

Reflecting Value: Whose safe spaces?

Introduction	
Robyn:	So, I'm really interested about how you...
Tamsin:	Oh, I think Robyn's cut has muted the...
Robyn:	Just muted me.
Robyn (narration):	<p>Hello and welcome back to Reflecting Value. The podcast where we consider the big questions surrounding cultural value in a reflective space. You'll be pleased to know I've learned from my past mistakes and locked my cat out of the room. In today's episode, we're focusing on the question, how do we make the field of culture, health, and wellbeing, more diverse and inclusive for those taking part?</p> <p>This episode's guests are helping me to unpick this very question, reflecting on how we may be able to address these issues relating to diversity and inclusion going forward.</p> <p>And before we jump in, we need to let you know that this episode will feature discussions about racism and hate crime that some people may find upsetting. If you want to avoid this content, the exact times of these discussions are given in the show notes.</p>
Culture Box team interview	
Robyn (narration):	<p>Within research it's quite unusual to hear about a project until the findings have been published in a journal or presented at a conference. So, I was really excited to have the Culture Box team come and talk about their COVID rapid response project with us. Culture Box is a project, which is aiming to understand how arts and culture can be used to alleviate social isolation and loneliness for people living with dementia during times of COVID, especially those from Black and Asian communities who have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic.</p> <p>Joining me for this discussion was Professor Victoria Tischler, Dr Hannah Zeilig and Dr. Errol Francis.</p>

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Robyn:	I was wondering, it might sound a bit strange Errol, but would you mind describing the Culture Box for the listeners?
Errol:	Right. So, the Culture Box is aimed at people living with dementia in care homes and its main aim is to provide public health information about COVID 19. And to promote social interaction through cultural activities. I've actually got one, sorry. It's not.
Robyn (narration):	I watched Errol bring up a box with a bright pink cover. From out of the box arrow, pulled out three pieces of paper. One with some written guidance, one with some beautiful botanical drawings of a tree, and one with an outline of an acorn, which could be filled out as part of the exercise.
Errol:	<p>They get one of these through the post, right, with this branding on it. And then they're drawing exercises based on the painting that people can do.</p> <p>I mean, I used to work in mental health facilities and the idea of culture in those spaces was terribly instrumentalized in the sense that it was sort of occupational therapy, you know, or art therapy, or it couldn't just be for enjoyment. The other thing was a, an assumption about what kind of culture they could cope with.</p> <p>So, I think that in that sense of cultural value, being a sort of notion about complexity or difficulty or, you know, that works, that require some kind of interpretation. We've been trying to challenge that, you know, the dumbing down of what is provided for this group of people.</p>
Victoria:	I was going to add, that's created some quite lively discussions within the group because of course we don't all agree. And as Errol said, you know, we come from different backgrounds and some of us have different ideas about what people might want to engage with or not what people might find interesting. But something I've learned through my years of working with older people with dementia is never to make any assumptions about what people might be interested in or might be capable of because I've my expectations have, if I've had them, I've always been exceeded and I'm always surprised by being surprised constantly by what people might want to do.
Robyn:	One of the challenges I'm seeing is when you're bringing together

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	<p>these kinds of three areas, so you've got the cultural sector, you've got health and you've got research coming together and how that may be limits access. So, I'm just interested in your take on this evident challenge that we have.</p>
Victoria:	<p>I think we're, we're driven by metrics often, aren't we? So somehow even though we have an understanding that something is, is valuable to, to ourselves or to other people somehow, we have to measure it. That's something we've been grappling with in the Culture Box project, which is COVID a pandemic responsive project.</p> <p>And one of our aims as Errol said is to reach out to different communities and to alleviate social isolation, using creativity and culture. And one thing we wanted to do specifically was to reach some of the groups that, you know, don't engage in research, as you said, Robyn, and trying to reach people from Black and Asian communities. But we found that really, really challenging.</p> <p>We're as the team we're really grappling with, what's the best way to reach people. And is it, is it an approach or is it that we're not offering the right product or are we not interacting with people in the same way? So, despite our best efforts, you know, we've really struggled.</p> <p>And again, we, we haven't quite finished recruitment, but we have a largely white British sample that we're working with.</p>
Robyn:	<p>So, I was just wondering if you could tell me a bit more about the recruitment process, what have you adopted to try and reach these communities and why don't you think you've managed to?</p>
Victoria:	<p>We've incorporated a co-design process. So we're working with a group of individuals who are quite diverse, you know, including people from different communities, people living with dementia, people from BAME communities to, to try and ensure that we're being responsive to, you know, to what people would find most, most helpful, most valuable during the, the pandemic.</p> <p>And we're also using a very iterative research approach where using Participatory Action Research, which is very much about a dialogue between ourselves and our participants and ensuring that we're able to change the delivery of what we're giving to care homes as we go</p>

