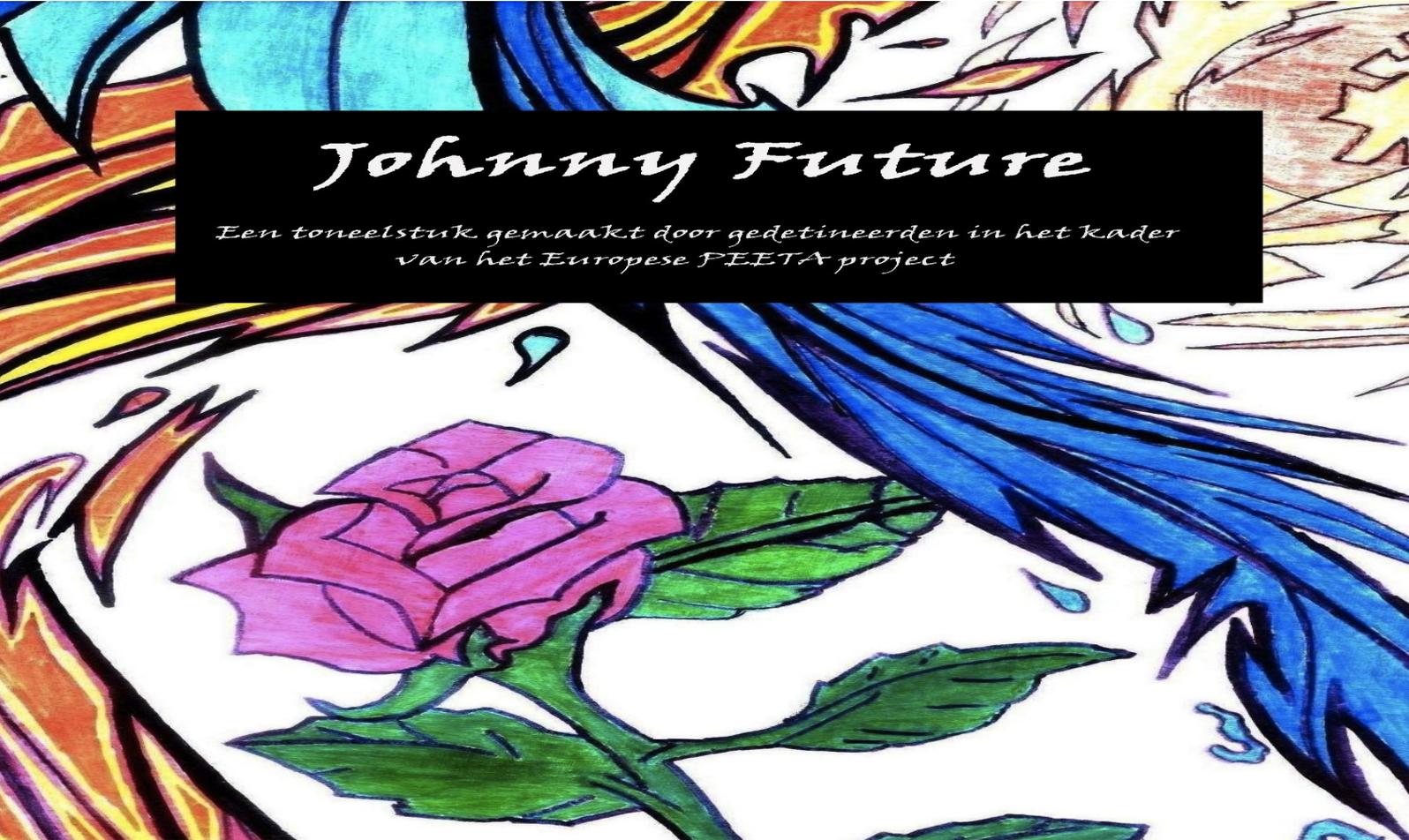


The Adventures of Johnny Future

*A Case Study of a
Prison Art Project*



Johnny Future

*Een toneelstuk gemaakt door gedetineerden in het kader
van het Europese FEETA project*

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Preface

Welcome to my master thesis! I hope you will find the experience of reading it both educational and enjoyable, as was my experience of writing it. This thesis is the end product of an intense and interesting journey which was at times also stressful and emotional. I do not know if you have ever been to prison, but if you have not I hope this thesis will show you a glimpse of a world not many of us get to see. If you have been to prison, I hope relating my writings to your own experiences will be meaningful to you.

When I told people I was going to do research in a prison, people reacted surprised but were also very curious about what it would be like and wanted to know if I was scared at all. The truth is that I was never scared, but there was one situation that made me a little nervous; in retrospect it is rather funny, so I would like to share it with you. We were eating lunch in the part of prison where only staff can come. I was talking to a woman who was also not a staff member of the prison and after a while we noticed that, besides us, everyone had left. The problem was that you cannot go anywhere in prison if you do not have keys. Only staff members have keys and they were all gone. We realized we were locked up in prison! There was no way to contact anyone, because cell phones are not allowed in prison. All we could do was wait for someone to 'rescue' us. Luckily it only took a couple of minutes and the rest of my prison experience was very positive and interesting.

I would like to use the remainder of this preface to thank the people without whom this research would not have been possible. It all began when Jos and Septimia posted and advert on the internet saying that they were looking for an intern for their Community Arts Foundation ACCU. I met with them a few days later and they told me about Johnny Future a prison art project, maybe I would like to research that? I was immediately excited and I am grateful for the opportunity they offered me. I would also like to thank the prison *PI de Ijssel*, for welcoming the project and allowing us to enter their prison. During the whole process, my friends and my mother have been very supportive whenever I was worried about not being able to finish the thesis on time. Thank you for telling me it would all work out and providing some much needed diversion from time to time. Most of all I am grateful to 'the boys' that decided to be part of the Johnny Future project and were willing to share their thoughts and feelings with me.

