

Goldsmiths
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

Case Studies 2 and 3

The emergence of
values of culture in
cultural participation
through digital media

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BACKGROUND AND METHODS

presented by Victoria D. Alexander

CONTEXT: PARTICIPATING IN THE ARTS DURING COVID-19

In the United Kingdom:

- In-person gatherings outlawed
- ❓ Many cultural organisations moved online
- ❓ Many individuals chose to engage with the arts digitally
- What cultural values emerge through digital participation in the age of Covid-19?



CASE STUDY: CULTURAL MAKERSPACE INITIATIVE



Reimagine, Remake, Replay [RRR]

- Northern Ireland
- Young people, 16-25
- Moved from in-person sessions in museums to online sessions

METHODS: RRR

Mixed Methods: February 2021

- Online Focus Groups
 - Participants aged 18-25 (2 focus groups; total N = 12)
 - Equal split between previous and new attendees
- Interviews with RRR Leaders (N=4)
- Discursive analysis of publicly available RRR videos

CASE STUDY: LONDON CHOIRS



8 choirs across 4 choral organisations in London

- Many UK choirs migrated to online delivery
- Digitally mediated rehearsals often involve singing alone at home, starkly contrasting with co-present group singing.

METHODS: CHOIRS

Interviews: During 3rd English lockdown, March 2021

N = 30 Choir participants (plus 5 choir leaders)

- Mix of voice parts (SATB)
- Type of choirs:
 - Semi-professional, classical choir (CC)
 - Mixed-repertoire Recreational Choir (MRC)
- Technical modalities:
 - Online rehearsals (pre-recorded, e.g. YouTube; interactive, e.g. Zoom, and networked music platforms, e.g. Jamulus)
 - Performances: Individually recorded and then mixed and mastered for online distribution.

RESULTS

presented by Oliver Peterson Gilbert

EMOTION REGULATION AND ATTENTIONAL DISTRACTION



Participation was valued for focusing attention away from the threat to life, loved ones and livelihoods resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic:

- *'Pure escapism'* RRR Participant
- *'It is great to be able to sing, it is nice to sing, singing is about switching off [...] I don't meditate but singing is one of the moments when I do switch off and switch into something else.'* Choir Member

SOCIALITY AND COMMUNITAS

Social values were the most clearly and emphatically articulated justification for participating in online activities:

- *'My main and only regular social interaction [...] It has moved from being about singing to maintaining some form of social contact.'* Choir Participant
- *'A space to socialise and reduce that kind of isolation that you had, especially at the start of lockdown when everyone was in panic mode and everyone was in for the first time. I think it kind of provided almost escapism.'* RRR Participant



IDENTITY CONSOLIDATION



The continuation of choir activities in the digital realm was valued for consolidating identity during a period when many identity forming activities were outlawed:

- *'It is one of the central activities of my life, especially since I retired but even before I retired it was one of the central activities of my life. I can't imagine not singing. I take every opportunity to sing.'* Choir Participant
- *'I consider myself an artist because I do illustration and painting. I kind of semi considered myself that before I did RRR but I definitely feel like the courses have helped me establish that more securely in myself.'* RRR Participant

SPATIAL-TEMPORAL STRUCTURING

A cluster of values centred on the spatial and temporal affordances of online participation, ranging from the structuring of time during lockdown to increasing the reach of activities beyond the immediate locale:

- *'I would say that the projects that I did with RRR were like milestones in the year in that I can reference time.'* RRR Participant
- *'I was so happy when they announced the virtual choir session because it was still like something in the diary, something to look forward to, something that brings joy. It was good to connect, you know that there are people in other households doing the same thing.'* Choir Participant



AESTHETIC, CREATIVE, AND SOCIO-EPISTEMIC CAPABILITIES



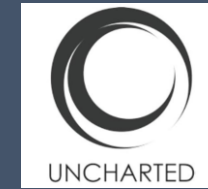
A 'creative boost' to overcome the generalised lockdown lethargy and a consolidation of skills and techniques:

- *'I've written a load of songs and would have never written songs before. I always played music, but I wouldn't have written any songs. And, as well, I started painting randomly, buying loads and loads of canvases.'* RRR Participant
- *'We are all very aware that we have to keep our voices going because if you don't, you lose it. I really notice a quick deterioration if I don't sing.'* Choir Participant
- *The individual act of singing and the collective act of singing is quite transcendental, it puts me in another place [...] losing yourself in music and what I would call beauty is something that is very special.'* Choir Participant

CONCLUSION: VALUE TENSIONS, CONFLICTS, AND RESOLUTIONS

- Participants were coherent in what they valued from online participation:
 - Distraction from the Covid-19 environment
 - The activation of sociality and communality during isolation
 - The ability to structure time in monotonous lockdowns
 - The opportunity to transcend spatial and temporal limitations
 - Consolidation of performative identity
 - Aesthetic, creative, and socio-epistemic capabilities
- These clusters of values did not operate in conflict or tension with each other but rather existed in a mutually sustaining plurality.
- This is fundamentally different to the value tensions which would emerge in a study of supply-side cultural production where values are less resolved and compete more explicitly for justificatory legitimacy.





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Thank you for your
attention

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