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	<p>along, rather than just offering, you know, deciding on a particular way of offering materials or particular type of materials. We're trying to be very bespoke and very responsive in the way that we're working with people. Yet still there's been this challenge and I'm not really sure what the answers are and that's something that as a team where we're continuing to discuss.</p> <p>I do know that it's really important to build relationships with people in order to build trust and for people to really engage. And I think the pandemic, you know, it's, it's been sort of like a crisis response. We haven't had a lot of time to think. We didn't have a lot of time to think about the project when we put it together and we've had to really react quickly. So that's, that's been a challenge as well, perhaps I would've liked to be a bit more thoughtful, a bit more slow that we're working in a crisis and that hasn't been possible.</p>
Hannah:	<p>Yeah. It's hard to, it's hard to underestimate the amount of thought and effort that we've put into recruitment and thinking about this and who we worked with, but that's the key, really the building of trust and the relational approach. We, we haven't had time. It's a rapid response project and has been really awkward where we've all been involved with phoning care homes and asking if they'd like to be involved in this work. And then by the time we've done that, we've already spoken for three minutes and somebody might have four minutes to talk to us. So, for us to then say, we'd like to work specifically with these residents or it's actually pragmatically, logistically difficult.</p> <p>But we're also, I'm hoping going to get the team. To reflect themselves. So, the research team are hopefully going to collect their own reflections. And what it's been like to research at this time.</p>
Victoria:	<p>I think we were really driven by the fact, you know, the really disproportionately negative impact that the pandemic's had on Black and Asian communities in particular. And I think it's quite a, a worthy aim that we wanted to respond to, but perhaps unrealistic. You know, people who are in, you know, having all kinds of challenges would have the time or the inclination to participate in a research project.</p>
Robyn	<p>In talking to the Culture Box team, I had a rare insight into the</p>

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(narration):	<p>reflections of a research project as it's taking place. What's clear from talking to this team is the complexities that lie in bringing together culture, health, and research. Research can be slow at times, but this project has shown how something can be developed and delivered in a rapid way when responding to a crisis.</p> <p>But the fast nature of this project may have meant less time to build trust with people living with dementia from Black and Asian communities. Time and methods of recruitment are not the only barriers in this context. And there may be other elements that stand in the way of more diversity and representation within the culture, health, and wellbeing field.</p>
Grace Quantock interview	
Audio:	<p><Audio from Grace Quantock's 2013 Ignite Talk></p> <p><i>Do you remember those books where you had to choose where he wants to go at the end of the chapter? Those choose your own adventure novels. Sure, they were badly plotted and printed on that awful pulp paper, but isn't it a compelling concept? The problem is now we're grown up and the adventure is actually our life and we can't flick to the end and see if it really does all turn out okay. I'm here today to talk to you about transforming your challenges about living well in full colour, every beautiful day.</i></p>
Robyn (narration):	<p>This clip is taken from an Ignite Talk by Grace Quantock back in 2013. I thoroughly recommend listening to the full talk, which you can find the link to in the show notes for this episode.</p> <p>Grace is a psychotherapeutic counsellor and writer who works across health, social care, and human rights. I spoke to grace to reflect on the barriers that are created within this area for those who have multiple marginalized identities.</p>
Robyn:	<p>Thanks so much for joining me, Grace. I wondered whether we could start with a question about research and what barriers you think might be created by research and even researchers working in this area?</p>
Grace:	<p>This is something that I feel very passionate about because so often I felt marginalized communities just get mined but under the guise of it</p>