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Utrecht, August 2011

1 If you have questions or comments about this thesis, you may contact me at annevan_veen@hotmail.com

Foreword

Hi, my name is Johnny Future. I was created by a group of prisoners who reside in the prison *PI De Ijssel*. Let me tell you a little bit about myself. I was born in a small rural town, where I grew up with my mother and brothers. My childhood was not always easy. My father had a drinking problem and was never around. On top of that, I was bullied because of my slightly larger than average ears. To escape from all the misery in my life, I spent a lot of time dreaming about being a dancer. My life as a grown up has had many ups and downs so far. I am an adventurer with many girlfriends and a great pokerface, but also a fool with a gambling problem who has been to prison (although I was innocent! Well, sort of anyway) . You can read my entire life story further on in this thesis. To enhance your Johnny Future experience, I have put together a playlist to accompany the different scenes . It is my life's soundtrack and you can find it here: <http://tinyurl.com/42yn968>

Johnny Future

Krimpen a/d Ijssel, July 2011

Content

<i>Johnny Future Scene 1</i>	7
1. Introduction	7
1.1 Research Context	7
1.2 Problem Statement	9
<i>Johnny Future Scene 2</i>	11
2. Literature review	12
2.1 Introduction	12
2.2 Values of Art	13
2.3 Art in prison: theory	19
2.4 Art in prison: practice	25
<i>Johnny Future Scene 3</i>	28
3. Methods & Methodology	29
3.1 Methods	29
3.2 The Case	31
3.3 Methodology	33
3.4 Reflexive account	34
<i>Johnny Future Scene 4</i>	37
4. Results	38
4.1 Introduction	38
4.2 'The boys'	40
4.3 Role in life	42
4.4 Effects	45
4.5 Role of Art	48
<i>Johnny Future Scene 5</i>	52
5. Conclusions	53
<i>Johnny Future Scene 6</i>	56
6. Discussion	57
<i>Johnny Future Scene 7</i>	58
References	59

Appendices **61**

Appendix A: Action Plan 61

Appendix B: Self-evaluation Star 62

Appendix C: Rehearsal schedule 63

Johnny Future Scene 1: Baby Johnny

INT. LIVING ROOM. DAY

MUSIC: WHAT A WONDERFUL WORLD – LOUIS ARMSTRONG

Once upon a time, there was a little baby whose mother named him Johnny. He was sitting in his mother's lap, sucking his thumb, while his mother told him a story about a frog. His mother then decided that it was time for Johnny's two older brothers, named Barry and Berry, to come home. So she called them on their cell phone and told them to come home. Barry and Berry really wanted to stay at the playground a bit longer, but they knew there was no arguing with their mum.

Berry and Barry arrived at the house and had just started explaining how they really needed some candy when the doorbell rang. Berry opened the door and a strange man was standing in the doorway. The man told Berry, who told his mum, that he was there to sell beautiful clothes almost for free! Johnny's mum didn't hear the 'almost' and invited him in. The man used a cane because he was blind and Berry had to lead him to his mum who was still holding Johnny in her lap. The salesman showed all the clothes he had, but Johnny's mum did not like them and besides, she had no money. She asked the man if he really had nothing else to offer and the man said: "Well, I can predict your baby's future.". Johnny's mum certainly liked that and asked the man what he wanted in return. A bunch of flowers will do, the man said. Barry was told to fetch some flowers and the man began his prediction: "I foresee a beautiful future for your son. He will be rich! He will have many friends! He will have many women!". This certainly pleased Johnny's family, but the prediction was not finished yet. "Wait", the fortunetelling salesman said, " I see more. Oh no, I see tragedy! Johnny will die a horrible death.". This is not what they wanted to hear and the poor man was chased out of the house, getting a cactus thrown at him instead of receiving some nice flowers.

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Context

Budget cuts have stirred up the art world in the Netherlands. Cultural organizations are being portrayed as 'funding addicted' organizations that are isolated from and have nothing to offer to 'ordinary people'. At the same time, community art has gained popularity and the number of community arts projects has increased dramatically (Twaalfhoven, 2010). These recent events have precipitated an interesting debate about the value of arts and its effects on society. Opinions differ greatly, ranging from 'art is useless and therefore valuable' to 'art is useless and therefore worthless'! If that seems confusing, no need to worry, I will discuss this debate in more detail and show how there are actually two separate debates confounding one another. For these community art projects and organizations to continue, it is necessary to show what their value is for society. In this thesis, I will focus on a particular community art project and what this project means for its participants. The project is called Johnny Future and has been developed by *Stichting ACCU*. ACCU is a foundation which creates community art and culture in a wide variety of settings and locations. They work with an interdisciplinary team of artists.

The project Johnny Future is a project in which inmates work with artists to create a performance with theatre, music, visual arts and dance. They rehearse once or twice a week for two hours; the duration of the project is eleven weeks. The inmates are involved in creating the storyline and all other parts of the performance.

By participating in the project, inmates can earn a certificate called SEPE. SEPE means Supporting Employability and Personal Effectiveness (through the arts) and was developed by EdExcel and the university of Exeter. To get this certificate, inmates have to demonstrate that they have developed certain basic skills that are relevant for getting a job (e.g. active listening, working together in a team). SEPE is already being used in the United Kingdom by community arts organization Superact!. They have been given a European subsidy to spread SEPE throughout Europe. Johnny Future is one of the pilot projects that is being done to find out how SEPE can be implemented outside the UK. The implementation of SEPE is being researched by Jo Cursley, a researcher from the University of Exeter. This study will therefore not focus on the SEPE-aspect of the project and is certainly not an evaluation of the project. I am using it as a case study to get a deeper understanding of what happens to people (and specifically those in prison) when participating in community art projects. I will focus on the experience of the participants

and what the project means to them. In the next section (Problem statement) I will go into more detail about the research questions and purpose. After that, I will discuss relevant literature (chapter 2), describe the methods that were used as well as methodological considerations (chapter 3). Results are presented in chapter 4, followed by a Conclusion and Discussion (chapters 5 and 6).

