (ORG 7).

Overall, the findings presented in this section highlight how some participants regarded the DSP as being motivated by a political need to demonstrate impact, which may be an important factor when considering how these organisations choose to adopt or reject the requirements of the policy. My analysis highlights that participants regarded those further up in the funding chain hierarchy – DCMS and the central government – as requiring Arts Council England to capture more data about the reach and impact of the publicly funded arts in order to make a case for continued investment. Although some participants argued that data for these purposes was already captured in their annual submission10 to ACE, others felt that this method was 'archaic' and did not provide detailed insights about the economic and social impact of DCMS's and central government's investment in the arts. Furthermore, my analysis highlights a tension held by participants about how economic impact was perceived to be more important to the ACE than the intrinsic value of the arts, a tension that becomes a recurring theme across subsequent chapters.

Related to the need to demonstrate impact, my analysis in the next section highlights another perceived motivating factor for the introduction of data sharing requirements: to satisfy the needs of touring theatre companies.

4.4.2 Data equality

The most frequently cited driver for the data sharing policy was to satisfy the needs of other – non-venue-based – ACOs and artists, most notably in terms of creating data equality. In this thesis, I take 'data equality' to mean relevant stakeholders having equal access to the data captured about their own activities, in line with the relevant data protection regulations. A number of participants claimed that, over the years, touring theatre companies (TTCs) and other individual

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10 This submission collects data on organisation profile, staffing, financial statements, numbers of performances, exhibition days, film screenings, and educational activities, as well as known and estimated audiences for these activities. It also collects data on touring activities.

artists (i.e. relevant stakeholders) have had 'a bit of a bad deal' in terms of their access to data about who attends the work they perform (ORG 3). For example, one executive director noted:

> There's been a particular issue around NPOs that are touring companies because they tour their work into venues…they never own any data because the venues book for their work, so actually they're not in a position…they're not ever in a position to really understand who the audience for their work is in a coherent sense across the country because they don't have access to that data and any ownership of that data (ORG 5a).

Similarly, a box office manager explained how TTCs and artists often mentioned how they 'were completely left out of the equation [data access and ownership] because they're often touring, [and] it's increasingly difficult to get access to it' (ORG 14). Together, these accounts are a good illustration of how the concept of data ownership and access was an area of contention between TTCs and venue-based ACOs. This notion was further supported by a chief executive who claimed that this has been a 'tricky area for the arts in terms of touring companies and venues. […] on both sides, there's been sort of opposing views at times [in terms of sharing audience data] (ORG 3).

Participants recognised the frustrations for TTCs and individual artists experience; for example, one director of communications reflected on their time as a freelance marketing officer and spoke about how it was often the case that 'the very commercial venues wanted you to pay for it [access to data], which was incredibly frustrating when, effectively, it was our work they [the audience] were paying to see' (ORG 6). Similarly, an artistic director reflected on the work their venue-based organisation toured, noting that 'when we're touring work nationally, it is very difficult to report on the reach and impact of those projects because many organisations like us are wary of sharing data' (ORG 7). Although both these accounts are based on first-hand experience of working as a TTC, my analysis shows that other participants recognised these frustrations. For example, one participant noted how 'it must be terribly frustrating for these touring companies…they often produce work on such shoestring funding, and then it's hard for them to get hold of their audience data, which they could do with to make a stronger case for future funding or fundraising campaigns' (ORG 15). The suggestion that TTCs need access to data for

future funding applications and fundraising was also touched upon by a chief executive, who had worked for ACE in the past. When asked about motivations for the DSP, they claimed that:

> There was a big drive from the Arts Council [to look at data sharing]...and a lot of it, where it came from, is actually touring companies. We felt that it was very difficult to market their work and to raise funds and donations when they did not have any access to their customer data; everything they did was through a third party. It's a fair point. You know, a friend of mine runs a touring company…it's very difficult for them to fundraise and ask for donations when they [the audience] have very limited news and contact (ORG 4).

Another participant commented: 'I guess if people like [a regional ballet company] have got all the data they feel they need on their audiences, then it might...they can report in a better way on what their audiences are […] and develop their business' (ORG 6). It is comments such as these that help build an understanding of how touring companies and individual artists are seen to be at a disadvantage in terms of their ability to access the 'tools' necessary to grow their audiences and/or finances.

Participants claimed that it is TTCs' desire to access these tools that was a motivating factor for ACE to introduce the data sharing policy. For example, the box office manager spoke about an inference that 'somehow organisations that hold data have been hoarding it and acting in a bit of an outdated way, so something had to be done about it' (ORG 14), while a marketing manager said that ACE has 'been lobbied over the years by touring organisations who feel they've almost got a bit of a hard deal in terms of the fact that they come to these venues [and] they're not able to collect data about their audiences' (ORG 11). Another suggested that the DSP was as a result of 'venues not being malleable enough', adding:

> I sort of think it's [the DSP] a bit like the schoolteachers saying, 'If you can't stop kicking that ball into the window, I'm going to take that ball off you' […], and it feels like this is what the Arts Council has done…basically companies who don't have adequate access to information to develop their own audience base, they've just gone, 'Well, if you can't do it through this, then you have to do it through this' [bangs on table] (ORG 12).

From these accounts, participants suggested that the demands of TTCs for access to data may have been an important factor in ACE's decision to introduce the DSP, implying how the policy would force venue-based organisations to help satisfy the data needs of these other organisations and individuals. This notion is further exemplified in the account given by the ACE representative, who, when asked about the policy motivation, pointed out how touring companies 'have found it the most difficult to get data because they're not in charge…they don't sell the tickets themselves… so there's a whole data ownership issue' (ORG 10).

Participants also spoke about what they thought the data sharing policy would mean for their own organisations, and their continuing relationship with those touring companies and artists. A couple of participants claimed that their organisations already participated in the activities the policy was mandating, noting that 'we do it anyway, so it's no different to what we've done in the past' (ORG 6). For example, one chief executive noted that 'we haven't felt it [DSP] as such an issue, so long as we're within data protection guidelines. We often discuss with touring companies or with other partner organisations ways in which we can work together to play an audience', so, in 'that sense, the policy won't really change much' (ORG 3).

Similarly, a director of communications spoke about how 'we're normally sharing our data with touring companies' (ORG 13), and an artistic director noted how their organisation has always 'done its bit' to ensure that touring companies were 'always well looked after' (ORG 7). Interestingly, these last two comments come from participants who, in the accounts presented earlier, spoke about understanding the frustrations faced by touring organisations based on their own first-hand experience. It appears that, in this instance, past experience may have influenced their actions in promoting data sharing prior to the policy being introduced, as they recognised the value of that data to these other organisations.

On the other hand, participants who did not explicitly claim to have first-hand experience in these other organisations spoke about how the DSP was 'going to level the playing field a little bit more, and I think probably the power that venues once had is going to be less, so I think the theatre

companies are going to come into their own to a certain extent' (ORG 14). In terms of 'levelling the playing field', one marketing manager explained that the DSP would

> mean we would be willing to share the data with other NPO organisations and other organisations that either tour here or that we're doing a co-production with […], and that, rather than us hanging onto all that data afterwards, we would, with permission from the audience member, we would then be able to share that information with them afterwards so that they can contact them direct as well (ORG 5b).

This comment highlights two key points, the first of which is the participant's acknowledgement that, in the past, their organisation may have 'hung onto data' regarding a touring company's audience rather than passing it on and how the organisation would need to become 'willing to share'. Second, this comment makes it clear that, for this organisation, they would only be 'willing to share' contact information if they had permission from the audience whose data had been captured. This stance is also evident in the account of a marketing manager, who emphasised how the DSP may not be a 'quick fix' for these touring companies as there were a 'whole raft of issues in just trying to get audiences on board with their data being passed around' (ORG 11). Here, the participant is referring to the need for audience members to 'opt in' or agree to their data being shared. It is these 'rafts of issues' that led to a director of communications, who had claimed that they already shared data with touring companies, suggesting that there 'perhaps has been a misunderstanding about what touring companies want as opposed to what we can give them' (ORG 6).

Finally, when considering the motivations for the data sharing policy in relation to TTCs, not only did participants highlight how the policy would enable companies who 'otherwise wouldn't have any access to that audience that's come to see the work they've made and particularly like touring companies, […] to communicate with audiences in terms of marketing messages or communicate with them for a research purpose' (ORG 5b), they also spoke about the 'bigger picture in terms of the Arts Council having an overview of what's happening' (ORG 5a). Here, the participant drew on the wider DSP rhetoric to 'develop a bigger and more informed audience for the arts and culture as a whole' (Arts Council England, 2015a, p.15), suggesting that, with access to data,

touring companies may contribute to this development. Similarly, a director of communications noted:

> I mean, I guess if people like [regional dance company] have got all the data that they feel they need on their audiences, then it might...they can report in a better way on who their audiences are (ORG 6).

The above analysis of the data shows that most participants regard touring company requests for better access to audience data as a motivating factor for the DSP and understand why this is the case – so that they can build their own audiences and make a 'stronger case for future funding' (ORG 15). However, it is also evident that participants thought that there has been a misunderstanding about what data they can actually provide these touring companies with that falls 'within data protection guidelines' (ORG 3). Given this position that organisations may have misunderstood the details of the DSP, the next sections (4.4.3 into 4.5) considers participants' perceptions of the way the policy had been communicated by ACE. This begins with the Arts Council representative's perspective.

4.4.3 An Arts Council perspective on data sharing

Unsurprisingly, the ACE representative's comments mostly aligned with ACE's published rhetoric when talking about their data-related activities, including the data sharing policy. What is clear from their account is that data has been a growing area of interest for ACE for a number of years.

4.4.3.1 Past data efforts

When talking about ACE's past approaches to data collection, the representative claimed that they 'actually [did] very little' and were only concerned with 'top-level, anonymised' datasets 'from [their] funded organisations'. When asked why they only collected a small amount of data, they spoke about how, 'over a decade ago', they worked with their counterparts in the devolved nations to establish the types of data the sector needed to make funding decisions:

> […] we kind of realised that Arts Councils only need[ed] this much data [indicates a small amount with hands] compared to what you need to decide what programming works for the local community and if you're targeting your marketing resources and everything; we need[ed] really very little data (ORG 10).

Compared to the data captured by ACOs for their decision-making processes (as show in subsection 4.1.1), this comment highlights how Arts Councils had, in the past, not felt the need to capture data to the same level of granularity in order to establish where to distribute their funding. Furthermore, regarding the data they did obtain from ACOs, they claimed that 'the actual stuff that [they] collect[ed] on audiences [was] pretty basic, [and] historically it was just audience numbers, and not even audience numbers…it's like visitor numbers'.

However, the representative said that there came a point when ACE 'needed to know just a little bit more' about the audiences who 'attended and participated' in the work they funded (ORG 10). They suggested that the 'very little' data they collected made it incredibly difficult to '[…] tell whether it was one person going five times or five people going once' to a piece of artistic work, suggesting a gap in their ability to track repeat engagement in the arts. The representative also spoke of ACE's desire to 'know a bit more' about the geographical reach of their funding, suggesting that they should 'at least understand by the postcode level the extent to which [funded organisations] are reaching some communities and possibly not reaching other communities as well'. Based on this desire, the representative suggested that, over time, ACE began collecting more information about audiences from their funded organisations but maintained that, in the 'grand scheme of things', it was still 'a very small amount compared to what [they] could ask for'.

4.4.3.2 Current data efforts

Based on the aforementioned changes in the data ACE collected, the representative felt that their use of that data had become 'incredibly important' for the management of their 'broad and wide reaching' mission – *Great Art and Culture for Everyone.* They noted that because there are so many different interpretations of their mission, it was 'really easy' for 'anyone to put in an

application [to] justify funding which touched on [their mission]'. Data is therefore seen as an important tool that enables ACE to set and prioritise goals relating to their mission and to track how well they achieve this:

> […] more recently, data has been incredibly important for us to set all the priorities that we work on, where we invest our money…all came from straight datasets that kind of shows that we've got further to go in some areas, whether that's a place or certain profiles, demographic profiles as well (ORG 10).

As can be seen from the above comments, ACE has become more motivated towards data usage over the past decade. The data it collects (or has access to) allows the organisation to maintain a broad overarching mission, as it can use data to 'prioritise and understand who [it is] reaching and who [it is] not' and use that insight to manage the number of funding applications it receives, granting funding [investing] to those who fill gaps in areas not currently covered. In other words, data now allows ACE to distribute its funding to organisations or art forms in areas of low participation and engagement in order to develop different audience demographics. It is this notion of audience development, or reach, that appears to be a key motivator for the data sharing policy.

4.4.3.3   Data sharing policy

When asked to talk about the data sharing policy, the ACE representative appeared very protective of it, frequently reiterating how the policy was in its infancy and that views of arts organisations would 'certainly change over time'. While this attitude may be a finding in itself, the few comments that follow provide some insight into ACE's motivations for introducing the DSP.

While the comments above relate to the increased use of data to identify localities and demographic profiles of where ACE should prioritise funding, the representative did not think that 'a single organisation on their own can develop a new audience for the arts […]' (ORG 10). In fact, they felt that their 'best bet in terms of raising our profile and making sure everybody has been invited to engage in the arts is through collaboration […], and data sharing is an important part of that' (ibid.). Although this position does not stray from the rhetoric put forward in the

policy wording, i.e. organisations are expected to contribute to developing a bigger and more informed audience for the arts and culture (Arts Council England, 2015a, p.15), it highlights another policy motivation, which is for arts organisations to work together and share data in order to achieve ACE's audience development goals and overarching mission.

Together, ACE's current approach to developing audiences – funding individual organisations that fill a particular gap in a place or demographic profiles – may not go far enough to meet their mission (i.e. great art for everyone). Their comments position the DSP as a new approach by ACE to put more emphasis on funded ACOs to develop audiences for the arts. Rather than funding individual organisations with the intent of developing or engaging a particular audience demographic, the DSP would grow audiences by giving organisations the tools to establish where the gaps in engagement are amongst themselves. For example, the representative stated:

> So, I suppose what we're looking for is organisations in our portfolio to use platforms like the Audience Finder to pick out those areas of low engagement, and work together across their catchments to create a programme that hopefully gets everyone experiencing great art and culture (ORG 10).

Although the comments above mostly align with ACE's policy rhetoric – 'larger and more diverse audiences are experiencing and benefiting from the work of the organisations and artists that we fund' (Arts Council England, 2010, p.31), the representative does offer a few useful insights as to the motivation for the DSP. First, the ACE representative only spoke about the audience data ACE uses and offered very little commentary about the other data they capture via organisations' annual submissions, which includes income and expenditure data. However, they did speak about the DCMS's 'Taking Part' survey, which examines country-wide arts engagement, and were keen to note that the information they gather in that survey was not used to discriminate between 'what [they] fund and what [they] don't fund' (ORG 10).

Second, the representative highlighted how ACEs attitudes towards data capture and usage have changed over time – moving away from very basic visitor numbers of each organisation to include postcode data and demographic profiles. Together, this information is 'incredibly important' for

ACE to set its priorities. In this regard, the DSP can be regarded as another progression of ACE's audience development approaches made over the past decade. However, it does suggest that the DSP will move the responsibility for audience development over to the funded organisations, rather than ACE pursuing targeted policy initiatives.

Finally, it is interesting to note in the above account how the ACE representative refers to audience development, made possible through data sharing and collaboration, as the organisation's 'best bet' for raising *its* own profile. Although the raising of *its* profile may have been used in the context of the whole arts and cultural sector, rather than just ACE, it touches on the notion outlined in Section 4.2, i.e. the need to satisfy the 'big players' in the funding chain. Having presented the perceived political motivations for the DSP in section 4.4 and the policy motivations from the ACE representative's position above, the next section will consider wider participants' perceptions of the Data Sharing Policy introduction and how this may have had an effect on the way the organisations understood and engaged with the policy early in its inception.

4.5 Policy Communication: Experiences of Data Sharing Policy Introduction

In this section, I present and analyse participants' experiences of the data sharing policy's introduction. I will show that the ways through which new policy is communicated, and the quality of guidance issued, is an important factor when considering the wider implications of a policy on a group of individuals or organisations. While some participants appeared content with ACE's processes, the vast majority did not. The consideration of participants' views relating to policy communication, guidance, and support will be important in helping to understand and contextualise their responses and actions relating to the DSP presented in subsequent chapters and discussions.

Participants wanted to be knowledgeable of changes in policy requirements for their public subsidies and felt that their ability to maintain such knowledge and prepare for changes was dependent on the quality and timeliness of the communication they received from the policymaker

– ACE. For example, participants noted how their 'ability to prepare for any changes in requirements is really dependent on the amount of notice we're given and the level of detail we get early on in the process' (ORG 3) and that 'knowing about new policy is really crucial for planning ahead' (ORG 7).

Participants had differing opinions regarding the quality of communication and guidance offered by ACE for the introduction of the DSP. On the one hand, a minority of participants felt that ACE had 'articulated the policies fine…no problem at all [with] their intentions and motivations…clear from the start' (ORG 14) and 'the [DSP] is quite well articulated. I can totally see the reasons for it' (ORG 11). Another participant felt that the Arts Council had communicated and explained the DSP 'as best as they physically [could]' (ORG 12):

> I think they responded incredibly well, and I think they're trying to square a circle which can't really be done. I mean, I don't think it's been ideal, and there's been a bit of shift in sands in it, but I think it would be wrong to be critical of anyone at the Arts Council for the way they're going about things (ORG 12).

Although these accounts show that, for some participants, the policy communication and guidance provided by ACE was 'clear enough for what [they] needed to get on with [i.e. implementing the policy]' (ORG 6), the latter participant noted that, following the announcement of the DSP, they 'went back to the Arts Council to ask about 40 different questions', which they felt 'should have been crystal clear from day one' (ORG 12). The examples the participant spoke of included questions relating to the ambiguity of the language used in the policy wording, such as: 'Who counts as a relevant Arts Council funded organisation? With arts organisations funded in various ways, we'd appreciate clarity/consultation on what this might involve' and 'Is there an expectation that companies should be set up to manage data in an adequate way before any data is shared?' (ORG 12). Here, the former point is seeking clarity on which organisations the policy applies to, while the latter raises questions regarding the competency of other organisations to uphold the legal obligations relating to data sharing (see Chapter 6 for more on legal compliance).

In contrast, other participants were clear that the DSP had been communicated 'imperfectly' (ORG 8) and had reservations about ACE's approach to the policy's introduction. Participants noted how the policy guidance was, to some extent, confusing; for example, one chief executive did not 'think they've [the Arts Council] managed the implementation of the data sharing statement very well […]; there is a lot of confusion on people's...well, different expectations of it, [and] people are uncertain how they can legally comply[11] with it. So yes, that's probably one they could learn from' (ORG 4).

Like the chief executive who asked ACE '40 different questions', participants also suggested that ACE's communications and guidance regarding the policy lacked sufficient detail. For example, referring to the requirement to share the personal contact details of audience members with other organisations, a director of communications stated that:

> […] the Arts Council issued all this guidance and announced the change to the policy, [but] they gave no support of how to do this. They gave no kind of standardised wording about…so…all NPOs must use this wording in a box office or this wording in your contracts with visiting companies (ORG 13).

Similarly, an executive director felt that ACE 'announced you're going to have to do this but then offered no kind of...it was the lack of standardisation which would have been really useful across the sector to sort of say, "This is how we suggest you do it"' (ORG 2), and that while 'they [Arts Council] may have articulated what they wanted very well, they gave sort of no support to companies as to the detail of how they would like that rolling out or the wording of it' (ORG 9). Another participant suggested that the policy was not fully developed prior to asking organisations to engage with it:

> I feel like they [the Arts Council] put this sort of legislation in place, but they hadn't quite got all of the backroom stuff ready, and they hadn't got everybody geared up to it as...what am I trying to say? The different timeframes weren't aligned (ORG 13).

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[11] The notion of legal compliance is a tension explored in subsection 6.2.1

While earlier comments highlighted how some participants were satisfied with the quality of ACE's communications, they recognised how other venues may have had a different experience:

> If you were to do a bit of a straw poll amongst marketers in particular at various venues, I think where there might be some criticism is that they [Arts Council] had a very clear idea about what they wanted to achieve and why they wanted to achieve it. But maybe the attitude was a little bit like, 'Okay, this is what we want venues, go ahead and make it happen', without much of an idea of how it might work and how it might be made to happen…how it might be successfully implemented (ORG 14).

My analysis suggests that participants believed that the introduction of the DSP was rushed and did not provide enough detail regarding the intricacies of the policy, thus leaving participants to 'wrestle with that particular Gordian knot and find [their] way a little bit' (ORG 14). It is these perceptions of inadequate policy communication and guidance that may create adoption barriers to the policy:

> In the absence of clear guidance on the issue of data sharing, I think there are difficulties that have to be overcome, and because it's not clear in detail what organisations are being expected to achieve, by and large they won't be making it a priority. They'll be waiting to see when there are clear guidelines from the Arts Council (ORG 4).

In this account, the chief executive suggested that ACOs may not engage with or embrace the DSP until the ACE provided clear guidelines for what the ACOs were expected to achieve. Similarly, another participant believed that the 'policy would have had more traction by now if they [the Arts Council] had taken a stronger leadership role and said, "This is how we recommend you do it [the policy]"' (ORG 13).

Participants also highlighted that the timeliness of the policy communication was not adequate. Reflecting on the DSP implementation deadline (1 April 2016), a data insight manager felt that, prior to the deadline, there had not been 'a huge amount of dialogue' and it was not until they attended an industry conference and 'somebody raised, again, "Oh, do you feel ready for 1 April 2016?" [that] I sort of went, "Oh God", and it really dawned on me that to implement the things,

that's going to be quite a tight challenge' (ORG 9). Although the participant claimed that it was 'partly [their] own fault for not keeping [their] eye on the ball' (ORG 9), they also noted that:

> By that point, there hadn't been any particular communication from our Arts Council engagement person or any further communication other than that sort of [policy] statement in the funding which I had read. It would have been nice of them to say, 'Oh, by the way, you should start thinking about this now. Is there any way we could help or is there any kind of dialogue we could have?' (ORG 9)

Another artistic director expressed similar sentiments:

> We certainly haven't had the capacity or focus to progress the data sharing agreements with other partners that the Arts Council are now flagging as a requirement, and I think there's a bit of a flurry of activity in the sector now happening because they're suddenly saying, 'You will remember won't you that you need to have these in place?' (ORG 7)

Therefore, the findings suggest that the lack of timely communication and dialogue regarding the DSP was problematic for an ACO's ability to fully understand the requirements of the policy and 'the realisation of the amount of work [they] have to do by the April deadline or you won't get your funding is quite significant' (ORG 9). However, it should be noted that this experience was not shared by all participants. For example, a chief executive claimed that 'we have done what has been asked of us so far in that we have not had the information we provided either questioned or we haven't had a funding instalment delayed' (ORG 3).

These reflections on the quality of policy communication and guidance were not just expressed by participants from ACOs – the ACE representative also critiqued the organisation's approach to policy communication and guidance and recognised how it 'could have been a lot better at it [communicating the DSP] because there is still a lot of confusion around it…I think it's why, in the end, we've supported this...standalone website as well because it was getting slightly confusing' (ORG 10). Here, the ACE representative was speaking about an additional website[12] launched in response to early criticism of the policy communication and guidance issued.

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[12] See https://www.audiencedatasharing.org

However, the representative offered a rebuttal as to why policy communication and guidance may have been lacking:

> The challenge we have is that if we give lots of advice and start overly promoting it [the DSP], then it looks like we're doing it for the monitoring reasons, and it really confuses people […]. But, I think if we'd had a team of people being able to do this, it would have been better, and I'm sure we could have done that better (ORG 10).

From this account, the ACE representative suggested two key reasons for why the DSP had not been communicated effectively. First, they suggested a resourcing issue in the ACE team tasked with implementing the policy, claiming that had there been more resources, the policy could have been communicated and explained in a more effective way. However, what is more interesting is the notion that the DSP was not 'overly promoted' in order to avoid confusing messages to ACOs about the reasons for the policy's introduction.

Finally, recognising that DSP guidance had not been communicated 'in the best way' and that it 'may have been a stretch for some organisations to get everything in place in time for 1 April' (ORG 10), the ACE representative noted:

> We are being quite lenient with organisations that haven't done this [implemented the policy] yet […]; we've just released people's July payments, which strictly speaking were tied to all the data clauses, but we're being very pragmatic about it […]. If people look like they're really trying to do this, then we're releasing the payment and then coming back in October and just asking for progress. So no, some people still haven't technically complied with the funding agreement, but, as I said to you, we're being really pragmatic about it because it's tough [...] (ORG 10).

It is interesting to note the contrast in attitudes here between the ACE representative and the other participants interviewed. In this regard, the ACE representative claimed that the organisation is being very lenient and is still releasing funding to those ACOs who are yet to fulfil the policy requirements, so long as it looks like they are 'trying'. However, the participant accounts presented earlier highlighted that they were rushing to get everything in place ahead of the policy deadline, which was 'quite a tight challenge' (ORG 9), especially when they felt ACE had

provided 'no support of how to do this' (ORG 13) and were fearful of their funding being withheld.

In summary, my analysis in this section has highlighted the ways participants experienced ACE's communication of DSP requirements and the associated guidance. Although a minority of participants appeared content with the quality and timeliness of the information they received from ACE ahead of the April 2016 deadline, other participants were not. These participants suggested that the policy had been communicated 'imperfectly' and that the guidance issued was 'confusing'. In addition, they spoke about the little support they had been offered by ACE early on in the process, something which the ACE representative claimed has since been addressed with the launch of a new website. The perceived lack of support and timely communication led participants to feel 'rushed' to implement all necessary changes in their organisation before the April deadline for fear of their funding being withheld if they did not. Again, this perception of funding being withheld was not shared by the ACE representative, who claimed that they were being lenient to organisations that were struggling to meet the DSP requirements. Finally, the ACE representative expressed how, as a whole, ACE 'could have been a lot better' at communicating and issuing guidance for the policy. The reasons they suggested for this included resourcing issues and to avoid additional confusion among arts organisation regarding motivations for the policy.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has presented my analysis and findings that provide background context to how participating ACOs typically collect and use data on a day-to-day basis. The analysis has identified three types of data that ACOs collect: operational, demographic, and customer contact data, as well as the two core functions these types of data are applied to: data to inform organisational decisions and data for reporting on organisational activities. Understanding these types and applications of data is important for subsequent chapters and discussion, as it provides context for the wider organisational challenges emerging from data-centric policies and processes

(such as the DSP and the requirement to engage with DPPs) and how these relate to artistic decision making (addressed in Chapter 5), as well as helping to understand the challenges relating to the mechanics of DSP implementation (addressed in Chapter 6). My analysis in this chapter has also highlighted the perceived reporting relationships and hierarchical dependencies between ACOs, ACE, DCMS, and central government that are used to set and deliver funding and policy priorities. Recognising this hierarchical relationship has helped to understand the perceived motivating factors behind the introduction of the DSP, which my analysis has highlighted were the need to demonstrate the impact of organisational activities to funders and policymakers and to achieve data equality for all publicly funded ACOs, notably touring theatre companies, who have limited access to data about the work they produce. These findings are important as they provide context for a key tension examined in Chapter 6, i.e. the concept of organisational legitimacy and what the impact of DSP is on this. Together, many of the accounts presented across this chapter demonstrate how participants think about data as a tool to deliver against funders goals – it is this type of speak I hereon in refer to as a 'funding logic', and similarly where data is a functional tool for making sound business choices, which is part of what I hereon in refer to as a 'market logic'. Finally, my analysis has highlighted that DSP acceptance and adoption by participants was hindered by a lack of communication and guidance from ACE, an important finding as it helps to frame the discussion about how tensions relating to future policy might be resolved.

5 'We Can't Data Everything' – Decision Making and Professional Identity.

Building on the findings in the previous chapter relating to the two core functions of data in ACOs, this chapter elaborates on the influence increasing data usage for informing and reporting has on organisational processes – notably artistic decision making – and how this is seen in relation to three key aspects of an arts manager's work: developing audiences, ensuring organisational resilience, and delivering artistic excellence. Importantly, these findings highlight how the increasing use of data-driven practices are reported to pull arts managers in different directions from what their traditional role (professional identity) has been in the past, creating tension at an individual level. Given the emergence of identity concerns as a theme in the research data, this chapter includes further important findings that elaborate on how these individual tensions, such as challenging creative expertise, develop in light of data-driven policies and tools and how participants try to resolve these tensions through balancing unique perspectives and educating their colleagues about data.

In outlining these findings, Section 5.1 considers the perceived influence of data-driven practices on developing audiences (5.1.1), ensuring organisational resilience (5.1.2), and delivering artistic

excellence (5.1.3), and how these three priority areas are balanced (5.1.4), while Section 5.2 then considers the wider issue of professional identity and how data-driven practices challenge existing identities (5.2.1) and how these identities may be developed going forward (5.2.2).

5.1 Data-Driven Programme Making

Arts managers are increasingly turning to data when looking to make decisions about their organisations, the scope of which range from routine managerial decisions such as those identified in Chapter 4 (e.g. optimising the opening times of the box office and café) to those that are fundamentally artistic in nature. For example, one chief executive pointed out that 'over the past ten years, there has been a noticeable shift in not only how much data we have but also how we use it [...]. I'd go as far as to say that it now underpins everything we do' (ORG 3), while another suggested that their interrogation of audience numbers and attendance was 'probably the single biggest data interaction with artistic programming decisions […]' (ORG 4). In this section, my analysis highlights how arts managers' increasing access to quantifiable audience data (such as demographics and box office sales), through either their own internal data analysis or that made available through data pooling platforms (e.g. Audience Finder), influences their approach to artistic programming decisions, in addition to also examining the three core types of 'logic' that participants draw on when discussing their work in relation to data-driven practices: market, aesthetic, and funding logics.

As shown in the literature review, the criteria to be recognised as a National Portfolio organisation, and thus receive public subsidy, is mainly dependent on an organisation's ability to evidence how they will deliver against the five goals of the Arts Council's overarching ambition: (1) artistic excellence; (2) audiences and reach; (3) resilience and sustainability; (4) diversity and skills; and (5) children and young people. It is as a result of these goals that ACOs 'must evaluate [their] performance at the artistic level, which reflects its mission, as well as the social and economic level, which determine its viability' (Poisson-de-Haro and Menot, 2014, p.9). The findings presented below suggest that although arts managers want to satisfy these goals and

recognise how data-driven decision-making practices can support their efforts, tensions emerge when these practices challenge their perceived organisational roles.

To highlight these tensions, subsection 5.1.1 outlines arts managers broad agreement that using data for audience development – either through interrogation of their own audience demographics or of the data made available through data pooling platforms (such as the Audience Finder) – is generally a good thing for their organisations. However, in subsections 5.1.2 and 5.1.3, the findings reveal that using data-driven practices to support organisation resilience can create tensions for certain arts managers as it pulls them in a different direction to what they also regard as being highly important, i.e. the delivery of artistic excellence. However, subsection 5.1.4 reveals that this tension can be managed by maintaining a balance between the different decision-making activities.

5.1.1 Data for developing audiences

A common view amongst participants was that increased access to data was important for their work in order to develop both the reach of their artistic products and the audiences who come to consume those products. In fact, developing audiences was regarded as 'one of the most important areas [arts organisations] apply data to' (ORG 2) and was seen as 'almost more important than making money' (ORG 9). Participants spoke about how the data they capture is useful in the development of their audiences for a number of reasons, including 'getting to know who our audiences are […]' (ORG 3) and building an 'understanding of who it is that comes through the doors rather than calling them Betty, Fred, and Wilma' (ORG 4). Simply put, a director of communications felt that 'access to good quality data is not only good for us…it's also good for our potential audiences because we can use it to find out who they are, so to speak, and what we can do to welcome them through the door' (ORG 13).

Participants identified various ways in which they use the audience demographic and box office data they capture for development purposes:

> Audience data is a massively useful [data]set against the programme, so you're looking at the correlation of particular programming choices and the demographics that those programmes reach and the age, diversity, and geographical reach of particular programming or particular engagement activity. That's really, really useful and genuinely informs the evaluation and planning of future projects (ORG 12).

One of the most prominent uses is to inform the organisations of any 'gaps' in the types of citizens or communities that are not currently engaged with their activities. For example, two executive directors spoke about conducting 'a lot of audience data analysis' to understand the areas 'where we're not reaching the people we want to reach' (ORG 2) and using data to 'work out who we're missing in the auditorium' (ORG 5a). Similarly, two chief executives noted how they also use data to look at 'the type of people that come to an event' and ask themselves questions about whether they are 'serving a wide range of the community, [or] are we serving one audience better than another in terms of segmentation […]' (ORG 4), in addition to 'what level of people are returning, what level of first-time attenders we get, and what postcodes people are traveling from' (ORG 3).

Being able to use the data for spotting gaps in engagement enables an organisation's season of work to better reflect the changing populations of the towns and cities they operate in. For example, a chief executive was 'embarrassed' that the population of their city was 'changing rapidly and we don't reflect that yet', suggested that using data was one approach for solving this issue:

> Understanding your data is a means to understanding people at a very basic level, so it goes back to the segmentation model, the mosaic profile, this, that, and the next thing, […and] if you can use it in terms of metrics where there are reasons to engage and participate…you know, all of that would be critically valuable to us if we had more of it and better. I think we might be more confident in making some of those decisions that we want to (ORG 4).

This is just one specific example of how arts managers saw their increasing access to audience demographic data as 'critically valuable' for becoming 'more confident' in making decisions about their audience development work.

In addition to 'gap spotting', a director of communications and a data insight manager spoke about undertaking 'very data driven approach[es]' (ORG 13) to address communities of low engagement by using data to make ticketing and marketing decisions:

> Last year, I employed a pricing consultant […], and they did a thorough analysis of all our box office data […] and looked at booking patters versus ticket price, versus where people like to sit in the auditorium, versus where people are from and how far they drive […]. This all informed a new ticketing strategy that I introduced […] in order to widen our band of tickets so that we were more accessible at the bottom end in order to do our audience development initiatives with different communities (ORG 13).

> One of my roles is audience development. I'm trying to better represent certain demographics, so the key three are the 16 to 44 year olds, those from a C_2DE[13] social background, so social grading, […] and then BAME [14] ethnicities because we underrepresent those groups, partly due to our location but also due to theatre in general being less representative […]. So, we use data in terms of postcodes to try and target areas that we know are socially deprived…so, if we've got £5 tickets offers, we'll try and go to those areas rather than any others in our database to offer them cheaper tickets (ORG 9).

These comments show how organisations bring together their different datasets – in these cases, demographic data and box office sales – to make data-driven decisions that help deliver their audience development work by identifying strategies for ensuring that tickets are available at price points to suit the different audience groups identified in their audience development strategies. In this sense, the comments reveal an ambition amongst participants for using the data available to them to inform decisions that support their audience development work. It could be for this reason that a number of participants seemed to advocate for the data sharing policy requirement to 'sign up to the basic Audience Finder principles and service' (Arts Council England, 2015a), which, as was highlighted in the literature review, 'enables cultural

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[13] Social grade based on occupation. (C2, Skilled manual workers; D, Semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers; E, State pensioners, casual and lowest grade workers, unemployed with state benefits only).