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	<p>actually being for our benefit. There are some conventions of research that I struggled with and this is something I'm working on in my master's at the moment, because, you know, when I spoke around the, the ethics committee, I was told, Oh, we can't, you can't pay you can't reimburse participants for their time in your research.</p> <p>And I said why? And they said, Oh, because you know, it might skew the research, but you can refund them travel. And you can like in a non COVID time, give them a cup of tea and a biscuit. So, so this is fantastic. This is fascinating. So, we're saying that my attention to them won't skew the research at all, food won't skew, the research travel costs, won't skew the research, but recommencing them for their time will. You know I'd love to see the breakdown of how we found that to be true.</p> <p>But you know, quite often this was coming from salaried people. Who was saying that, you know, it's expected that somebody will have the capacity to participate in research. And, you know, I get asked to participate in research quite often, and I have to turn it down because you know, I'm a carer, I'm self-employed and I'm disabled. My available time is generally spent working. Doing things that I need to do to live and take care of myself or caring for the person I care for. So actually if you're asking me to do something in my spare time, what you're asking me to do is go without paid work, to go with that sleep, to go without food or to go without necessarily things that I need to do to be well.</p> <p>So, which one of those would you like me to give up for your research? I'll let you pick.</p>
Robyn:	<p>I think that's such an important consideration that researchers maybe don't have enough. I keep saying, seeing the term safe space within the literature and obviously this means different things to different people.</p> <p>So, I wondered whether this term is something you've come across within your own practice and what you maybe think about safe spaces within culture, health, and wellbeing.</p>
Grace:	<p>The first thing might be actually, I don't know how to make them safe because I I'm not them, I don't know how safe or unsafe they feel in</p>

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the world.

So in one thing I'm working in because I, I did a union inspired a body work training online, and they had some improvement that was brilliant, where there was a, a breathing room, a breakout room that there was a therapist that who would if anybody found the group work activating or difficult at all, there was a room where they could go and sit and process it.

And if anything came up from the work that, that needed processing outside, then the tutors were available to do extra work, to process with you. And I just thought, wow. Imagine if in, in research there was somebody, you know, who from a marginalized background or some who was experienced in holding space or working or doing inclusion support work, who was actually able to, you know, firstly facilitate the space, co-create and design space. And then possibly to be able to sit within it and then to have you know, something clear so that if something does come up, because so many people have stories where we know the violence that happens in the niceness of these kinds of white het cis non-disabled middle-class spaces. And, you know, sometimes I have been around research and people have been saying to me, you know, people just they're scared come in. We just need to make them feel welcome. I said, I'm so sorry. What makes you think people are scared? I said, well, they're not coming. Right, do you think there's a reason for that. You know, no, we want to make these wonderful playful spaces. I said hold on, these spaces are great for you, but that does not mean they are great for everybody else.

So, talking about playful cities, for example. So, I was doing some work around this. And explain to some people who were kind of asking, you know, how do we get people to engage? I said, I don't engage because it is unsafe for me to engage because those playful spaces are literally the place that I experienced hate crime and attack because I, as a visibly disabled woman on view under that gaze, and I'm a risk there.

So actually, you don't need, I don't need encouragement, quite frankly. I need you all to reckon with why those spaces are safe for you and not for me and what we're going to do about that. So putting something into how we make spaces safer is much more likely to make me beat, make me out to help me engage then kind of assuming that I