1.2 Problem Statement

In this section I will present the purpose of the research and its relevance for both science and practice. After that, I will specify the questions that were researched.

Purpose of the research

The purpose of my research is to gain more insight into the experiences of participants of prison art projects, the processes that take place during these projects and the way in which art plays a role in this (from the perspective of the participants). As the literature review will show, a considerable amount of books and articles have been written about art (therapy) in prison. Most of these are however written by professionals based on their experiences as artists or art therapists in prisons. These accounts of practice-based evidence provide valuable insights into the workings of art therapy, but are prone to bias and lack the rigour of scientific research (cf. Meekums & Daniel, in press). Several quantitative studies have been conducted as well, investigating the effects of art projects or therapy on certain outcome variables predetermined by the researcher, using before and after tests. These have shown interesting results, indicating positive effects on for example mental well being. Both professional and scientific texts focus heavily on art therapy using visual arts and its effects on mental well being and have been written either from the perspective the professional or from that of the researcher. Consequently, little is known about the experience of non-therapeutic prison art programs from an emic² perspective. In this research, I will not work with predetermined variables or investigate hypotheses about specific effects. Instead I will explore what participants think and feel happens to them during a prison art project and what the artistic aspect means to them.

Although I am investigating a specific project, I am not doing research to evaluate or to provide the knowledge to solve a particular practical problem. The thesis is meant to contribute to the understanding of what it means to people and in particular those in prison, to participate in an art project. It remains a challenge for researchers in the field of art to show how art benefits people and society and what is 'special' about art (cf. Bina & Ijdens, 2008). By focussing on the emic perspective, I hope to be able to construct a different type of knowledge, which will further our understanding of what art means to people.

The results of this study may of course also have practical relevance. Community

² Emic research describes research results from the perspective, and using the terminology, of those researched, whereas etic research offers descriptions using researchers' terminology.

art organizations such as *Stichting ACCU* might be able to use them to show potential commissioners that their activities have a scientific justification. Gained insights into the experience of participants might also be used to fine tune projects, for example by giving more attention to aspects of the project that meant a lot to participants.

Research Question

The main question of the study is: How did inmates who participated in the prison art project Johnny Future experience this project, which took place from May to July in prison PI de Ijssel?

Several subquestions were formulated prior to the fieldwork and adjusted during the first phase of data collection, based on observations.

- How can the group of participants be described and how did the group develop?
- What role does the project play in participants' lives?
- How has the project affected participants?
- How do participants experience the 'art' aspect of the project

Johnny Future Scene 2: Tragedy

EXT. STREET. NIGHT

MUSIC: DON'T LET ME BE MISUNDERSTOOD – THE ANIMALS

Johnny is all grown up now and living his life as predicted: enjoying women, friends, and money in abundance. One evening he is happily walking down the street, blissfully unaware of the car that is following him. Hiding in the dark is a man, carrying a gun. Johnny finally turns around and, realizing what is about to happen, starts begging for his life. Unfortunately for Johnny, it all happens as predicted and Johnny is murdered. His last words: “Please don't let me be misunderstood!”

2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

In this part of the thesis, I will discuss literature in order to place this research in a theoretical framework, demonstrate how it builds on previous research and how it can contribute to furthering knowledge in its area of research, as well as provide a historical context. The literature review is divided into three sections, each dealing with different themes and each with their own objectives.

In the first section, theories and empirical research about what makes art valuable and the relationship between art and society is presented. I will demonstrate that there are two fundamental debates when it comes to the value of art. After describing the different standpoints in these debates, I will elaborate on my own position and how this relates to the research design. The objective is to describe the debate this thesis is hoping to contribute to and to place this thesis into a wider scientific context.

In the second section, I will zoom in on the subject of art in prison and discuss why art programs might be especially beneficial for prisoners and provide a critical overview of research results from previous studies of prison art programs to show which questions have yet to be researched.

In the third and final section, a closer look will be taken at prison art in practice. How has policy with respect to art in prison developed itself and how is this related to the general history of the modern prison system? A historical context will be provided in this section.

2.2 The Values of Art

Prisons are public institutions, paid for by public money. The expenses on prisons and prisoners have to be legitimized by demonstrating their benefit for not only inmates, but for society at large as well (the most important benefit being of course reducing re-offense rates). The Johnny Future project studied here, was funded by the European Union and executed in cooperation with participating correctional institutions (which are the responsibility of justice departments of national governments). This would indicate that both European and national government subscribe to the belief that art programs for inmates are eventually beneficial for society. The position that it is wise to spend money on art to positively affect society, could be considered quite unpopular in the current political climate in the Netherlands. The Dutch government has recently announced rather dramatic budget cuts in the field of art, which is being met by loud protests by artists and art lovers. At the same time, reading news forums gives the impression that 'art is a waste of public money' is also a popular opinion amongst people in the Netherlands. This debate about the value of art and the nature of the relation between art and society, is of great importance for community art projects such as the one studied here; if art has no value for society, why should tax money be spent on it? The rest of this section aims to give an overview of the different standpoints and related arguments in the debate, as well as my own assumptions on this subject that are the basis of this research.