[14] Black, Asian and minority ethnic.

organisations to understand, compare and apply audience insight' (The Audience Agency, 2018) through a series of data-driven tools.

5.1.1.1   The Audience Finder (data pooling platform)

Participants felt that the Audience Finder platform was one way in which the Arts Council 'and other agencies are definitely encouraging us to work closer together and share audience data…and I think that's quite crucial, to be honest with you, because there's no point in having data in isolation' (ORG 11). For participants, the introduction of data pooling services, such as the Audience Finder, has led to

> a lot more data being shared [with the platform] and a lot more trying to use data in a good way to make business decisions, like postcode analysis or kind of using [audience] segmentations to kind of try and be effective in targeting either existing or lapsed customers or new ones (ORG 1b).

> We use data, both self-generated and from the sector, to look at audience reach…warm, hot, and cold spots in the city…as well as data provided by the Arts Council's Audience Finder and the city council to look at areas of low engagement. That informs our strategy for locating activity in particular parts of the city […], so we're using this data in practical ways I suppose (ORG 7).

> The Audience Agency's kind of work, which is collecting aggregate data on an anonymised basis so that we can compare ourselves with other people in terms of audiences, is really helpful if we know…you know…if we are able to get a bigger picture of audiences across [their location] and how they compare to how many of them are coming to our organisations, things like that [are] really helpful (ORG 11).

These comments highlight how the use of data pooling services enhances an organisation's ability to spot gaps in the types of citizens or communities that are not currently engaged with their activities. Participants also noted that access to these platforms is useful for delivering against the Arts Council's goal to develop audiences: 'I suppose when we're needing to tick so many boxes in terms of audience diversity or inclusion, having these innovations...or whatever we're supposed to refer to them as...kind of flags up where our current programme falls short' (ORG 6).

Aside from being used to spot gaps in audience engagement, participants also claimed that the Audience Finder is good for highlighting areas of engagement where they are doing well. For example, a director of communications claimed that using the Audience Finder has shown that:

> We are very successful at attracting kaleidoscope creativity…we obtain quite a high number of that group, much higher than other [large municipality] performing arts organisations. So, I guess that's an example of how postcode data can be directly used, correlated, [and] laid on top of the data we've drawn from [local authority] as a whole to kind of advocate the work we're doing (ORG 13).

It is these purported benefits of both gap spotting and work appraisal that led one chief executive to claim that the Audience Finder gives publicly funded arts organisations the tools needed to make data-driven decisions about their audiences in the same way as commercial organisations:

> I think it's quite interesting that if you look at very commercial organisations, things like Ambassador's Theatre Group, they use audience data a huge amount. They would be paying for many of its services…so obviously they're a national chain and commercial organisations, and other sectors will be looking at population data and will be looking at profiling of their data. So, the arts sector is a bit behind at that. Obviously, for smaller-scale organisations, budgets are very tight, particularly in austerity I think, so the notion that there is a service [Audience Finder] that is more affordable and is arts specific I think is really important (ORG 3).

However, not every participant believed that use of the Audience Finder would be a revolutionary tool. For example, a marketing manager, who advocated the use of the tool for comparing themselves with other organisations in terms of audience reach, claimed that:

> There's more work to be done actually on thinking about how the Audience Agency's data can be used because at the moment it's helping us get broad-brush kind of information about our audiences, but I'm not sure how many organisations are genuinely using the data in a way that's helping them really get to the next level of audience development (ORG 11).

Another participant added that 'having access to these tools is great, but we still need the skills to be able to use that insight to make meaningful decisions, although I guess it [the Audience Finder] will at least mean venues will have to take of the blinkers and see the full landscape of what's going on' (ORG 2).

Taken together, these comments show that most participants advocated the use of both self-generated data and insights made available through data pooling platforms to inform their audience development work. Using audience demographics and box office data, as well as the insights they have access to though data pooling platforms, arts managers can identify gaps in the types – or segments – of audiences they attract and use that knowledge to inform their decision making around how they meet their audience development goals, as outlined in their individual funding agreements with the Arts Council, as well as the wider goals of the *Great Art and Culture for Everyone* (Arts Council England, 2013b) strategy**.** These findings are interesting as they emphasise the appetite among arts managers for using data to inform their decision making, especially in terms of audience development, and that they are happy to adapt their practices accordingly. For example, some participants highlighted how they are moving away from their current segmentation models used in their audience plans to 'focus on the Audience Finder and Audience Agency segmentation model' (ORG 5b) so as to better utilise these tools.

Although my analysis highlights how arts managers broadly agreed that data is a useful tool for identifying areas of low engagement and informs their strategies about how to approach these gaps (e.g. ticketing structure or where to locate engagement activity), it does not consider what the increasing access to quantitative data means for other aspects of their work, notably resilience (Goal 3) and artistic excellence (Goal 1). With this in mind, the relationship between data and these areas of work is explored in the following sections.

5.1.2 Data for organisational resilience

A number of participants perceived the increasing amount of data they have access to as a tool for ensuring that their organisations are resilient financially (i.e. have good ticket sales) and can secure continued public subsidies (i.e. maintain Arts Council England funding). Arts managers frequently talked about how they consult the historic audience data their organisations have access to when making decisions about their season of work. In addition, participants spoke about how 'data and attendance information helps us to inform programming decisions' (ORG 1b) and how

their analysis of audience numbers and attendance is 'probably the single biggest data interaction with artistic programming decisions […]' (ORG 4).

5.1.2.1   Making good business decisions

A common view among participants was that engaging with the datasets available to them helps them make programming decisions that are also good business decisions:

> I do think it's really important, and I think it's great that we've all become much more data driven and we're not just going, 'Oh, let's do this or let's do that' [...]. I think all those sorts of things are really, really important in terms of developing the business (ORG 9).

> Make[ing] good business decisions and good artistic decisions needs to be underpinned by that sort of understanding about who the audience is, what's their behaviour, what's the financial envelope they're working in, and what's the impact of that (ORG 3).

This practice of using data to lead decision making was evident across organisations of different sizes; for example, the chief executives from two of the smaller participant organisations noted how the 'gathering of data and our work that we do with that data will absolutely inform the decisions we make […] (ORG 2) and how data 'is vitally important [...] it's that ability to set a target for a show […]; there is a lot of work behind the scenes to estimate what's realistic based on past performances, so you absolutely need that data to access that and deliver' (ORG 3). The 'vital' importance of data was similarly expressed by a participant from a large regional theatre who, reflecting on their twenty-year career in the arts and cultural sector, noted how they had always used data that was 'vitally important' to the 'continued growth of the sector' (ORG 6).

The notion of using data for developing 'the business' through correlation of audience demographics to artistic programming and engagement activity appears to be a well-established practice among participants. For example, one chief executive noted how data 'governs the shows we make because we've got to plan a budget, so it fundamentally informs artistic decisions [...], which might surprise you because everyone assumes it's just financial decisions, but we absolutely have to look at data' (ORG 4). Others similarly noted the following:

> In relation to programming, obviously that [data] plays a huge part in what we might decide to do going forward in terms of our resources within the building…that's going to be significant in that, within my team and the activity and the tactics that we use in marketing and press and sales. So, that's all informed by all that data (ORG 5b).

> We look at…every show has aggregated data around demographics and ticket sales and a whole set of box office data that sits behind that, which enables us to evaluate the artistic programme but also inform future programming decisions (ORG 11).

These comments highlight the perceived importance of 'data interrogation' to arts managers as 'part of [their] strategy' (ORG 4) when making decisions about seasons of work, which includes 'informing our decision making about the work we do' by questioning audience data about 'who is coming to what and where they're coming from' (ORG 5b). This again highlights the potential influence data holds over an organisation's seasons of work and the artistic programming therein. Participants also claimed how data 'enables us to see where we are stronger and where we are weaker' in terms of the artistic work they produce (ORG 7), in addition to 'justify[ing] the decisions we've made' (ORG 13).

5.1.2.2 Resilience through financial scrutiny

The ability to analyse their data to make informed decisions about artistic programming and the financial implications of those decisions were clearly important to some arts managers. For example, participants felt that '[…] you can't just have an artistic strategy which is based on impulse and instinct because that would be ineffective' (ORG 12) and that it is 'important to have a level of data understanding about our organisation [and] to be able to make the best decisions [...] rather than sticking our finger in the air and seeing which way the wind blows and hoping that we get it right' (ORG 4). Another participant shared this sentiment, pointing out that 'when organisations are likely working within such tight resources, we can't really afford to be sticking our finger in the air [...] and just take a guess at it' (ORG 5a).

Other participants attributed the need to 'make the best decisions' to a belief that arts organisations are under increasing pressure to make the best use of the funding they receive from the Arts

Council while satisfying the other conditions of that grant, such as reaching broader audiences (see subsection 5.1.1). For example, one chief executive noted how they are 'under so much pressure to make this small sum of money stretch over the year […] that actually we have to rely on data to help us make those difficult decisions of what to keep and what to cut' (ORG 3), while a marketing manager similarly claimed that:

> Obviously, our job is to produce fantastic art, but it's also our job to keep the doors open, and data has been a godsend for that because we can unpick the productions we've done in the past and then use that intelligence to be a bit more…how should I say it…cautious with our programming and budgeting so that the money lasts the year (ORG 11).

These comments highlight how, for some arts managers, data analysis is regarded as an important process for embedding financial checks and balances into their programming decisions, especially in light of the financial pressures publicly funded arts organisations are facing. In fact, participants suggested that the interrogation of data to financially scrutinise their artistic decisions is 'key' to 'the way our business model works [as] we have to make a contribution from every show to the overhead costs [of the theatre]' and to make sure 'we have the differences met' (ORG 4) – inferring here the funding gap between Arts Council subsidies and organisational overheads.

Other participants also discussed this notion of financial checks and balances – or scrutiny – to inform artistic programming decisions. For example, a chief executive noted that 'if you think [...] there's an artistic imperative to put on show X, there's then an interrogation of how similar projects have performed' (ORG 3). A marketing manager noted how data helps them to 'look at different options and say, "Well, if we did X, this number of people are likely to come to it", which allows us to place options within the context of a [financial] year, alongside other options' (ORG 5b). Such sentiments were succinctly expressed by the executive director from one of the smaller organisations, who noted how they 'often look at audience numbers [...] and box office revenue and we go, "Nah we just can't afford to do that"' (ORG 12).

Although participants cited in this section appeared content with their approach to data interrogation and financial scrutiny being an important part of their organisation's business

model, one marketing manager expressed frustration about their analytical insight being ignored by colleagues in artistic roles:

> Our department is under increasing pressure to make sure the main house is full and generating maximum income, but that can be extremely challenging when we're asked to market a show that should really be in the studio [theatre]. We do tell them this and use data to try and make our case, but sometimes they just want to take a punt at it, but in the end the data was usually right (ORG 11).

The box office manager shared a similar sentiment, claiming that 'sometimes we put a show on sale and think, "Wow, they're [artistic team] certainly being brave with this one"' (ORG 14), again referring to the possible financial risk of programming work not supported by data. These comments indicate a potential conflict among some arts managers about organisational approaches to data-driven analysis in artistic programming decisions. On the one hand, the marketing manager wanted to be data-driven to maximise their income per seat for the organisation while also suggesting that members of the artistic team would rather prioritise artistic reasoning over financial reasoning. Similarly, the box office manager talked about the artistic team being 'brave', again indicating a belief by some arts managers that decisions not backed up by data go against the norm.

However, participants who promoted data analysis were not unconcerned about the effects that data-driven practices have on the organisation's artistic programme. For example, a chief executive was keen to express that if there was not a funding deficit, their organisation would 'probably have a different artistic programme [...] in our main house because we can't take much risk in the main house, but if money were less of an object, we'd probably have a more diverse main-house programme' (ORG 4).

Together, the comments presented in subsections 5.1.1 and 5.1.2 collectively suggest that a number of participants recognised the value of the data they collect about their audience from a market-logic perspective. My analysis suggests that this 'vitally important' data is integral to the internal evaluation and forward planning of an ACOs season of work, especially when under

policy pressures to self-generate income. To that end, many of the positions expressed above were well captured by a chief executive's comment that when planning their seasons, organisations 'should not be making decisions based on anecdotal assumptions' (ORG 3). The analysis also reveals that, for these participants, making programming decisions that are supported by data is a key part of delivering organisational resilience, which aligns with Arts Council England's ambition for 'arts and cultural organisations to capture and use data to improve resilience' (Arts Council England, 2013b, p.52). However, it was also clear that despite seeing data-driven processes through market logic, participants acknowledged that it was their job 'to produce fantastic art'. To this end, the next section presents further findings that consider the perceived impact of data-driven practices on an organisation's work to deliver artistic excellence.

5.1.3 Artistic excellence, risk, and mission

While participants could see the benefits of data-driven practices through (primarily) market logic for curating an artistic programme that is both resilient and sustainable (i.e. financially sound), participants also considered the implications of data-driven practices from an aesthetic-logic perspective, which encompasses 'notions of artistry that animate and inform the integrity of an organisation's artistic work' (Glynn and Lounsbury, 2005a, p.1037). My analysis reveals that participants from all organisational roles worried to a greater or lesser extent that an increasing reliance on data-driven practices to inform their programming decisions could challenge their organisation's ability to uphold their mission, take risks, and deliver artistic excellence in their work.

Considering the trajectory of data-driven practices, one participant (an artistic director) questioned the point at which their 'creative expertise gets trumped by box office reports or audience segmentation models? We have an artistic mission here, but I'm not sure how long we can uphold that in the current "data" climate' (ORG 7), while a director of communications added that they were 'all about inclusion in the arts, but I sometimes feel we're being asked to go beyond our role as creatives and to be a problem solver for much wider government priorities' (ORG 13).

These two comments are, in themselves, an interesting finding as they demonstrate that worries about the creative nature of an ACOs work is not reserved for members of the 'artistic' team. In this sense, those who would perhaps align more closely with market logic also worried about challenges to creative work.

Participants felt that the appetite for data-driven practices could lead organisations to stray from their artistic missions. Regarding the intersection between artistic missions and data, an executive administrator raised the question that although 'data tells you one thing, does it also fit your mission statement?' (ORG 1a), while their colleague – a marketing manager – added:

> [...] we can't just rely on that [data], otherwise we'd be programming Jim Davidson [a British comedian] or [...] something that the masses would come to because the data says that's what people want. But our mission and our purpose might be different to what the masses want (ORG 1b).

Similarly, another marketing manager claimed that if their organisation was 'trying to make the most money in theatre, I guess we could look at the data and we could go, "Well, what shows have been most popular and which areas have been most popular and the most successful in targeting?" But this is not what we're about' (ORG 11). In this regard, they maintained that it is the role of the arts organisation to make programming decisions that ensure their audiences experience exciting and different work:

> [...] which way round are you going to define the programme? Is it what audiences want and what you perceive them to want, or should we be guiding them and trying to create new stuff for them which they might not necessarily have a track record for seeing but they might be interested in? If you just use previous history, you're not going to create exciting work because you'll just programme more of the same (ORG 11).

Turning to an artistic perspective, an artistic director suggested that if their organisation was just to 'rely on the data [they] gather and have access to', there would 'inevitably be a number of very disappointed patrons who have come to expect the extraordinary – not the ordinary' (ORG 8). Taken together, these comments highlight participants' understanding that their artistic programmes should not always include work that they know the 'masses' *would* come and see

since certain works – like the Jim Davidson comedy example – would not reflect their organisation's mission and purpose. My analysis suggests then it may be for these reasons – attracting the masses – that participants were worried about the perceived pressure to use data-driven practices for informing artistic decisions, given that 'data will be used to pull out trends *we* might not want to make concessions for in terms of what we're trying to achieve here' (ORG 2).

5.1.3.1   The role of the artistic director

A number of participants felt that programming decisions should be the responsibility of artistic individuals and teams embedded in their organisations. In this regard, participants said that 'some of the artistic decisions that are made can't be data driven, that the decision about the piece of work that somebody wants to make has to come from a desire to want to make that piece of work' (ORG 2), and 'the very reason we have an artistic director is to make programme decisions that reflect our artistic mission and values' (ORG 5a). This notion of the artistic director being the artistic decision maker was also evident from the following comments:

> You can't say to an artistic director, 'The computer says that the next play should be this' because that would be a really uninteresting and uninspiring way to programme theatre (ORG 12).

> Our artistic director knows our audiences better than anyone else, and I think it would be wrong to try and discourage their [artistic] choices based on what the data says will or won't work (ORG 6).

From the perspective of the artistic directors interviewed, one noted that while they 'appreciate' all that data can do for them in terms of the day-to-day 'operational stuff', they were concerned that 'all the hype around data in Arts Council policy could distract us from making those all-important artistic choices, which aren't always recognised in the data we collect [...]' (ORG 15), while another added how they 'need to be able to manage the data we have to allow us to take risks and not to stop us taking risks' (ORG 7). Based on the analysis, this notion of 'risk' and

'risk-taking' appears to be at the heart of arts managers – aesthetically-driven – tensions around using data in artistic programming.

5.1.3.2   Risk-taking culture

My analysis found that organisations are inclined, or have a desire, to take artistic risks in their programming and look to refute data when it becomes a barrier to achieving their artistic mission or goals. Participants highlighted, on reflection, artistic successes from across the sector that were considered risks at their time of conception (i.e. the data available did not support the artistic choice). In this regard, one participant anecdotally spoke about a production their organisation put on that was in stark contrast to their typical repertoire:

> We had this small little-known production we took a big risk on called [X] that started in [their regional theatre] and now has sold two million tickets last year in [large city], [another country], and [another country] (ORG 9).

Similarly, one of the executive directors commented on the National Theatre of Great Britain's 2007 production of 'War Horse'. Reaffirming the notion that 'data doesn't prove everything', they spoke about how 'if data analysis was used for the planning of War Horse, it never would have happened; it was so risky at the time […]. Now, it's cash-flowing the National [Theatre] with something like £2m a year,[15] which goes back into their artistic work' (ORG 2). The data insight manager also claimed that data 'doesn't help every decision because artistic organisations will always take risks and do things that may be seen as counterintuitive […]. Artistic teams don't like being led by data' (ORG 9). From these accounts, it can be seen how participants advocated for the benefits of organisations forgoing data analysis and taking artistic risks in their programming. They highlighted how such artistic risk-taking has, for some organisations, been of massive benefit to not only their organisations reputation but also their self-generated income, in turn satisfying calls for resilience and sustainability.

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[15] The Guardian reported this figure to be £13.5 million over a seven-year period (see https://www.theguardian. com/stage/2015/sep/17/national-theatre-to-end-war-horse-despite-runaway-success).

While the latter comments refer to not being led by data when looking to programming risky artistic work, participants also spoke about how an absence of data also leads them to take risks. For example, the larger, arguably more financially resilient, organisations interviewed suggested that in the absence of data – where they are unable to access booking history and demographic data for a proposed piece of work or it is simply not available – the decision falls to the discretion of the artistic team:

> Sometimes, there are decisions where, artistically, someone will want to do something, and if you say, 'It's nothing we've done before…I can't think of anything in our history that's of a similar kind of show', ultimately the decision is an artistically-led decision (ORG 6).

According to another participant, 'I guess we're a big enough organisation to take a few risks and take a punt on something a bit different to what our audiences, or the board, are used to, [and] if it doesn't work, we at least have the data to start understanding why' (ORG 9). In this instance, the participant was essentially suggesting that data captured through failure is helpful for resilient programming in the future.

Despite these suggestions that arts organisations can still forgo data and take risks in their artistic programme, there was a sense amongst participants that this would be a

> short-lived luxury…I don't mean to repeat myself, but like I said, money is getting tighter and [the] number of boxes we need to tick to get that money is increasing, and my worry is that any risk we are seen to be taking is purely accidental rather than intentional (ORG 11).

From this, it can be seen how the participant considered their organisation's ability to take artistic risks in relation to the perceived instrumental legitimacy demands of the Arts Council. While the perceived legitimacy requirements of the Arts Council are considered in subsection 6.1.2, the findings below briefly highlight their perceived implications for risk-taking and future metrics of success.

5.1.3.3   Risk and future metrics of success

With regard to artistic programming, participants from across organisational roles were concerned that using data to guide their decision-making processes would become 'the norm' in order to 'meet the strategic goals of the Arts Council's funding remit' (ORG 15). Participants also noted how 'the Arts Council has such a focused agenda these days…we'll need to micro-analyse our booking data to make sure we're crossing the t's and dotting the i's […]' (ORG 8). Such a sentiment was best expressed by a data insight manager:

> The pessimistic bit, which is what worries me about the way that things are going [data collection and sharing], is that there is a lot more comparison, there's a lot more standardised collection of information, for example audience demographics […]. What worries me is that that's going to go down the route [that] funding will rely on, and it'll become...it then makes art quite bland because it's looking for averages or it's not being understanding of geographic limitations or other challenges an organisation might have (ORG 9).

This account again highlights how data may become an inhibitor to artistic risk-taking and that arts managers are worried that increasing calls by policymakers for the 'standardised collection' of audience data is a precursor for how funding may be awarded in the future, i.e. based on an organisation's ability to be seen as hitting the policymaker's audience reach objectives. Similar claims were seen in the account of the smallest participating organisation:

> [The Arts Council] will measure our successes based on it [data], and I guess it depends where they put the measurement – is it attendance, is it income, is it how many artists you've worked with and the number of experiences you've created? It really depends on what you want to measure and what the importance is. We might have a profound impact on 30 or 40 people, but I'm not sure that's going to keep giving us £110,000 a year…I would say it's worth it, but if you're looking at a reduced funding pot and how people make these decisions, it could be based on income and attendance and just some very sort of cold facts like that really (ORG 1a).

In this comment, the participant expressed concern that their current artistic programming choices – which may be regarded as 'risky' work and have a 'profound impact' (ORG 1a) on a small number of patrons – may not be a sufficient measure going forward. In this regard, they suggested that if the norm for policymakers became the measurement of average audience demographics,

the artistic work of some organisations may become 'quite bland'. Similarly, a data insight manager, despite clearly supporting data as a tool for resilience, conceded that:

> It [data sharing and collection] will remove risk-taking from art because if your funding relies on your getting certain ratings or certain things [like] that, people will then not want to take a risk because they'll want to put the safe bets on (ORG 9).

In summary, these findings affirm how some participants, irrespective of their role in an organisation, regard the increased collection and usage of audience data as having an impact on their organisations' artistic risk-taking.

5.1.3.4 Future purpose

My analysis highlights that, for participants, the prospect of needing to 'put the safe bets on' makes them question the difference between themselves as a publicly funded ACO and a commercial theatre venue. For example, a director of communications stated that 'if we were to forget about the small niche work and just focus on big sellers, we may as well get the sign writers in and stick an ATG [a large UK-based commercial venue company] logo above the door' (ORG 6). Here, the participant was suggesting that it is an organisation's ability to programme shows that are not necessarily commercially successful that sets them aside from a commercial venture. This sentiment was again articulated by the smallest participating organisation:

> You could get sort of blind-sided by it [data], but again if the pressures are just to sell more tickets regardless of programme, regardless of anything else, then yes you're going to go for safe, mainstream, [and] popular, and that's not what we're good at. We can fill those briefs and we can do those sorts of things, but actually it's the more interesting work that we do that's very special, and if places like us don't or aren't able to continue, you're going to lose a whole wave of experimental culture, and that would be a crying shame, that really would (ORG 1a).

Perhaps the most poignant comments regarding data and artistic decision making from artistic directors were as follows:

> There are some things that are just a bit too intangible in the arts, and we can't data everything because [...] data doesn't prove everything […]. The point at which you start

> making a piece of theatre by numbers, [...] you lose the heart of what we're doing (ORG 15).

> It's a bit like pinning down a butterfly, you know, it loses its beauty once you've killed it and pinned it to a little box – you've killed what it was, and that's my worry for the arts I think (ORG 8).

From the analysis, this notion of data-driven practices moving publicly funded ACOs towards more 'commercial' models with less artistic risk evokes a fundamental concern among participants about the future of the publicly funded sector. Clearly then, the increasing prevalence and perceived pressure to use data-driven practices in artistic decision making has fostered a tension that arts managers must reconcile at both collective (i.e. sector-wide) and individual levels. The next section moves on to highlight how participants try to resolve these collective and individual tensions through a 'balancing act' that recognises both the market and aesthetic logics that participants draw on in the curation of their artistic programmes.

5.1.4 Balancing data priorities

As has been suggested earlier in the chapter, participants in this research tended to draw on all three of the market, aesthetic, and funding logics when considering the implications of increasing data-driven practices in their organisations. For example, a director of communications spoke of how 'vitally important' data is for the 'continued growth of the sector' on the one hand, while also saying that organisations cannot 'forget about the small niche work' that those who analyse the data may overlook in favour of 'big sellers' (ORG 6). The idea of wearing both 'hats', so to speak, was also evident in the account of an artistic director, who regarded audience data as enabling them to see where they are 'stronger and where we are weaker' while also expressing concern that 'creative expertise gets trumped by box office reports or audience segmentation models' (ORG 7). While my analysis does not identify a clear divide in opinion between different types of participants interviewed (e.g. marketers/ executives vs. artistics), it appears that participants looked to strike a balance at an individual level between their organisations' freedom

to be creative and the need to be financially viable when planning their artistic work. However, striking a balance between these different aspects of work is a difficult task:

> We're a charity. We don't make money…we just cover our costs, but it's interesting that dichotomy of having to try and generate more income because the Arts Council, the way funding has gone, there's been increased pressure to create self-generating income. At the same time, there's this increased pressure on bringing in new audiences, and those things are difficult to juggle, and different people have slightly different priorities (ORG 9).

Participants explained that when it comes to making programming decisions, they are all 'creatives at heart, and although data is really useful and […] should help inform the work we do here, it absolutely shouldn't define it' (ORG 7) and that 'it's not just about making decisions that are in the best interests of the organisation financially, it's about making decisions that are in the best interests artistically and in terms of our engagement with our audiences' (ORG 5a). An executive director also noted that:

> […] just because we have to be quite entrepreneurial in the way we approach our business, because 90% of [overall funding] is under our own commercial steam, we still need to think outside the box when it comes to programming [...]. I mean, data isn't everything, is it? (ORG 12)

In pursuit of being a creative organisation, participants worried that 'obsessing over audience demographics' (ORG 8) would detract from the creative processes involved with artistic decision making. This notion was best captured in the statement of an executive director, who believed that 'there's got to be an element of professional judgement16 applied [to decision making] as well I think [...]' (ORG 7). Participants acknowledged that they should not always be led by data, and that central to their collective organisational missions are art and creativity:

> There is also the creative side of it that doesn't always come out of data, and I think that [the] creative process has still got to be able to thrive as well. Otherwise, it turns into a

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16 This notion of 'professional judgement' is explored further in the following section on Professional Identity

> formula, doesn't it? It's kind of X + Y + Z = 'Right, that's what we're doing'. It can't be that…it can't be entirely formulaic (ORG 2).

This stance was also shared with another chief executive, who suggested that programming decisions should be a collaboration between data and artistic mission:

> It has got to be a combination of art and science – you can't have one without the other. I mean, you've got to use data and instinct together to make decisions, but it's one thing to say that is a brilliant response to a show, we completely sold it out, but then you break down the demographics of the audience, and they don't reflect the values at which you're funded to do, then something has gone wrong. You've got to try and get a balance of all of those different things (ORG 12).

Based on these comments, participants did recognise the value data can add to their decision-making processes but also suggested that, without creative consideration, there is a fear that their artistic programming could become an automated – formulaic – process.

My findings also show how some participants chose to ignore facts (i.e. audience demographics and sales data) in favour of promoting their organisations' artistic mission. For example, a director of communications noted how the artistic director of their organisation would approach their team and ask for advice on particular pieces of work they would like programme. While these requests 'usually stack up', and there was a 'clearly identifiable' audience, the participant suggested that there were a 'small number of occasions' where they would come back and say that 'by looking at similar types of shows, we would suggest the audience would be X, [which] might be far lower than the artistic decision would like' (ORG 6). On such occasions, when the data did not support the artistic director's proposed work, the participant made it clear that 'in the end, it [the decision] becomes the call of the artistic director [...], and if they're really passionate about that piece, we'll look to go ahead with it' (ORG 6). However, another participant spoke about occasions when, despite artistic desire, 'they [artistic teams] can't refute the data […], and they have to accept that and maybe face up to things that they kind of knew in their heart of hearts or whatever' (ORG 9). These accounts support my findings that participants recognise the need for their organisations to balance the 'facts' coming from data and the autonomy of the artistic team to make decisions,

even when those 'facts' do not support their choices. For example, in the above accounts, while data did not support the artistic director's proposed choice of work – be that for financial or demographic reach reasons – the work was not blocked if there was clear artistic merit. However, my findings also highlight occasions when the data analysis is so strong that an artistic team may forgo artistic merit in favour of what the data suggests:

> I'd absolutely love it if this was the case, but you can't say to an artistic director, 'The computer says that the next play should be this' because that would be a really uninteresting and uninspiring way to programme a theatre. But, in the same way, you can't just have an artistic strategy which is based on impulse and instinct because that would be equally ineffective. It has got to be a balance between the two (ORG 12).

Recognising the need to balance data with artistic desire can also be seen by returning to the earlier findings on risk-taking. Although participants acknowledged that they do not like to be steered by data when making artistic decisions, they understood how it can be useful in avoiding failure and spoke of using data to take a balanced approach to the risks they take. For example, a chief executive spoke of the occasions when the artistic team had an idea or a piece of work but were unable to programme it: 'Many times, where we want to do something artistically, we might want to do it because of the audience in reach, or we believe we could do it really, really well, and every other star in the sky is aligned, but we can't make it stack up with everything else' (ORG 4). For this participant, the 'everything else' included having the confidence that the work would attract an audience that could fill the larger of their performance spaces, which they felt was required for 'the stage space and technical stuff needed to do the work justice [and] to warrant moving a well-known, good-selling show to the next season' in favour of the proposed work (ORG 4). In this instance, the organisation needed to balance aesthetic logic, i.e. the desire to use the larger performance space, with the market logic that it would unlikely attract a big enough audience for that space and would lose money by re-scheduling another production. On balance, they conceded that 'there was just too much risk to try and put it on' (ORG 4).

It is clear from the above comments that the ability to strike a balance between their organisations' freedom to be creative (seen through aesthetic logic) and the need to be financially viable (seen

through market logic) as well as attracting a diverse audience is not an easy task. To that end, participants spoke about needing to move to the 'middle ground':

> We have to do our best to find a position that works for everyone…and that's what we're doing at the moment here in terms of finding a middle ground that 1) recognises that data *can* be a good baseline for making sensible programme choices and 2) still allows us to take a fair bit of artistic risk. And, actually, I think the more people here who understand the middle ground and actually understand that data isn't an all-or-nothing offer, the better [venue name] will be for it…but not everyone here is so easily convinced by that [laughs] (ORG 3).

Although this comment clearly promoted a balancing act between the two different types of logic discussed in this section, it introduced another interesting concept – that despite an organisation's chief executive being keen to find a 'middle ground' that recognises both market and aesthetic motivations of arts managers working in publicly funded ACOs, some arts managers are reluctant to do so. Therefore, I will present findings in the next section that help to understand why there is a potential reluctance from some arts managers to find a middle ground and accept that data-driven practices are becoming a core part of their organisation's work.

5.2 Professional Identity

In the findings presented so far, it is not clear whether there is a binary tension between different types of arts managers and the logics they draw on in conducting their work in relation to data-driven practices (i.e. aesthetics vs. the market); instead, my findings have suggested that the use of data-driven practices to build audiences, promote organisational resilience, and deliver artistic excellence may introduce tensions at an individual level. In this section, I present findings that highlight a number of concerns relating to the effects data-driven practices evoke in relation to an arts manager's professional identity and autonomy within an organisation. To explore these challenges to professional identity and autonomy as an arts manager, this section is divided into two subsections: *challenging established identities* and *building data awareness*.

5.2.1 Challenging established identities

Like their concerns regarding what the increasing use of data means for their organisations' artistic decision-making practices, some participants were also concerned about the wider implications data will have on their professional identity as knowledgeable arts managers. In this regard, participants felt that the increase in the collection and analysis of data would devalue their years of experience working in the arts:

> I have fifteen years of experience across many, many organisations…but, you know, how do I stack up against the thousands of data points you can now run through a piece of software? (ORG 15)

Similarly, another participant worried that the sector will become full of arts managers who are 'glorified "bean counters" because everyone is spending all their time reporting or analysing, no one is actually going to make any work' (ORG 8). In this comment, the artistic director suggested that increasing pressures to engage with data-driven practices could normalise the unique roles of arts managers into mechanical roles that forgoes an arts manager's identity as a knowledgeable individual who creates and curates artistic work.

Participants were also worried that, in comparison to data analysis, their experience and artistic expertise – a fundamental part of their professional identity – would not be regarded as a credible/authoritative voice in future decision-making processes. For example, an artistic director commented as follows:

> What worries me is at what point does my – our – creative expertise get trumped by box office reports or audience segmentation models? We have an artistic mission here, but I'm not sure how long we can uphold that in the current 'data' climate (ORG 7).

This fear of being 'trumped' by data is clearly a concern for arts managers, leading some to consider the longevity of their current role in the organisation. One participant even joked about changing roles: 'Should I quit now and re-market myself as some kind of artistic data analysist?' (ORG 8).

5.2.1.1 Recognising limitations

Another interesting finding is that participants who were wary of the move towards data-driven decision making were not complacent about their ability to make good artistic judgements. A number of participants recognised that, despite all their experience, arts professionals 'will make mistakes or make a couple of bad judgements' (ORG 8) when making decisions not grounded in data. However, participants defended these 'bad judgements' as being part of what artistic decision makers do. For example, a director of communications noted that:

> […] if data was always accurate, there would never be such a thing as a flop in theatre, [but] there are and there always will be because, you know, artistic decisions are made on the basis of we feel this might work or we would like to do this artistically. And sometimes, regardless of data, people take a punt on things like that (ORG 6).

While not in an artistic role themselves, the participant recognised that decisions made by arts managers in artistic roles would often be driven by a desire to produce a piece of work they were willing to take a 'punt' on. This claim again highlights that the professional identity of an arts manager is shaped by their ability to make creative decisions based on their experience, even when such decisions fail to deliver the intended outcome.

Participants even looked to justify any wrong decisions they had previously made in their roles as 'the nature of the beast' (ORG 7). In this sense, it was noted how 'there's equally flops in commercial theatres, and you can see something that, on paper, looks like it'd be a massive hit and isn't and vice versa' (ORG 5a). In contrasting publicly funded organisations with commercial organisations, this executive director – typically very data-driven in their programming operations – suggest that, no matter the size of an organisation, its commercial or public aim, or whether or not data is used to inform programming decisions, it is likely that poor programming choices will be made at some point. This stance was typified by an artistic director who felt that 'it doesn't matter if it's the Palace Theatre [commercial organisation] or an NPO [publicly funded] […], with all the good intentions in the world, sometimes we get stuff wrong' (ORG 7). Similarly, one of the directors of communication – a self-proclaimed data enthusiast – conceded that even though

their organisation had been operating for more than thirty years, 'ultimately, we should know who our audience is…these are the people who come to this organisation […], but there will still be things that absolutely surprise us' (ORG 6).