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	<p>feel excluded because you know, having enough respect to think that actually, perhaps I'm not there for a very good reason.</p>
Robyn:	<p>Yeah. And I guess this kind of builds on the phrase that you used when you got in touch with us about the podcasts that really interested me. You discussed the, the wounds that arts and culture can cause, but also the ones that can address. So, I was just wondering if we could just unpick that a little bit more for, for our listeners.</p>
Grace:	<p>Yeah, absolutely. So, you know, in speaking of this, I'm speaking from, from my personal perspective, which is as a multi marginalized, disabled woman and I sit at different intersections of marginalization and privilege. So, I'm a white, disabled woman. I from a lower socioeconomic background but English is my first language. So, you know, I sit at multiple points and, you know, I'm really aware that I can't speak to many other people's experiences of it. What I can do is to speak from the experiences of people that I have worked with in, in workshops. We can make permission to share their experiences in this way, anonymized and also to cite it, to cite examples from, from my teachers who sit at different positions.</p> <p>So, I'm really aware that we can find shifts and healing art and art has huge potential to shift things for us. And at the same time, you know, the other side of that coin is that it can massively wound us. And I think that in a rush to basically not look prejudiced or to fix, fix something which you know, is a big thing and does need to shift there can be just this, this, this headlong rush into trying to correct. And that means, you know, I get asked you know, can you please look at this? Can you please, okay. This and know if, actually I've said, I'm sorry, what did, did you, you, you're making something for, to save for people. Great. Right. I mean, speaking from a disability perspective here. Right? Why. Did anybody say to ask you to create this? Did anybody was able to create this and wanted some support with it to, to, to work as a in partnership? You know, what makes you think we want this? And there's just so much it's based on these assumptions.</p> <p>That again, perhaps, you know, there's more in the health sector that, Oh my goodness. If I never see another stair climbing wheelchair in my life, I will be so happy. So, for me, there's something there around, you know, when people are creating for culture and for art, there's a real</p>

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	<p>ask of like, what's happening? Is this co-created? Is this a rising in your experience with the community being of a community? In a community? Or are you actually looking around and going we're missing, we're missing, you know, for the best, most meaningful reasons in that moment, you think, gosh, we're leaving out disabled people, you know, we better do something and then there's a jump.</p> <p>And I'm really fascinated in what could happen in that space. If we just, as Zara Ash Harper talks about, if we just slow it down into slow, slow inclusion, just look what happens in that leap. What's going on.</p>
Robyn (narration):	<p>Grace raises some really important reflections here on how the lack of flexibility and research can create additional barriers to participation for people who hold multiple marginalized identities. It's also clear that we have to think carefully about the places and spaces where culture, health, and wellbeing programs and research take place.</p> <p>And we need to ask ourselves these questions that grace has suggested, who is it for? Why is it being created and what are my intentions? So, let's take a look at a program which has used a co-creative approach to support a range of women with different migration circumstances who are living in Leeds.</p>
Mafwa Theatre interview	
Audio:	<p><Audio from clip of Mafwa theatre's To & Fro project></p> <p><i>Home. Home is nice cooking. Home is dolma, kubba, biryani, kebab, bhaji, onions, samosa. It is fresh boiled rice. Different taste. Home, home and love.</i></p>
Robyn (narration):	<p>This clip is taken from Mafwa theatre's To and Fro project, which documented the journeys of refugees, asylum seekers, and settled communities in Leeds. I spoke with Tamsin Cook co-artistic director and Anne Collins and Mafwa member back in December 2020 about their experiences of co-creating theatre to pieces together.</p>
Robyn:	<p>So, I'm really interested in the history of Mafwa over the two years that you've been running. Could you tell me a little bit more about why you've chosen to work in this area? What drew you to working with the people that you work with?</p>