As said before, budget cuts have precipitated a heated debate regarding the value of arts for society. The debate is more complicated however, than simply agreeing or disagreeing with the statement that art is valuable for society. While some try to demonstrate what the positive impacts of art on society are, there are others who reject such an instrumentalist view. They argue that art has value in its own right, that only the intrinsic value of art is important: art is valuable because it is useless. This means that there are two fundamental issues at the heart of the debate about the value of art. The first one is about whether or not art has the ability to affect society and if these effects are positive or negative. The second issue has to do with what makes art valuable: intrinsic quality or extrinsic effects of the arts. Let us consider the second issue first, since there is no point of investigating the effects of art on society if we conclude that the only relevant value of art is its intrinsic value.

Issue #2: Intrinsic v. Extrinsic value

Although it has been a while since there was so much discussion about the value of art, the debate is not new. The idea that art should only be valued because of its internal qualities, is over two hundred years old and the idea that art can be a valuable tool for affecting society is over two thousand years old (Bennet & Belfiore, 2008).

In their book *The impacts of arts on society, an intellectual history* Bennet and Belfiore (2008) dedicate most chapters to different categories of effects of arts on society (e.g. art as an educational instrument), but there is also a chapter about the intrinsic value of art. In this chapter, the authors contrast the 'intrinsic' or 'art pour l'art' perspective on art with the instrumentalist perspective on art, which considers positive and negative impacts of art on society (to be discussed later). They describe the beliefs of thinkers who argue that we should not think about art in a pragmatic way; they reject this instrumentality of art and say that art should exist solely for art's sake. This idea of art for art's sake is first put forward in the late eighteenth century by Moritz and can also be found in the ideas of Kant. In the nineteenth century, Aestheticism became popular among artists. The Aestheticists believed that the aesthetic and moral realm should be separate. It was especially important to these artists to free themselves from the prescriptions of Christian morality (ibid.). The debate about whether or not art should have a purpose, continued during the twentieth century and can still be recognized today. After WWII, artists did not have to work hard to demonstrate the value of their art; it seemed governments were happy to support art for its intrinsic value (Vuyk, 2010). Vuyk shows however, that this is a misconception. The freedom artists had during the Cold War era, was actually used by governments to spread the ideology of liberal-democracy. In the 1990s, art lost its value for ideological warfare and support for art declined. A new instrumental value of art had to be found to legitimize government spending on art.

The current debate about art gives the impression that there is a trade-off between the intrinsic value of an art work and its extrinsic or instrumental value (cf. Blina & Ijden, 2008). Some artists are worried that all this attention given to the instrumental use of art will lessen the quality and intrinsic value of works of art. Others argue that 'useless' art has no value for society. My position is that intrinsic and extrinsic value are not mutually exclusive. Art needs at least some intrinsic value for it to be called art. Extrinsic value therefore presupposes a certain level of intrinsic value. An artwork with very little intrinsic value will have a hard time affecting people, especially when it comes to the exclusive or special effects of art. High intrinsic value does not exclude high extrinsic value. Maybe

quite the opposite.

There is a difference in where the focus of the artist lies. An instrumentalist focus on extrinsic value will make the effect intended and more directed towards a certain goal that the artist (or commissioner) wants to achieve with the art work (e.g. stimulating social cohesion). It could be that intrinsic value is sacrificed in the process because it is given less priority, but this is not inherently so. Artists can also find artistic inspiration in the people or communities they are trying to affect (this is certainly my experience as a choreographer). A focus on intrinsic value, does definitely not mean less extrinsic value. It just means that the external effects are not directed by the artist, there is no specific instrumental goal. We can imagine that an artwork that is very valuable intrinsically, will have a profound effect on the audience, precisely because of this intrinsic value. Even if there is a complete lack of attention to external or instrumental effects on the part of the artist, the intrinsic value of the artwork is appreciated externally by the audience. An artwork cannot value itself, this is only something that human beings can do. And when they do this, when people enjoy the useless beauty of art, they are affected by it. We might call these side-effects, because they are unintended, but occur anyway. In this sense, it is impossible for the value of art to be completely intrinsic. Even if an art work seems completely useless, because there is no audience, it has still been created by an artist for whom there was value in creating the work of art and who is external to her or his work of art. Vuyk (2010) agrees that the debate should not be about intrinsic versus instrumental value. He argues that art has been and always will be instrumental and that the debate should be about which goals artists should aim to achieve with their art. Art is not the right instrument for all social or economic goals politicians just happen to want to achieve. Art has value because it is a unique instrument, and we should research what unique effects it can have on people. According to Vuyk, these unique effects have to do with the lasting experience that people have when experiencing art; art is an instrument of experience, capable of affecting how people experience and perceive the world.

Having concluded that extrinsic and intrinsic value are not mutually exclusive and that this dichotomy does not do justice to reality, because even intrinsic quality has to be recognized and appreciated externally, I will now discuss theories and empirical research about what the external value of art can be.

Issue #1: The effects of art on society

There are many well known examples of situations in which people have attempted to affect others by the use of art, ranging from expecting parents who play classical music to their unborn child in the hope that this will increase her or his IQ, to movies created by the nazi's to spread their ideology. The idea that art can be used (or in some cases abused) in an instrumental fashion is not a modern one. Bennet & Belfiore (2008) give many examples which demonstrate that the usage of art as a (mainly political) instrument dates back to ancient antiquity. As well as discussing historical examples, they provide an overview of theories and philosophical standpoints regarding the positive and/or negative impacts of arts on society.

The positive impacts that are discussed are centered around different categories: catharsis, personal well-being, education and self-development, moral improvement and civilization. For all these categories, the authors give many examples of theories and practical situations in which art is used as an instrument to affect society.