5.2.1.2 Balancing unique perspectives

Like the director of communications above, and most of the participants included in subsection 5.1.2, individual participants who appeared more closely aligned to market logic and advocated data-driven practices acknowledged that some of their colleagues whose professional identity was not typically shaped by market-led orientations still made good programming decisions because they 'offer a unique perspective on what we program' (ORG 12). For example, one director of communications spoke about unique programming decisions made across the sector that surprised them; for example: 'on paper it, [a production] should not have sold', but after seeing 'bigger than expected box office sales', they began qualitative research that highlighted how the 'audience were incredibly moved by the piece of work because the storyline was based on an event that happened quite recently in the local community' and through 'word-of-mouth, it brought in people who'd never even been to the theatre before […]. So yeah, I guess our artistic director's gamble with this one really paid off, and now, of course, we have data to support similar work in the future' (ORG 6). This account clearly highlights how an artistic director saw beyond the 'data' and made a decision that was both good for the community they served and was profitable. This, in turn, demonstrates how the professional identity of a perhaps more aesthetically-oriented arts manager is shaped by their ability to draw on their knowledge, experience, and expertise to take successful risks.

Similar to the earlier notion of needing to find a balance between market-oriented and aesthetically-oriented programming decisions driven by data, participants also recognised the need to draw on the knowledge and experience of arts managers – who were more closely aligned to aesthetic logic – to help maintain a balanced artistic programme that delivers for all stakeholders. For example, participants commented as follows:

> Does the artistic vision trump all other concerns or should the artistic vision be shaped by its audiences? I think the main problem with data is [that] it's not necessarily more data; it's being able to actually find meaningful understanding and statements (ORG 12).

> While I think it [data] is important and useful, I don't think you can use it in isolation; it needs us as a team to sit and look at what the data is telling us and start to understand it – why is it telling us certain things. And yes, there are times when the anecdote on its own is dangerous, but so is data on its own […]; there needs to be a human factor to it as well (ORG 11).

Thus, my analysis highlights an appreciation among participants that although the amount of data available to publicly funded arts organisations is increasing, the 'human factor' is still a core requirement in artistic decision making. Taken together, these accounts once again reinforce the professional identity of arts managers (particularly those in artistic roles) as knowledgeable and experienced but also useful members of increasingly data-driven ACOs who can tease out 'meaningful understandings' from data in order to mitigate against so-called 'theatre by algorithm' (ORG 14).

5.2.1.3 Negotiating data naivety

The aforementioned findings highlight three key insights relating to the professional identity of arts managers: (1) some fear that their identity as knowledgeable and experienced agents is being devalued by data analysis; (2) they recognise their weaknesses when making non-data-driven decisions; and (3) arts managers who tend to align with either market logic or aesthetic logic recognise the need to balance the unique perspectives of each arts manager in organisations' decision-making processes. However, some participants, who are more market-oriented in their roles – believed that some members of their organisations' artistic teams must do more to understand and develop their professional identity so as to recognise how data can support the work of the organisation. In fact, some participants suggested that some of their colleagues were 'data naive'. For example, a data insight manager noted that:

> [...] data usually confirms what people think…there's a lot of gut feel goes on in the arts particularly, I think partly because the arts industries people are in touch with audience reaction through sitting in the shows, and you can see and feel the audience reaction.

> Although, having said that, a lot of artistic or senior staff will only go on, say, press night, which is a very different audience for one and you don't see...so for example BAME audiences (ORG 9).

This account can be taken to suggest that some of the knowledge and experience that form the professional identity of typically aesthetic-oriented arts managers is either flawed or built upon naive insights. The participant's reference to artistic staff only attending press nights suggests that their first-hand experience of 'audience reaction' is shaped by the unique demographic profile of those in attendance on a typically well-attended, (sometimes) invitee-only performance, and is therefore out of touch with regular audiences.

Another example of where the knowledge and experience that underpins the professional identity of some typically aesthetic-oriented arts managers is questioned by their colleagues relates to their understanding of the insights box office data can offer. For example, a box office manager spoke about times when 'data stops those artistic decisions that have impacted significantly on income […]' (ORG 14) and reflected on an occasion where a 'senior artistic person wanted to take 72 seats off sale because they wanted to extend the stage, and they said that nobody sits on those seats anyway and the view from the seats is terrible' (ORG 14). However, the box office manager 'produce[d] the figures to say [that] those [seats] brought in a quarter of a million pounds last year, and whilst the rating of the view was poor from those seats, the overall rating of value for money […] was really good; they [senior artistic person] were taken aback with that one and, after some pressure from the rest of us, reconsidered the choice to take those seats off sale' (ORG 14).

While these comments demonstrate a perceived naivety by some arts managers in aesthetically-oriented roles towards data use in programming, other participants made a stronger claim that this was simple ignorance: 'Using data isn't this new phenomenon…it's been bubbling away in the background for years; I just think, now, it's so pervasive that people have had to take notice' (ORG 12). However, it should be recognised that such ignorance towards data-driven practices is not limited to those in artistic roles. When asked if they used the Audience Finder platform in

their roles, an interesting dialogue took place between a marketing manager and an executive director:

> **Int......**Do you use Audience Finder within your job role?
>
> **5a.......**I've still added a note to do it to be honest, but I would really like to have a look at it, so this is a kind of mental note and an opportunity for me to ask [ORG 5b] to show me what Audience Finder is.
>
> **5b.......**Yes, I mean, I think it's really useful in terms of us benchmarking against other venues and arts organisations in the region and nationally, and it's great to know where we are.
>
> **5a.......**Yes.
>
> **5b.......**So it's a very easy tool and easy reference for that.
>
> **5a.......**Do you just log online, log on online, and then you can go in and have a look?
>
> **5b.......**So, there's a dashboard and all the information is there in various different forms, and you can request different reports as well if they're not there.
>
> **5a.......**Do I have access to it?
>
> **5b.......**Well, I can get you a login, yes.

This dialogue highlights that the organisation's executive director was unaware about or had yet to engage with the Audience Finder, despite this being a key requirement of their organisation's public funding. While this example of ignorance can be regarded more as unawareness, one of the chief executives claimed that the historic relationship between ACOs and Arts Council England was also a cause of ignorance towards data-driven processes:

> I suppose it's difficult...this is long history, but I know some organisations will not recognise that Arts Council policy or data sharing can support what they do. So, I think that's a cultural thing really about understanding the benefits (ORG 3).

To recap, my analysis in this section has shown that some, typically aesthetic-oriented, participants were concerned that increasing the use of data-driven practices in an ACOs artistic decision making may challenge their professional identity as an expert in the organisation (i.e.

they fear data will do their job for them). On the other hand, participants who typically aligned with market logic and were mostly supportive of data-driven practices were concerned that their colleagues in typically aesthetic-oriented roles – while acknowledging their significant contribution to the work produced – are sometimes ignorant about the benefits of data-driven practices and how data can be used to support everyone's work.

5.2.2 Developing professional identity through data awareness

To get beyond the perception of aesthetic-oriented arts managers' naivety towards data-driven decision-making processes, participants whose professional identity is, to a greater or lesser extent, shaped by their knowledge of data (such as data insight managers or marketers) believed that managers who appear to be data adverse must do more to understand how data can support the work of the organisation: 'Now, I'm not saying we should all be data wizards, but I think anyone who is working in a senior position should have at least some understanding of the data so they can participate in these conversations' (ORG 9). Similarly, one chief executive spoke about how better understanding of their colleagues' roles could complement the work they do:

> If you think about it logically, both the skills and experience of the artistic team here and the depth of data analysis available should complement each other nicely. I just think there needs to be a change in some attitudes, or at least some PD [professional development] about how to achieve this and get everyone singing from the same hymn sheet (ORG 12).

The analysis suggests that if all members of an ACO could understand – or at least recognise – data-driven processes as a useful resource for supporting artistic work, the benefits would be afforded to all. For example, a data insight manager spoke about a positive experience of getting their artistic team to engage with data:

> […] these initiatives help people to see...consider a season of work as a whole and be able to balance it a little bit more. I think some of the more enlightened artistic planning team will try and say, 'Okay, well, if you've got this piece for families, we'll try it, this is your new writing, this is more your existing audiences'. So they're starting to see, particularly the audience segmentation, they're starting to think of the audience segmentation and plan (ORG 9).

In this regard, the participant described how through their role as a data expert, they guided other members of their organisation – in this case the artistic planning team – to recognise the value of data analysis and insight for supporting their own roles while still recognising their autonomy over the artistic decision-making process. Similarly, a chief executive spoke about how senior management in artistic roles would benefit from understanding how data can complement the work they do:

> The ability to have a much better understanding of who attended the work would be very, very helpful. Because, again, this is always the danger that when an artist doesn't get the audiences they were expecting, they don't react well to it, and they're scared of doing something similar in the future…but actually, access to the data could embolden and enable people to actually pursue a line of practice or an approach or a style or production (ORG 11).

Taken together, these accounts not only highlight the benefits of understanding data-driven practices for the wider organisation, they also demonstrate how getting data-adverse arts managers to develop their data awareness can help strengthen their professional identity, as it actually helps to bolster their existing knowledge and identifies new opportunities for them to apply their creativity, which in turn could help to alleviate any perceived fears or concerns that data challenges arts managers' professional identity and/or autonomy to make artistic decisions. However, while these comments have shown that some data-sceptic arts managers are willing to engage in efforts to boost their data awareness, other participants explained that certain members of their organisation are less enthused to do so.

5.2.2.1 Frustration

Despite the potential value-added of data awareness, the analysis highlights that not everyone in an arts organisation is interested in reshaping their professional identity to incorporate new data-driven practices. Arts managers in data expert roles (e.g. data insight managers and marketing managers) noted how they spent a great deal of time developing their own data awareness and learning about new data tools (e.g. Audience Finder) with a view to disseminating that knowledge and expertise to their colleagues. For example, a director of communications explained how they

'spend a lot of time attending workshops and conferences to learn more about what data can do for [the organisation]' (ORG 6). Similarly, a chief executive noted that:

> Although I've just been complaining about all those things we have to do for them [the Audience Agency], they do run a huge number of training workshops and invite us to a number of webinars…which are really useful in bringing us up to speed with the system [the Audience Finder], which we then share with others here (ORG 3).

While these participants spoke about their proactive approaches to developing their data awareness and skills, they were frustrated that other members of the organisation were not concerned about attending such events or learning from those who had attended. For example, the same director of communications felt that 'it's a bit like pulling teeth...my team and I make lots of effort to go out and learn about this stuff…how we can best use it, etc., but you come back and share what you've learned [and] people just don't seem that bothered' (ORG 6). Similarly, a data insight manager believed that 'some of the more senior members just want us to give them the answers…they're not interested about how we got to those answers' (ORG 9). Although not a substantive finding, these accounts again show that some data-sceptic arts managers in ACOs are simply not interested in acquiring data skills or even developing any form of data awareness.

5.2.2.2   Generational divides

One potential reason emerging from the data for why some arts managers are resistant to learning data skills or developing data awareness could be linked to a generational divide between colleagues. While only two participants spoke about this, it is still an interesting finding, as it may help to explain why some arts managers seem disinterested in reshaping their professional identity to incorporate new data-driven practices. To illustrate this point, one of the directors of communication stated:

> I completely get why some people can't get onboard with this big surge in data; you know, they've probably been running arts centres for years without access to what [data] we have today, so I think it's nothing more complicated than a 'didn't need it then, don't need it now' attitude...I mean, is that the right attitude? Perhaps not, but that's why it's our job to show them otherwise (ORG 13).

Here, the participant acknowledged that some arts managers feel that they have successfully run their organisation without relying on the data-driven processes at their disposal today. However, it is perhaps the notion of a 'surge in data' that may be the barrier to some managers engagement. For example, the oldest of the research participants, and artistic director talked about how they

> come from a generation of managers where technology has moved at such a speed that I just feel...I can't deal with the amount of information of all kinds coming in […]; I think there is too much information available or being made available or being shared where it's irrelevant. I'm retiring within the next two years…I already struggle with the amount of daily emails…what's the point of me trying to get my head around another system [the Audience Finder] at this stage? (ORG 8).

Although this sentiment may only be shared by those arts managers who are long into their careers and who had experienced the sector before the boom in data as we know it today, as a finding it does highlight the pressures some participants feel they are under to engage with, and dedicate time to, new developments in the sector. It also shows that arts managers may arrive at a point in their careers – in this case retirement – where they become less protective of their professional identity because they do not feel it is worth their time learning new skills that may safeguard that identity.

In summary, my analysis has shown that while those in data-expert roles want to help their colleagues who are less enthused by data-driven practices to accept that such practices can complement the work they do, it will require those arts managers to reshape/reconsider what their professional identity is in order to accept data-driven practices as a part of it. However, this notion of reshaping professional identity through acquiring data skills and awareness will only work if those arts managers who feel their identity is being challenged are willing to embrace change. Furthermore, it has been shown that those who are not willing to learn to embrace change will frustrate their colleagues who want to share their experiences, one cause of which may be a generational divide.

5.3 Conclusion

This chapter has shown that there was collective agreement among most participants that developing audiences is a good thing for their organisation and that, to a greater or lesser extent, data-driven practices (e.g. interrogation of their own audience demographics or the data made available through data pooling platforms) can help inform decisions that support such development. In addition, while participants see the benefits of data-driven practices under (primarily) market logic for curating an artistic programme that is both resilient and sustainable (i.e. financially sound), participants are also mindful of the implications that data-driven practices could have on the artistic (aesthetic-oriented) work of the publicly funded arts and cultural sector. Building on the findings in subsection 4.3 – the perception that data-driven practices and policies (i.e. the data sharing policy) were tools through which an ACOs activities could be assessed by ACE – most participants agreed that data-driven practices risked becoming a proxy for artistic decision making, challenging an organisation's ability to uphold their mission, take artistic risks, and promote artistic excellence going forward. Another key finding in this chapter was the need to balance different priorities. Despite different participants working in roles that typically align with different types of logic (e.g. market and funding logics for marketers and executives and aesthetic logic for artistics) when it comes to data-driven practices, participants recognised the need to balance these positions and identify a 'middle ground' in their preferred approaches to artistic programming that 'worked for everyone'.

The analysis also revealed that the increasing use of data-driven practices in ACOs creates tensions for participants, irrespective of their roles (i.e. executives, marketers, or artistics), as such practices can pull/lead them in a different direction to what they believed underpinned their own professional identity and autonomy as an arts manager. My analysis suggests that the 'professional identity' of an arts manager is, at a fundamental level, informed by their experience, expertise, and knowledge as arts professionals in the sector (i.e. knowledge and experience of creating and supporting the production of artistic works). While upholding their professional

identity as knowledgeable and experienced arts professionals, the participants recognised the limitations that come with this and that their 'desire to produce a piece of work' inevitably means that some decisions which are not data-driven might fail to deliver against intended outcomes. However, analysis of the findings relating to professional identity also reinforced the need for balance when making artistic programming decisions, highlighting how participants recognised the need to balance the unique perspectives of all arts managers in an organisation, as data cannot be used in isolation. The final set of findings to emerge from the analysis related to a belief that when trying to achieve this organisational balance, some data-sceptic arts managers are not willing to develop their data awareness, which frustrated the data-expert participants who were willing to share their knowledge with colleagues. Taken together, these collective understandings of how data-driven practices are perceived to challenge the professional identities and autonomy of arts managers will be helpful for considering how such tensions may be addressed going forward and whether they manifest themselves in other areas of an arts manager's work.

6 'Stuck in the Middle' – Satisfying the Divergent Legitimacy Demands Generated by the Data Sharing Policy

In this chapter, I present my analysis and discussion of how arts managers identify and deal with the challenges of engaging with the data sharing policy (DSP) in an environment that requires them to satisfy a number of divergent legitimacy demands set by the multiple legitimating actors they engage with: Arts Council England (ACE), the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), their peers (other funded arts organisations or artists), and their audiences. I suggest that policy of this type generates a series of tensions relating to arts organisations' ability to demonstrate and maintain organisational legitimacy with these different actors, which leaves them 'stuck in the middle'.

To help understand arts managers perceptions of what the DSP will mean for the way their organisations meet and uphold organisational legitimacy, I analyse the legitimacy judgements

made by participants along three distinct, but not exclusive, dimensions: relational, moral, and instrumental legitimacy (Tost, 2011). By so doing, this analysis highlights three themes relating to the DSP: *Data sharing vs. data protection, comradery vs. competition, and integrity vs. control*, which cover tensions relating to an organisation's perceived ability to uphold data privacy laws, maintain a trusting relationship with their customers, and steer off competition from their peers while being seen as a cooperative and supporting friend.

I suggest that these tensions influence participants' responses to the DSP (at the time of this research), with their accounts ultimately suggesting that there is no action they can take that does not have a consequential impact on their legitimacy with at least one of these actors. Arts managers are therefore challenged with needing to prioritise which of these actors it is more important to maintain organisational legitimacy with in both the short and long term when considering their actions against the policy requirements. Through the analysis, it can be suggested that across each of these areas of tension, arts managers seek to maintain legitimacy with their audience above any other actor.

To present the findings, this chapter is organised as follows: First, I present an overview of the different legitimating actors and their perceived legitimacy requirements considered by the arts managers who participated in this research. Second, I present findings that show how the DSP generates tensions and challenges for meeting the legitimacy requirements of each of the aforementioned legitimating actors, tensions that relate to data sharing vs. data protection,[17] integrity vs. control, and comradery vs. competition.

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[17] Since writing this chapter (and the majority of this thesis), the **General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)** has been introduced across the European Union. The comments presented in this chapter are made in reference to the older Data Protection Act (1998) and before the GDPR became prominent in the minds of participants, i.e. when GDPR compliance campaigns began. If the data was to be captured now, more emphasis would be expected in terms of the legitimacy requirements of the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

6.1 Legitimating Actors and Legitimacy Requirements

Arts managers participate in multiple social systems, which include the publicly funded arts social system and the legal social system. In these social systems, there are a number of legitimating actors, either individuals or groups, who 'depend on an organisation to fulfil their own goals and whom, in turn, the organisation depends on' (Johnson et al., 2008). Participants identified four core legitimating actors when making sense of the DSP, which were Arts Council England (ACE; the policymaker), the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO; the independent legal authority who uphold data privacy law), the audience (whose data is of central interest to the DSP), and peers (other funded arts organisations and artists).

In the following four subsections, I present arts managers' perceptions of what they believe their organisations must do to satisfy each key legitimating actor's requirements so as to demonstrate organisational legitimacy.

6.1.1 Perceived legitimacy requirements of the ICO

Government policy defines the legal frameworks and responsibilities through which organisations – be they public, private, or not-for-profit – conduct their business. The Information Commissioners Office (ICO) is the independent legal authority that upholds data privacy law in the United Kingdom. As the DSP requires arts organisations to 'share personal customer contact data (to allow for direct marketing) to other ACE funded organisations' (Arts Council England, 2016a), such actions (sharing personal customer data) fall under the jurisdiction of the Data Protection Act (1998), overseen by the ICO. In order to be considered as a legitimate entity to ICO, arts managers believe that all their actions relating to the capture, storage, and usage of their customers' data must always adhere to the data privacy laws outlined in the Data Protection Act. This is an example of both *moral* legitimacy – relating to the integrity and ethicality of an entity – and *instrumental* legitimacy, i.e. internalised goals or outcomes (Tost, 2011).

Arts managers are aware of the legal obligations they face when handling their audiences' (i.e. customers') sensitive data, and they see this as a high priority. For example, a box office manager noted that although 'we have the things we need to do for the Arts Council, we also have those legal constraints we're bound to follow – the Data Protection Act, for instance' (ORG 14). Another participant added that all their activities relating to the handling of audience data must be 'within guidelines approved by the Information Commissioner' (ORG 12). To be compliant with the Data Protection Act, arts organisations must ensure that any personal information they collect is correctly stored and used. In considering their day-to-day handling of this type of data, participants made explicit reference to how their actions are shaped and bound by these principles:

> […] there is legislation that we have to comply with, and therefore we have to be very careful that we don't do anything essentially that we do not have specific consent for from the individual customer (ORG 1b).

> Data protection is such an important area for any organisation […], and I'm very confident that the way we collect and store people's personal data is done in a way which keeps the Information Commissioner happy (ORG 9).

The notions of compliance in the above comments show how arts managers establish what they believe to be the legitimacy requirements or *instrumental* goals expected of them. They want to know that their actions are (in this context, the way they handle audience data) 'operating within the law' (ORG 7).

Something that is clearly important to arts managers and their organisations is being knowledgeable of any changes to their legal obligations (or goals) for handling audience [customer] data. For example, a director of communications talked about how they 'try and keep [themselves] abreast of any kind of legal changes and progressions within the industry' (ORG 13), while an artistic director felt that it was 'important that we understand […] the legal context for what we gather and what we share' (ORG 7) and a data insight manager noted how they have 'done a lot of work to try and bring [themselves] up to date with data protection legislation' (ORG 9). These comments are again indicative of the perceived legitimacy requirement that arts

organisations must always be compliant with the legal obligations of the Data Protection Act, which, as another participant noted, 'is going to continue to be absolutely a core of what we do, especially as I think…because in our lifetimes more technological advances are going to make it easier and easier to use data' (ORG 14).

Taken together, these accounts highlight how arts managers regard the appropriate handling of the personal customer data they collect, store, and use as an instrumental goal – or expectation – that they must meet in order to be legally compliant and thus demonstrate organisational legitimacy to the Information Commissioner's Office, which governs the Data Protection Act. Conscious of these requirements, arts managers make sure that they are aware of any changes in said expectations so that they can continue 'operating within the law' (ORG 7). However, it is this perceived legitimacy requirement that arts managers fear they will struggle to uphold when considering the DSP, as will be shown in subsection 6.2.1.

6.1.2 Perceived legitimacy requirements of Arts Council England

Although arts organisations 'operate in a multi-stakeholder funding environment' (ORG 3), one of their most influential funders is ACE, as it is ACE that transforms government objectives and priorities into the funding criteria through which they distribute public money (subsidies) to arts organisations. In addition to outlining their criteria for funding, ACE also have the ability to introduce additional policies that funded organisations must adhere to, of which the DSP is an example. As one of the main challenges for the sector is 'viability and sustainability' (Poisson-de-Haro and Menot, 2014), arts managers must demonstrate that they are a legitimate organisation, and thus maintain access to their subsidy by fulfilling the policy requirements and funding conditions mandated by ACE. Again, turning to Tost's (2011) framework, this an example of *instrumental* legitimacy, i.e. the need to deliver against internalised goals or outcomes.

Participants used words such as 'vital' and 'essential' to describe their public subsidy, with one executive director noting how 'it's [public subsidy] what allows us to keep our doors open […]'

(ORG 5a), while another noted that 'it's not a huge amount of money in the grand scheme of things, but we'd certainly be up a stream without a paddle if we stopped getting it' (ORG 13). Participants spoke about how maintaining access to this funding is important as their other revenue sources in the multi-stakeholder environment are facing increasing cuts. For example, one participant noted that 'we get zero pounds and zero pence' (ORG 12) from their local authority, with another adding that 'we have now lost all of our local authority funding […]' (ORG 8).

To maintain their funding, arts organisations must do as they are told. The literature review highlighted that for ACE to continue distributing public subsidies, there is an expectation that the organisations they fund fulfil the agreed targets set by the policymakers (Prince, 2014). It is this fulfilment of agreed targets, or adherence to ACE policy, that are examples of the *rules* and *norms* of the publicly funded arts social system that arts managers should follow in order to demonstrate their organisational legitimacy. This notion was reflected in the participants' accounts through the suggestion that, to be recognised as a National Portfolio organisation, they must be willing to 'jump through hoops' (ORG 14) and 'make sure we're compliant with what our funders want of us' (ORG 7).

In doing as they are told, arts managers believe that they demonstrate legitimacy to their funders, with participants pointing out how 'we are accountable to the Arts Council as an NPO; they are a significant funder, and we are accountable to them for the grant that they give us and the grant conditions that come attached to that grant' (ORG 5a). This is another example of how arts managers' attribute value to the 'significant' funds they receive from the public purse. Furthermore, on the notion of accountability, and to show that they are doing as they are told, participants also spoke about the need to supply evidence of how they satisfy the conditions of ACE funding. For example, one chief executive claimed that 'accountability is about demonstrating your work and your value when you're in receipt of public funds…demonstrating they've been used well' (ORG 4), while an executive administrator added:

> I think as the funds become tighter, there's a lot more emphasis on hitting objectives, and I don't know if this is right or not, but my feeling is that there's a lot more setting of objectives and milestones that you set out that you've got to achieve, and the Arts Council wants us to achieve so many things as part of our agreement with being an NPO (ORG 1a).

Comments such as these support Miller and Rose's (2008) claim that those at the bottom of the funding chain – the arts organisations – must return 'evidence of their "impacts" and "outcomes" back up the hierarchy in order to earn higher budgets or avoid cuts' (cited in Prince, 2014, p.751), as was shown in the findings in Section 4.3.

The accounts presented above highlight a very instrumental – goal and outcome driven (Tost, 2011) – understanding of what arts managers think they need to achieve in order to demonstrate organisational legitimacy to their funders. Arts managers suggested that their funding is dependent, to a large extent, on their ability to do as they are told, which involves demonstrating their 'impacts and outcomes' (Holden, 2004). By doing as they are told (i.e. fulfilling targets and adhering to policy), arts managers believe they can demonstrate accountability, and subsequently legitimacy, for the subsidies they receive from ACE. However, it is these perceived legitimacy requirements of ACE that are challenged by the advent of the DSP, a tension that is examined in subsection 6.2.1.2.

6.1.3 Perceived legitimacy requirements of the audience

Audiences are the lifeblood of any arts and cultural organisation. As the sector has traditionally functioned on a product-led model – pushing its products (e.g. productions) down to their audiences as consumers – organisations have become reliant on the income this consumption generates. When audience members book a ticket for one of these products, organisations not only collect their personal contact details for operational reasons (e.g. processing credit card transactions) but, with their permission, they can also use these details for marketing purposes to sell future products to them. It is these personal customer contact details that are at the heart of the DSP, which states that the organisations that originally collected the data should, with

permission, share it with other relevant ACE funded organisations so that they can also use it for direct marketing. However, arts managers were concerned that the requirement to share personal customer contact details will have a significant impact on their *moral* and *relational* legitimacy with their audiences, which may stop existing audience members returning in the future.

Participants recognised that their organisations must meet the needs and expectations of their target customers (Poisson-de-Haro and Menot, 2014, p.18). When discussing audience expectations of the way arts organisations handle their personal data, participant accounts typically exhibited two different dimensions of legitimacy: *moral* and *relational* (Tost, 2011). Regarding *moral* legitimacy*,* participants believed that their audiences expect them to act ethically and appropriately when collecting, storing, and using their personal data and to 'always have their [the audiences] best interests in mind' (ORG 5b). For example, participants suggested that 'all [their] activities should come across to the audience as being appropriate and proper […]' (ORG 3):

> It shouldn't matter what data we ask the customer for; what really matters is being upfront and honest about how we intend to use it [the data] and let them [the customer] decide if they're happy with that or not (ORG 6).

This comment by a director of communications captures the idea of integrity relating to *moral* legitimacy, demonstrating how arts managers want to be seen as being honest with their audience about how their data will be used, which they believe is 'the right thing to do' (ORG 6).

The *relational* dimension of legitimacy is also clearly evident in how participants perceived the legitimacy requirements of their audience. In their accounts, it was obvious that arts managers want to be seen as upholding trust and acting as a friend to their audiences. For example, participants described themselves as being 'audience focused' – 'we care about our audiences; that's what we're doing, that's what we're here to do.' (ORG11) – as well as 'prid[ing] ourselves on being a venue that our audience can trust' (ORG15).

Gaining the trust of their audience is also clearly important when collecting personal customer contact data. Participants demonstrated an acute awareness of trust-related issues with regard to data, noting how they closely followed the 'different attitudes' of customers. Referencing studies conducted by the Market Research Society [18] about data security, a data insight manager commented that:

> There was a poll […] about their [customer] views on data protection and how much they trust their data to be protected by different organisations and stuff, and there were some different demographic differences in that…I'm sure it came up that younger people are more suspicious or less trusting with their data (ORG 9).

Referring to studies such as this, it can be suggested that participants are aware of the low levels of trust customers have in an organisation's ability to use their data appropriately. Therefore, arts managers want to uphold this trusting relationship and 'avoid doing anything which makes [them] seem less trustworthy' (ORG 9).

From these accounts, it is evident that arts managers consider their organisations' 'processes and techniques' – or actions – for dealing with their audiences' data as a way of demonstrating organisational legitimacy. Many of these comments reflect Holden's (2006) stance that arts organisations should create trust, promote mutual respect, and provide a basis for sociability. This notion was also supported by the ACE representative, who noted that, as an industry, the relationship between arts organisations and their audience is 'built on trust' and that they have 'got to treat the [audience] like adults […]' (ORG 10), a comment that is reflective of respect. However, participants were also conscious of the repercussions they may face if they fail to uphold these values; in this sense, one chief executive noted that 'just because [they are] their local theatre, doesn't mean [the audience] won't hold [them] to account if [they] do something wrong' (ORG 3).

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[18] https://www.mrs.org.uk/article/item/1396

In summary, given the consensus in the arts management literature that audiences are declining – either through economic challenges or the dilution of audiences due to increased cultural and leisure offerings (Poisson-de-Haro and Menot, 2014, p.8), arts managers want to do everything they can to maintain their existing audiences. One way that arts managers try to achieve this is through acting responsibly (*moral* legitimacy) and being trustworthy (*relational* legitimacy) when handling personal customer contact data. In fact, *moral* and *relational* legitimacy appear to be closely related to one another with regard to data handling. For example, participants suggested that using their audiences' data in the way it was intended shows integrity, which in turn helps the organisation uphold trust. Arts managers are also mindful of the repercussions they may face if they fail to satisfy these two dimensions of legitimacy, which – as will be shown in subsection 6.2.3 – is another tension brought about by the introduction of the DSP.

6.1.4 Perceived legitimacy requirements of peers

At the time this research was conducted, there were 663[19] publicly funded National Portfolio organisations, each of which applies for individual ACE funding on a bi-annual basis. These organisations often work together in co-productions, play host to the work of touring companies, or (in the case of large metropolitan areas, e.g. London) operate near one another (amongst other commercial ventures, e.g. the West End). The relevance of the DSP to these organisations is two-fold. First, each of these organisations will be expected to adhere to the conditions of the policy (as outlined in subsection 3.2.2.1). Second, under this policy, each of these organisations will be able to request access to the personal customer contact details held by one another (with the appropriate consent). As with their perceived requirements of other legitimating actors, participant accounts exhibited different dimensions of legitimacy when discussing the relationships with their peers. While *relational* legitimacy appeared to dominate their responses, they also acknowledged the influence of the *instrumental* legitimacy dimension.

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[19] Investment from 2015–2018 (http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/our-investment-2015-18/national-portfolio-organisations).

Like the perceived legitimacy requirements of the audience, my analysis suggests that arts managers want to have a relationship with their peers that includes perceptions of 'fairness, benevolence, and communality' (Tost, 2011), notions of *relational* legitimacy that were evident in many of the participants' responses. For example, regarding communality, participants spoke about how, over recent years, 'there's been a lot more coming together of arts organisations' (ORG 1b) that has led to 'more collaborative working' (ORG 8). As a result, participants related how working together benefits their organisations. For example, one marketing manager noted how 'we are stronger working together than in competition from each other' (ORG 11) – referring here to their organisation's cross-city arts partnership. Others commented:

> It's always the case that working in the arts is actually a hugely collaborative process, and I think, for me, it's about acknowledging the fact that, actually, we are all very stretched in what we do, and […] I think we are now acknowledging that we do much better if we work together (ORG 2).

> I think because of the funding landscape over recent years, there are far more co-productions than there ever used to be as a way of sharing resource and production budgets (ORG 13)

The above accounts not only addressed the purported benefits of working together but also resonated with the earlier *instrumental* notion of arts organisations needing to 'achieve more' to retain their subsidies (see Section 4.3).

Arts managers also suggested that all publicly funded arts organisations should be treated fairly. For example, participants noted how 'we should all stand on a level playing field […]' (ORG 6), claiming here how all public funded arts organisations should have access to the same resources, while another suggested that 'just because they don't have a physical building doesn't mean what they set out to do is any different from ours' (ORG 7), referring to touring theatre companies and other recipients of ACE subsidies who are perceived drivers for the introduction of the DSP (see subsection 4.4.2). On the whole, participants were seen to explicitly reject the suggestion in the arts management literature that 'competitive intensity within the arts is high due to the large

number of ACOs' (Poisson-de-Haro and Menot, 2014, p.25). As one marketing manager from a London-based venue noted:

> I think the London theatre sector, the NPO London theatre sector, is genuinely quite collaborative; I think an understanding has been reached that we are stronger working together than in competition from each other (ORG 11).

Another participant commented how '[…] we're not in competition with each other […]; actually, we are all passionate about what we do in terms of the art forms that we work with' (ORG 2). Comments such as these are consistent with the ACE representative's assertion that 'on the whole, people aren't in competition with each other' and how organisations may have previously acted as though they were 'in competition with each other as a sector rather than in a competition with the wider leisure industry for people's time and money' (ORG 10).

However, while the comments presented above reflect the idea of fairness, benevolence, and communality amongst organisations – suggesting that feelings of competition are non-existent – some participants were acutely aware that their funding is granted based on their individual ability to meet the targets set by the funder, an idea that was best reflected by two participants:

> So yeah, we're all working towards a similar end goal, and we should support each other in that […], but I guess, at the end of the day, the Arts Council don't necessarily look at what we do together […] but as individual organisations (ORG 13).

> I think it's wonderful that we all work together and support each other's activities, but obviously we need to make sure we're delivering what we said we will in our funding agreement […] (ORG 2).

Accounts such as these show that the *instrumental* dimension of legitimacy is also evident in the way arts managers consider the relationship between themselves and their peers. Resonating with the earlier idea that publicly funded arts organisations must demonstrate organisational legitimacy to their funders by achieving the individual goals and outcomes expected of them, comments such as these suggest how arts organisations may look to prioritise the attainment of their own goals

over those of their peers. As will be seen later in this chapter, I suggest that arts managers being drawn towards goal attainment, and the introduction of the DSP, produces significant tensions between the perceived dimensions of *relational* (fairness, benevolence, and communality) and *instrumental* (goal attainment) legitimacy. Both the implicit and explicit responses of participants suggested that the DSP is reintroducing fears of competition between these organisations, which in turn leads arts managers to question how they maintain organisational legitimacy with the different actors in this social system.