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Tamsin:	<p>So, Keziah and I met at the University of Leeds, actually we're alumni, during our master's study in. Development and global development, I should say. And theatre studies, which is no longer running, but we were the last cohort and it was a really natural partnership because I taught many years of experiences of facilitator working with lots of different community groups.</p> <p>And Kez had many years of experience working on frontline support for people who were well sanctuary seekers, people with different migration status. So, we, in 2018, we were finding, we started just as a temporary group, but we knew that we didn't want to parachute into a community and just leave again.</p> <p>We always knew that we had intentions that went beyond the, beyond the theatre module that we were working on. And Leeds Refugee Forum, we struck up a partnership with them. They needed more activities that were just for women from the centre. So, when we started the first session we run, we had about 20 women turn up into a very small room.</p> <p>And yeah. Anne do you think it's worked with opening the group out?</p>
Anne:	<p>Well, to be honest with you when I first, when I just, when I was new to Mafwa, I was not quite sure that what this group is about, and I just knew that, okay, Mafwa theatre, theatres, meaning something related to the art and drama, but involving myself with the every weekly sessions then I thought myself, no, this is something really from here, there are different, different kinds of the doors I had gone through that, which is Arts Together and Opera North and deeper in the Playhouse, we used to go to see the different play from Mafwa theatre getting the free tickets and involving in different organizations through Mafwa.</p> <p>So that was quite you know, or like we can, I can feel that, okay. Mafwa is there. Yeah, every session Mafwa is there. Every week, they used to provide us a bus ticket, so, okay. The transport, no problem for the transport. And they were like quite supportive. Both of them Keziah and Tamsin.</p>
Tamsin:	<p>So, I think, yeah, we are definitely, we draw on the network of partnerships that we that we've created. So, we, you know, like with</p>

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	<p>Arts Together and with places and spaces in the city and making sure that they're open to us and Mafwa members. So, for example, when we went to the Leeds Museum, the city museum, I think most people in the group had never been to the museum before.</p> <p>And just walking up those steps, which requires quite a lot of entitlement was something that was really important to people and to perform in that space, brought with it quite a lot of kudos. So, Keziah and I have written an article for the Journal of Performance and Ethics in Theatre it's along those lines.</p> <p>Can't remember what the journal title is. I'm an apology is everyone. But you'll be able to find it somewhere if you do a search in your academic institution. So, we wrote about redistribution and recognition. So, for us collaboration with Mafwa is all about making sure that not only do we recognize voices, but we also redistribute power and resources and social capital. So a lot of what we do is trying to make sure that we are kind of using our kind of our education and our status and our background and making sure that Mafwa members have access to everything that we have access to.</p> <p>So that's kind of from an academic kind of point of ethical point of view and what we're trying to achieve. Universality as well as something that is important to us in terms of, for the logistical stuff. So, like everyone who comes gets a bus ticket because of one person needs a bus ticket, then everyone gets one. That's just part of how we work. So, nobody is kind of pointed out in that way.</p>
Robyn:	<p>Yeah. I think that's a really important consideration and I I'd really love to know what, what you feel you're most proud of. And the things that you've done with Mafwa so far.</p>
Anne:	<p>Well, I can say in my most proud of the Transformed Festival, which, which for me, no, not me and not, not in front of nobody. So that was quite proud for me and the whole project when we went to Sheffield, that was unfortunately I could not go to Leicester, but yeah, I miss that part, but the Sheffield and Leeds to the museum on, on, on the map, on the map, which is already there. And then we did the map and all this, it was a game master.</p> <p>We bet that that game was night and it was really nice for me. Yeah,</p>

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	<p>Cooking with Parveen but unfortunately, we didn't like that because of the pandemic. We had to go through this lockdown and we, because just be in February, we were discussing about the plays and dedicating the time and how to do two sessions and then three sessions a week you have with the Mafwa was quite exciting. We also did in big practice in the, in, in Leeds Refugee Forum, but then all of a sudden, the lockdown came. So, it's all, I couldn't do that this year. So, we were really looking forward to do that, but as times in say that we could not do.</p>
Tamsin:	<p>So now we are also delivering the online sessions since kind of September, we were already aware that another lockdown was likely to happen. So, we equipped people. Again, Leeds, the city of Leeds, were great. You know, there was a 100% Leeds Digital we were able to get a grant from, so we were able to equip, I think, eight women with phones so that they could take part in the WhatsApp group.</p> <p>And we were hoping that that would enable people to join on Zooms as well. Unfortunately, obviously being a theatre company, we don't have the best, IT kind of knowledge. So, we had to, we've had to get more funding for tablets because the phones that we provided, people just aren't up to scratch.</p> <p>So, we've done our best, but you know, we can be critical of ourselves and say, you know, it wasn't, we haven't always managed to pull it off really.</p>
Robyn:	<p>I think it's like you say, it's really important to reflect on, on these things. So, when things go back to normal, how will your experiences in times of COVID change your practice and how you think about Mafwa going forwards?</p>
Tamsin:	<p>Go on, Anne, would you be able to answer like what you would want from Mafwa? Like when things go back to a bit of normality and how it might change your perception.</p>
Anne:	<p>Well, to be honest with you here, Mafwa before was really nice, friendly, you can sit together. But now because of this pandemic it has affected minds so badly that oh, are we going to do the same though? You know, you just, now, now that you, how automatically when somebody is coming near you, Oh, come on. There's a social distancing</p>