Although it would be beyond the scope of this thesis to go into all these theories, the fact that such a large historical account can be written, tells us that the idea that art has the potential to effect society is long standing and widespread. One thing that is important to mention, is that Bennet & Belfiore (2008) do not only discuss positive impacts of the arts; they also present ways in which art can have a negative impact (at least according to some thinkers). Art can for example also be used as a political instrument. This can be negative, in the case of propaganda. This negative perspective on art can of course also be found in the works of Plato. In his work *The Republic* (translation by Jowett, 1994), Plato explains why society would be better off without art. He believes that art is morally corrupting and a distraction from reality. He also disapproves of art because of its ability to elicit an emotional response; only reason has a valid place in society. Even if art is believed to have negative impacts on society, it does support the idea that art has the potential to affect society and the people in it.

The idea that art can impact (part of) society has lead to the development of art works or art projects with a specific purpose. An example of a type of art with a specific purpose that has become more and more popular recently, is community art. Within community art, it is assumed that participatory art project can positively affect a community and its members. Let us therefore take a closer look at what exactly is meant when people talk about community art. The term community arts seems to be a relatively new one, but according to Graham Pitts' (2002) *Brief History of the Community Arts*, it is only the term

that is new, not what is meant by it:

"Arts practice and creative expression are at the heart of a community's vitality. People have always come to sing, to tell stories, to enact rituals, to celebrate, to mourn and to mark significant events in their lives. Besides being able to see great art, people need to actively participate in these activities. This is what is meant by the term "community arts": it might be a new name but it is not a new idea"

If 'people actively participating' is enough to make art community art, then it would indeed be an old idea. But is there really nothing more to it than active participation? Since the 1990's, the number of community art projects in the Netherlands has increased dramatically. Although these projects differ greatly (Erven, 2010; Twaalfhoven, 2010), attempts have been made to arrive at a definition of the core of what makes an art project a community art project. According to Van Erven (2010), community art is at a minimum a collaboration between artists and other people not usually involved in art. The intensity of collaboration can vary, with on one end of the spectrum 'hardcore' projects in which the focus is on participation and participants have a great deal of ownership in the project. On the other end are 'softcore' projects, where ownership remains mostly in the hands of the artist, but there is some form of community participation or consultation (ibid.). Twaalfhoven (2010) points out that community art projects often aim to include marginalized groups and have goals that are not about art (e.g. social cohesion). They are not always initiated by cultural organizations, but also by housing corporation, care organizations, et cetera. Consequently, funding for these projects does not always come out of the budget for art and culture. Community art is about more than just creating a good art product; it is also about the process that is necessary to create a good art project co-owned by artists and community-members involved. This process is supposed to positively affect participants and result in a work of art capable of affecting the audience (and thus affect community members who did not participate).

Research has been conducted to find out what the effect are of community or participatory art projects. In his research paper 'Use or ornament' Matarasso (1997) investigates the social impacts of participation in art. He does this by evaluating many different participatory art projects in the United Kingdom and abroad. The different social benefits gained from participating in the evaluated art programs, were divided into six categories: personal development, social cohesion, community empowerment and self-

determination, local image and identity, imagination and vision, health and well-being. Matarasso found positive impacts of participation in art in all these categories (but not all art projects impacted all categories) and concludes that participatory art can make an important contribution to addressing social challenges. He also claims that this contribution of art is in some respects unique; functions of art cannot be taken over completely by other projects and types of social policy. This claim was however not based on a comparison between art and non-art projects, only art projects were researched. Therefore it remains unclear which effects that were found are unique to art and which are not.

2.3 Art in Prison: Theory

As was discussed in the previous chapter, community art aims to be inclusive of all types of people, regardless of their background or artistic experience. People who are incarcerated can however not be included in community based art projects for obvious reasons. Involving inmates in art, means taking art inside prisons. Prison art programs can be seen as a special type of community art, not only because of their unusual setting which differs greatly from other program locations, but also because of the characteristics of the participants and the intended effects of the program.

In this chapter I will first take a closer look at the characteristics of prison populations and prison life and what this means for art programs. I will relate these characteristics to theories about the characteristics of art, to demonstrate how art projects can be especially valuable in prison settings. Secondly, I shall review literature about the benefits of art for prisoners, staff and society.

2.3.1 Characteristics of prison populations, prison life and art

There are currently 11.736 people incarcerated in the Netherlands, 93,7% of those are male (DJI, 2011). 20-29 Year-olds form the largest group and most prisoners are sentenced to less than a year (ibid.)

When we compare people who reside in correctional facilities to people on the outside, the most obvious difference is that those on the inside have been convicted of a criminal offense and those on the outside have not (or have served their sentence for it). Studying some more statistics about prisoners, reveals that the average prisoner is different from the average non-prisoner in many other ways as well (Coyle, 2005). Many more prisoners compared to non-prisoners: have failed in the mainstream educational system, experience difficulty with reading and writing or are illiterate, have had difficult or even traumatic childhoods (e.g. suffering abuse, growing up in foster care), have psychiatric problems and/or substance abuse problems (ibid.). Add to this the experience of prison life itself (having little control over your daily life, being away from loved ones, living in a tense atmosphere, et cetera) and one can understand why spending time in prison is often referred to as 'doing hard time'. Living in prison is of course not supposed to be an enjoyable experience, but on the other hand, it is commonly thought of as desirable that inmates develop themselves in a positive way during their sentence, so that they are a

'better person' (i.e. less likely to re-offend) when they leave than when they first arrived. To accomplish this, prisons offer programs through which inmates can improve their chances for the future. These can be educational programs or therapy programs, but also art programs. The latter have some unique characteristics which, at least in theory, make them especially well equipped to benefit people in prison (benefits of prison art project actually found in research will be discussed later). Based on a literature review, I have discerned four of these unique characteristics of art.

Art and language

Art allows you to express yourself in a language of your choice, using your own vocabulary. This vocabulary can have verbal elements, but can also be completely non-verbal. As Royston Maldoom (2011), who is one of the founders of community dance and has extensive experience of working with prisoners, puts it: '*Dance can give a voice to the voiceless*'.