6.2 Challenges of Meeting Legitimacy Requirements of Each Legitimating Actor in Light of the Data Sharing Policy

The data presented in the previous sections has outlined the general perceptions of what arts managers considered to be the requirements of the key legitimating actors they must satisfy. Four key legitimating actors in the publicly funded arts social system were identified: The ICO, Arts Council England, the audience, and their peers. Overall, the general legitimacy requirements organisations need to satisfy can be summarised as:

- **The Information Commissioner's Office**: Arts organisations must make sure they know the legal requirements for the activities they undertake and, to the best of their knowledge, they are 'operating within the law'.

- **Arts Council England**: Arts organisations in receipt of public subsidy must do as they are asked by the funder to continue receiving their subsidy. The organisations must also provide evidence of this.

- **The Audience**: Arts organisations understand how important their audience is to their long-term viability. They need to maintain – and develop – a trusting relationship with their audience and treat them with respect.

- **Peers**: Arts organisations should work collaboratively and act fairly with other publicly funded arts organisations. However, they are also mindful of their individual goal attainment.

In this section, my findings show that because ACE's data sharing policy challenges an arts organisation's perceived ability to satisfy its different legitimacy demands, arts managers feel 'stuck in the middle'. For example:

> It's like we're stuck between a rock and a hard place […]. We try to do everything above board, you know, making sure we do what the Information Commissioner says we should do, but then the Arts Council drop this on us, and it's like we've now got to decide who has the bigger voice per se […], although I suspect it will be the Information Commissioner (ORG 14).

The analysis reveals how the DSP exacerbates tensions in the arts organisations perceived ability to satisfy the divergent legitimacy requirements of these key actors. Overall, this section highlights how arts managers find themselves between conflicting social systems and suggests that they need to decide whose 'voice' is more influential – e.g. which actor is more important to demonstrate organisational legitimacy to in the long term – which in turn informs the actions the organisation takes when responding to the policy. However, this leads arts managers to fear that, in prioritising the requirements of one legitimating actor, they may weaken [lose] their organisational legitimacy with others in the short term.

My analysis identifies three key tension areas, i.e. *data sharing vs. data protection*, *integrity vs. control*, and *comradery vs. competition*, each of which considers the different dimensions of legitimacy in relation to the perceived legitimacy requirements (as mapped out in Figure 6).
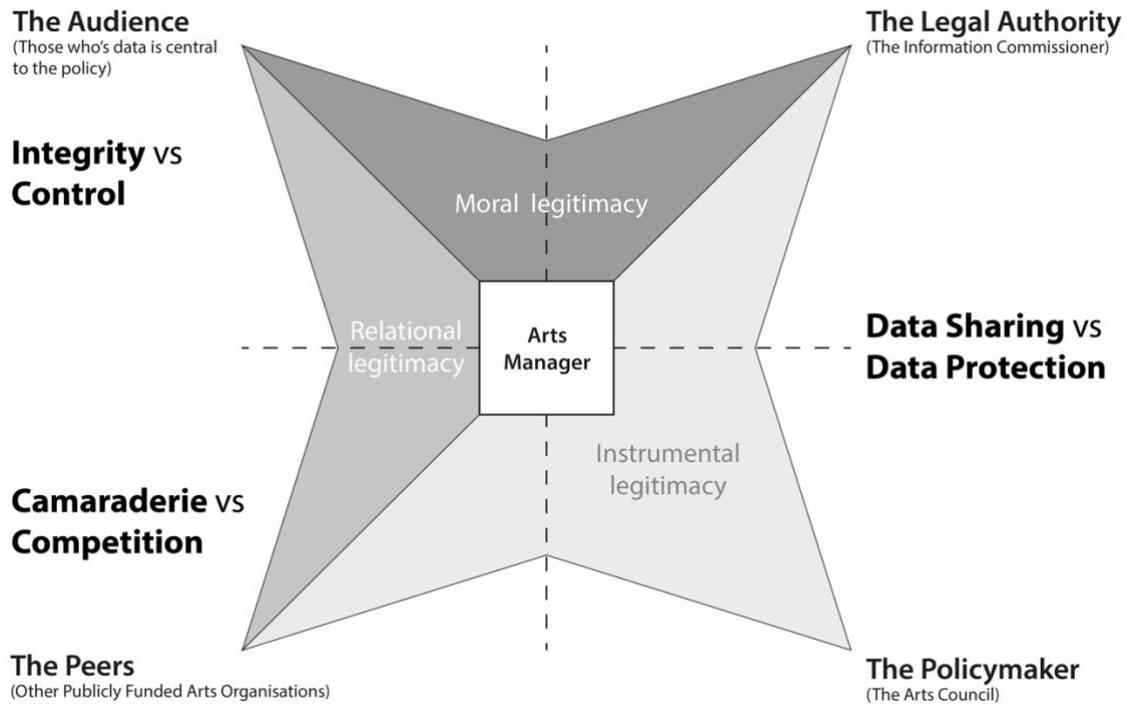
Figure 6: Mapping Dimensions of Legitimacy to Data Sharing Policy's Legitimating Actors

6.2.1 Data sharing vs. data protection

(Challenges in meeting the legitimacy demands of both the Information Commissioner's Office and Arts Council England)

> *'All our data protection laws in this country are against preventing the proliferation of people's personal data' (ORG 4).*

As was shown in Chapter 4 (see subsection 4.1.1), one of the main types of data arts organisations collect and use is customer record and contact data, which is 'possibly the biggest, *the* most crucial, but also the most complex' type of data arts organisations collect (ORG 7). However, the findings of this research suggest that, in light of the DSP, arts managers are worried that by trying to satisfy the *instrumental* legitimacy requirements of ACE, they will be unable to satisfy the requirements of the Information Commissioner or vice versa. To analyse these findings, I will first identify how arts managers attempt to satisfy the *instrumental* legitimacy requirements of the

Information Commissioner – the need to 'operate within the law' – and the processes and fears that come with this. After doing so, I will then present the data relating to ACE's *instrumental* legitimacy requirements for arts organisations to engage in the DSP. The section will then conclude by suggesting that the conflicting *instrumental* legitimacy demands of both the ICO and ACE leave arts managers 'stuck in the middle'. These findings are important because they suggest that policies such as the DSP do not fully consider how organisations are able to satisfy both policy demands and the demands of other, legal entities they are accountable to.

6.2.1.1 Satisfying the legitimacy demands of the Information Commissioner

The introduction of the DSP has led to arts managers increasingly having to consider the legal frameworks and obligations under which they capture and store their customer contact and records data. Prior to the policy introduction, demonstrating (and thus satisfying) the legitimacy demands of the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) was a relatively straightforward process:

> We've never really had to give the Data Protection Act much thought before…well marketing might have […], but I guess it's always been a pretty straightforward process. The customer buys a ticket, and other than a few emails we might send them, their data just sits there in Spectrix [box office platform] (ORG 2).

In fact, participants claimed that if 'there hadn't been the push from Arts Council in this case [mandating the policy], we [wouldn't] suddenly […] be thinking about data sharing agreements between arts organisations' (ORG 7), in addition to also outlining how the policy 'has certainly made us pay closer attention to our responsibilities as data controllers' (ORG 9). Through these accounts, and those presented in Chapter 4 (see subsection 4.1.1), although arts organisations regularly capture and use customer contact data, because they did not participate in any data sharing activities involving data covered by the Data Protection Act, they would not necessarily have considered their actions against the legitimacy requirements of the ICO. However, as a consequence of the DSP's introduction, arts managers are now acutely aware of their legal obligations to the Data Protection Act when considering the requirements of ACE policy.

6.2.1.1.1 *Legal obligations*

Participants frequently spoke about the intersections between the Data Protection Act and the DSP. While the policy intention was subjective amongst participants, 'the methods by how you do it [implement the policy] and making it within the bounds of the law and that kind of thing are debatable' (ORG 9). The Data Protection Act was regarded by one marketing manager as:

> [an] Act that we are legally obliged to follow and that trumps any sort of other legislation because, at the end of the day, if we do not follow the Data Protection Act, we are liable as an organisation. So, I think the issue of data sharing has actually...you know, it has made it very difficult in that sense (ORG 11).

Likewise, another marketing manager was 'not sure how it [DSP] will work with the quite detailed do's and don'ts set out by the Information Commissioner' (ORG 5b). Taken together with the earlier comment that 'operating within the law' (ORG 7) is a fundamental legitimacy requirement for arts managers, the Data Protection Act is highly influential on the way arts managers understand – and therefore approach – the DSP requirement to share customer contact data with other ACE-funded organisations.

When talking about their liability and need to be seen as operating legally, participants made a legitimacy judgement about DSP along *instrumental* grounds, i.e. they were looking to understand how the DSP will either help them achieve, or not achieve, one or more desirable outcomes or goals (Tost, 2011). In this instance, the desirable outcome for arts managers is that they are successful in being legally compliant with the ICO by upholding the rules of the Data Protection Act. This notion is consistent with the perceived legitimacy requirements presented in subsection 6.1.1, where participants spoke about staying informed about any legal changes in the industry, maintaining an understanding of the legal context for the data they gather and share, and making sure that all their data activities are within ICO guidelines.

Arts managers were concerned about the need to gain customer consent when considering the DSP statement. A chief executive noted how 'all our data protection laws in this country are

against preventing the proliferation of people's personal data' (ORG 4), while others highlighted how 'there are certain things in terms of constraints around data protection, around anonymity of individuals and organisations we must keep in mind' (ORG 3) and how 'we always comply with the Data Protection legislation when we ask them [the customer] for their details' (ORG 9). In fact, when it comes to their legal obligations regarding the sharing of customer contact data, participants felt that they 'are the facilitators of it [data sharing], but it is not [their] decision per se as to whether that data is shared…ultimately, the decision lies with the customer' (ORG 9). Other comments were as follows:

> I think the difficulty for me comes with the idea of compliance with data sharing, which is not necessarily customer focused. At the end of the day, the Data Protection Act puts the wishes of customers and those…the individual holders of their data…at the front of the legislation. So, it's all about them making the decisions about how they want their data to be used (ORG 11).

In these accounts, participants recognised the goals associated with achieving the *instrumental* legitimacy requirements of the ICO and outlining criteria for how they make a judgement of the effectiveness or efficiency of the DSP against their perusal of these internalised goals. In this instance, these goals are making sure that the DSP does not conflict with the legal constraints of the DPA and lead to the exploitation of their audiences' data, in addition to ensuring that their actions are in keeping with their customers' wishes.

6.2.1.1.2 *Fear of sharing data*

As their accounts suggested that legal compliance is at the forefront of the collection and usage of customer (audience) contact data, it is no surprise that some arts managers were 'scared' of sharing that data with others. For example, one participant claimed that 'many organisations like us are wary of sharing data, so we're over scared' (ORG 7), while another suggested that they are 'overcautious about sharing […]; unless it's really clear that we're part of a wider formal structure of sharing data […], [we] tend not to share' (ORG 9).

Because arts managers make legitimacy judgements about the DSP along *instrumental* – goal driven – grounds, considering how the policy intersects with their legal obligations to the Data Protection Act, it can be seen how these obligations inform their actions and, in this instance, cause hesitancy when asked by another entity to share data. The data insight manager's main worry was not with their organisation's ability to adhere to the legal obligations of the Data Protection Act but 'those who we may be required to share it with' (ORG 9). For example, when considering their responsibilities relating to data sharing, they also spoke about the 'slight terror that if you did something wrong that you'd end up on...well, first of all, if you did anything wrong with people's information, it would cause all kinds of problems, and you'd be found out and made an example of – that's really not good' (ORG 9). Similarly, a chief executive claimed that 'you have to be so careful with what you do with customers' data that you sometimes feel like you should never have asked for it […]; all it takes is one mistake, and you may as well put your neck on the block' (ORG 12).

Although this participant did not stipulate what that mistake might look like, these accounts suggest that as organisations are in pursuit of upholding their obligations to the Data Protection Act, arts managers fear any actions they take that may jeopardise this. Further evidence for this can be found in the account of the ACE representative, who spoke about how in the past, an organisation they provided subsidy to 'had been in breach of something with the Information Commissioner's Office' (ORG 10). Although they did not 'get sued…you have to really flaunt the rules to get sued from the ICO', they noted how the steps the organisation had to go through 'to convince them [the ICO] that you were doing it [handling data] properly were quite challenging actually' (ORG 10). From this account, it can be seen how the ACE representative recognised the potential legal implications for organisations who mishandle data, despite suggesting that organisations would have to 'really flaunt the rules' for these to be actioned.

The above accounts highlight that arts managers regard their legitimacy to the ICO as being defined along the *instrumental* dimension, i.e. art managers are concerned that the actions they

take in relation to their audiences' data is done so in a legally compliant manner. However, participants acknowledged that the Information Commissioner's Office is not the only actor whose legitimacy requirements need satisfying, which results in arts managers regarding this intersection of policy and law to be a complex issue for their organisations.

6.2.1.2   Satisfying the legitimacy demands of Arts Council England

As has been suggested in subsection 6.1.2, arts managers are mindful of their need to 'hit the objectives' of their funder – Arts Council England. Such a notion of hitting objectives is consistent with *instrumental* legitimacy judgements, which sees an individual or group – in this context arts managers – attempting to satisfy a series of goals or outcomes, i.e. the DSP. Participants were clearly aware of the potential consequences their organisations may face if they do not meet the 'grant conditions' – or goals – expected of them. They spoke about how 'it's the usual, isn't it… the Arts Council make a decision – albeit poorly thought out – and we NPOs have to jump to it' (ORG 1a). In considering the implications of not meeting these grant conditions, an executive director also noted:

> I don't think the Arts Council would be very happy; it is part of our NPO funding agreement, so we must do it. We don't have a choice in that. I think if we didn't do it because we'd failed to put in place the mechanisms, then I think that would be highly frowned upon. I think if we refused to do it, again it's not an option in our...it's part of our NPO agreement…it's not an option – we must do it (ORG 5a).

Through these perspectives, it is again possible to see participants making a legitimacy judgement along *instrumental* grounds that, in order for them to maintain their public subsidy, they must be willing to engage with the DSP.

6.2.1.2.1   *Stuck in the middle*

My analysis suggests arts managers appeared to be stuck in the middle of Arts Council England's and the Information Commissioner's legitimacy requirements. Participants did not believe that they can meet the expected funding requirements of DSP without having significant impact on

their legal obligations to the Data Protection Act. For example, participants spoke of '[...] an inherent tension in how we get round, or work within, the data protection laws' (ORG 4), while another suggested that 'data sharing is very complicated very quickly, [and] the Data Protection Act [...] trumps any sort of other legislation' (ORG 11). These accounts highlight that Arts managers are concerned that the DSP does not consider – or make clear – how it functions within the constraints of the legal frameworks organisations must adhere to. This notion was affirmed in the following statement:

> I also think the level of belligerence that […] this has been attacked at without understanding the enormity and the complexity of what we're dealing with […] what they're [Arts Council] actually asking us to do…is something we couldn't legally or morally do (ORG 12).

Participants were also seen to question the policymaker's [ACE] authority to ask their organisations to engage with the DSP, e.g. suggesting that 'the Arts Council can't tell us to do that [sharing data with third parties]; only the Data Officer can tell us what we can give' (ORG 6). These tensions were well summarised by the box office manager:

> It's like we're stuck between a rock and a hard place […]. We try to do everything above board; you know, making sure we do what the Information Commissioner says we should do…but then the Arts Council drop this on us, and it's like we've now got to decide who has the bigger voice per se […], although I suspect it will be the Information Commissioner (ORG 14).

Arts managers are stuck in the middle between the perceived legitimacy requirements of both the Information Commissioner's Office and the new requirements of ACE. As a result of being in the middle of what they regard as two conflicting systems, arts managers find themselves – either implicitly or explicitly – needing to decide whose 'voice' is more influential over their actions – or who has more authority to legislate their data handling [sharing] processes.

In this regard, arts managers see the Data Protection Act as their organisation's priority. In their statements, the participants were making strong *instrumental* legitimacy judgements that their

legal obligations under the DPA's legal framework 'trump' the obligations outlined by ACE. They believed that their organisations cannot meet the goals and requirements needed to achieve organisational legitimacy with ACE without failing to meet the goals and requirements needed for organisational legitimacy with the Information Commissioner's Office. Basically, engaging with the DSP may be effective in maintaining ACE funding but may not be efficient in how they 'operate within the law'. In contemplating the requirements of the two legitimating actors – both with strong instrumental legitimacy needs (legal vs. funding), it can be seen how arts managers are at position of stalemate: while recognising the need to uphold the legal requirements of the Data Protection Act, arts managers still need their organisations to be viable and sustainable, which can be achieved though continued subsidy from ACE. This situation appears to place arts managers in a difficult position.

This section began by describing how, prior to the DSP, arts managers believed that demonstrating (and thus satisfying) the legitimacy demands of the Information Commissioner was a relatively straightforward process, as they only had to consider their data-related actions against the Data Protection Act. The DPA therefore appears to be highly influential to the way these arts managers understand – and thus approach – the DSP's requirement to share customer contact data with other ACE funded organisations. As the Data Protection Act is a legal framework, some arts managers are 'scared' that their engagement with DSP requirements may jeopardise the fulfilment of their legal obligations, the result of which is that arts managers may adopt a default position of strict legal compliance with respect to the DSP, as they want to know that they are operating within the law. However, such a position leaves arts managers 'stuck in the middle' because while strict legal compliance will ensure organisational legitimacy with the Information Commissioner, it is unlikely to fulfil the legitimacy requirements [goals] of the ACE. To that effect, participants suggested that the *instrumental* legitimacy requirements of both ACE (to engage with the DSP) and the Information Commissioner (to uphold the Data Protection Act) do not work together.

6.2.2 Integrity vs. control (being trustworthy)

(Challenges in maintaining trust with their audiences)

> Arts managers *'are the facilitators of [data sharing], but it is not [their] decision per se as to whether that data is shared. Ultimately, the decision lies with the customer' (ORG 9).*

As was shown in subsection 6.1.3, when considering audience expectations for the way arts organisations handle their personal data, arts managers draw on both *moral* and *relational* dimensions of legitimacy. In this section, the findings show that the DSP challenges arts managers' perceived ability to maintain legitimacy across these dimensions. It will also be revealed that the ability to maintain a strong and stable relationship with the audience is at the forefront of participants' responses to the DSP. In presenting these findings, I will first provide a more in-depth analysis of the data, highlighting how arts organisations believe that it is increasingly difficult to get audiences to trust them with their personal data and demonstrate integrity, after which I will show how the DSP is felt to restrict the control organisations hold over their customers' personal data, which they fear in turn will jeopardise their integrity as a trustworthy organisation that respects their customers' personal data. These findings are important as they suggest that policies such as the DSP could lead to a decline in audience attendance across the sector as more and more audience members will be inclined to opt out of data sharing, restricting the marketing opportunities available to the organisation.

6.2.2.1 Data handling with integrity

Arts managers are concerned that the DSP will affect the perceived integrity of their organisations, thus challenging their ability to be recognised as a legitimate organisation in the eyes of the audience. This is problematic for arts organisations, given that having an audience – putting to one side any debate surrounding its size or diversity – is a generally accepted requirement for live

performance. In fact, every organisation involved in this research referred to their relationship with the audience at some point.

The DSP was introduced at a time when many of the participating arts managers suggested that there was a heightened sense of awareness among audiences about how their personal data was being used and its value to those who had access to it. Participants drew on the notion that audience members – or 'customers', as half of participants interchangeably referred to them as – are increasingly exposed to stories in the media that highlight the would-be risks they are exposed to if their personal data is mistreated or obtained through a questionable source, which has led customers to be 'much more savvy about data' (ORG 5b). To illustrate this proposition further, a box office manager noted:

> We're having this conversation at the time when there's far greater, heightened, public awareness of data issues; it seems only every other week there's a news story in the press about some leak that's happened (ORG 14).

Another marketing manager added:

> You understand their [the audience's] hesitancy about leaving their data, but that's precisely what the data protection questions are for; but it can be – when there are all these stories in the media all the time about data being compromised – it can be difficult to reassure customers that their data is safe with us (ORG 5b).

Furthermore, participants made frequent references to the increasing number of cold callers, junk mail, and email spam their consumers [audience] faced daily. For example, participants spoke about 'consumer fear of being cold called' (ORG 4) and that 'audience[s] are increasingly tetchy about sharing and being marketed to […]; they're very cautious about ticking boxes nowadays, I would say; well, I am as a consumer' (ORG 11). This notion was reflected in another participant's account, where they suggested that audience members are 'happy to sign up to our mailing list to receive communication from us, but as soon as you start to talk about third parties […], that has to be asked for as part of the NPO data sharing agreement, the success...the sign-up levels are

lower' (ORG 5b). Fundamentally, arts managers asserted that because of the way data is being 'handled or used elsewhere, people [audiences] have a growing protectiveness about their personal data and the use of that data' (ORG 5b) and 'they want to feel that we are careful with it' (ORG 2).

As the DSP had been introduced at the time of data collection for this research, it could be assumed that the arts managers were already conscious that some audience members will have opted-in, and thus given permission, for the arts organisation to share their personal contact data with third parties. Consequently, it could be implied that these arts managers see their audiences' choice to opt-in – despite their 'growing protectiveness' – as an engagement of 'trust' with the organisation, especially in considering the heightened media awareness they were citing.

It is this trust that arts managers seek to uphold in order to maintain integrity. As was noted in subsection 6.1.3, arts managers pride themselves in 'being a venue that our audience members can trust' (ORG 15) and being 'audience-focused' organisations who 'care about our audiences; […] that's what we're here to do' (ORG 11). These notions were also evident in the accounts of two participants, who – when considering actions relating to sharing audience data – noted:

> I have a fundamental problem with the words 'data sharing' […]; I think it would scare the shite out of me as a consumer because you shouldn't share data, really; it should always be owned by the consumer, and the idea that I can give my data to someone [and then] they could start sharing it with other people – that's when customer loyalty starts to disappear (ORG 12).

> [We're] overcautious about sharing […]. Apart from where it's really clear that we're part of a wider formal structure for sharing that data […], we tend not to share [data]. I suppose we might seem obstructive because we're erring on the side of caution. We, for example, would not share data with another organisation that we were co-producing or co-presenting with (ORG 7).

Both these accounts share a common position – they appear to be strongly against sharing their audiences' data, even with third parties that they may be working closely with. The first account addresses *moral* legitimacy, i.e. it is ethical and integral that the audience gets to choose who their

data is shared with, in addition to noting the possible consequences of failing to uphold this *moral* legitimacy, which is the loss of customer loyalty – a sentiment that is akin to trust and *relational* legitimacy.

Turning to the accounts of other participants, reasons relating to *moral* and *relational* legitimacy and arts managers' propensity not to share their audiences' data can be identified. For example, several participants suggested that although audiences may be attending their venues to watch a performance presented by a visiting company [third party], they regarded the transactional relationship as still being between the audience member and the venue. They suggested that while they 'have a duty of care to those customers who [book tickets] and supply data to [them], [they] are also conscious that the customer [audience] is likely to consider us, the venue, responsible for any data passed on and then misused' (ORG 12). Another participant noted how 'it doesn't matter that they're [the audience] coming to see a touring production. In their eyes, they have booked a ticket with us, so we're the ones they come to if something goes wrong […]' (ORG 14). Such comments affirm the repercussions arts organisations may face if they fail to demonstrate organisational legitimacy, i.e. they will be held to account by the audience and, as per subsection 6.1.1, the Information Commissioner.

Using Holden's (2006) definition of *institutional value,* these statements are examples of how arts managers carefully consider their organisations' 'processes and techniques' – or actions – for how they handle audience data. For example, an audience insight manager noted that:

> […] the audience expect a lot from us in terms of the quality of what we produce, but also in the way we conduct ourselves as an organisation […]. We need to act in a professional manner and that most certainly includes what we do with their data […]. So yes, the ICO might tell us we have to do this with data, and then the Arts Council might tell us to do that with data, but we will always make that decision based on the customers' wishes (ORG 9).

It is through their current 'processes and techniques' that arts managers endeavour to uphold trust and promote the mutual respect the audience has afforded them – something that they consider to

be the appropriate, desirable, and proper actions expected of them, which may in turn demonstrate one facet of their organisational legitimacy. However, what these accounts also show is that while considering which of their actions are regarded as appropriate and desirable, participants acknowledged how their relationship (*relational* legitimacy) with the audience could become strained and fracture if they consider the organisation to have breached their trust and mutual respect.

In summarising the above comments, notions of integrity (*moral* and *relational* legitimacy) are consistent with Holden's (2006, 2009) position on *institutional* value, i.e. arts organisations should go above and beyond the value of their products – arguably the sale of a ticket – which includes the 'processes and techniques' through which they conduct their business (2006, p.17). In other words, organisations need to look past their productions (products) and ensure that their actions uphold the values their audiences have come to expect of them: trust and mutual respect. In this context, trust and mutual respect is achieved through careful consideration of the appropriate and desirable actions for how arts managers handle and share their audiences' personal contact data. In doing this, they are seeking to avoid the criticism often associated with the processes and techniques adopted by other sectors when handling, or perhaps mishandling, consumer data.

6.2.2.2   Being in control of data

Arts managers want to have control over the data they collect about their audiences. While the findings relating to *integrity* considered how these organisations try to uphold a trusting and respectful relationship with their audience, which is in turn seen as the morally right thing to do, arts managers fear that the requirement for their organisation – when requested – to 'pass […] customer contact details to the visiting company or presenting venue […]' (Arts Council England, 2016b) will cause their relationship (*relational* legitimacy) with the audience to become strained.

From the analysis, the majority of organisations that welcome visiting companies into their venue were seen to be thinking about what the DSP requirement to share audience data with third parties (i.e. the visiting companies) would mean for their relationship with their audiences going forward. While almost all the arts managers interviewed believed that audiences are used to having their personal information requested for the purpose of booking a ticket, their claim that audiences are facing an increasing number of cold calls, junk mail, and email spam suggests another of the 'processes and techniques' they adopt to try and uphold trust and mutual respect (*relational* legitimacy) with their audiences is through controlling access to customer contact data.

Prior to the introduction of the DSP, participants suggested that it was their venues – those with the transactional relationship – that acted as the 'gatekeeper' for communications sent to their audiences. However, at least a quarter of the chief executives and marketing managers interviewed suggested that there is only a 'finite amount of communications' (ORG 12) that can be made to any individual audience member before they start to feel 'overloaded' by its volume and velocity. Although some participants suggested that the number of appropriate communications will 'depend on the audience member, to be honest […]. I think some people are remarkably relaxed in terms of...you know, "Yeah, just send me anything you want"'. On the other hand, they also suggested that:

> […] there are other people who you can actually make quite angry if you send them one
> piece of information that is slightly wrong or if they feel that you have used a piece of
> information that you got […] from somebody else or you [give] it to somebody else (ORG
> 2).

Echoing this notion of what is communicated to audiences, participants spoke of how they are selective over who they communicate to based on other data available to them, e.g. past booking history. They use this to identify target audiences in order to avoid, 'with varying success, […] bombard[ing] people with emails […], but [we] send them stuff that they may be interested in based on their past behaviour' (ORG 9). This is important to note as, per the DSP, organisations are not required to share a customer's past booking data – only their contact details. Consequently,

arts managers worry that those they share customer data with could send out information 'blind and unaware of what that audience member typically books for' (ORG 7), which could further annoy them. It could be suggested that contacting audience members to market productions (products) that may not be relevant has the potential to be considered by the audience as a form of cold calling.[20] If this is the case, it could have implications for the *moral* legitimacy of both the organisation who shared the data and the organisation who made the communication, as cold calling (or junk mails) is not consistent with the audiences' (evaluators) moral and ethical values.

Participants suggested that audiences not only feel overwhelmed by the communications they receive while in their own home but can also feel overwhelmed inside the venue walls. In this sense, the participants are not referring to the capturing of personal data at the box office but the increasing number of surveys and data-gathering exercises audience members are subject to when attending a performance:

> We're a bit aware that audiences can sometimes feel over-questionnaired. At any one time, you might have a visiting company […] with a questionnaire. We have a standard venue 'thing', and then you might have something else like Culture Metrics[21] on top, so we have to be *really* careful that we're not overdoing it (ORG 7).

> While our audiences are responsive [to engaging in data gathering activities], I think there's always the issue – the danger – of fatigue of asking them too much and the worry about doing something like Culture Metrics or the Audience Agency […] and other bespoke [questionnaires] […]; people get fatigued by doing [them] (ORG 4).

It is therefore suggested that the culmination of marketing emails and questionnaires that audiences are increasingly faced with 'gets them [the audience] on edge' (ORG 12). In this regard, not only does any cold calling that may or may not occur as a result of sharing customer data with third parties have a detrimental impact on an arts organisations *moral* legitimacy with their audience, it could also impact on their *relational* legitimacy as the audience may not feel they are

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[20] A visit or telephone call to a prospective customer without an appointment or a previous introduction.
[21] http://www.culturemetricsresearch.com

being treated with dignity and respect. For these reasons, arts organisations want to be in control of how, when, and for what purpose their audiences' personal contact details are used for marketing and research.

In the findings presented above, it can be again seen how these arts managers find themselves 'stuck in the middle' of the requirements of different legitimating actors. On the one hand, venue-based arts organisations like to feel they are in control of the 'processes and techniques' used to communicate with audiences since they want audience members to regard these actions as desirable, proper, or appropriate – upholding both *relational* and *moral* legitimacy. However, this logic of wanting to be in control of customers' data is counter to the requirements of the DSP. In this regard, the introduction of the DSP enables other legitimating actors – visiting companies – to freely request access to the personal contact data that venue-based arts organisations hold about their audiences. Participants fear that multi-actor access to their audience data will in turn increase the overall number of communications the audience can potentially receive. Taken together, it is possible to understand why participants were worried about the sector fast approaching a 'tipping point', where audiences will reject and retract requests for their personal information. This may, in turn, have a detrimental impact on their organisations' viability and sustainability going forward, as it may result in less opportunities for them to promote their future work.

In the next section, I address another legitimacy problem relating to the DSP, i.e. comradery vs. competition, and look at the perceived challenges of maintaining *relational* legitimacy with their peers and *instrumental* legitimacy with the policymaker.

6.2.3 Comradery vs. competition

(Challenges in meeting the legitimacy demands of both Arts Council England and an organisation's peers)

> *Are we friend or foe? We obviously want to help other portfolio organisations, but at what cost? It's a tricky one (ORG 15).*

In this section, I present findings that reveal how arts managers are split along the *relational* and *instrumental* dimensions of legitimacy when trying to satisfy the legitimacy demands of their peers – i.e. other National Portfolio organisations and touring theatre companies – in response to the DSP. Regarding the *relational* dimension, participants showed benevolence towards other organisations, suggesting that they should have access to customer contact data to help them demonstrate legitimacy (make a case for themselves) to ACE. However, along the *instrumental* dimension, participants considered and feared the competition that the sharing of customer data may introduce, which they suggested will hinder their goals of growing their own audiences and donations. In outlining these findings, I briefly present data that re-enforces the notion of arts organisations wanting to appear as a friend to their peers, before then highlighting the perceived threats of competition by doing so. These findings are important because they suggest that the DSP introduces tensions amongst NPOs relating to elements of competition that they have previously refuted.

6.2.3.1   Being a friend to others

Arts organisations do not want their peers to fail. As has been suggested in subsection 6.1.4, arts managers believe that their organisations should work collaboratively and act fairly with other publicly funded arts organisations. Similarly, a chief executive suggested that 'when you are a funded organisation, there is a comradery' (ORG 4) amongst organisations, noting how organisations 'meet regularly as peers' and participate in 'collaborative opportunities' together (ibid.). In fact, the participant attributed this 'culture and mindset' to the 'fact that many of our staff have all worked in each other's organisations' (ibid.), suggesting that such friendships – or comradery – are a result of a close-knit network of arts managers in the sector. Another participant supported this claim, noting how the 'almost incestuousness and comradery means that [they are] quite relaxed about data sharing to a certain level within the law' (ORG 3).

To this extent, other participants similarly recognised the need for touring companies (third parties) to have access to personal contact data of the audiences they performed for, despite being

in contrast to the counter-sharing logic and fears pertaining to audience overload identified in subsection 6.2.2. For example, participants noted that:

> Companies […] tour into venues…they never own any data because the venues book [sell tickets] for their work, so actually they're not in a position…they're not ever in a position to really understand who the audience for their work is […] because they don't have access to that data and any ownership for that data (ORG 5b).

> I think most venues would agree and sympathise with the theatre companies and say, you know, it's a completely valid point that they've had, and on the one hand we do support their right to have a piece of the pie, so to speak (ORG 14).

Given the above comments, participants were, to some extent, understanding of why ACE introduced the DSP. In addition to the notions of comradery above and those relating to the perceived motivating drivers for the policy presented in Chapter 4 (section 4.4), where participants felt that their organisation had 'always done its bit' to ensure that touring companies were 'always well looked after' (ORG 7), participants noted how the policy had the potential to build these relationships further. For example, a box office manager believed that the policy would 'inescapably mean closer co-operation in terms of marketing activity, promotional strategy, that kind of thing […] because we're no longer necessarily in an environment where the venue has all the data and then the company doesn't…we're in a much more level situation' (ORG 14). A data insight manager added that 'even though it's such a difficult thing to do, and to do right, I can imagine how our data would really help visiting companies, especially those much smaller than us' (ORG 9).

However, while comradery seemingly advocates *relational* legitimacy, i.e. arts managers want to have a fair and benevolent relationship with other like-minded arts organisations and recognise the benefits and opportunities that greater access to audience contact data will afford them, the findings also suggest an inherent tension with regard to competition relating to the DSP. In the next section, I reveal that arts managers are anxious about how sharing customer contact data with

visiting companies could lead to increased competition between themselves and these companies in the future, despite their rhetoric that competition does not exist.

6.2.3.2 Competing for marketing and fundraising opportunities

Here is another instance where arts managers may be stuck between two legitimating actors when trying to satisfy each of their divergent requirements. On the one hand, the findings show that arts managers are legitimate along the *relational* dimension when they are seen to work collaboratively alongside their peers. The DSP may strengthen this legitimacy further, as the sharing of data is recognised by some participants as an action that upholds fairness and benevolence. Furthermore, by engaging with the DSP, arts organisations will be legitimate along *instrumental* grounds, as they will be satisfying the obligations and requirements of ACE's policy. However, I suggest in this section that while this policy may aid an arts organisations' organisational legitimacy with their peers and funders, it may also have adverse effects on other areas of legitimacy that they must uphold. In this regard, my analysis shows that although arts managers cast aside any explicit suggestion of inter-organisation competition for audiences, many of their accounts do implicitly express concerns about competition with regard to the sharing of audience data.