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	<p>socially for now. It's in the mind there with the mask and the social distancing. So, you cannot sit when you cannot chat with anybody near you far and make a decision.</p> <p>So, I, I wonder how would be Mafwa after the pandemic, but even then, we don't know where when this pandemic is going to end, when the vaccine is going to come. But. It would be quite different to, to, to get together again the same way before, for me, I'm telling, I don't know about others' experience, but yes.</p> <p>Now on now also for myself, when I'm somewhere in the queue and somebody come near me, I just, just get, okay, let me make myself a space. So, I'm wondering, I don't know how would be Mafwa when it will be back to normal? Well, I don't know. I don't know.</p>
Tamsin:	<p>I think on raises a really good point though, because we are already working in a group, and that's members and facilitators alike, who have mental health issues. And we already have a high prevalence of anxiety and depression within the group. And that is something that obviously the pandemic has not helped with. So, it's more important than ever that we are thinking really mindfully about running sessions. And I think safe, you know, really making sure it's always a safe space. And we worked really hard to create a safe, safe space and a space of trust before. And we've also got Nazia who unfortunately, wasn't able to join us today, but she is a mental wellbeing worker from LMWS: so that's Leeds Mental Wellbeing Service I believe, We have kind of introduced Nazia as a familiar face within the group so that they have somebody to turn to. And so that it's not just them coming to cause you're an Island asking for a referral for somewhere. It means that they can go to somebody who works within health and wellbeing and they can get proper targeted, appropriate advice and referrals from somebody who knows what they're talking about.</p> <p>So, there you go. I think hopefully that answers your question Anne. So, a bigger space, really focusing on our wellbeing within the whole group and making sure that we can all have a cup of tea at the beginning. Does that sound good to you?</p>
Anne:	<p>Yeah.</p>

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Tamsin:	Yeah. I'm looking forward to it.
Outro	
Robyn (narration):	<p>So, what can we take away from this episode's conversations? I think it's really clear that the ways in which we research the value of culture for health and wellbeing can throw up barriers for those who hold multiple marginalized identities. And there's so much work that needs to be done in order to ensure that research in this area becomes more diverse and representative this episode's guests highlighted the value of building trust with different communities.</p> <p>And asking questions as to what spaces are seen as safe to different people. And this of course requires an emphasis on co-creation and collaboration. But we also need to reflect and take action on who holds the power in their spaces and how it can be redistributed more equally while there are many examples of good practice when it comes to involving diverse and representative communities in health and wellbeing work.</p> <p>Within research, these nuances are rarely acknowledged or reflected upon. So, I think today's conversation is a starting block for further reflection. And I'd be really interested to hear what you think going forwards.</p> <p>What actions can you take forwards in your research or practice to redistribute power and co-create spaces that are safe and inclusive?</p> <p>How might you make your research and practice more flexible so you can develop trust with different communities? What can happen in those uncomfortable spaces if we slow down our thinking before springing to action?</p> <p>That's all from me. Thank you for listening to Reflecting Value. A podcast from the Centre for Cultural Value. To keep up to date on reflections from this episode and to hear how other people have answered these questions, search hashtag Reflecting Value on Twitter, and don't forget to rate, review, and subscribe.</p> <p>See you next time.</p>