This characteristic of art has several potential benefits in prison settings. First of all, it allows people to participate who are illiterate or who do not master the dominant language. Secondly, it allows people to express thoughts and feelings without disclosing them to others (Johnson, 2008; Gussak, 2007; Gussak, 2009). Inmates can create art inspired by things they have done or have experienced and that they do not want others to know about; it is a safe way to work through sensitive issues. Finally, art provides an alternative way of learning. Many inmates have negative experiences with the educational system and will not feel comfortable in the traditional educational settings that are often also offered in prisons (Johnson, 2008).

Art and therapy

A large part of the prison population has suffered trauma in their lives and have psychiatric and/or substance abuse problems. Compared to for example cognitive behavioral therapy, art therapy has the advantage of allowing inmates to work through issues without disclosing them. Gussak (2007, p. 446) lists the following eight reasons why art therapy might be especially beneficial for prisoners:

- 1. Art is helpful in the prison environment, given the disabilities extant in this population, contributed to by organicity, a low educational level, illiteracy, and other obstacles to verbal communication and cognitive development.*

2. *Art allows the expression of complex material in a simpler manner.*
3. *Art does not require that the inmate and/or client know, admit, or discuss what he has disclosed. The environment is dangerous, and any unintended disclosure can be threatening.*
4. *Art promotes disclosure, even while the inmate and/or client is not compelled to discuss feelings and ideas that might leave him vulnerable.*
5. *Art has the advantage of bypassing unconscious and conscious defenses, including pervasive dishonesty.*
6. *Art can diminish pathological symptoms without verbal interpretation.*
7. *Art supports creative activity in prison and provides necessary diversion and emotional escape.*
8. *Art permits the inmate and/or client to express himself in a manner acceptable to the inside and outside culture.*

Art and Humanity

Prison is often said to be dehumanizing (Johnson, 2008). As we have learned from the famous *Study of Prisoners and Guards in a Simulated Prison* by Zimbardo (1973), imprisonment can have dramatic impacts on staff and prisoners. Although there has been a stronger focus on humanization and rehabilitation in recent decades (see next chapter), dehumanizing will always be part of prison life. According to Balfour (2004), this is because the first priority of prison staff is always containment, which leads to dehumanizing rules and regulation. Art can be seen as typically human and as such as a potentially humanizing force. Balfour argues that there is a fundamental creative impulse present in human beings and supports this argument with the example of concentration camp art. During WWII, people held captive in concentration camps risked their lives to create art; there was no chance of this art reaching an audience. It might be the epitome of useless art, only created to satisfy the need to create.

Carrol (2004) argues that art is part of our human nature. Human nature can, at least in part, explain why art exists. Art exists in all known human cultures; this cannot be explained by cultural diffusion since art seems to have originated in different, isolated locations simultaneously. If the capacity of art is part of our human nature (analogous to the capacity of language), the universality of art would be no more than logical. This would also explain why people are able to recognize art produced by cultures they are not familiar with, as art. For the capacity of art to become universal and not to be rendered

extinct by natural selection, it must serve as an adaptive advantage for individuals and groups that have this capacity; i.e. the capacity of art makes one more 'fit' and benefits survival. Through natural selection, this capacity then becomes part of human nature. Now Carroll turns to what some of the adaptive advantages of art might be. Artworks elicit emotional responses, often shared by audiences. This coordination of feelings fosters social cohesion, which is beneficial for both the group as a whole and its individual members. Art also helps us improve our ability to discern different emotive states in and intentions of others. Lastly, art stimulates our imaginations and strengthens our ability to envision things that might be and figure out what others might be thinking.

Johnson (2008) also states that humans need to be creatively expressive. In a dehumanizing environment such as a prison, this need might be even stronger. Furthermore, art can be seen as a form of escapism, providing much needed diversion.

Art has 'useless' value

Thus far, I have mentioned three characteristics of art that give it the potential to be a powerful tool for positive change in prisons. The intrinsic value v. extrinsic value debate that was discussed in the previous chapter, although deemed incorrect, reminds us that art also has non-instrumental value, stemming from its 'useless' beauty. Art by prisoners can be very interesting and aesthetically pleasing. This is positive all by itself, but can in fact have some more positive (side-) effects. When prisoners are valued for the art they make, this can boost their confidence and provide them with an alternative identification ('artist' instead of 'inmate' or 'criminal').

2.3.2 Previous research

The aforementioned characteristics of art make it reasonable to hypothesize that art programs can have positive effects on prisoners. Now it is time to take a look at previous research on the effects of art on prisoners to see if positive effects were indeed found and which aspects were affected.

Johnson (2008) has done an extensive review of literature on art in prison and in his article *A Place for Art in Prison; Art as a Tool for Rehabilitation and Management*, he concludes that art programs' effects can be divided into four different categories:

1. Therapeutic: Art therapy is successful in improving mental well-being of inmates.

2. Educational: Art can be used as an instrument to make educational programs more successful. Inmates are more likely to sign up for and successfully conclude educational programs when they are multi-dimensional and include an art component.
3. Quality-of-Life Management: Art programs in prison result in a more human atmosphere with less violence and aggression. They also provide much needed diversion and escape.
4. Societal: Prisoners can make a positive contribution to society by making art works and making them available to the public. Art in prison might also reduce re-offense rates, but this requires further research.