In considering the requirements of the DSP, some participants suggested that 'there's often going to be a fear around competitiveness and competition in the arts' (ORG 4) and 'historically there may have some organisations with a bit of a protective "This is my data" attitude' (ORG 13). It is this attitude that also led one chief executive to suggest that for the DSP to be welcomed by all organisations, there will 'probably need to be a cultural shift within arts organisations because they might see a degree of competition otherwise' (ORG 3). To that end, the findings highlight two areas of competition that were implicitly expressed by participants: competing for contact and competing for donations. I suggest that these two areas of contention are a causality of the other perceived legitimacy requirements of ACE, notably the need to ensure viability and sustainability and the need to provide evidence of their impacts and outcomes.

6.2.3.2.1 *Competing for contact*

As was shown in the previous chapter, the DSP introduces a tension amongst arts managers regarding the control they hold over the personal contact data they capture and store (see subsection 6.2.2.2). Venue-based arts organisations like to feel that they are in control of the 'processes and techniques' used to communicate with audiences, as they want audience members to regard these actions as desirable, proper, or appropriate – upholding both *relational* and *moral* legitimacy. However, the findings also show how participants attribute great business value to their ability to use their audiences' contact data for direct communication purposes. For example, one participant noted how 'there are lots of very valid marketing reasons why customer data is important […]; if you have more access to data, you'll be better at marketing' (ORG 4). Other participants noted how customer data enables them to 'encourage people to come back to the theatre again […] and sell them tickets for future shows' (ORG 9), while another pointed out how their ability to communicate with their audiences is 'essential' to their organisation's growth (ORG 5a). For one marketing manager, customer 'data is one of the best tools in our marketing arsenal' (ORG 11).

Since the introduction of the DSP, and the requirement to share customer contact information (of those opted-in) with visiting companies [third parties], the arts managers interviewed seemed to attribute greater value to those 'finite amounts' of communication. One chief executive attributed this to the pressures placed on public arts funding, noting that 'as the competitive market for funding especially has come about, there is more and more of an appetite for companies to have their own identity and communicate with audiences directly' (ORG 12).

For these reasons, it can also be argued that arts organisations have become more protective of – or perhaps more opinionated about – who should get to communicate with the audience, i.e. the venue or the visiting company, given the finding that arts managers want to promote mutual respect and uphold trust with their audience. Perhaps the most succinct opinion on this matter came from a artistic director with over 40 years of experience working in the publicly funded arts:

'[…] those requirements [to share with third parties] overcomplicate our relationship with the audience, and it pisses them off' (ORG 8).

While arts managers acknowledged that visiting companies are free to make requests for this contact data under the new policy, they suggested that the accepted amount of communications with audiences does not increase. Consequently, participants suggested that both the venue and the visiting company will want 'the meat, they want the gold, they want the people who are most interested to come and see their work' (ORG 12). From this account, it can be suggested that there is an understanding between the venue and visiting company that their audience will only tolerate a certain amount of communications from them, and therefore they both want the opportunity to use that audience data to market their future shows because, as some participants suggested, 'as the funding pots shrink, survival becomes the instinct' (ORG 1a) and each organisation will have a vested interest in seeing audiences return to them and not necessarily to the visiting company or hosting venue.

Because of this desire to contact audience members directly about future works, while also acknowledging the need to avoid overwhelming them with communications, venue-based arts managers in this study suggested that data sharing will only work if 'you are prepared to miss out on an opportunity in order to support the people who are around you, and that inevitably doesn't work' (ORG 12). In this account, the chief executive appeared to suggest that access to audience data can provide a competitive edge for those who use it to target marketing efforts, and because of this venue-based organisations are going to be reluctant to forfeit such opportunities to visiting companies. Stances such as these could be attributed to existing policies that ACOs must satisfy for *instrumental* legitimacy, such as the overarching rhetoric of *Goal 2,* which sees success as 'the number and range of people experiencing great art, museums and libraries increas[ing]' (Arts Council England, 2013b, pp.46–48). Venue-based organisations see each communication they send to an audience member as a unique opportunity to entice them back to another event they

have either produced or are hosting, which will help to evidence an increase in, or at least maintain, an audience base that consumes cultural offerings at the venue.

Although the accounts of the arts managers working in larger organisations did not show explicit concerns regarding this notion of taking turns to communicate with audiences, other smaller organisations did. These organisations operate in more densely populated areas with, as one participant called them, 'mobile audiences' (ORG 14), who are able to travel to other venues with relative ease. From these arts managers' accounts, it can be inferred that in fulfilling visiting companies requests for audience contact details following their performances – so that they could contact that audience to promote future events – the venue-based arts managers will draw on their knowledge of how visiting companies operate. As the nature of a visiting company is to present their work at a variety of venues, either locally or nationally, the venue may fear that their 'mobile audiences' *might* choose to consume future cultural offerings by that visiting company at another venue. Therefore, the findings show that there is an inherent fear amongst smaller organisations that sharing audience contact data could see their organisations experience a decrease in attendance for future programming, a notion that is consistent with the literature, which suggests that when there are multiple organisations in close proximity to each other, rivalry between competitors increases due to the 'wide range of choice available to consumers [which] tends to limit profitability in the sector' (Poisson-de-Haro and Menot, 2014, p.25).

From the findings presented above, it is possible to see how arts managers worry about how the DSP may put a strain on their 'marketing arsenal', which means they will 'maybe have to change the way we market in general' (ORG 14). They suggested that greater access to audience contact data will result in an increase in the number of communications made to their audiences by those with access to it and encourage competition, which is evident from a chief executive's comment:

> […] even worse is it encourages us to be more competitive with the amount of communications we make – if we've got a [visiting] company who wants to send something out, we want to get there first (ORG 12).

Furthermore, taking into account earlier findings, participants feared that the increased level of communications may 'piss off' their audience, which could result in a loss of trust and respect for the organisation. The findings also suggest that the ability for other organisations to contact the audience the venue holds data for may result in a decrease in audience numbers, as they may be enticed to consume cultural offerings elsewhere. I suggest that both fears stem from the participants perceived legitimacy requirements of ACE along the *instrumental* dimension, in terms of their need to satisfy the requirement to develop and maintain an audience, but also how they demonstrate organisational legitimacy in terms of earning money. It is this notion that also informs the second area of competition: competing for donations.

6.2.3.2.2   *Competing for donations*

Another line of enquiry in which competition concerns were prevalent was from the first-order concept '*data is a pathway to philanthropic donors'.* Participants discussed a purported rise in philanthropic donations and support appeals being conducted in the sector to subsidise the downturn in public funding. While only a few organisations included in this research are in current pursuit of philanthropic support, it was generally acknowledged by several other organisations that this is the way they felt the sector was going:

> I know there was a report put out a couple of years ago which suggested the Arts Council focused on getting us [the arts organisations] to put more emphasis on raising funds from the audience and businesses (ORG 7).

In this statement, the participant was referring to the recommendations outlined in the *Legacy10* paper, which states that 'the organisations [which] Arts Council England supports should demonstrate philanthropic fundraising, including legacies' (Legacy10, 2012, p.15). This assertion was further supported by a chief executive who had previously worked for an organisation that was awarded funding from ACE to conduct data research: 'Our major organisations have to think in different ways. So, whether it's the philanthropy agenda from this first coalition government or whether it's reduced local authority funding, organisations have to rethink how they work'

(ORG 3). On the topic of philanthropic income, another chief executive also noted how 'more and more theatres are expected to generate that sort of [philanthropic] income, and I think that's where data is being squeezed' (ORG 2).

However, it should be noted that some participants explicitly rejected the notion that publicly funded arts organisations should be in pursuit of external funding sources. For example, a box office manager noted how philanthropic agendas

> could fundamentally affect the audience, well…consumer confidence in the sector […]; the concept that you can simultaneously be saying that a theatre is a bubble and everyone who works within this are Arts Council organisations, but also say you need to have a more resilient third-sector model and look outside the sector for sources of funding and influences and things like that, those two things can't coexist (ORG 14).

In this sense, the participant suggested that audiences may not accept the conflicting rhetoric of an organisation being publicly funded through the lottery and taxes but also in need of additional revenue from audience members who pay these very taxes.

Setting aside the above notion, the reality of the need to peruse philanthropic income may be another reason why venue-based arts managers are expressing concerns over how often, and by whom, their audiences are being contacted. Although some earlier commentaries recognised – from their own perspectives – the competition for audiences as minimal, it is the inferred notion of competing for contacts (and subsequently donations) that is of interest here. For example, take the following statement from a chief executive:

> […] every company from the big to the small is expected to compete for individual philanthropy private sector funding, and whereas you can maybe share an audience, it's more difficult to share a donor (ORG 12).

It can be seen how this arts manager was, on the one hand, acknowledging that while NPOs do have the capability to share audiences in terms of consuming cultural offerings,[22] they were also recognising the limitations of trying to share an audience when it comes to the perusal of

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[22] Although, as discussed earlier, this was contested by some in large municipalities.

philanthropic giving. This marriage of competing for donations led another arts manager, who noted how their organisation is actively looking at philanthropic approaches, to comment that 'it's a terrible phrase, isn't it? Wealth screen[ing]…but we need to look at people's disposable income and their propensity to give […] we're interested basically in bringing marketing communication about donations together' (ORG 3).

The above is an example of how venue-based organisations are actively looking to use their access to audience contact data, as well as other demographic data readily available to them, to contact their audiences about making financial donations to their organisation. This notion provides additional context to the earlier comment regarding organisations not wanting to 'miss out on an opportunity' (ORG 12) to communicate with an audience. The same arts manager also said the following:

> Previously, when other [visiting] companies wanted to access our database, you would just try to say, 'Let's find out if we can get this person to come and see your next show', but now you know that there is going to be somebody who is going to be targeting individuals and asking if they want to give them financial support above and beyond that. When you're dealing with high network individuals, there's only a finite amount of them who will give to the arts, and previously they would give to very specific organisations (ORG 12).

The findings in this section suggest how the DSP again leaves arts managers stuck between the requirements of different legitimating actors. While many participants regarded the policy to have good intentions, i.e. to 'grow audiences for the arts in general' (ORG 9) – an *instrumental* legitimacy requirement of ACE – there was an implicit fear that it will foster competition amongst venue-based organisations and those they must share their audience data with. Furthermore, participants believed that competing for contact 'could be detrimental to audience growth unless people learn to collaborate better, but we're dealing with individuals, and that doesn't work' (ORG 14).

Participants again appeared to be 'stuck in the middle' of two key legitimating actors as, on the one hand, they must satisfy ACE's *instrumental* requirement to share this data with their peers,

which in turn satisfies *relational* legitimacy (i.e. upholds fairness and benevolence). However, in doing so, they feared the repercussions will be that they fail to satisfy the *moral* legitimacy requirements of the audience, i.e. the audience will become 'pissed off' with the additional communications this will give rise too. Furthermore, they feared that within these additional communications, they will be competing with their peers to attract the attention of donors, which all organisations will need to do in order to satisfy other *instrumental* requirements of ACE to show organisational viability and sustainability going forward.

6.3 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter's findings show how the data sharing policy exacerbates tensions and challenges with regard to how arts managers demonstrate, or indeed maintain, organisational legitimacy with four key legitimating actors (or stakeholders): Arts Council England, the Information Commissioner's Office, peers, and the audience. Using Tost's (2011) dimensions of legitimacy framework, the findings were analysed to identify arts managers' general perceptions of what they believe ACOs must do to satisfy the divergent requirements of each key stakeholder in order to demonstrate organisational legitimacy. These dimensions of legitimacy included *moral* grounds – relating to the morality, ethicality, or integrity of an entity; *relational* grounds – relating to fairness, benevolence, and communality to affirm the social identity and self-worth of individuals or social groups; and *instrumental* grounds – relating to an entity's effectiveness, efficiency, or utility to facilitate the individual's or group's attempts to reach self-defined or internalised goals or outcomes (Tost, 2011).

Using these general perceptions of legitimacy demands and Tost's (2011) framework, the chapter has considered how these divergent demands could be sufficiently met in light of Arts Council England's data sharing policy. As such, the analysis has highlighted a series discrete tensions and challenges expressed across three thematic areas: *data sharing vs. data protection*; *integrity vs. control;* and *comradery vs. competition.* Considering the DSP against the perceived legitimacy

demands of each stakeholder associated with these areas, a significant finding emerged: in its then current form, the data sharing policy limited arts managers' ability to simultaneously satisfy the legitimacy demands of all stakeholders, leaving them feeling 'stuck in the middle' of the policy requirements (i.e. in trying to demonstrate legitimacy with one stakeholder, ACOs may, in turn, lose legitimacy with another).

Understanding the general perceptions of legitimacy demands is therefore helpful not only for recognising the tensions and challenges emerging from the introduction of the DSP (i.e. how organisations can practically engage in data sharing activities in a way that satisfies all stakeholders) but also in extending the arts management field's understanding of organisational legitimacy demands within publicly funded arts and cultural organisations when any new policy is introduced. Going forward into the main discussion chapter, the findings, analysis, and discussion in this chapter help to frame other emerging tensions relating to the datafication of the arts and cultural sector and what these mean for an ACOs relationship with its stakeholders.

7 A Culture of Data Challenges and Opportunities

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an interesting, useful, and hopefully perception-changing contribution to the arts management discipline that sheds light on the *effects of a formalised data sharing policy on the management of publicly funded arts and cultural organisations in England.* In short, this chapter will explain how the findings presented across the previous three chapters all fit together, what they mean in relation to the existing literature, and why anyone should take notice of them.

There are four key sections in this chapter that broadly reflect the aggregate dimensions of the data structure (see Figure 3) generated from my application of the Gioia (2013) method in the data analysis: datafication in the arts (Section 7.1); artistic integrity and values (Section 7.2); managing professional identities (Section 7.3); and challenging stakeholder relationships (Section 7.4) I draw together the findings from across the preceding chapters to discuss the implications of Arts Council England's data sharing policy and data-centric practices on the management of arts and cultural organisations. In **Datafication in the Arts**, I make sense of the effects the DSP has on the management of ACOs by discussing how arts data is a type of organisational resource

that changes from being a distinct resource to a common one in light of the DSP, in addition to demonstrating how this change weakens the competitive advantage that data-rich organisations held prior to the policy. In this section, I also draw on my findings to demonstrate how DPPs facilitate organisational dependency in using data-driven practices to support the delivery of their value-creating activities. In **Artistic Integrity and Values**, I discuss and build on the understanding of how the DSP and DPPs affect the work of arts managers, showing that they enable arts managers to prioritise audience growth and organisational resilience over other aspects of an ACOs work (such as artistic excellence). This discussion also contributes to our understanding of the phenomena by considering it in relation to the public value literature in order to explain the risk the DSP poses to public value creation. **Identities of the Arts Manager** then develops our understanding of the different levels of data-driven ambition exhibited by different types of arts managers, which is important for explaining why this may affect the adoption of data-driven practices. Similarly, I also outline the policy effects on the work of arts managers by explaining how the DSP and access to DPPs can challenge and subvert the professional identities and autonomy of arts managers, which leads to the conclusion that arts managers need to upskill in data literacy in order to thrive in the arts data culture. Finally, **Challenging Stakeholder Relationships** builds on the discussion of organisational legitimacy in Chapter 6 to explicate other ways that the DSP can affect an ACO's relationship with their audiences, peers, and Arts Council England in the future.

This discussion chapter brings together and draws on a number of terms used throughout the thesis, which I will briefly recap here. As established in the methodology chapter (see subsection 3.3.1), participants were grouped into three arts manager categories based on their roles within an ACO: artistics, marketers, or executives. Similarly, the findings presented in both Chapters 4 and 5 identified three predominant (but not mutually exclusive) logics (which I used as a sensitising device) that arts managers aligned with when talking about their data-driven activities: (1) market logic – where data is a functional tool for promoting artistic work and building organisational resilience; (2) funding logic – where data is used to deliver against funders goals or philanthropic

opportunities; and (3) aesthetic logic – where artistic skill and experience is prioritised over data analysis or insight.

There is frequent reference in this chapter to the term 'data', which I use synonymously with the term 'big data' in much of the literature (see Chapter 2, subsection 2.1.2). This approach is consistent with Lilley's (2014) claim that whether 'data is technically defined as 'big' is of comparatively little importance […] it is the use of data-driven approaches to drive insight and change behaviour which matters'. Furthermore, my analysis of the qualitative data has shown that data sharing policy and the requirement to engage with data pooling platforms drive forward the sector's 'datafication'. However, combining the findings presented in the previous three chapters provides support for the conceptual premise in the literature of a 'data culture' in the arts and cultural sector (Arvanitis et al., 2016; Ellerton, 2018; Gilmore et al., 2018). To this end, I adopt the concept of an arts 'data culture' to explain some of my findings in this discussion chapter.

7.1 Datafication in the Arts

The initial aim of this research was to identify the effects that a formalised data sharing policy had on the management of publicly funded arts and cultural organisations in England. My findings support the idea of a 'datafication' process – or a 'data revolution' (Kitchin, 2014, p.117) – in the arts and cultural sector by demonstrating how ACE's data sharing policy and requirements to engage with data pooling platforms aim to create equality of data resources across organisations and introduce data tools that organisations depend on to deliver key aspects of their artistic programming work.

To explore this concept, I first address the theme of arts data as an organisational resource (subsection 7.1.1) by discussing the findings presented in subsection 4.1.3 and relating them to the intended aims of the DSP, in addition to drawing on the resources and competencies literature. I suggest that the DSP alters the customer contact data (CCD) held by venue-based ACOs from being a distinct resource to which they had privileged access to being a common resource they

must share with relevant peers. These finding have important implications for understanding how the DSP changes the dynamics of an ACOs relationship with stakeholders and the effects this has on an organisation's ability to meet its own goals in the future, which are discussed in detail in subsection 7.4.1.

I then discuss the theme of becoming a data-dependent organisation (subsection 7.1.2), where I draw on the findings presented in Section 4.2 (two core functions of data in arts organisations) and subsections 5.1.1 (data for developing audiences) and 5.1.2 (data for organisational resilience) to show that data-centric practices have become a critical part of an ACOs decision-making processes. Taken together, these findings demonstrate that the propositions made in Lilley and Moore's (2013) seminal work relating to the use of sector-generated data in decision making have been supported as a result of tools such as the Audience Finder becoming a crucial part in the delivery of an ACO's primary activities. This discussion of the findings therefore raises intriguing questions regarding the nature and extent to which the DSP and DPPs aim to make ACOs more efficient in the delivery of their work as arts professionals.

7.1.1 Arts Data as a changing organisational resource

In this section, I focus on the aspects of the DSP that relate to the sharing of customer contact data – a crucial type of data collected by ACOs. In trying to establish the effects of the DSP on the work of ACOs in England, my findings highlight that the policy requirements to 'pass customer contact details to the visiting company or presenting venue by a mutually agreed time and in a mutually agreed format' (Arts Council England, 2015, p.21) forces ACOs to forfeit their privileged access to CCD and make it available to other relevant ACOs, which is perceived to weaken the value of the CCD.

Scholars have noted the importance of different resources and competencies in the work of organisations (Barney, 1991; Poisson-de-Haro and Menot, 2014). In this regard, the resources and competencies necessary to conduct an ACO's activities that are similar from one organisation to the next are regarded as common resources (Poisson-de-Haro and Menot, 2014, p.56), whereas

distinct resources are those that are rare, inimitable, non-substitutional, and valuable (Barney, 1991, cited in Poisson-de-Haro and Menot, 2014, p.56). Drawing on the findings presented in subsections 4.1.3 and 4.4.2, it can be suggested that, prior to the introduction of the DSP, CCD exhibited the properties of a distinct organisational resource in the following ways: **rare**, as only the ACO who made the transaction with the customer could access their contact data; **inimitable**, as TTCs and other ACOs did not have access to this CCD and could not legally obtain it; and **non-substitutional** since, because the CCD is inimitable, another ACO or TTC who did not typically have access to this type of data had nothing they could use in its place (i.e. if an organisation did not sell its own tickets, they would not typically have access to any detailed customer contact data). Taken together, these three properties made CCD a **valuable** resource for the ACOs who initially collected it as they could use it to create financial and marketing value for themselves. The use of CCD as a valuable resource was evident throughout the findings in Chapter 6, particularly under the theme of comradery vs. competition (subsection 6.2.3), where participants spoke about using customer contact data for generating philanthropic donations and direct marketing opportunities. As my analysis suggests that the properties of CCD made it a distinct resource for ACOs, it can be assumed that CCD afforded ACOs competitive advantage (or market hold) over their peers (TCCs and other ACOs) as they used that unique data to promote their organisation's artistic work and generate ticket-based and philanthropic revenue. However, one clear issue emerging from the findings in Chapter 6 is that the DSP affects an ACOs privileged access to CCD, changing its status from a distinct resource into a common one. While I am not offering a full, admittedly perfect analysis of this shift based on resource and competency frameworks, they are instead seen as a helpful analytical device for drawing out the tensions this change creates for ACOs (further discussed in subsection 7.4.1).

While my findings show that participants understood the need for data equality (subsection 4.4.2), introducing the requirement for ACOs to 'pass customer contact details to the visiting company or presenting venue by a mutually agreed time and in a mutually agreed format' (Arts Council England, 2015, p.21) signifies the end of the competitive advantage and control that ACOs had

benefitted from with this data resource prior to the DSP introduction (this transition is summarised in Figure 7). By requiring ACOs to share (with permission) a customer's contact details, the properties making that data a distinct resource are transformed into properties that I suggest are akin to a common resource.
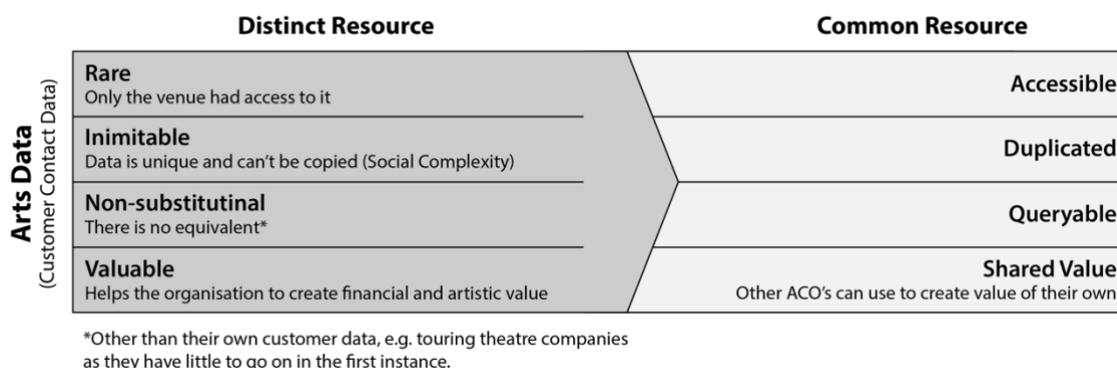
Figure 7: Data as a Changing Resource (Adapted from Barney, 1991, cited in Poisson-de-Haro and Menot, 2014, p.56)

For example, where CCD was once **rare**, DSP makes access to that data **accessible** to 'the relevant Arts Council funded company, promoter or venue they [the customer] are booking for' (Arts Council England, 2015, p.21). In addition, the **inimitability** of CCD to the venue is lost as it becomes **duplicated** with one or more TTCs who request access; as such, the **non-substitutional** nature of CCD transforms into data that other organisations can **query**. Finally, regarding **value**, because the DSP means that TTC's can access the CCD for those who booked tickets for the artistic work *they* produced, they will be able to use that insight to create financial and artistic value of their own – i.e. they can independently contact the customers for research and development opportunities or directly ask for philanthropic donations. However, in the transition from a distinct resource to a common one, the ability for an ACO to extract value from the CCD they captured is not lost – it simply becomes a **shared value** with the TTCs.

It can thus be suggested that by the DSP changing the properties of CCD and transforming it into a common resource from which all ACOs and TTCs can extract value, ACE is delivering on its aim to support a 'healthy and competitive sector' (Arts Council England, 2016, p.1). However, in

considering that one of the aims of this thesis was to explore how formalised data policies were understood by arts managers in relation to their work as arts professionals and what they mean for an ACO's relationship with its stakeholders, this area of discussion provides support for the conceptual premise that the DSP challenges the relationships between ACOs and their peers (including TTCs) and audiences, as will be further discussed in Section 7.4. In the next section, I will build on this idea of CCD as an organisational resource and consider the other types of data that ACOs use to create value, i.e. audience demographic data and box office sales data, in addition to how DPPs are making ACOs dependent on these types of data to conduct their work.

7.1.2 Becoming a data-dependent organisation

The above discussion has highlighted customer contact data as an organisational resource that ACOs have come to rely on for generating financial and marketing value. In this section, I broaden the discussion to consider the other types of data my findings highlight as a key resource for ACOs, and in so doing suggest that access to data pooling platforms (DPPs) is leading arts managers to depend on such data resources to inform aspects of their work – most notably decisions relating to their artistic programming – that help them deliver against ACEs funding goals/priorities.

As mentioned in the literature review, ACOs interact with data on a regular basis (see subsection 2.1.2). In Chapter 4, my analysis identified two core functions of data in ACOs: to inform operational decisions under a market logic (subsection 4.2.1) and to report on their activities under a funding logic (subsection 4.2.2). These findings are interesting as they demonstrate – to some extent – a dependency amongst ACOs to capture and use data to streamline their businesses by making better financial decisions (e.g. refining café and box office opening hours) and to demonstrate how they spent public money and who benefited such that expenditure. These findings thus highlight two of the data benefits proffered by Lilley and Moore (2013): that data can support arts managers by enabling 'sophisticated analysis to improve decision making, minimise risks, and possibly unearth valuable, hidden patterns and insights' (p.16); and by helping

to streamline reporting processes (ibid. p.41). More importantly, however, my findings and analysis show that this perceived data dependency goes beyond just operational and reporting decisions by highlighting how arts managers are increasingly dependent on data to inform the decisions that help them deliver against ACE priorities.

As was evidenced through participant accounts in Section 5.1, arts managers (whether they accept the practice or not) regard data as 'underpin[ing] everything [they] do' (ORG 3), and they spoke about using data to inform their organisations' primary, value-creating activities: the conception, programming, production, promotion, and distribution of artistic work (Poisson-de-Haro and Menot, 2014, p.64). My analysis shows that ACOs typically apply data insight to these activities, which broadly align with goals one and three of ACE's strategic priorities (Arts Council England, 2010; 2013), i.e. audience development (subsection 5.1.1) – using data to understand the areas 'where we're not reaching the people we want to reach' (ORG 2) – and organisational resilience (subsection 5.1.2) – using 'aggregated data around demographics and ticket sales […] to evaluate the artistic programme but also inform future programming decisions' (ORG 11). Although the tensions and challenges associated with the use of data-driven decisions used in these ways are reserved for discussion in Section 7.3, it is still pertinent to discuss them here as they demonstrate that ACOs are responding to ACE's calls for them to 'exploit the opportunities technology offers to collect, analyse and apply data cost-effectively, to learn more about existing and potential audiences and to target marketing and fundraising effectively' (Arts Council England, 2013, p.32). In considering this finding against my research objective to explore how arts and cultural managers understand formalised data policies and practices in relation to their work as arts professionals, it can be assumed that the requirement for ACOs to engage with DPPs is an attempt by ACE to ensure that all the ACOs they fund can access the data needed to support those aforementioned value-creating activities.

To help understand *how* DPPs support ACOs in their delivery of value-creating activities, I draw on Porter's (1985) value chain framework, which considers the flow of activities that enables an organisation to create value (Poisson-de-Haro and Menot, 2014, p.64). From a value chain

perspective, the use of DPPs share many of the heuristics associated with 'support activities', which include 'technological developments' – e.g. information systems to enhance organisational efficiency – and 'infrastructure', i.e. the backbone of an organisation, encompassing activities such as financing and information sharing (ibid.). For example, the Audience Finder platform is described as an 'audience data and development tool, enabling cultural organisations to understand, compare and apply audience insight' (The Audience Agency, 2018) and a 'shared system designed to pool data from National portfolio organisations […] enabling us to form a much more accurate picture of the area of benefit of Arts Council England's investment as a whole' (Arts Council England, 2015, pp.19-20). These descriptions are consistent with participant accounts that the DPP is a 'tool we can go to when we have questions about our programme' (ORG 3) and 'a helpful [tool] to give us a snapshot of our audiences and their behaviour' (ORG 11). This finding is important as it demonstrates how data access facilitated through DPPs – in this instance demographic and box office sales – is likely to become a resource (support activity) that ACOs depend on to inform decisions relating to the delivery of their artistic programming (value creating activity).

Building on the discussion so far, another key observation can be made: ACE's requirement for ACOs to engage with DPPs aims to legitimise the use of these tools to share and extract knowledge that can be used in the decision-making practices of ACOs in such a way that speaks to ACE's strategic priorities. For example, my findings in subsection 5.1.1.1 clearly demonstrate that arts managers regard DPPs as repositories of data 'present[ed] in a tempting way which speaks directly to priorities areas they want us to deliver against' (ORG 4). Considered alongside the published features of the Audience Finder discussed in the literature review (see subsection 2.1.2.1), which state that it has 'the potential to fundamentally shift the level of insight [ACOs] have about [their] audiences' (Ellerton, 2018, p.120), this is perhaps another example of how ACOs are becoming dependent on data, as it is being positioned as a way to 'provide the evidence for the generation of knowledge which is employed to manage the organisation more effectively,

efficiently, competitively and productively, and to identify new products and markets' (Kitchin, 2014, p.117).

Taken together, the discussion in the two subsections above helps to develop our understanding of a 'datafication' process in the arts and cultural sector by 1) highlighting data as a (now) common resource that organisations can use to create value and 2) outlining how that resource is something ACOs are becoming dependent upon for developing work that delivers against ACO priorities. The findings therefore align with Kitchin's (2014) notion that data related to the core functions of an organisation is a 'key aspect of how these organisations understand themselves and their constituencies and make decisions about their present and future applications' (p.117). In this regard, the present discussion has highlighted just one small, albeit useful, element of resources and competencies frameworks – i.e. distinct vs. common resources – as a useful way of understanding the importance of data to arts organisations; however, to develop a fuller picture of ACO data resources, further studies with more focus on competencies and resources are suggested. Similarly, further research on arts data as part of the value chain should be considered so as to expand on the types of support activities prevalent in a more 'datafied' sector.

In the following section, I will discuss my findings relating to the effects of such data dependency on arts managers', and their respective organisations', ability to deliver other key aspect of their value-creating activities: artistic excellence, taking risks, and promoting organisational mission.

7.2 Artistic Integrity and Values

This study set out with the aim of highlighting how arts managers understand formalised data policies and practices in relation to their work as arts professionals in publicly funded arts and cultural organisations in England. My findings show that ACE's DSP promotes the growth of arts audiences (audience development) by creating the conditions for data reciprocity across the arts and cultural organisations they subsidise. However, the findings also suggest that approaching audience development in this way has implications for the cultural and public value that is created

under such conditions for the audiences (the public) who consume artistic products. In this section, I build on the discussion in subsection 7.1.2, which suggested that engagement with DPPs is becoming rooted through the DSP as an activity that publicly funded ACOs use to support the delivery of their primary activities (i.e. the conception, programming, production, promotion, and distribution of artistic work). My findings show that the decisions ACOs make using insight from DPPs tend to favour the creation of primary activities that demonstrate instrumental value (i.e. impacts, outcomes, and benefits; Holden, 2004) rather than activities that create intrinsic value for the audience (the subjective experience; ibid.). These findings are important as the use of data-driven practices for such purposes not only has implications for the identities of arts managers working in these organisations (as will be discussed in Section 7.3) but also creates uncertainty about the risk-taking culture of the arts sector going forward and what this means for the creation of public value.

7.2.1 Driving audience growth (tools for target-led audience development)

In considering how arts and cultural managers understand formalised data policies and practices in relation to their work as arts professionals, my findings show that data sharing policies, more specifically data pooling platforms such as the Audience Finder, are understood by arts managers as tools that have been introduced to drive audience growth (audience development) across the sector. This is an important finding as although audience development (AD) is regarded as a vital part of the work that cultural organisations undertake (Hadley, 2017), instrumental (typically quantitative) types of data made widely available through DPPs and that lend themselves to funding logic (i.e. where data is used to deliver against funders goals) may pose a risk for the artistic excellence (intrinsic value) of the future work an organisation produces.

As was shown in the literature on audience development (see subsection 2.2.4), AD had traditionally been product-led (i.e. 'This is our artistic work, and this is why you should come and experience it.'), typically falling into three categories: 'taste cultivation', 'audience education'

and 'extended marketing' (2000, p.3). It is these types of product-led AD that have enabled ACOs to adhere to market logic in order to increase audiences for commercial purposes while also maintaining aesthetic logic (Glynn and Lounsbury, 2005). Simply put, ACOs have been able to develop (grow) audiences in the past while also maintaining their 'notion of artistry' (ibid.) or the rhetoric of art for art's sake.

From my findings in Sections 4.3 (perceptions of the policymaking process) and 4.4 (motivations for introducing a data sharing policy), it can be suggested that the introduction of the DSP and DPPs is understood by arts managers as falling under the umbrella of funding logic as they regard it as part of a shift towards a target-led AD agenda that acknowledges the sociological idea of cultural separatism (Kerr, 2013 cited in Lindelof, 2015) and looks to address issues of social inclusion and diversity in arts audiences, which is 'frequently realised as a series of egalitarian objectives concerned with the widening of access to culture and the arts' (Hadley, 2017, p.277). This concept of target-led AD for social inclusion (or, under the European Union's suggested terminology, 'audience by surprise' [Bollo et al., 2017a]) was best expressed as 'use[ing] platforms like the Audience Finder to pick out those areas of low engagement […] to create a programme that hopefully gets everyone experiencing great art and culture' (ORG 10). However, the findings presented in subsection 5.1.3 (artistic excellence, risk, and mission) highlight how the notion of target-led AD for social inclusion can take 'cultural organisations into unfamiliar territory where they are expected to achieve goals of an essentially non-cultural nature' (Kawashima, 2006, p.58) by asking them to 'go beyond our role as creatives and to be a problem solver for much wider government priorities' (ORG 13).

In terms of the effects of the DSP and DPPs on arts managers work, my findings in 5.1.1.1 also highlight that these data-centric tools force ACOs to critically assess their current artistic work:

> I suppose when we're needing to tick so many boxes in terms of audience diversity or inclusion, having these innovations...or whatever we're supposed to refer to them as...kind of flags up where our current programme falls short (ORG 6).

This finding aligns with the target-led audience development literature in that it shows ACOs 'problematiz[ing] existing 'products' and/or practices' (Kawashima, 2006, p.58). This is again interesting and important to note as my findings show that a perverse incentive of DPPs is that they invite challenge to the existing work of an ACO by highlighting the inadequacies of their artistic work's ability to attract diverse audiences in the past, which (as will be discussed in subsection 7.3.3) can challenge the professional identities and autonomy of arts managers working in artistic roles.

Another way to approach my findings on how arts and cultural managers understand formalised data policies and practices in relation to their work as arts professional is to consider how the increasing use quantitative audience data – either self-generated (i.e. box office systems) or through engagement with DPPs – as a tool for target-led audience development can challenge the cultural values of arts managers (be they marketers, artistics, or executives). For example, the findings in subsection 5.1.3 demonstrate how arts managers from across arts management roles worried to a greater or lesser extent about the impact of data-driven practices on the artistic excellence of the work they produced. Arts managers work in the cultural field first and foremost because of their commitment to intrinsic values – the 'subjective experience of culture intellectually, emotionally and spiritually' (Holden, 2006, p.32), and it is these intrinsic values that relate to the arts managers' work to deliver artistic excellence and align with aesthetic logic. The other aspect of arts managers' work – developing audiences – is consistent with instrumental value, which relates to the 'ancillary effects of culture, where culture is used to achieve a social or economic purpose' (Holden, 2006, p.16). It is this type of value that aligns with politicians and funders who want 'measurable, tangible results that help deliver government policy predictably, cost-effectively and on a mass scale, because that is the job of politics' (ibid.).

Based on the discussion above, it can be seen how notions of target-led AD map to the ideologies of instrumental value or funding logic. If it is accepted that the data sharing policy and data pooling platforms (such as Audience Finder) are leading organisations to become dependent on data in order to 'spot gaps' in engagement and take a target-led AD approach to social inclusion

(developing audiences) – which in turn influences the artistic work that is produced and programmed by ACOs – it can therefore be suggested that arts managers are becoming conditioned, through data-centric policy, to prioritise instrumental value in the arts.

The above discussion is important as it challenges the rhetoric surrounding the Audience Finder platform that 'when given the right tools, big data can help organizations build resilience while supporting creative risk taking' (Ellerton, 2018, p.118) as these target-led approaches to audience development through DPPs appear to be designed to prioritise funding logic – i.e. growing audiences in terms of size and diversity – over the aesthetic logic that includes the rhetoric of art for art's sake and risk-taking. Furthermore, these findings are consistent with Lindelof's (2015) critique that audience development tends to ignore the aesthetic dimensions of performance, which again is an important aspect of how the DSP, DPPs, and the general 'datafication' of the arts sector challenges the professional identity and autonomy of some arts managers (as will be discussed in subsection 7.3.3).

Finally, given that my findings presented in subsection 7.1.2 (becoming a data dependent organisation) suggest that ACOs engage with DPPs for their own political self-interest, i.e. growing audiences in terms of size and social inclusion to meet funding goals set by ACE (funding logic), the findings above highlight that the concept of artistic excellence (aesthetic logic) is at risk of becoming neglected by arts managers when making programming decisions based on data-driven insights. This will be discussed in the following section.

7.2.2 Balancing a risk-taking culture

Previous literature has explored the balance between economic and artistic risk-taking within the performing arts sector (e.g. Cray et al., 2007; Kleppe, 2017), yet very little was found in the literature on the topic of data-driven decision making and its effects on artistic risk-taking. In this sense, my findings contribute to this gap by showing that the increasing ease of access to data made available through the DSP and DPPs, and its use for data-driven decision making, may make artistic excellence and a culture of risk-taking difficult to maintain. This is an important

finding as it demonstrates how the purported benefits of data-driven decision making, facilitated through DPPs, to 'drive insight and change behaviour' (Lilley, 2014) can negatively impact on the work of some art managers whose roles in an ACO are grounded in their ability to deliver risk-taking, artistically excellent experiences for an audience. Building on the discussion above that the DSP and DPPs are tailored towards the priorities of market and funding logics associated with aspects of the arts managers work – making them dependent on data to deliver organisational resilience (subsection 7.1.2) or to develop audiences (subsection 7.2.1), the discussion in this section moves on to consider what the prioritisation of these logics means for an ACO's ability to uphold aesthetic logic, i.e. deliver artistic excellence and take risks in the work they produce in the future.

Although data-driven practices create individual tensions for the professional identity of some arts managers (as discussed in Section 7.3), all participants in this study (see subsections 5.1.4 and 5.2.1.2) saw the need to 'balance' their individual and organisational priorities to deliver an artistic programme that was resilient, developed audiences, and delivered artistic excellence (i.e. combining market, funding, and aesthetic logics). This finding is consistent with the literature that ACOs 'need to balance aesthetic considerations with ensuring the viability of the organization' (Cray et al., 2007, p.298), in addition to also supporting research conducted by the European Commission, which concluded that ACOs must balance priorities and question whether they are 'willing to adapt programming for a cultural offer more appealing to target audiences' (Bollo et al., 2017c). While the latter conclusion is concerned with the balancing of audience and organisational priorities, it is reasonable to suggest that the need for balance also extends to market and aesthetic logics. In this regard, my findings are significant as they show that by recognising the need to balance these logics, ACOs can deliver 'adaptive resilience', i.e. 'the capacity to remain productive and true to core purpose and identity whilst absorbing disturbance and adapting with integrity in response to changing circumstances' (Robinson, 2010, p.14), and ensure organisational survival by overcoming tensions between the artistic and management

elements of their operations, despite the potential conflicts that may arise as a consequence (Chiapello, 1998, cited in Daigle and Rouleau, 2010).

However, my findings also show that despite the acknowledgement of a need to balance priorities, it may be the case that the datafication of the sector, and policies that seek to promote and grow this culture (e.g. the DSP and DPPs) will make Robinson's (2010) notion of 'adaptive resilience' difficult to achieve in the future, as the increasing ease of access to data may lead organisations to make data-driven decisions that do not reflect the 'core purpose and identity' (i.e. aesthetic logic) of the ACO as the pressures to maximise income generation for organisational resilience become more and more urgent as public funding decreases. This was evident in my findings in subsections 5.1.3.3 and 5.1.3.4 and is typified by one participant's account that 'if the pressures are just to sell more tickets regardless of programme, regardless of anything else, then yes…you're going to go for [the] safe, mainstream, [and] popular' (ORG 1a). These findings therefore support Mulchay's (2006) claim that the future of cultural policy 'would seem to predict an increasingly inexorable demand that the arts "carry their own weight" rather than rely on a public subsidy to pursue "art for art's sake"' (p.328).

This is an important finding as it demonstrates that data-centric policies that enable ACOs to take data-driven approaches to programming their artistic work (i.e. DPPs) can become a barrier to artistic risk-taking and achieving artistic excellence: '[…] I get that niggling feeling that, as we get used to [the Audience Finder], that's when risk-taking might be sidelined because we'll either be more confident in using it [data] in our programming or we'll simply have to use it in our programming to deliver against our KPIs' (ORG 15). This finding is contrary to that of McMasters (2008) in his report for DCMS, which stated that 'harnessing the possibilities offered by the exponential growth and development in new technologies is an important part of enabling risk and innovation' (p.18).

These findings are also significant as they suggest that a continued reliance on data not only has a detrimental impact on the artistic excellence of an ACOs work, but may also have repercussions

for their work to be a resilient organisation (market logic) and develop audiences (funding logic). For example, my findings show that an ACOs freedom to prioritise aesthetic logic enables ACOs to take a 'punt' (ORG 2) on programme decisions that, while not supported by data, ended up being hugely successful for those organisations (e.g. the National Theatre's '*War Horse*'; see subsection 5.1.3.2). These examples of risk-taking that paid off also support Robinson's (2010) claim that 'disturbance does not [always] come in the form of trouble or bad news' (p.14) and demonstrate that the autonomy of an arts manager to forgo data over artistry reinforce how 'risk-taking is about experimentation and pushing boundaries in ways which artists and practitioners themselves may not be sure will work' (McMaster, 2008, p.10). Put simply, taking risks that are not supported by data may not only afford an ACO with artistic excellence but also help them to be financially resilient and develop their audiences.

To summarise this part of my discussion, my findings suggest that although arts managers want a balance between their organisational priorities, DPPs may shift this balance and allow funding and market logics to dominate over aesthetic logic if used as tools by ACOs to make artistic programming decisions. By limiting artistic risk-taking in favour of financial resilience and audience development, ACOs may be negatively affected as they overlook risky decisions that would deliver against all three key priorities. This finding builds on existing literature as it offers another perspective on the proposition that 'too many organisations are trying to second-guess what their audiences want and are therefore cheating them out of the deepest and most meaningful experiences' (McMaster, 2008, p.17) and that 'successful risk-taking should be informed by skill and sense and be managed, but not avoided. The biggest risk, of course, is taking no risks at all' (ibid., p.10).

7.2.3 The data sharing policy and creating the conditions for public value

Based on the discussion in subsections 7.1.2 and 7.2.1, my findings show that arts managers consider the function of the DSP and DPPs as tools to identify and fill 'gaps' in audience

attendance through interrogation of demographic, box office, and customer contact data. Through this insight, my findings suggest that arts managers are increasingly informing their artistic programming decisions to deliver against funding and market logics – where data is used to deliver against funders goals and as a functional tool for promoting artistic works and building organisational resilience – which may overlook the aesthetic logic of artistic excellence and risk-taking. As mentioned in the literature review, scholars have considered the concept of 'value' in the arts and cultural sector, most notably Holden (2004; 2006; 2009; 2012) on 'cultural value' and Moore (1995; 2013) on 'public value'. Relating my findings to this literature, when arts managers draw on funding and market logics, they are essentially talking about instrumental value, while aesthetic logic is akin to intrinsic value.

From this perspective, my findings suggest that an increasing reliance on data-driven practices (facilitated through, for example, DPPs) to inform artistic programming may have implications for the arts and cultural sector's ability to create not only cultural value but also the value that the arts contribute to society as a whole. Moore's (1995) strategic triangle identifies three distinct but interdependent processes necessary for the creation of public value: public value outcomes, the authorising environment, and operational capacity (see subsection 2.2.2). From my findings and discussion thus far, these processes are outlined in Figure 8.

Public value outcomes focus on the twin priorities of artistic excellence and public engagement, which strengthen the capacity for the public to experience arts that excite, enlighten, stimulate, and challenge. These priorities are achievable if the public funding system abides by core principles of risk-taking, innovation, development of artistic practice, fairness, inclusiveness, access, and variety with regard to the artistic opportunities and experiences available to people (Bunting, 2007); the **authorising environment** is public arts funding, which was evident from participants' understanding of the funding chain: 'the whole cultural sector...has a responsibility to meet the objectives that we're funded to do' (ORG 12). Meeting these objectives allows ACOs to gain ongoing support from key political and other stakeholders (Benington and Moore, 2010). The authorising environment includes ACE's overarching priorities (i.e. artistic excellence,

audiences and reach, resilience and sustainability, diversity and skills, and children and young people) against which ACOs should deliver. The data sharing policy is arguably another way of creating political sustainability as it is intended to provide all funded organisations access to the audience data, or evidence, they need to deliver against these ACE goals and, subsequently, their objectives to create social value; and **Operational capacity** is the 'harnessing and mobilising of operational resources (finance, staff, skills, and technology) that are necessary to achieve the desired public value outcomes' (Benington and Moore, 2010, p.5), which is represented by investment in data pooling platforms. For example, DPPs are a technological solution with minimal cost and skills requirement that give ACOs the capacity to pursue objectives (outcomes) in terms of analysing and sharing data to 'spot gaps' through 'compar[ing] the reach and profiles of their audiences' (Arts Council England, 2015, p.19).
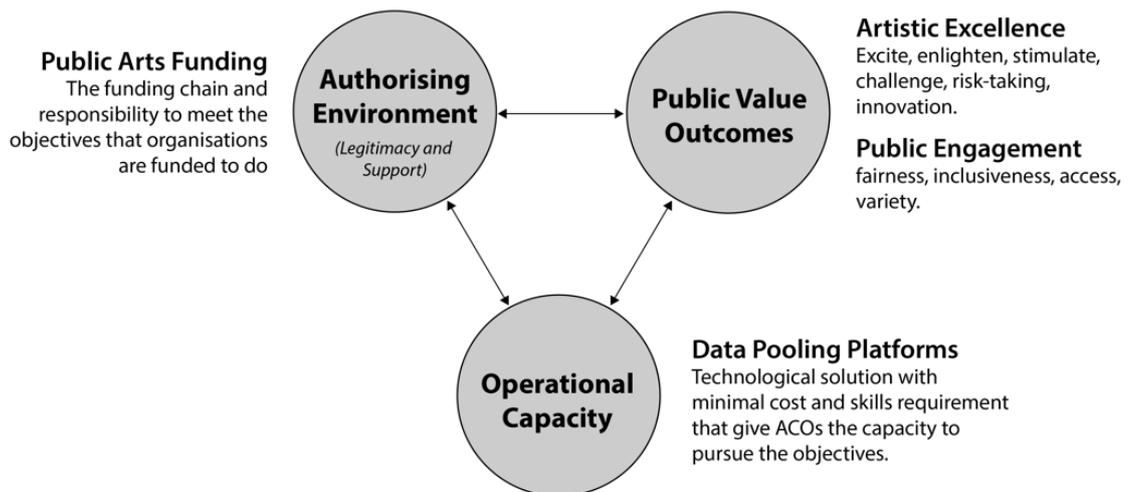
Figure 8: Strategic Triangle of Public Value (Adapted from M. Moore, 1995)

If it is accepted that artistic excellence and public engagement are the twin priorities that create public value (i.e. public value outcomes), the datafication of the sector is creating an imbalance in the strategic processes necessary for public value by building conditions that favour public engagement (instrumental value) over artistic excellence (intrinsic value). As the authorising environment – the publicly funded social system – acknowledges public value outcomes, the data

sharing policy can be seen as helping to deliver these outcomes by providing organisations operational capacity to both gain access to and engage with data about their audiences (data pooling platforms and data sharing agreements). However, by introducing the DSP and encouraging the use of data-driven decision making, there may be an unintended consequence that in trying to deliver against ACE goals to receive public subsidy (funding logic), ACOs use data-driven processes differently than initially intended, i.e. rather than supporting a balanced artistic programme, achieving artistic excellence becomes subordinate to organisation resilience and audience development (see subsection 7.2.2). Furthermore, this unintended consequence may be intensified by the prevalence of arts managers in the sector who are orientated towards the 'business' of cultural production, i.e. to increase audiences in order to generate income (as will be discussed in the proceeding section).

Taken together, these findings are important as, in contrast to the notion that 'the public will benefit and achieve improved "value" from improvements in how public-sector organisations operate' (Gray, 2008, p.210), my findings suggest that formalised data-centric policies encouraging the use of data-driven tools to 'enabl[e] cultural organisations to understand, compare and apply audience insight' (The Audience Agency, 2018) have knocked the processes in the strategic triangle in Figure 8 out of alignment, thus posing a threat to public value creation going forward as public value outcomes are not being satisfied. Building on Moore's (1995) theory, more work has to be done, either by ACE or ACOs, to better align these processes, i.e. DPPs need to be advocated as a tool for creating artistic excellence and not just public engagement so that 'public value' can be truly achieved.

7.3 Managing Professional Identities

This research set out with the aim of highlighting how arts managers understand formalised data policies and practices in relation to their work as arts professionals and to identify the adoption barriers to enhanced data usage and sharing across the publicly funded arts and cultural sector. My findings and analysis show that both ACE's requirement for ACOs to engage with data

pooling platforms and the general 'datafication' of the arts and cultural sector challenge – both positively and negatively – the professional identities of arts managers by subverting 'traditional' roles and questioning long-standing knowledge, experience, and expertise. From these findings, it is possible to identify the diversity of arts managers' data-driven ambitions prevalent in ACOs – which I define as the level of desire and determination of an arts manager to embrace and embed data skills and practice within their organisations' decision-making practices. Taken together, these findings are important as they help us not only understand how the DSP and DPPs affect arts managers but also consider how these effects can be managed in subsequent policymaking.

To explore these issues, I first address the theme data-driven ambition (subsection 7.3.1) and how this relates to an arts manager's professional identity, and why there is diversity in this ambition, which I do by discussing the findings presented in Sections 5.1 (data-driven programme making) and 5.2 (professional identity) in relation to the arts management literature on collective identities (Paquette and Redaelli, 2015a) and previous research on arts management training (Bilton, 2015). I suggest that the way in which new arts managers are trained and enter the sector is a key factor in arts managers accepting data practices as part of their work. After doing so, I then discuss one particular example of where the data-driven ambition of data-expert arts managers can change the professional identity of those arts managers in marketing roles (subsection 7.3.2) and how data-sceptic arts managers (notably artistics) worry about data-centric policies undermining their position as knowledgeable, experienced, and expert members of their organisations. Finally, I examine how arts managers who feel their professional identity is challenged by their data-expert colleagues can reshape their identities to reflect the datafication of the sector through the acquisition of data literacy (subsection 7.3.4).

7.3.1 The diversity of data-driven ambition

The first question in this study sought to explore how arts managers understood formalised data policies and practices in relation to their work as arts professionals. My findings and analysis across Chapters 4 and 5 highlight that different arts managers exhibit diverse levels of ambition

with regard to using data-driven practices in their work. These findings are important as identifying different levels of data-driven ambition is useful for understanding how data-driven practices can affect the respective professional identities of those who are asked to engage with them.

In the arts management literature, scholars have noted that while arts and cultural organisations have collective identities of their own, they are also organisations where 'many professional groups evolve together, with their own professional collective socialization', and that this 'encounter between multiple professional identities can become a source of tensions and conflicts' (Paquette and Redaelli, 2015, p55). This broadly aligns with the findings of the present study in that of the three dominant types of arts managers (marketers, executives, and artistics) each have their own divergent positions on how their organisation should be using data, particularly in artistic decision making. Although my findings show that most participants accepted that their organisation's artistic decisions should not always be led by data, more participants – notably executives and marketers – advocated the business benefits (market logic) to be gained by adopting data-driven approaches in their artistic programming (see subsections 5.1.1 and 5.1.2) as opposed to those who saw data-driven approaches as a threat to artistic excellence and mission (aesthetic logic), such as those identified in subsection 5.1.3.

Cray (2007) suggests that 'the demands of arts stakeholders often conflict with a more business-like, or managerialist, management style and thus complicate leadership and decision making' (p.295). Although it is not possible to generalise from my findings whether there was a rigid conflict/tension between these different arts manager roles or logic when it came to using data in artistic decision making, it was clear that there was a diversity in ambition between those arts managers who were typically data-sceptic (artistics and some executives) and those who were typically data-expert (marketers and some executives). My findings highlight that this difference in ambition can cause individual tensions amongst the professional identities and autonomy of data-sceptic arts managers when trying to make sense of and adapt to organisational practice in response to the new requirements of the DSP, including the requirement to engage with DPPs.

In this discussion, I explore this diversity of ambition in relation to the 'strong' data-driven ambition exhibited by marketers and some executives and the 'weak' data-driven ambition predominantly exhibited by artistics. While this difference in arts manager type is not a surprising finding, it is interesting to note that artistics and some executives frequently referred to the knowledge and skills of their marketing colleagues as 'data experts' (ORG 8) and 'the guys who are really knowledgeable about this stuff [data analysis]' (ORG 3).

Building on this, my analysis and findings suggest that a lack of data skills and awareness – or data literacy - across the sector could be a primary reason for this diversity of data-driven ambition between data-expert (strong ambition) and data-sceptic (weak ambition) arts managers. This finding is consistent with Arts Council England's *Digital Culture 2013* report, which found that only a small number of organisations identify as the 'cultural digerati', i.e. organisations that have 'digital skills spread throughout their organisation rather than concentrated in any one area' (Arts Council England et al., 2013, p.5) when compared to other ACOs where there are gaps in expertise and limited understanding of the value, relevance, and usefulness of the data available (Arvanitis et al., 2016). In other words, it can be suggested that those without, or with limited, data literacy have weak data-driven ambitions, while those who demonstrate a high degree of data literacy have strong data-driven ambitions. Given that another finding (although not a saturated one) is a perceived generational issue that could be attributed to a weak data-driven ambition (see subsection 5.2.2.2), a possible explanation for this diversity may be linked to the way that 'new generation' arts managers are trained, enter the sector, and the professional identities they adopt in doing so.

As can be seen in the arts management literature, new graduates of arts and cultural management courses are 'trained to take up the demands of managing arts organisations' (Bilton, 2015, p.287), which is in contrast to the historic approach of deriving their training from on-the-job experience (Di Maggio, 1987, cited in Varela, 2013). As the policy rhetoric over the past two decades has been for organisations to be more business-like and become sustainable and resilient, arts and cultural management training has become orientated around the 'slick certainties of business'

(Bilton, 2015, p.287). To this end, a cautious finding could be that arts managers who have been through formal arts management training programmes are more likely to be those who demonstrate a strong data-driven ambition and promote business-minded decisions in their role (such as those highlighted in subsection 5.1.2). However, while it may be assumed that this 'new generation' of arts managers, or for that matter anyone who is data-confident (rather than expert), is exempt from challenges to their professional identity in light of the 'datafication' of the sector, my findings also highlight that an ACO's increasing dependency on data-driven decision making does in fact affect the professional identity of arts marketers.

7.3.2 Reframing data-expert identities

My findings highlight that data-centric policy that puts data-driven practices at the forefront of an ACO's activities can reframe the professional identity of data-expert arts managers who have the skills and strong levels of data-driven ambition to engage with those practices. For example, my analysis shows that those in marketing roles, with insight into the commercialisation of audience data, and who have strong data analysis skills may be subverting their identity in the traditional sense as a promotor of an ACO's artistic work to a new identity that includes a broader artistic remit. This finding builds on the wider arts management conversation regarding the changing role and identity of the arts marketer (see, for example, Caust, 2003; Lee, 2005; Chambers, 2013) and highlights how the continued datafication of the sector may signal the end of the traditional arts marketing paradigm. This is a significant finding as it demonstrates that the professional identities of all arts managers, irrespective of their roles, are affected by the introduction of ACE's DSP and DPPs, thus addressing the research objective of understanding the effects of a formalised data sharing policy and practice on the management of publicly funded arts and cultural organisations in England.

This proposition relates to the changing role and identity of marketers in terms of their influence within the wider artistic team of an organisation. Traditionally, the role of marketing was 'embedded in romanticism' (Lee, 2005, p.289), which viewed the value of the arts as being

determined by the producer – in this context, an ACO's artistic team. The role, and thus identity, of the marketer has traditionally been 'product-led', as it involved selling the artistic work – the product – to the audience (consumer). In this capacity, the role and identity of the marketer has not been about understanding what the audience want but rather 'being able to introduce the consumer to the magnificence of the artistic product' (Paquette and Redaelli, 2015b, p.36).

As was shown in subsections 5.1.1 and 5.1.2, arts managers in marketing roles have an increasingly active voice in the planning of an ACO's artistic programme, which is evident in their perceived ability to use both the data they capture or can access through DPPs (demographic, contact, and survey data) to identify gaps in audience engagement, recognise emerging trends, and carry out other data analysis as requested. In undertaking such activities, it can thus be suggested that the professional identity and autonomy of the marketer is becoming defined, to a greater or lesser extent, by their data-analysis competencies. Considering this finding in relation to Alvesson and Willmott's (2002) stance that at the level of the individual, the types of identities that people work on have consequences for everyday decision-making in organizations, the autonomy of an organisation's artistic team to make artistic programming choices (part of their own identity – see subsection 5.2.1) without the input of the marketer will become increasingly difficult. This is because marketers' data-analysis skills have become heavily embedded in the decision-making practices of ACOs in terms of understanding the audience, which subsequently aids an organisation's ability to meet ACE goals and targets (as discussed in subsection 7.1.2). Put simply, the marketer's role and identity is now not just to introduce the audience to the artistic product but to be a constituent part of informing what that artistic product is, thus comprising their new professional identity. However, it should be noted that these findings cannot be extrapolated to all the marketers interviewed for this research or seen to be reflective of the sector as a whole, as the semi-structured interviews did not consistently ask about participants' training and employment pathways. To develop a full picture of whether routes of arts management training/how they enter the sector influence their degree of data-driven ambition, more research needs to be conducted that fully considers participants' backgrounds.

7.3.3 Undermining knowledgeable identities

Drawing on earlier discussions regarding ACOs increasing dependency on DPPs to inform aspects of their artistic programming work that deliver against ACE priorities (subsection 7.1.2) and how it is often those in marketing and perhaps some executive roles who have the necessary data literacy to understand and utilise data to achieve those goals, it could be hypothesised from my findings that artistic arts managers fear that data-centric policies could undermine their position as knowledgeable, experienced, and expert members of their organisations.

For example, my analysis and findings in subsection 5.1.2 (artistic excellence, risk, and mission) and Section 5.2 (professional identity) show that the DSP and the requirement to engage with DPPs create individual tensions relating to the professional identity of artistic arts managers. In this regard, these policies are seen to pull artistics in a different direction to what they believe their professional identity to be (i.e. they are an artistic director who cannot make artistic decisions without validation from data analysis). These findings, together with the discussion above in subsection 7.3.1.1, therefore suggest that an unintended consequence of marketers reshaped professional identities (informers of artistic products) is that they may further exacerbate those individual tensions reported by data-sceptic arts managers in artistic roles by making them feel that their artistic knowledge, experience, and expertise (which shape their professional identity) is at risk from their marketing colleagues. This sentiment was best illustrated by the artistic directors who worried about the point at which their 'creative expertise gets trumped by box office reports or audience segmentation models [...]' (ORG 7) and how the sector could become full of arts managers who were 'glorified "bean counters" […]' (ORG 8).

One of the key issues emerging from these findings is how the continued promotion of data-centric tools for organisational decision making, which speak more to the professional identities of data-expert arts managers (i.e. marketers and some executives), may ultimately diminish the professional identities and autonomy of data-sceptic arts managers (i.e. artistics) by devaluing and removing the 'tacit knowledge, experience, and expertise' they traditionally brought to their

organisation's artistic decision making in favour of explicit knowledge generated from data (Poisson-de-Haro and Menot, 2014, pp.62-63). This individual tension was best captured in my findings by an artistic director's apt comment that they 'have fifteen years of experience across many, many organisations…but you know, how do I stack-up against the thousands of data points you can now run through a piece of software?' (ORG 15).

These findings raise intriguing questions regarding the nature and extent of data-centric policy intentions, as it appears that the formalising of data policies (i.e. to facilitate ACO data access and analysis) seems to cater to a sector that is prepared to forfeit the professional identities of some artistic arts managers – whose expertise is grounded in the traditional sense of possessing knowledge – in favour of a new identity where expertise relates to an arts manager's ability to find and leverage knowledge from the ever increasing pervasiveness of data (Van Knippenberg et al., 2015). However, as with the previous discussion relating to tensions experienced by artistic arts managers, the small sample of artistic directors participating in this research means that it is difficult to generalise these findings, and further research should be carried out to consider them at scale.

7.3.4 Securing professional identities through data literacy

Following on from the above discussion, the second research question in this study sought to determine what the adoption barriers are to enhanced data usage and sharing across the publicly funded arts and cultural sector. In this regard, my findings support and build upon much of the literature presented in subsection 2.1.2.4 (barriers and challenges to datafication in the arts sector) and suggest that a lack of 'data literacy' amongst some arts managers is a key barrier to accepting data-driven practices as part of a reshaped professional identity. This is important as until arts managers can accept data-driven practices as a constituent part of their professional identity, the datafication of the arts and cultural sector will either stall or – more likely – will continue to develop while leaving such data-sceptic arts managers behind. In this regard, understanding how these different levels of ambition can be brought closer together is important as it may help artistic

arts managers – the often data-sceptic – to resolve individual tensions relating to their professional identity and autonomy as an arts manager when trying to make sense of and adapt their own practices in response to data-driven decision making.

However, a challenge with this is also clear from my findings, i.e. some arts managers did not appear interested in upskilling themselves, even when their data-expert colleagues offered to share their knowledge. This is an important finding as the implications of arts managers not willing to upskill themselves could widen the diversity in data-driven ambition between them and their data-expert colleagues. Given the policy trajectory towards embedding data practices in ACOs, and in order to help data-sceptic arts managers secure role longevity, intervention is required to assist art managers in reshaping their professional identities so as to accept data and to upskill themselves to be data literate (or at least data aware). To this end, my findings highlight that a lack of data literacy as an adoption barrier to enhanced data usage and sharing across the publicly funded arts and cultural sector has important implications for understanding how future data-centric policies will be accepted by arts managers working in the sector.

From my findings, it can therefore be suggested that to help resolve this issue of data *illiteracy*, all members of senior management teams in ACOs should have the opportunity to upskill to the point where they can understand the data presented/accessed through the DSP and DPPs. This proposition is consistent with the recommendations of the European Commission's research that arts managers 'must be equipped with appropriate skills to design and implement audience development activities' (Bollo et al., 2017b, p.11). However, the appetite to seek out opportunities to become data literate so that they can utilise and (from the ACE's perspective) benefit from these policies and platforms will be limited by how protective those arts managers are of their professional identity and autonomy as experienced and knowledgeable people in an organisation. If these actors are to accept that their professional identity as an arts manager needs to adapt in response to the datafication of the sector, including upskilling themselves in this area, arts managers and the ACOs they work in may stand to benefit in three important ways.

First, they may be better placed to understand the perspectives and approaches taken by the data-expert arts managers and evolve together, with their own professional collective socialization (Paquette and Redaelli, 2015, p.55), which will allow them to deliver their organisations' artistic programmes through balancing the market and funding logics often adopted by marketers and executives with the aesthetic logic that an artistic's professional identity and autonomy is usually defined by. Second, by re-shaping their professional identity to include data literacy, ACOs can mitigate against the risk of role desertion by the marketers they have come to rely on for decision making (i.e. data expertise/confidence is spread out across an organisation and not just owned by one individual or team). Finally, by having a data literate senior team of marketers, artistics, and executives, the collective identity of an ACO as a whole can be transformed to become one of the 'digital culturati' (Arts Council England et al., 2013) – or digital leaders who see digital technologies as very important or essential to all areas of their business – which can create both positive change not only in the way their organisation interacts and understand their audiences but also for the overall running of their operations (Ellis et al., 2017). As digital leaders, managers may be more willing to experiment with and upskill themselves in new and emergent technologies going forward, and they will 'feel much more comfortable with their capabilities than other organisations in almost all skills areas, and in particular with regard to software development, user interface design and digital commissioning' (Arts Council England et al., 2013, p.8).

However, the challenge with these propositions is that there is currently a lack of professional development and lifelong learning opportunities for arts managers who have been in the sector for a number of years. While it is apparent from the findings that some arts managers actively participate in professional development activities, it is important that new data policies take into account the 'development needs and also […] harness the knowledge and capability of some individuals and institutions to act as pathfinders and to help each other along the road' (Lilley and Moore, 2013, p.43).

Finally, it should be noted that these findings of a lack of data literacy are not unique to the publicly funded arts and cultural sector in England. The US based Association of Arts

Administration Educators (AAAE) have included data literacy as one of their new principles and practices for undergraduate Arts Management training: 'Arts managers must become educated consumers of data and be able to use data as an important input in their decision-making' (Association of Arts Administration Educators (AAAE), 2018). However, while these principles and practices are a step in the right direction in terms of training the 'new generation' of arts managers, there remains the risk of a widening skills gap between those new arts managers entering the sector, trained to be data literate, and those who have worked in these organisations for a long time.

In this section, I have discussed how the datafication of the arts and cultural sector, and the introduction of the DSP and DPPs, affects the work of arts managers in three ways: (1) the range of data-driven ambition is linked to the roles arts managers assume in ACOs; (2) data-centric policies affect the work and identities of all arts managers; and (3) data literacy is a key barrier to some arts managers accepting data-driven practices as part of their work.

7.4 Challenging Stakeholder Relationships

Another objective of this research was to identify what the increasing usage of 'data' in the arts and cultural sector means for an ACO's relationship with its stakeholders. My findings and analysis show that ACE's DSP significantly challenges an ACO's ability to satisfy the divergent legitimacy demands of its stakeholders. While the core discussion surrounding the different dimensions of legitimacy ACOs struggle to satisfy in response to the DSP was in Chapter 6, this section will broaden the discussion to consider wider implications to stakeholder relationships and the additional literature that supports this.

7.4.1 Relationships to other arts and cultural organisations [peers]

Building on the findings and discussion presented in subsections 6.2.2 (integrity vs. control) and 6.2.3 (comradery vs. competition), my findings show that the DSP removes the power venue-

based ACOs had traditionally used to control access to their audience data, signalling the end of the closed-data relationships they had with their peers, and transitioning them to a relationship underpinned by the supply and demand of digital data. This finding has important implications for understanding the notion of competition between ACOs and their peers in the ways they (1) approach new emerging pressures such as the need to generate additional income through, for example, philanthropy, and (2) consider their own hierarchical relationship with their sector peers.

On the notion of competition, my findings challenge the published rhetoric ACE used to justify the introduction of the DSP, which claimed 'publicly funded arts and cultural organisations are not in competition with each other for audiences' (Arts Council England, 2016, p.1). As CCD is now a common resource (see discussion in subsection 7.1.1) arts managers believe there is an arms race between themselves and the peers that the CCD has been shared with (in this instance TTCs) to be the first to use that data for communicating marketing or research purposes as they believe a customer's (audience) tolerance to receive such communications is limited (discussed in more detail in subsection 7.4.2). Another repercussion of competition fear between ACOs and their peers then, is that both organisations expedite their search for philanthropic donors. While previous research has suggested that 'organisations vying for the same pots of money all acknowledged that developing other income streams was an area that must be addressed, but most felt that it was not resourced sufficiently' (Rowlands, 2012), it is possible that this fear of competition with their peers evoked by the DSP means that ACOs place a renewed emphasis on assessing their audiences 'propensity to give' and subsequently 'bring marketing communication about donations together' (ORG 3). In other words, fear of competition introduced by DSP may make ACOs of all types more aggressive in their marketing and fundraising campaigns.

Building on this proposition, and the earlier discussion of how ACOs regard themselves as being in a better position to engage with CCD than their peers and have leveraged this market hold to create competitive advantage (see subsection 7.1.1); another interesting possibility which emerges from these finding is that venue-based ACOs have a superiority complex in that they perceive themselves to have the human and technological resources needed not only to store customer data

securely but also to do meaningful work with that data which their peers are not able to. The reason for this is not clear, but it may have something to do with the concept of data ownership, whereby venue-based ACOs believe that as they have taken the risk to capture and store CCD on behalf of their peers (i.e. TTCs), the venue-based ACO should be rewarded for that risk and effort by getting optimum value out of the CCD for themselves, i.e. marketing and communicating philanthropic opportunities.

The final interesting contribution to come out of the findings in subsections 4.4.2 (data equality) and 6.2.3 (comradery vs. competition) is that they support and build on the literature that sees the publicly funded arts and cultural sector as an example of an organisational/institutional field defined 'more or less, [by] the sum of similar organisations evolving in a similar economic, cultural, and organisational/institutional environment' (Paquette and Redaelli, 2015, p.50). In other words, ACO and their peers should all be experiencing the same pressures and opportunities. This notion is important as it contributes to an understanding of why ACE introduced the DSP in the first place. For example, single organisations – in this instance, venue-based or touring theatre companies – each experience the constraints and pressures of the field, which include the need to 'demonstrate impact' (see subsection 4.4.1). Responding to these pressures (which may be coercive, normative, or mimetic), organisations tend to develop structures, norms, and collective behaviours that are adjusted to the field's expectations, i.e. they effectively conform to the pressures of the field (Paquette and Redaelli, 2015, p.51). Therefore, my proposition is that because TTCs have not had access to the same types of data (mainly CCD) that venue-based ACOs have (even though it is data generated from work they have produced), they are not able to develop the same 'structures, norms, or collective behaviour' (i.e. develop their own data culture) that venue-based ACOs have and thus struggle to respond to the pressures of the organisational field. Understanding the DSP in this way is helpful as it can be used to pre-empt future policy directions by looking for areas where there is a variation in resources/skills/other phenomena between one publicly funded organisation and the next.