Johnson based these conclusions on a large amount of literature, most of which is however so-called practice-based evidence written by professionals working as art therapists or artists in prisons. Evidence based on empirical research can be found in the studies of Gussak (2007, 2009). He has conducted several pre-test-post-test experiments, which have demonstrated positive effects of art therapy interventions (ranging from four to fifteen weeks) on depression, locus of control and mood for women as well as men. Outcome variables were measured using standardized tests (e.g. the BDI-II for measuring depression). In one study participants were randomly assigned to either a control group or experimental group. The control group did not receive any art therapy, but also no other form of therapy or non-therapeutic art. Consequently, even though the study shows that art therapy has positive effects compared to 'no intervention', it remains unclear whether these effects are caused by art, therapy or the combination thereof. The forms of art in prison discussed by Johnson (2008) and Gussak (2007, 2009), were all visual arts programs and visual art therapy.

Other art disciplines have been given much less attention, probably because they are much less prevalent in prisons. An evaluation study by Oud & Oostdam (2007) of a prison music program showed inconclusive results. Two types of variables were measured before and after the project: (inter)personal skills and musical skills. Scores were given by the artist, staff member, and a researcher on a scale of 1-3. Participants scored themselves on a scale of 1-5 for cooperation skills only. Significant pre and post differences were only found in the scores of the researcher. According to the researcher, this might be due to the fact that pre-test scores by participants, staff member and artist were already high, resulting in little room for improvement.

Milliken (2020) has written an article about her experience as a dance/movement therapist in prison. She describes how dance therapy has the potential to be a healing experience and to transform violent behavior. Her participants expressed that the session made them feel more calm, harmonious and accepting.

This review shows that the body of literature consists mainly of practice-based evidence and quantitative research. The first provides valuable insights from a professional perspective, but is prone to bias and lacks scientific rigour (cf. Meekums & Daniel, in press). The latter shows positive effects of art therapy on mental well-being, but does not provide any information on how art therapy works and what the role of art is. When Meekums & Daniel (in press) attempted to synthesize literature on art with offenders by doing a meta-analysis, they found that it was difficult to draw any firm conclusions due to the extreme differences in types of literature and many methodological shortcomings. They concluded that two themes emerged from the meta-analysis: increased mental well-being and increased emotional literacy as a result of art therapy. They recommend conducting well designed research, using qualitative as well as quantitative measures. When we look beyond the effects of art therapy to include non-therapeutic art projects, what is lacking is sound research, which explores experiences of participants of art projects as well as art therapy using different art disciplines.

2.3.4 Art in prison: practice

In this chapter I will discuss the practice of art in prison and show how prison art has developed from an act of resistance to something actively supported in (some) prisons. To understand this development, it has to be related to the development of the penal system itself. That is why I will first introduce you to a little bit of prison history.

History of the modern prison

People have been held captive for centuries (waiting to be fined, exiled or executed), but imprisonment as a form of punishment did not become generally accepted in Europe until the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century (Coyle, 2005; Jewkes & Johnston (Eds.), 2006). It was during this period that imprisonment gradually replaced exile to overseas territories and bodily punishment as the main form of punishment for serious crimes. According to Foucault (in Jewkes & Johnston (Eds.), 2006), more changed than just the type of punishment. The new mode of punishment was accompanied by '*(...) new theory of law and crime, a new moral or political justification of the right to punish;(...)*'. In other words: '*It was a new age for penal justice.*'

In the second half of twentieth century, the perception of prison changed from just a form of punishment to a form of rehabilitation as well. In 1957, shortly after the approval of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the General Assembly of the United Nations also approved the Standard Minimum Rules of the Treatment of Prisoners (UNSMRs). This approval was a reflection of the growing awareness that international regulation was necessary to ensure the universal application of minimum standards regarding the treatment of imprisoned human beings. Not long thereafter, the Council of Europe decided that there was a need for a regionally reinforced version of UNSMRs and in 1973 the European Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Resolution (73)5) were adopted (Council of Europe, 2006). Since 1973 the European Prison Rules have been revised and updated several times, most recently in 2006. The European Prison Rules focus strongly on the protection of the human rights of this vulnerable group and on rehabilitation and reintegration into society. In fact the first of nine basic principles is (ibid., p. 6):

1. *All persons deprived of their liberty shall be treated with respect for their human rights.*

Three basic principles stress the importance of facilitating reintegration into society (ibid. p.7):

5. *Life in prison shall approximate as closely as possible the positive aspects of life in the community*
6. *All detention shall be managed so as to facilitate the integration into free society of persons who have been deprived of their liberty*
7. *Co-operation with outside social services and as far as possible the involvement of civil society in prison life shall be encouraged.*

In *Part II Conditions of imprisonment*, it is stated that prisoners are entitled to work, education and exercise and recreation. Art and/or culture are mentioned in the subsection on exercise and recreation:

27.6 Recreational opportunities, which include sport, games, cultural activities, hobbies, and other leisure pursuits, shall be provided and, as far as possible, prisoners shall be allowed to organize them.

According to the Council of Europe: '*The organisation of sport and recreation provides an ideal opportunity for involving prisoners in an important aspect of prison life and for developing their social and interpersonal skills*' (ibid. p.57).

In the Netherlands, the European Prison Rules have been translated into the national *Penitentiare Beginselenwet*. This national version of prison rules, also states that prisoners are entitled to work, education, exercise, and recreation (although cultural activities are not mentioned explicitly). In order to comply with national and international prison rules, Dutch prisons do not need to offer artistic activities. There is however a budget available to prisons, which can only be used for art. This art budget is a recent development and marks a change in the policy of the department of justice (and quite an interesting one in the light of the severe cultural budget cuts).