7.4.2 Relationships with the audience[23]

Another way we might understand what the increasing use of 'data' in the arts and cultural sector means for an ACO's relationship with its stakeholders is to consider the perceived effects of the DSP on the audiences who attend the work produced by ACOs. My analysis and discussion in subsection 6.2.2 (integrity vs. control) highlights that the DSP requirement to share audience contact data with third parties, an activity most participant organisations did not currently engage in, is perceived by arts managers to challenge the long-standing, trusting relationship that exists between ACOs and their audience (due to a fear of data misuse). Since the literature highlights that maintaining and creating good long-term relationships with an audience is vital for the viability and survival predicaments of an ACO (Hegner et al., 2016), my findings (subsection 6.2.2.1) show that the act of sharing personal data under data sharing agreements (mandated through the DSP) is perceived by arts managers to result in a loss of trust and the subsequent reluctance of audiences to share personal data (either contact or demographic) with ACOs in the future due to their growing awareness of personal data misuse. These findings confirm Carlucci et al.'s (2018) stance that audiences want to 'avoid misuse of the information they pass along to others and the sharing of information revealing an individual's identity' (p.23), in addition to also being in accord with recent studies indicating that over 70% of the population is concerned about data sharing and data privacy (Communications Consumer Panel, 2016, p.12), within which losing control of their personal information was the most significant concern (Bartlett, 2012, p.15). An important implication of this perceived loss of trust with regard to sharing data is the possibility that ACOs may see a decline in direct marketing opportunities for future artistic work, in addition to affecting their ability to target audience members for private fundraising and philanthropy as their databases of contact data are severely diminished. This is a potentially

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[23] Throughout this thesis, reference is made to ACOs controlling audience contact data. To clarify, I am not suggesting that these organisations share data for which they do not have permission. For this study, it is assumed that all data shared either before or after the DSP came into effect was done so with audience members' permission and that the participants' responses were made under such conditions.

significant issue if we consider that one of the key aspects of arts managers' (and their organisations') work is to develop audiences and that direct marketing has been one of the key methods through which they had traditionally reached those audiences.

Another way of considering the implications of what sharing customer contact data under the DSP means for an ACO's relationship with its audience is to consider its potential effect on an ACO's ability to create institutional (public) value. For example, Holden (2006) suggests that ACOs are 'active agents in the creation or destruction of what the public values' (p.17) through their engagement with the public, particularly regarding their working practices and attitudes. Given the above discussion that audiences (the public) are becoming increasingly aware of, and placing value on, their data privacy, it is possible that by lawfully sharing audience data, the perceived loss of control by venue-based ACOs to use audience members' data in a trustworthy and respectful manner may ultimately lead to the destruction of institutional (public) value. For example, building on the discussion in subsection 7.2.3, which noted how challenges to an ACO's delivery of artistic excellence can knock the processes in the strategic triangle of public value creation out of alignment, the same can be said for an ACO's perceived misuse of audience data in light of the DSP as 'fairness and trust' are also constituent parts of public value outcomes (Holden, 2004, p.43).

Considering these findings, I suggest that to mitigate against the possible tensions between the DSP and the destruction of audience trust, ACOs will need to be strategic in the way they work with other ACOs (including TTCs) who request access to personal audience data under the data sharing agreements. This can be considered in relation to the literature that notes how organisational survival depends on an ACO's capacity to decide upon agreements that appease the conflicting parties or stakeholders (Townley, 2002, cited in Daigle and Rouleau, 2010, p.13). In other words, if ACOs are to follow the requirement to share data with third parties, they will need to ensure that the data sharing agreements between parties address this issue of audience trust so that it can be maintained and thus ensure survival for all organisations. This will be particularly important given the implementation of the General Data Protection Regulation

(GDPR), which aims to protect all EU citizens from privacy and data breaches in an increasingly data-driven world.

7.4.3 Relationships with funders

The final way that this thesis discusses what the increasing usage of 'data' in the arts and cultural sector means for an ACO's relationship with its stakeholders is in relation to the ACOs funder – Arts Council England. My findings in Chapters 4, 5, and 6 collectively highlight a fear of the unknown amongst arts managers when considering the wider – for them ambiguous – aims of the data sharing policy. Aside from their immediate concerns relating to issues of data protection, competition, and audience trust (see Chapter 6), my findings exposed an underlying tension that the data ACOs are asked to upload to data pooling platforms would be used as evidence in the ACE's measurement and assessment activities (see Section 4.4), which I argue is another example of the instrumental legitimacy demands (Tost, 2011) that ACOs must satisfy. These findings are important as they broadly support the work of other studies relating to performance measurement and assessment, as outlined in the literature review (see subsection 2.2.3). Although the DSP's policy wording contains no specific mention that the data made available through ACO uploads to DPPs will be used for measurement and assessment (the ACE representative interviewed for this study also did not confirm this), the findings in subsection 5.1.3.4 demonstrate that this is clearly a worry for arts managers, in turn supporting the sense amongst other practitioners and scholars that 'modern society is perceived to have become addicted to ratings and rankings that convey a comforting sense of clarity and control' (Mayrick et al., 2016).

Participants also acknowledged how each actor in the funding chain needs to report and justify their actions to agents above them (see Section 4.2). These accounts are examples of how arts managers may draw on their stocks of knowledge - common values and beliefs (King, 2004) - to inform fears relating to measurement and assessment activities, i.e. they reflect on previous ACE policies they and their ACO have experienced. These stocks of knowledge may also be informed by other publications, such as Lilley and Moore's (2013) *Counting What Counts*, which, as

highlighted in the literature review, calls for ACE to harness the 'big data opportunity' and 'encompass new approaches to measurement' (p.10) that move away from accountability measured on what is produced to measurement based on consumption and impact (ibid., p.23; see also subsection 2.2.3). In this regard, it is these stocks of knowledge that may drive underlying tensions about sustaining organisational legitimacy going forward and cause arts managers to question the policy's motivations.

These tensions, however, can be regarded as an unintended consequence of action. In this context, accessing or maintaining public arts funding is achieved by ACOs delivering against a set of pre-defined requirements or priorities outlined by the funder (see subsection 6.1.2). However, the nature of public arts funding structures enables the introduction of new or the refinement of existing requirements and priorities, e.g. the introduction of the data sharing policy. However, based on my findings, it appears that arts managers (as individuals or as collective ACOs) have taken the new policy requirement (the DSP) and interpreted it in a different way, i.e. they believe that the data made available through the DSP and DPPs will be used to measure and assess their ACO in the future. In short, because ACOs exist within a social structure with traditions of hierarchical agents invoking policy requirements to measure and assess ACOs so as to gain or maintain their funding, there is an assumption that the data sharing policy will, like the other policy requirements historically invoked by ACE, be used for measurement and assessment, despite the rhetoric from ACE that this will not be the case. Given that the findings in Section 4.5 highlight that DSP policy communications had been carried out 'imperfectly' (ORG 8), it can be suggested that one way for ACE to mitigate against such fears and enhance the overall relationship between the funder and the funded would be to improve how they disseminate and explain policy motivations in a more useful and confidence-building way, which is an important factor to be considered when introducing new policies that (1) require ACOs to consider their actions against the legitimacy requirements of other actors (such as the Information Commissioner's Office in this research – see subsections 6.1.1 and 6.2.1) and (2) when the new policies being introduced

are considered to be disruptive in nature (e.g. changing the nature of an ACO's resources – see subsection 7.1.1).

In this section, I have built on the findings in Chapter 6 in order to tease out and discuss additional areas where the increasing usage of 'data' and the introduction of the data sharing policy and data pooling platforms in the arts and cultural sector can present challenges for an ACOs relationship with its stakeholders, notably their audience, peers (i.e. other ACOs), and principle funder – Arts Council England. My findings and discussion presented both above and in Chapter 6 are thus a useful contribution to the arts management literature as they apply Tost's (2011) model of legitimacy judgements (not previously used in arts management research) and demonstrate that doing so is a practical way for considering and testing the implications of new policies introduced in the publicly funded arts and cultural sector. Finally, it is important to note that some caution should be applied to these findings as they only come from the perspectives of venue-based ACOs. In this regard, further research should be conducted to test these findings against qualitative data generated from arts managers working in touring theatre companies and audience members whose data is at the heart of the DSP.

8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I first summarise the key findings of the study, tying together the research questions, and discuss the subsequent conclusions. In the second section, I offer a critical evaluation of the study, including a personal reflection and discussion of the research limitations before then considering the practical implications of the research and its findings for publicly funded arts organisations in England. The first set of recommendations are for improving professional development opportunities for arts managers in light of a growing data culture in the sector, whereas the second set of recommendations make proposals for how the Arts Council should develop future policy in light of the findings.

8.1 Empirical Findings and Implications for Arts Management

This research captured the opinions of arts managers at the inception of Arts Council England's data sharing policy (DSP), which were inextricably tied to organisations' public funding. In this regard, the study sought to understand the *effects of a formalised data sharing policy and practices on the management of publicly funded arts and cultural organisations in England* across three research questions:

- **RQ01**: How do arts and cultural managers understand formalised data policies and practices in relation to their work as arts professionals?

- **RQ02**: What are the adoption barriers to enhanced data usage and sharing across the publicly funded arts and cultural sector?

- **RQ03**: What does the increasing usage of 'data' and data-centric practices in the arts and cultural sector mean for an ACOs relationship with its stakeholders?

For ease of navigation, the key findings and the conclusions of this thesis are addressed under four broad headings: (1) arts data culture; (2) data expert vs. data sceptic tensions; (3) artistic risk-taking; and (4) stakeholder relationships. All four of these key findings mix, merge, and interrelate, as has been the pattern throughout my findings and discussion chapters. Taken together, they set out the contribution of this thesis and what new knowledge has emerged as a result.

8.1.1 Arts data culture

The overarching research aim was to understand the effects of data sharing policies on the arts and cultural sector in England. While this study did find specific examples of how the Arts Council's DSP effects these organisations, it also contributes to a wider discussion around organisational data usage and the growing 'data culture' prevalent in the arts and cultural sector. Previous research has examined the emergence of a 'data culture' in the publicly funded arts and cultural sector for performance measurement, self-evaluation, and data-driven decision making (McGill, 2014; Arvanitis et al., 2016; Ellerton, 2018). Although much of the data presented across the three findings chapters supports these previous research propositions, the findings of this thesis highlight that rather than the emergence of a *new* arts data culture, we have instead been witnessing *existing* data subcultures gaining traction and prominence in the sector, which appears to be in response to: **greater data dialogue** not only around the Arts Council's DSP but also the wider data discourse prevalent in our daily lives; **greater data opportunities** for arts managers to use their data skills in organisational life; and **greater policy pressures** on organisations to engage and utilise data effectively.

As a note to the reader, in this thesis, I use the term 'subculture' to mean a minority number of senior managers responsible for, or interested in, their organisation's data-led activities. In my understanding, members of a subculture tend to share many of the assumptions of the organisation writ large (e.g. mission and values), but also hold assumptions that go beyond those of their organisational peers; this is usually reflective of their specific organisational roles or experiences (Schein, 2004). In other words, those who work in data-led roles are likely to hold more significant assumptions about the value data can add to the organisation over those who do not work closely with, or understand, data. To that end, the term is used as a sensitising device to help articulate a phenomenon I have found in the participant data. As such, the use of the term in this thesis does not seek to map onto or build on, any particular theoretical grounding of the term in other academic disciplines or literature.

8.1.1.1 Greater data dialogue

Lilley and Moore (2013) sought to change the dialogue about how organisations address the data they capture from 'too limited a perspective', pushing for effective use of big data in these organisations. While, for a number of arts professionals, the recommendations in Lilley and Moore's (2013) work will have signalled a seismic shift in the nature of their role as arts managers, it is more likely that this publication; the business-led course content of arts management training programmes; and a generally wider public discourse around data have all provided the opportunity and framework for arts managers and organisations to be more open about the long-standing data activities that already 'underpin everything [organisations] do' (ORG 3).

To this end, my findings show that increased data dialogue appears to have helped organisations understand that their data is an important organisational resource. Speaking to a greater or lesser extent about the three types of data they regularly captured and used across the organisation, i.e. operational, demographic, and customer contact data, participants noted how 'vitally important' these types of data were for the 'continued growth of the sector' (ORG 6). The findings presented in Chapter 4 and discussed in Chapter 7 clearly highlight a trend of this sector-generated data

being treated as a resource that is increasingly used to inform a broad range of organisational activities, ranging from *informing* operational decisions such as café and box office opening times to *reporting* against performance objectives set by stakeholders.

8.1.1.2   Greater data opportunities and capabilities

This thesis has shown that an increased dialogue around data usage, particularly in terms of the Arts Council's DSP, in the arts and cultural sector has presented an opportunity to promote and develop organisations' data culture. One opportunity of an increased data dialogue is that arts managers already engaging in the arts data subculture are able to demonstrate and apply their data skills across more areas of their organisation in response to more members of senior management teams recognising and understanding the potential of their organisation's data. For example, my findings have shown how data expert managers apply data analysis skills to a number of different scenarios under a market and funding logic, such as refining box office and café opening times, to demonstrate the revenue and diversity potential of auditorium seating options that – if not for their intervention –would have been taken off sale for artistic purposes (see Chapter 5).

This leads into another opportunity for increased data dialogue, which is to build data capabilities within arts and cultural organisations. Through this research, it is clear that there are already a number of skilled or data-savvy arts managers working within the sector, which was evident in the number of data-driven activities referenced to by participants. However, it is also clear that many of the participants felt under-resourced with regard to maintaining and effectively utilising all the data made available to their organisations. In this respect, the findings support the argument of Gilmore et al. (2018, p.37) that there is a requirement for 'significant improvements and investment in in-house skills and analytical expertise in order to meet the demands of a truly big data culture in the arts'. To this end, another opportunity afforded by increased data dialogue is a growing consensus that the sector needs to welcome more skilled individuals in order to help deliver the growing data ambitions of organisations.

8.1.1.3 Data pressures

This thesis has also highlighted that parallel to the data opportunities afforded by a growing data dialogue – which has given prominence to an arts data culture – are greater pressures on arts and cultural organisations to utilise the different types of data they collect. Policy pressures such as the DSP, and wider pressures to deliver against *instrumental* Arts Council goals for audience development and resilience building, have created the conditions for data-expert managers to apply their skills to the 'calculation, routine, regulation, order, and measurement' (Daigle, 2010, p.13) of their organisations work necessary to show legitimacy in their reporting activities to the Arts Council. This was evident across the findings, specifically those presented in Chapters 5 and 6 and the discussion in Chapter 7 (subsection 7.3.1).

Another example of where this thesis has identified a data subculture growing into a primary arts data culture is in the increasing sense of data dependency across participant organisations in response to funding policy pressures (the funding logic). The discussion in Chapter 7 (subsection 7.1.1.) in part highlighted how pressures to sign up to and engage with data pooling platforms (DPPs) such as the Audience Finder lead organisations to become more dependent on data in a number of areas under market and funding logic, such as *informing* decision-making activities (i.e. artistic decision making) that would previously have been made without any data-led input.

8.1.1.4 Challenges of a growing data culture

In considering how data sharing policies and data tools have grown the arts data culture in terms of greater dialogue, opportunity, and pressures surrounding audience-specific data, this thesis has also identified a series of challenges associated with such growth, challenges that help, in part, to answer **RQ01** and **RQ02**. Two of these challenges – identity issues and competition fears – are outlined in this section, while another two tensions/challenges are addressed later in the chapter.

8.1.1.4.1 *Identity issues*

Identities are people's subjective understandings of who they are and who they desire to become (A. D. Brown, 2015), and they often align with the different institutional logics at play within an

organisation. My findings have highlighted that a growing arts data culture is generating challenges for some arts managers in maintaining a valued identity as knowledgeable creatives. My research has also found that a formalised DSP, and a sense of a growing arts data culture, has created a disparity between the levels of data ambition embodied by data-savvy arts managers who align with market logic (i.e. financial resilience) and those who are data-sceptic and tend to align with aesthetic logic (i.e. artistic excellence). The disparity in ambition and logics thus creates tensions at an individual level for participating arts managers, most notably those who align with aesthetic logic and express lower levels of data ambition.

In this sense, arts managers with perfunctory data ambitions tend to have lower (self-identified) levels of data literacy and understanding. As such, these managers fear that failure to embrace the stronger sense of data ambition of their peers and to address their lack of data literacy would make them surplus to their organisation's requirements in the future. However, in accord with the research literature, this study finds that this feeling/position is heightened by an increasingly new workforce of arts managers (either through training or employment from outside the sector) who are trained in the 'slick certainties of business' (Bilton, 2015, p.). It is these managers who are seen to overlook the value and experience of artistic arts managers, in turn challenging their professional identity as knowledgeable creatives. From the perspectives of artistics, it is essential that taking a data-first approach to traditionally artistic decisions must be balanced with 'the human factor'.

It should be noted that such challenges are not new. In fact, they support Holden's (2004) position that, in 2004, the emerging body of evidence was leading arts managers to overlook the fact that data is not knowledge and that 'objective' data does not capture all aspects of why culture should be funded (p.21). To this end, the present research shows that the sector has not been effective in responding to the challenges identified more than ten years prior to this data collection, i.e. that shifts in the prominence of an arts data culture could pose a fundamental issue to the skills, knowledge, and thus identity of arts managers working in the sector.

8.1.1.4.2 *Competition fears*

Another significant issue is that the DSP and DPPs incite fears about competition in venue-based arts and cultural organisations. As noted above, data is treated as an important organisational resource by arts managers (see subsection 7.1.2). The Arts Council's DSP requirement for organisations to share audience data with other organisations and partners, such as touring theatre companies (TTCs), means that audience data is no longer a distinct – or unique – resource that venue-based ACOs can rely on for competitive advantage among their peers. For example, venue-based arts and cultural organisations often act as the booking agent for shows staged at their venues by TTCs or independent artists. This relationship with the data has afforded these organisations a competitive advantage not only over the artists or TTCs, but also other venues that the TTCs may wish to tour their work to, as the venue-based ACOs have not typically shared customer contact details or detailed demographic profiles for the attending audiences. To this end, the requirement through the DSP to open up and share the data with partner organisations or companies therefore challenges the market hold that venue-based ACOs have benefitted from over recent years. While participants recognise the fairness of the policy – i.e. although they promoted the show, the TTC was actually the producer of the work the audience came to see and they were thus their audience – competition fears are fuelled by issues relating to audience retention, accountability for data mishandling, and most interestingly the generation of philanthropic donations.

This notion again contributes to the narrative that an existing data subculture has become more prominent through the introduction of policy that recognises data not as a value-added resource only afforded to some organisations, but as a common resource that all organisations should be entitled to access, use, and share.

8.1.2 Data expert vs. data sceptic tensions

Addressing in part research questions **RQ01** and **RQ02** – understanding the effects of data sharing policies and identifying the barriers to enhanced data usage in arts and cultural organisations –

this research has highlighted a gap in data literacy/data handling sensitivities among some arts managers working in the sector.

While it has been suggested that the cultural sector has a particular skills gap in terms of data analysis that prevents organisations from collecting and using data to develop their business models (Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, 2018), the findings in this thesis have shown this not to be the case for all arts managers. As above, there is a strong data subculture in the arts and cultural sector, where data-savvy arts managers use the data available to drive business growth. However, what this research has identified is how the DSP – or just greater data dialogue in the sector – has highlighted specific gaps in data literacy provision inside senior arts management teams, and how these gaps act as a barrier to more arts managers engaging with data and supporting greater data usage across the sector (i.e. as all arts managers are talking about data more, it is easier to highlight where understanding or skills are lacking).

It is clear that there is a broad spectrum of data handling sensitivities/literacy amongst managers working in the sector. Some managers are data experts or are simply data literate, while others are data sceptic. Research participants were supportive of all arts managers having at least a baseline level of data awareness (see subsection 5.2.2) so they can 'participate in these [data] conversations' (ORG 9). However, such light-touch data awareness still requires a change in attitudes from data sceptic arts managers to recognise the benefits of doing so. As a result, data-savvy arts managers become frustrated by an apparent unwillingness from those who are data sceptics to attend training workshops and seminars to build and develop their understanding. In addition, such data expert managers believe that if data sceptics do more to develop their data handling sensitivities, they are likely to understand the wider organisational benefits of data-led activities and how these can add value to all aspects of organisational work.

However, this research has identified potential explanations for *why* data-sceptic arts managers are hesitant to develop their data literacy, one of which is a generational divide in attitudes towards data usage that impacts upon longer-serving (i.e. often the data-sceptic) arts managers'

willingness to engage in data skills courses. Two reasons for this include i) the identity issues related to protecting and upholding artistic knowledge and skills in light of strong data ambition from new arts managers entering the field and ii) the fact that some arts managers nearing retirement may feel overwhelmed by the amounts of data they are already presented with and simply do not wish to learn a new skill.

The research also finds that organisations with strong, data expert arts managers may disincentivise those who are data sceptic to engage in any upskilling activities because they have positioned themselves as the experts who 'have the answers'. This role of the expert is also reinforced by an apparent trend of the data literate becoming increasingly more data literate, i.e. current training and conference opportunities are perceived to cater for those with a baseline understanding of data analysis rather than those who are low skilled in this activity.

To achieve greater data literacy across the sector, this study highlights the need for a change in attitudes from arts managers in the sector who sit on either end of the data sensitivities spectrum. In this regard, data expert arts managers, who tend to be in marketing roles, need to do more to address the concerns of those data sceptic arts managers who worry about challenges to their identity and artistic knowledge, while those who are data sceptic need to actively engage in the development of data literacy so that they can understand *how* data expert arts managers arrive at the data-led suggestions or decisions they advocate.

8.1.3 Artistic risk-taking

Previous research highlights that the biggest risk to arts and cultural organisations is taking no artistic risks at all (McMaster, 2008); however, this study has found that a growing data culture, including the introduction of the DSP and DPPs, creates a series of implications for an organisation's artistic integrity and values, especially in relation to artistic risk-taking. These findings speak directly to **RQ01** and **RQ02** and are significant as they suggest a fundamental risk to the concept of artistic excellence and 'art for art's sake' in light of instrumental goal fulfilment. For example, the findings and discussion in subsections 5.1.3 and 7.3.2 have shown that

engagement with data tools (e.g. data pooling platforms) have, through the DSP, become rooted as a new critical resource ACOs draw on to support the delivery of their primary activities: the conception, programming, production, promotion, and distribution of their artistic work. Linked with the identity issue outlined above, the increased use of data to inform these primary activities creates individual tensions among arts managers with strong data ambitions (i.e. those more aligned with market and funding logic) and those who are data sceptics (i.e. those more aligned with aesthetic logic) as there is a discrepancy in what each of these actors is trying to achieve in their work.

Similarly, by highlighting a number of ways through which the DSP and DPPs hinder an organisation's artistic risk-taking, this study has found that, by design, data tools tend to facilitate audience growth that leads arts managers to go 'beyond their roles as creatives' and deliver a programme of work that meets funder priorities but which may forgo the aesthetic dimension of performance. These moves towards quantifiable tools are seen by arts managers as a method to highlight where their artistic programmes 'fall short' of required demographic reach, in turn steering artistic programming choices toward the delivery of ACEs instrumental goals, notably organisational resilience and audience growth. Arts managers are therefore concerned that a renewed focus on these instrumental goals will limit their ability to deliver artistic excellence – another core ACE goal they must achieve.

The findings therefore show that artistic excellence can be achieved when arts managers are not constrained by the parameters of their data; in this sense, the ability for organisations to take, as a participant suggests, a 'punt' on programming choices is important part of their creative roles. For example, these findings highlight instances where arts managers have made decisions that are not supported by financial or demographic data but which turn out to be huge successes for the organisations, delivering not just artistic excellence but also resilience and audience growth.

It is also important to note that arts managers from across the data sensitivity spectrum recognise the need to balance priorities and find a compromise that enables data-driven and artistic-led

decisions to co-exist. By striking this balance, organisations are able to deliver what Robinson (2010) calls adaptive resilience: the capacity to remain productive and true to their core purpose and identity while adopting to changing circumstances. However, my findings highlight a concern amongst arts managers that the ability to maintain this balance (or adaptive resilience) will become more difficult if arts funding continues to be cut and a rhetoric of data-driven approaches continues to develop in policy.

Taken together, the empirical findings provide a new understanding of how data tools and the rhetoric surrounding data sharing policies may restrict a publicly funded arts organisation's ability to take risks in their artistic programming and deliver artistic excellence in favour of easy to quantify instrumental goals. This thesis has shown that the prospect of a growing data culture, and thus growing acceptance of data embedded decision-making practices, foreshadows a trend in income maximisation that forgoes the core purpose and identity of an organisation and the arts managers who work within it. To this end, my findings echo Mulcahy's (2006) proposition that new cultural policies will likely move away from the notion of 'art for art's sake' and will require ACOs to 'carry their own weight' rather than relying on public subsidy (i.e. produce an artistic programme that can be self-funded). Finally, on this key finding relating to artistic risk-taking, this study contributes to our understanding of how a reduction in perceived 'artistic risk-taking' in favour of data-led decisions can have implications for the creation of public value (see Moore, 1995; 2013) in the future. As shown in subsection 7.3.3, by pursuing an arts data culture that is seen to favour the priorities of public arts funding (the authorising environment) and reduces an organisation's options for artistic risk-taking, the conditions for public value creation cannot be fully met and the strategic triangle of public value is knocked out of alignment. These findings therefore contribute to the literature on artistic risk-taking and public value in the field of arts management, in addition to also having a commonality with a recent European Commission study on audience development tools, which challenges organisations to consider whether such goals are 'coherent with [organisations] values and artistic vision' and whether these come at a 'price' of excellence and ethics the organisation is not willing to pay (Bollo et al., 2017c, p.8).

8.1.4 Stakeholder relationships

Another substantive finding of this research is that the DSP challenges arts managers and their organisations' ability to demonstrate and maintain organisational legitimacy – and therefore relationships – with their key stakeholders (legitimating actors). This thesis has identified four key stakeholders (see Section 6.1) that arts and cultural organisations are accountable to: funding bodies (Arts Council England); regulatory bodies (the Information Commissioners Office); peers (other ACOs and TTCs); and customers (the audience). The findings show that the DSP leaves ACOs feeling 'stuck in the middle' of these four stakeholders, as the policy requires organisations to satisfy a number of divergent, and often competing, legitimacy demands needed to maintain these key relationships. These findings therefore speak to **RQ01** and **RQ03** with regard to data understanding and tensions.
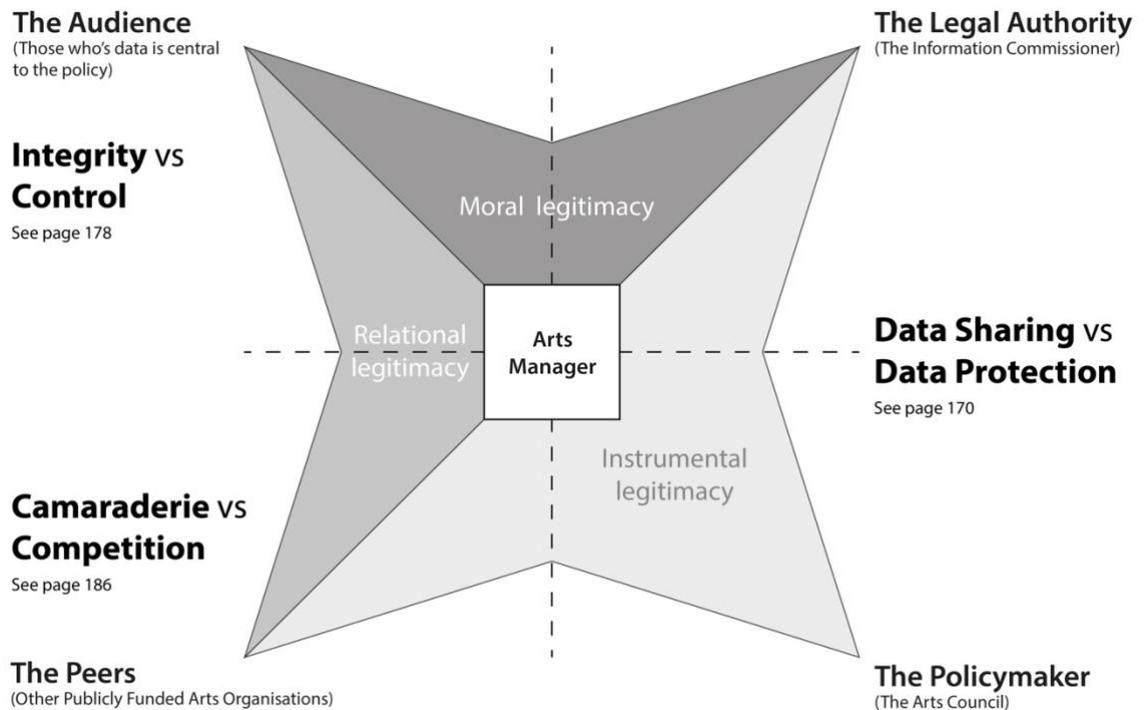

Figure 9: Mapping Dimensions of Legitimacy to the Data Sharing Policy's Legitimating Actors (with back referenced page numbers)

Using Tost's (2011) dimensions of legitimacy judgements as a framework, I presented a model in Section 6.2 (repeated here as Figure 9) to illustrate the complex set of relationships between arts manager and their stakeholders and the corresponding legitimacy demands that make arts managers feel 'stuck in the middle'. The dimensions that participants found themselves 'stuck' between included relational, instrumental, and moral legitimacy, and of the four core legitimating actors, the policymaker is focused on the instrumental dimension, the legal authority on both moral and instrumental dimensions, peers on relational and instrumental dimensions, and the audience on moral and relational dimensions. Through this model, this thesis has identified three distinct yet interconnected themes to reflect the challenges that the DSP poses to an organisation's relationships with these stakeholders (see Chapter 6).

First, with regard to an organisation's relationship with its peers, the findings show that the DSP challenges this relationship as it removes an ACO's power to control its data resources and manage when, how, or if it shares such data with their peers. Under the theme of *comradery vs competition*, ACOs recognise the need for data reciprocity between themselves and their peers – notably TTCs – to help them develop their own business, which in turn demonstrates relational legitimacy. However, as noted above, such comradery results in a fear of competition that shared access to data will result in a loss of direct marketing and philanthropic income opportunities.

Competition fears aside, the findings also highlight a second theme of *integrity vs control*, which has direct implications for how arts managers uphold moral and relational legitimacy with their audiences. The DSP is seen as a fundamental risk to an organisations ability to create and maintain long-term relationships with their audiences, which Hegner (2016) notes is vital for an ACOs viability and survival. Participants cited a heightened awareness amongst their audiences relating to *how* their data is used (and indeed *misused)*. Arts managers are therefore concerned that any mishandling or misuse of the audience data they share with their peers will have implications for the moral legitimacy they must demonstrate to those audience members. In this sense, they feel that the audience considers that the moral and ethical contract to protect a customer's data is made between the audience member and the organisation they originally gave that data too, i.e. not a

third party, who may misuse it. Thus, the analysis highlights that arts managers are worried that if any shared audience data were to be misused, there would be a tipping point whereby audiences would close down and revoke or reject any future requests for their personal data. The fear for arts managers in this regard is that it would not only damage numerous organisational functions, including the use of contact data for direct marketing opportunities, but it would also effect an organisation's ability to capture the demographic data that is necessary to demonstrate the reach of their work to their funders.

The final relationship that will become strained in light of the DSP is that between the funder – the Arts Council – and publicly funded arts and cultural organisations, and the instrumental legitimacy demands that dominate this relationship. The evidence from this study highlights two ways in which this relationship may become strained, the first of which falls under the theme of *data sharing vs data protection*. In this regard, there was a sense among participants that the DSP, understood by the policy wording published at the time of data collection (see subsection 3.2.1), does not respect the requirement of the Data Protection Act and has significant implications for how organisations uphold instrumental legitimacy to the legal authority (i.e. the Information Commissioners Office), which puts a strain on organisations' relationships with the Arts Council as they feel they are being asked to undertake tasks that could have legal implications.

The second area of tension relates to a fear of the unknown. In this sense, my findings show that arts managers are concerned that the DSP, alongside data pooling platforms, will facilitate a culture of enhanced measurement and assessment to demonstrate instrumental legitimacy. While the policy documents assessed and the interviews conducted with Arts Council officials in this study made no specific claim towards enhanced measurement and assessment, arts managers have entrenched views of an evidence-based culture, whereby they must demonstrate the impact of their work and the Arts Council's financial investment in it. To this end, the findings highlight another unintended consequence of action whereby the intended effect of policy – to support all organisations to understand their audiences so that more and more people up and down the country

enjoy great art and culture (Arts Council England, 2016a) – has instead been interpreted by arts managers as a policy designed for accountability purposes.

8.2 Recommendations for the Arts and Cultural Sector

The findings of this study have a number of important implications for the future of the publicly funded arts and cultural sector and for both those who develop policy and those on the receiving end. These implications fall into two categories: professional development for arts and cultural managers, and future arts policy for those developing arts and cultural policies in England.

8.2.1 Professional development opportunities

The need to enhance the skills and capability of cultural organisations has already been highlighted by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sports *Culture is Digital* (2018) paper. In this regard, strong digital leadership in the cultural sector by senior management teams can influence organisational behaviours, with organisations likely to benefit from digital technologies when they are 'digitally mature' (ibid.). However, such maturity can only 'occur if UK cultural sector leaders have the digital literacy and confidence to drive forward the adoption of digital technologies across their business plans' (ibid.). Given that my findings echo these calls (specifically in subsection 5.2.2), more needs to be done to address professional development opportunities across the sector in order to enhance these necessary data skills and foster a culture of lifelong learning for arts managers.

As is the norm in most sectors, professional development opportunities must be consistent with an arts manager's personal development goals and aspirations, in addition to also benefitting their organisation as a whole by enhancing its resources and competencies (Poisson-de-Haro and Menot, 2014, p.154). Throughout the findings presented in this thesis, it is clear that the aspirations of different arts managers to engage with data is split between those who are typically in marketing and executive roles and those who are in artistic roles or those have been in their

post for a number of years, with the latter expressing less desire to engage in new learning and development opportunities.

Over two decades ago, professional development opportunities for the 'older generation' of arts and cultural managers were identified as a need in order for the public to truly benefit from the arts (Martin and Rich, 1998). Despite this, the findings of this thesis still highlight a gap in skills and knowledge of the now 'older generation' of arts managers. While I am not suggesting that professional development has gone unaddressed by the Arts Council – indeed, it is recognised in Goal 4 of both *Achieving Great Art for Everyone* (2010) and *Great Arts and Culture for Everyone* (2013a) – I will now explore how the findings of this study could help identify areas of practical improvement for the publicly funded arts and cultural sector in England.

First, building on Martin and Rich's (1998) research, the arts and cultural sector could benefit from yearly surveys to identify what arts managers perceive to be the current skills gaps and requirements across the sector, as well as preferences for how development opportunities should be delivered. While this may not fully capture the reluctance or scepticism of those arts managers unwilling to engage in data-skills training, regular polling of this type would have other useful benefits for the sector, for example, serving a horizon-scanning function to identify new and emergent technologies or trends that arts managers are concerned about in relation to their work. It was clear from my research that one of the perceived barriers to DSP adoption and engagement with data tools was that some members of the organisations either did not understand how these practices could complement the work they do, or they feared that they would challenge their professional identity. In this regard, the ability to understand future trends, and concerns about them, could enable funding bodies, arts educators, or wider civil society to intervene early with suitable training programmes and communication plans to mitigate against concerns raised. Such intervention does not just cater for the 'older generation' of arts manager as those who currently see themselves as 'data experts' may not be as expert about the next trend. However, to mitigate against similar tensions highlighted in subsections 5.1.3 and 7.4.3 around measurement and

assessment, any survey undertaken to identify these trends and issues should be conducted independently of government and their arms-length bodies.

Second, this thesis has highlighted how those participants who lacked data knowledge and skills felt too 'time poor' to engage with/attend training opportunities. While this could have been an excuse for not wanting to upskill, it still presents an intervention opportunity. With this in mind, I recommend that in future funding applications, the Arts Council should place more emphasis on an organisation's provision for delivering and making time for professional development opportunities for their staff. This could include demonstrating the types of training they will have senior management undertake during the funding period and how they will ensure that suitable time is made for these activities.

Third, the publicly funded arts and cultural sector would benefit from a continued behaviour change campaign championed by Arts Council England or a well-established think tank such as NESTA or Demos, designed to promote the diversity of skills, both data-led and aesthetic-led, within organisations and across the sector. Empowering arts managers to recognise *how* data is successfully used and deployed across a variety of arts and cultural organisations may ease the concerns of data-sceptic arts managers and help them to embrace data opportunities within their respective organisations.

Fourth, academia and academic institutions can play a role in supporting professional development opportunities in the arts and cultural sector. In this regard, institutions should introduce more professional practice qualifications, or massive open online courses (MOOCs),[24] for those working full time in these organisations. These could include creative qualifications for those working in data-centric or marketing roles and analysis qualifications for those working on the creative side. Enabling access to professional qualifications could lead to increasingly well-

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[24] **Massive Open Online Courses** are free online courses available for anyone to enrol. They provide an affordable and flexible way to learn new skills, advance one's career, and deliver quality educational experiences at scale.

rounded senior management teams that will foster a more collaborative environment between artistics, marketers, and executives, which, as shown in subsection 7.2.1, is often difficult to achieve when arts managers exhibit different levels of data-driven ambitions. Furthermore, UK academic institutions should include data literacy as core modules in cultural training programmes. Building on the Association of Arts Administration Educators (AAAE) inclusion of data literacy as one of their new principles and practices for undergraduate arts management training (see Chapter 7, subsection 7.2.4), the UK should have a broader scope so that *all* cultural training programmes, including those that are artistic in nature (e.g. acting, dance, or directing) are taught the skills to engage with, and understand the types of, data their sector generates. This would ensure that future arts managers and artists entering the sector are better prepared for the challenges that may emerge as a consequence of the growing arts data culture.

Finally, I recommend that the government, alongside the Arts Council and civil society, should consider developing an arts data literacy strategy, which should be done in broad consultation with stakeholders, including both for and not-for-profit arts organisations, artists, academia, civil society, and legal institutions. Such a strategy would ensure a coordinated and strategic approach to data literacy provision and awareness for arts professionals in the midst of a growing arts data culture.

8.2.2 Future policy development

Through investigation into the Arts Council's DSP, this thesis has exposed some of the challenges and unintended consequences resulting from the policy's introduction. In this section, I explore how the potential failures in policy development and introduction of the DSP can usefully highlight areas where future policy development could be improved so as to mitigate against these failures in the future.

First, the findings highlight the importance of the timely communication of clear and concise policy guidance and documentation. It was apparent that the advice issued at the time of the policy's announcement was vague and was regarded by a number of participants as unsatisfactory.

Participants were unsure of the DSP motivations, how the policy fit within wider legal frameworks, and how organisations could properly implement it. In fact, it is likely that such vague and delayed policy guidance, especially around issues of data protection and overall policy motivations, entrenched many of the arts managers' negative views towards the policy at the outset (see Section 4.5). While the Arts Council representative did acknowledge that, as the policy creator, they could have 'been better' in its communication, it is clear that future policy announcements relating to 'data' *must* recognise the sensitivities of those whom the policy will directly impact. To this end, greater efforts are needed for future policy intentions and announcements to be suitably developed and tested with at least a sample of those working in affected organisations prior to any announcement to the wider arts community.

Second, new policies must take into account and be sensitive to the pressures they place on organisations' relationships with their key stakeholders. As mentioned in the key findings above, the DSP fundamentally failed to account for the divergent legitimacy demands of each stakeholder that organisations must satisfy, leaving them to navigate difficult decisions on their own. Much like the previous recommendation, future policy needs to demonstrate consideration of the potential impact on stakeholder relations and to ensure that appropriate systems, services, and support for organisations are in place in order to help them navigate potentially sensitive policy issues and feel supported by the Arts Council throughout new policy announcement and implementation. Failure to do so may, as alluded to by a couple of participants, lead to the public subsidy on offer being less attractive to organisations. As such, organisations may choose to apply for alternative funding in the future as the perceived policy pressures and requirements of Arts Council England funding outweighs the subsidy's benefits.

Third, and connected to the previous recommendation, is another practical implication for future policy development. Considering the key findings discussed above, this research has shown that policies such as the DSP and a generally more prominent arts data culture pose a fundamental threat to the risk-taking culture of the arts. If arts and cultural organisations continue to be faced with policies that make expressing their artistic work less of a priority in favour of data-driven

decisions that deliver against instrumental goals, then the very notion of achieving 'great art' may not be attainable. The government and the Arts Council must be attuned to this issue and ensure that future policies protect the core values of why the arts is subsidised. While I acknowledge that such values include more people experiencing and being inspired by arts and culture – and data does have a role to pay in delivering this – it also means that talent and artistic excellence thrive and are celebrated (see Arts Council England, 2010; 2013b). To achieve this, there are a number of important changes that could be included in the arts data literacy strategy recommended above. For example, the strategy should promote both the benefits of data usage in organisations to complement artistic decision making but also actively promote and share instances of how organisations can forgo data in favour of purely artistic 'gut' feelings. Throughout this strategy, and in other public facing policy documents, the Arts Council should use more positive language around risk-taking, which is often superseded by language of resilience and growth. By speaking more positively of risk-taking and ensuring that a risk-taking culture is upheld, arts managers whose identities are firmly rooted in the logic of aesthetics are less likely to perceive the growing data culture as a threat to their knowledge and role.

The final area of policy development that would benefit from review to mitigate against the tensions that surfaced in the research relates to the relationships between venue-based and touring arts and cultural organisations. Participants felt that the DSP was brought into being to satisfy the rallying call of touring theatre companies, who wanted greater access to data. While participants understood they reasons *why* they wanted greater access to data, it was clear that a series of tensions relating to competition and data misuse surfaced as a result of the policy. To this end, the Arts Council could do more to foster a better collaborative culture between venue-based and touring organisations. For example, if such a culture had already existed, the need to peruse data sharing through policy would not have been necessary.

8.3 Future Research

While there are numerous options for future research that builds on the findings of this thesis, there are four immediately apparent areas. First, this research highlighted how DSP changes the customer contact data (CCD) captured by ACOs from being a distinct resource to a common resource. It also showed how ACOs are becoming dependent on data as a support activity to inform their primary, value-creating, work. By drawing on resource and competency frameworks (Barney, 1991) and value chain perspectives (Porter, 1985); this research was able to demonstrate the important place data has in the organisational life on an ACO. Given the key finding that an arts data culture is the product of existing data subculture gaining prominence, through policy, further studies should be conducted under a resources and competencies and value chains lens to help understand other areas where a prominent arts data culture may challenge existing practices, assumptions, or in the case of the performing arts value chain, an ACOs viability - the sustained value contributed towards fulfilling its mission (Preece, 2005). In other words, do data cultures in the arts put ACOs in a vulnerable position by weakening their artistic product? Researching this area would help contribute to the emerging body of literature on arts data cultures.

Second, in discussing the potential reasons for diversity in arts managers data-driven ambition, this research cautiously suggested a link with how the 'new generation' of arts managers enter the field with a view to applying the 'slick certainties of business' in their work (Bilton, 2015). Future studies should be conducted based on this concept with the aim of (1) understanding the different educational and industry routes arts managers in England take, i.e. how did they get to where they are now; and (2) identify the extent to which the diversity in data-driven ambition affects the inter-organisational relationships between those who are data sceptic and those who are data confident. Research into these areas would be useful as it would build on the ethnography conducted by Moore (2016) which highlighted a fracture with 'different levels of severity' (akin to data-driven ambition) between the work of those involved with data (data confident arts managers) and the '"artistic" gatekeepers' (Ellerton, 2018 p.124)

Third, this research showed that the application of Tost's (2011) legitimacy judgements framework as a promising tool through which policy changes in the arts and cultural sector can be understood. Given the growing body of literature which applies the legitimacy lens to the arts management research (for example Larsen, 2014 and Prikk, 2017); further studies should be conducted to build on the findings presented in this thesis which fully adopt Tost's (2011) framework. This would make a valuable contribution to the arts management 'legitimacy' literature by providing useful and interesting insights into the legitimacy demands of divergent arts 'stakeholders' which will help us to understand better how an ACO survives (Minahan, 2005).

Finally, and as suggested in the above paragraph, future research building on this thesis would benefit from using a more focused theoretical lens or framework. To that end, this research could be replicated through a dedicated management lens of either organisational cultures, institutional logics, or identity theory. Similarly, a more focused design lens could be used to explore the phenomenon through speculative design and design fictions to understand the implications of current policy trajectory and the future of risk-taking in the publicly funded arts.

8.4 Critical Evaluation of the Research (Research Limitations)

This thesis is based on the findings of empirical research and, as such, has a number of limitations. This qualitative research extracts value from the deep and meaningful understandings of a small population. However, unlike a quantitative study, the research draws on a small sample of seventeen arts managers from across fifteen publicly funded arts and cultural organisations working in a similar organisational setting. As a consequence, the findings may not necessarily be representative of the entire publicly funded arts and cultural sector. Furthermore, the scope of the thesis was limited to the accounts of senior arts managers. As such, the data presented does not account for the 'on the ground' staff working on the coal face of an organisation's data collection, i.e. the artists or production teams employed to deliver programmes of work; nor does it represent the views of audiences (customers) whose data (both contact and demographic) is shared and analysed as a consequence of the DSP and data practices under scrutiny.

Of the arts managers interviewed, there was low representation from those I define in the thesis as 'artistics', whose roles were either artistic or creative directors. To this end, the findings are based on a limited number of first-hand accounts and the reflections of other arts managers who work closely with them. Talking on behalf of others (e.g. a marketing manager talking about the work of an artistic director) is obviously not ideal, and more first-hand accounts would have been preferable; however, gaining access to research participants proved extremely difficult. The original design of the research intended data collection to focus on a collective of nine organisations, which were all of a similar size and structure. However, approaching the head of the group as a whole created a barrier to this, as they decided that the nine organisations were 'too busy' to participate in my research. I then set about contacting organisations from across the country. Of the thirty-plus organisations I contacted, only fifteen agreed to participate, including the Arts Council. On reflection, it is perhaps easy to see why the recruitment of participants was problematic. On the one hand, as indicated in the findings, arts managers are generally time-poor and may not have felt that research participation was a good use of their time. Second, the policy area I was investigating was new to these organisations and was also contentious. As alluded to in the sections of this thesis on legitimacy, I believe that participants were concerned that any negative sentiments they shared towards the Arts Council and their policies that could be attributed back to an organisation would have implications for their organisations' future funding prospects. This was despite my reassurances that all participant names and organisations would be anonymised.

If I were to conduct this research again, I would actively seek a more balanced, larger sample of senior arts managers and organisations in order to increase the generalisability of the research findings. In addition, a broader sample would have included more participants in artistic roles, as well as the inclusion of touring theatre companies. In doing so, such a sample could ensure that what was observed in this thesis could be seen as reflective of the wider arts and cultural sector and not just of those willing to participant in the study.

Linked to access was also issues of the timing and scope of data collection. As with the very nature of the PhD process, data needed to collected at a time that allowed the research to progress and be delivered on time. At the time of data collection, the DSP had only recently been introduced, and the deadline for organisations to implement processes were not for a few months. However, this meant that participants took a very narrow view of the policy as, at this point, it was still very much a theoretical problem to them. Another issue of the research timing was that participants were in a period of transition when it came to data protection law. In this regard, at the time of collection, discussion of the new Data Protection Act 2018 (the GDPR) and its implications were being discussed across the industry. Thus, when talking about legal obligations, participants in this research could have been doing so across two very different legal frameworks. While I maintain that it was appropriate to capture participants' understandings about a policy in its infancy – which has inevitably helped inform my implications for the arts sector – this is perhaps the reason why the findings were mainly focused on the holistic question (**RQ01**) of data usage in the arts as a whole, rather than speaking directly to DSP implications. This, in turn, has made the research appear to have an overly wide scope.

This study did not include empirical contact with arts managers working in the commercial, i.e. for profit, sector, and it therefore lacks a comparative element. In this regard, based on the literature, research assumptions led this thesis to treat the publicly funded arts and cultural sector as materially different to the commercial sector. Given the fact that certain challenges are shared with the commercial sector, such as relationships with audiences and their personal data, a comparative element may have been interesting. However, the main question of this thesis was understanding *how* the data sharing policy and practices affect publicly funded arts and cultural organisations and *not* how their understanding compares with the for-profit sector. However, if I were to conduct this research again, I would try to address the assumptions that a growing data culture only affects publicly funded arts and cultural organisations by including a comparative element with the commercial, for-profit, sector, which would enable any crossovers or shared

tensions to surface and highlight any practices that occur in the for-profit sector that could be used to mitigate the tensions in the subsidised sector.

8.4.1 Methods and analysis

While most of the data collection went well, I experienced a few difficulties. For example, for the sake of expediency, I conducted a couple of dual interviews with participants from the same organisation. While participants were able to bounce off each other to discuss and understand the questions asked, I fear that this may have caused participants to filter their responses to align with those of their colleagues. Similarly, participants were all offered the right to use off-the-record statements. These were used on four occasions, and on listening back to the transcripts, these comments would have strengthened some of the arguments presented if included in the analysis.

Given the very nature of qualitative interviewing, I generated a vast quantity of data, despite the relatively small sample of eighteen participants from across fifteen organisations. At times, this large amount of data was difficult to manage, especially given that there are no standard rules to follow when identifying codes and categories in qualitative data analysis. To paraphrase Corley and Gioia (2004, p.215): I certainly got lost in my data before I found what I was looking for. With regard to my data analysis, a limiting factor with my use of grounded theory methods was that they failed to recognise the close association of the researcher and the agency I had over the direction, aims and focus, and interpretation of the data. While I am not saying that I was in any way biased when analysing the data, I wonder what the findings may have looked like had this research been conducted with a broader research team, where there would have been more checks and balances when interpreting the data.

8.5 Personal reflections on the research process

It is also appropriate to reflect on the personal circumstances and the context in which this research was conducted. The HighWire Doctoral Training Centre, which funded this research, aimed to bring together the disciplines of design, computing, and management studies. While novel in its

approach, this meant gaining collective agreement from my two focus disciplines (i.e. design and management) – which both have their own distinct styles and conventions – about what an arts management thesis actually looks like. In addition, I have been subject to questions, perspectives, processes, and literature that were unfamiliar and therefore challenging at times. That said, the whole process has been one of compromise in terms of the research design and analysis, the presentation of the research, and the final context for contribution, and I cannot thank my supervisors enough for helping me deliver this thesis. Finally, some of the more challenging chapters of this thesis were written up while I was working full time in a policy role, which added its own layers of complexity in terms of timescales for delivery, a feeling of distance from the research findings when I had the time to write, and a new policy official lens through which I viewed my research.

8.6 Closing Statement

In concluding this research, it is clear that speaking with ACOs about Arts Council England's data sharing policy and introduction of data pooling platforms has acted as a catalyst for arts managers to talk more openly about the data activities their organisations undertake. These activities are typically bucketed under three principal types of data that organisations regularly collect: 'operational' data, demographic data, and personal customer contact data. Taken together, these types of data and the data activities identified in this research fully support the notion of a data culture in the arts and cultural sector as posed by Arvantis et al. (2016) and Ellerton (2018). However, unlike the idea that an arts data culture is a new or emergent phenomenon, this study has contributed to the arts management literature the idea that the arts data culture is, in fact, an existing data subculture that, through various pressures, has grown in prominence over the last few years.

For arts managers working in publicly funded arts and cultural organisations, the growth of the arts data culture is either a welcomed or feared change to their organisational lives. While some arts managers are clearly data-savvy and are willing to use (or are already engaged in using)

sector-generated data in organisational/strategic decision-making processes (e.g. to inform café opening times), organisational frameworks for using data in artistic decision making have not experienced similar 'radical shifts'. As such, data-sceptic arts managers fear what a prominent arts data culture means for the long-standing skills and knowledge they have brought with them to their organisations.

The Arts Council's data sharing policy is just another example of the ever-changing 'digital transition' in the arts and cultural sector, while the findings presented in this thesis are an exemplar of a paradigm shift from the physical – or for some, the traditional – arts management landscape to a digital one. Data is an integral part in such a shift. However, it is clear from this research that elements of this shift have had serious implications for ACOs ongoing relationships with their stakeholders, as the sensitivity and fluidity of the data (namely customer contact data) at the heart of the DSP has redefined commonly held practices ACOs used to control and manage such relationships.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Participant ID:

Consent Form

Lancaster University

Data sharing policy and practice in non-profit arts organisations.

Researcher: Christian Joel Butterworth ████████████████

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the briefing document dated 01/02/16 for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily. ☐

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw up until two weeks after my interview date, without giving any reason. ☐

3. I understand that any information given by me may be used in Ph.D thesis, future reports, articles or presentations by the researcher. ☐

4. I understand that my name, and the name of the organisation I work for will be anonymised. ☐

5. I understand that data will be securely held for at least 10 years. ☐

6. I agree to take part in the above study. ☐

_____   _____

Name of Participant   **Date**

_____   _____

Researcher   **Date**
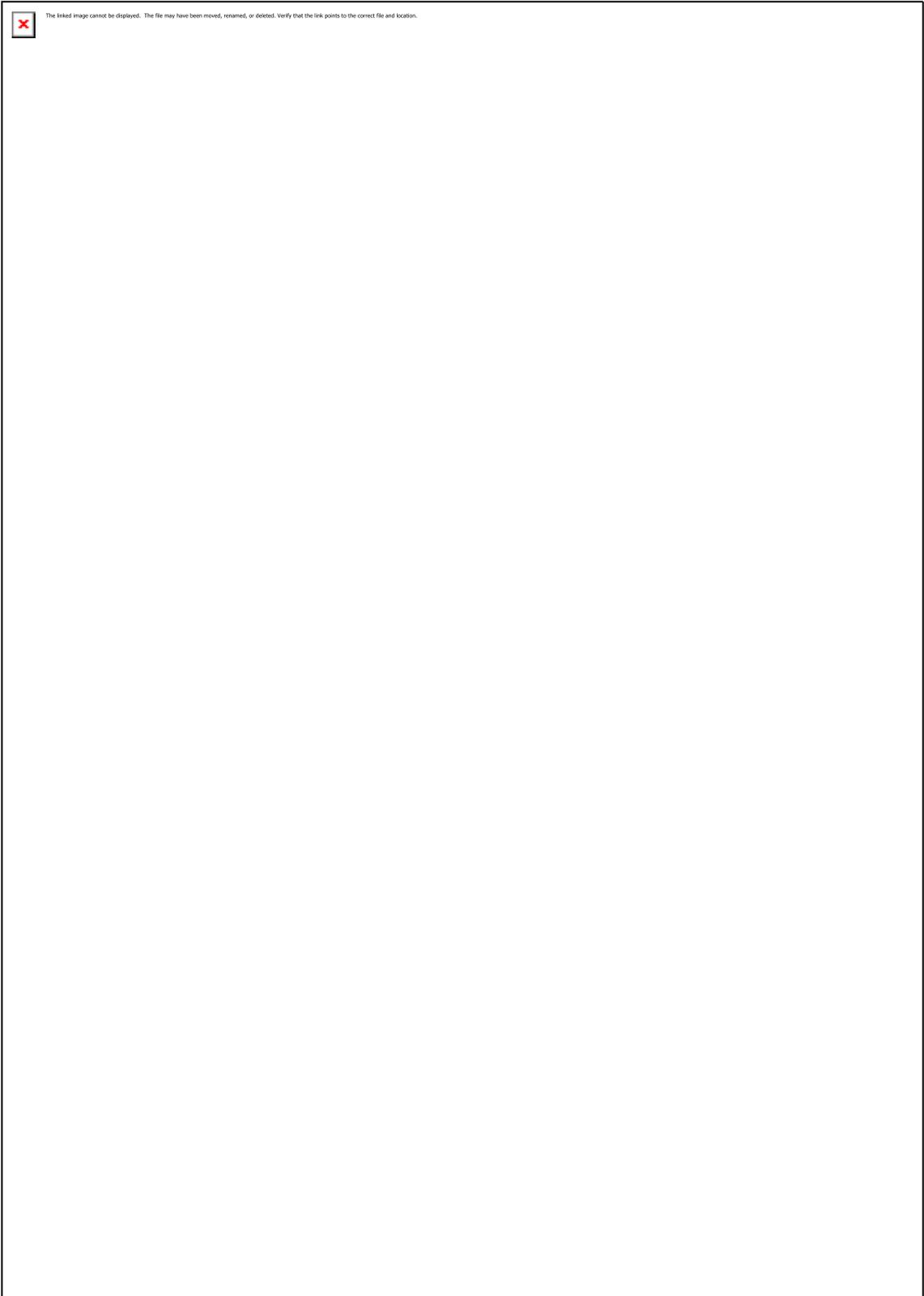
HighWire
Innovation for the Digital Economy
An EPSRC Doctoral Training Centre

Research Councils UK
Digital Economy
Transforming Business and Society

Appendix 2

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Appendix 3

Lancaster University

Data sharing policy and practice in non-profit arts organisations.

Q1.   Can you tell me how long you've been working at _____ for?

Follow-up: And where did you work before here?

Q2.   Could you tell me who you feel responsible to in your role?

Q3.   Could you tell me what you do on a day-to-day basis?

Q4.   Over the X years that you've been working here, could you tell me about any significant events that have had an impact, in your opinion, on the organisation?

Now as you're aware, this research is focusing on data sharing policy and practice in NPOs, so with that in mind:

Q5.   Over the past few years, let's say 5, have you noticed any changes in the way arts organisations work with each other?

Q6.   Can you tell me about the types of data, to your knowledge, the organisation collects and uses on a daily basis?

Follow-up: And what's the motivation for collecting that data?

Follow-up: What do you do with the data you collect?

Q7.   How important do you feel data is for the organisation as a whole?

Follow-up: Can you recall any occasions where data has been used in making any organisational decisions. (or are there any specific examples you could give in relation to your job role?)

—

I'm going to read you two statements made by the Arts Council in their NPO briefing notes and Funding Statements. They say:

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All National portfolio organisations are expected to contribute to developing a bigger and more informed audience for arts and culture as a whole. In order to help achieve that, [they] will be committed to shared approaches (across arts and museums) to the capture, sharing and reporting of audience data.

National portfolio organisations (NPOs) must enter into mutually agreed data sharing agreements with other relevant Arts Council funded organisations and follow best practice principles on data sharing. NPOs will need to be in a position to share personal customer data (to allow for direct marketing) with partner Arts Council funded organisations by 1 April 2016.

Q4. What does these statements mean to you?

Q5. What do you think the motivation is for getting NPOs to share data about their audiences?

Q6. How well do you feel the Arts Council have articulated this policy?

Q7. Do you feel your organisation can comply with these requirements?

Follow-up: Can you give any specific examples of where you can't easily fulfil these requirements?

Q8. What do you think this requirement to 'share and report audience data' might mean for your organisations relationship with audiences?

Follow-up: and to your knowledge, how responsive have your audiences been to having their data collected?

Q9. Who is responsible for the audience data you're capturing and sharing?

Q10. And what are responsibilities associated with data sharing?

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Q11. To your knowledge, how do you currently engage in data sharing activities?

Q12. Are you aware of, and if so have you engaged with, the Audience Finder tool?

Q13. What do tools, such as the Audience Finder, mean for your organisation?

Follow-up: So are you generally receptive to sharing your audiences' data with other NPOs, via platforms such as the Audience Finder?

Q14. Has having access to data sharing platforms, such as the Audience Finder, or engaging in other data sharing initiatives with NPOs brought your attention to anything you didn't already know, or provide new insights about how your organisation operates?

Follow-up: Can you give an example of this?

Q15. OK, that's great, so do you think audience data is an important factor when making decisions within the organisation?

Q16. Does having access to data about audiences, other than your own, mean anything for the way you programme artistic work here?   Does it change / alter anything?

Q17. (if not already covered): Does existing legislation, such as the data protection act have an effect on the data sharing practices we've discussed?

Q18. So again, thinking back to Arts Council's data sharing statement, what do you think the requirement to share and report audience data might mean for future arts policy?

Follow-up: How about the way your organisation's funding is awarded?

Q19. Is data capture and sharing a requirement for any of your other stakeholders?

Q20. Does your organisation receive any support from Arts Council England in terms of working with the data you're collecting as part of data sharing initiative?

Narrative: So going back to the Audience Finder tool, one of the purported benefits for using it is that you can benchmark yourself against other, similar organisations…

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Lancaster University

Q21. Can you tell me what it means to be able to benchmark yourself against others?

Follow-up: Is the ability to benchmark yourself important?

Q22. Who do you think benefits most from the sharing, capturing, and reporting of audience data?

—

Narrative: So thinking again about this data sharing policy and the way your organisation makes decisions…

—

Q23. How embedded are data sharing practices and data usage in your formal documents, such as your business plan and perhaps your NPO funding applications?

Q24. What do you think data sharing might mean for your decision-making in the future?

--

Narrative: So I just have a few more questions before we finish – these are a slightly broader questions…

--

Q25. In your experience, how responsive do you feel the non-profit arts sector is for adopting new practices and technologies?

Follow-up: And how about this organisation specifically?

Q26. So we've talked about data sharing as a concept, now, could you tell me what terms such as Big and Open data mean in relation to this?

Follow-up: What do you think these terms mean for the publicly funded arts sector?

Q27. Thinking about what we discussed already, could you tell what you understand "data-driven decision-making" to mean?

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Follow-up: Could you comment on how important you think this is for the party, and why?

Q28. What are your personal views on the pros and cons on of the data-driven decision-making notion?

Q29. I understand that this is a rather broad question, but can there ever too much data?

Final Q. Finally, do you think there is anything I may have missed, or anything you would like to add?

Is there anyone else at _____ who might be able to share their knowledge with me?

Thank you...

Appendix 4

Box Office Diagram.
23 September 2016

Box Office :

Non-Active Customers

Active (5 years)

Active But Not Complete

Active & Complete
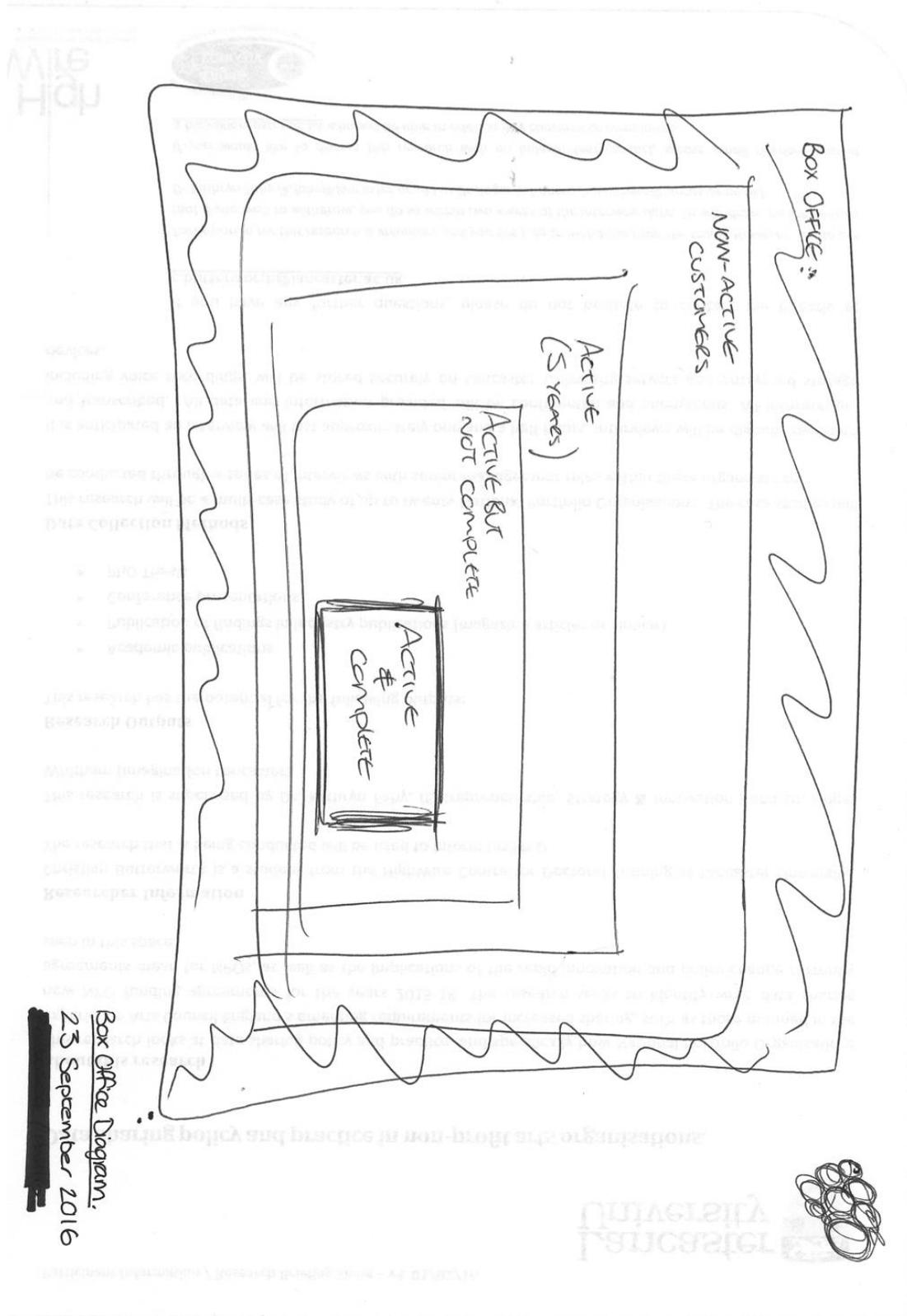
Appendix 5

ORG1

With a core theatre space, concert hall, and gallery, this organisation describes itself as a cross-arts organisation with a long-established reputation for the creation, development and production of contemporary works. The organisation works in close collaboration with a local educational institution.

ORG2

Built as part of a University Campus, the organisation has one main performance space and aspires to be nationally recognised for producing bold, distinctive productions created by the best rising talent in the country. The organisation is regionally renowned for its commitment to artist development. This organisation was building a second venue when data was collected.

ORG3

With three performance spaces spread across two buildings, the organisation describes itself as a 'creative hub' with a program including theatre, comedy, cinema, and music. It is the only producing theatre in its county and describes itself as a place of cultural leadership. The local community at the heart of its activities.

ORG4

With a large, flexible auditorium, and smaller studio space, the organisation aims to reach out to all of its surrounding communities to create and present world-class theatre for them to experience. The organisation also runs a wide-ranging educational program that nurtures and develops the stories of others in the community. This organisation was fundraising for a significant re-build when data was collected.

ORG5

With a large auditorium and smaller studio space, the organisation describes itself as a producer of vibrant and thriving theatre, delivering high-quality drama to its audiences. The organisation works in close collaboration with a local educational institution and takes pride in its community engagement work and artist mentorship schemes.

ORG6

With two performance spaces, the organisation describes itself as being at the heart of the city and region and aims to create world-class theatre that transforms people's lives through their work. Throughout all its activities, the organisation seeks to have an environment, artistic programme and audience that reflects a diverse society.

ORG7

With two performance spaces, the organisation aims to redefine theatre for the 21st Century through its work with young people and world-renowned artists, producing a diverse programme for the whole community. The organisation's education program looks to develop new artists and creative leaders.

ORG8

With a large main house and smaller studio, this repertory organisation produces classic, modern and new plays throughout the year. The organisation has established itself as a strong community hub that draws in tourists from across the country with its reputation for high production values and unique setting.

ORG9

With three performance spaces spread across two buildings, the organisation aims to produce the finest theatre productions, working year-round with writers, directors, designers and actors to develop new plays, and reimagine classic works. Its productions are produced on-site and then transferred to other domestic and international locations. Education is a core part of the organisation's work.

ORG11

With one main theatre space and a separate cinema, the organisation describes itself as a creator of internationally-renowned creative and innovative performances. The organisation looks to represent unheard voices and encourage artists of all ages and backgrounds. This organisation was about to undergo significant capital development when data was collected.

ORG12

Set in the outskirts of a large municipality, the organisation has one main performance space. The organisation describes itself as a world-renowned home for new writing by playwrights that reflect a range of backgrounds. This venue was undergoing significant capital development when data was collected.

ORG13

With a large auditorium and smaller studio space, the organisation creates and showcases inspiring theatre that reflects the diversity of modern Britain. They describe themselves as a regional flagship who provide a wealth of opportunities for the local community, both young and old, to participate, create and engage in artistic works.

ORG14

Set in a former civic building, the organisation has a large, flexible auditorium, and smaller studio space. The organisation is described as having a strong track record for finding fresh talents, nurturing them and then providing them with a platform to bloom. It also aims to share its work as widely as possible across the country. This organisation was undergoing repair work at the time of data collection, following an event.

ORG15

With a main auditorium, music venue, gallery, and cinema space, the organisation works in partnership with local, regional and national companies to achieve its creative goals. The organisation describes its programme as being unique and memorable and looks to push boundaries with innovative and diverse experiences.