History of art in prison

Perhaps the most famous works of art made in prison, were made by people who were already professional artists when they entered prison. For example: the painting'

Intervention of the Sabine Women, which can now be seen in the Louvre, was painted by Jacques Louis David when he was in prison (Boelen et al, 2008). A few more of these examples can be given, but most art made in prison was made by those who had very little involvement in art prior to their imprisonment. Prison artists are generally not insiders of the art scene. Art made by those outside the art scene, is often called 'outsider art'. This term was coined by Roger Cardinal in 1973 and is used to describe art which is 'pure' and 'fresh', because it is made by those not influenced by the established visual art culture (ibid.; Meadows, 2010). Art made by psychiatric patients, drug addicts, the mentally disabled, and prisoners is usually referred to as outsider art. This type of art has become quite popular, especially in the United States, where prison art can be bought in galleries and on websites.

When the modern prison system had just been implemented, the sole objective was to punish and artistic expression was forbidden. This changed during the twentieth century; the focus shifted more and more towards rehabilitation and it was recognized that art might have a positive effect on prisoners. In the first half of the twentieth century, creativity by prisoners was just condoned, but from the 1950s onwards, art and creativity were supported by the prison system more and more. In the Netherlands, several artists started giving visual art lessons in prisons, which were called *Crea*. By the early 1980's, the majority of prisons was offering some form of *Crea* (Boelen et al, 2008). Besides visual arts, music is also practiced in prisons. Other art disciplines are much less widespread, but there are examples of theatre and dance projects in prison (see for example Miliken, 2002; Carley, 2010; Balfour, 2004). Dance and theatre project are of course much harder to realize on a practical level, since they require a live audience and the working together of the same group of people over a certain period of time.

In the 21st century, many countries have experienced a political shift to the right. In the UK and the US, this has resulted in a reduction of the number of art programs in prison and art programs in the Netherlands are under pressure as well (Meadows, 2010; Boelen et al, 2008) . The budget specifically designated for art is a strong indication however, that there are no plans to return to the situation of the 19th century.

Johnny Future Scene 3: The funeral

EXT. CEMETARY. DAY

At Johnny's funeral, we see a lone man standing by his casket. He seems to be waiting for someone and after a while six other young men turn up. All seven wear mustaches and they all seem to resemble Johnny in one way or another. They must be his sons! Probably all from different mothers....

They start talking and it appears that not a single one of them has met Johnny during his life. Johnny's sons want to know where he has been all their lives and why he did not take care of them. They get more and more angry with him until a woman walks in. Who is she? The brothers have no idea. The woman is pregnant and obviously in mourning. After a while they realize that she must be his latest girlfriend, carrying yet another son of Johnny. Another child he will not take care of. This infuriates one of the sons and he starts screaming at Johnny. Johnny comes to life for a few seconds and says: "No yelling at my funeral, a little respect please. I have an appointment upstairs so just nail this casket shut.". The brothers are happy to do so and carry the casket away.

3. Methods & Methodology

3.1 Methods

The main purpose of this research is to create more understanding of the experience of people participating in community art projects in general and prison art project in particular. What role do these projects play in their lives? Do they feel their participation has led to personal change? What was the significance of the art-aspect to them? I am in other words interested in the 'emic' perspective of community arts participants and in investigating what is meaningful to them. This means employing a research method which yields thick and rich descriptions of participants' experiences of a project. This type of knowledge will not be gained from questionnaires or even in-depth interviews. It requires a long term investment, giving researcher and participants the time to get to know each other and establish rapport. Long term presence of the researcher also makes it possible to gain insights into developments over time. For these reasons, I decided to conduct a field-study of a particular case: prison art project Johnny Future. This project consisted of twelve rehearsals over an eleven week period and three final performances (see next section). Several data collection methods were used: participant observation, interviews and analysis of field products. This triangulation of methods increases the validity of research results as it allows for different types of data on the same subject to be compared (Hart et al, 2001).

Participant observation

To be as unobtrusive as possible, I have observed while participating in the field as one of the artists delivering the project³. My role in the project was smaller than that of the other two artists, which allowed me to spend more time observing and talking to participants. During the rehearsals, I observed and engaged in casual conversation whenever it came up naturally. Participants were generally eager to talk to me and frequently initiated conversations with me. After each session, I wrote down notes in my field journal about: observations, interpretations (e.g. connections with theory, earlier observations, recurring themes) and considerations about how to proceed methodologically. In the first period of data collection, I kept a broad focus, observing as much as possible that might be relevant for answering the research question. After a few rehearsals, I fine tuned my subquestions

³ I have a degree in dance and have worked as a dancer, dance teacher and choreographer.

to focus on themes that were especially meaningful to participants. The ethnographic research process as a whole is inductive, reasoning from a particular case to a general theory. During the research, I alternated between induction and deduction. An observation leads to the hypotheses of a general tendency (induction), which is then confirmed or falsified by new research data. This prevents me from drawing conclusion to fast and allows for new or unexpected themes which emerge in the observations to be included.

Interviews

The original plan was to conduct in-depth interviews after the performances when participants had their individual meetings with a member of staff. Unfortunately these meetings were postponed several times and will not be held before the deadline for this thesis. As a consequence no interviews were conducted by me. I did however observe a group interview with participants and an interview with an educational staff member⁴ that were conducted by researcher Jo Cursley from Exeter University, who is researching the implementation of SEPE in several European prisons.

Field products

Two different field products were analyzed: Action plans and Self-evaluation stars. Action plans were filled out by participants near the end of the project and asked them to write down their future plans and what steps they would undertake to realize those plans. Self-evaluation stars were filled out three times during the project and asked them to write down things they had done well and things they wanted to improve on. Empty action plans and self-evaluation stars can be found in appendices A and B respectively.

⁴ This educational staff member was not directly involved in the project, but did see the participating inmates regularly outside of the project.

3.2 Case description

In this section a description will be given of the project Johnny Future and all the parties involved.

The project Johnny Future

Johnny Future is a project in which inmates work together with artists to create an interdisciplinary performance. The project is designed and delivered by a two artists, who are assisted by the Crea-teachers of the prison and me. The first artist is one of the founders of ACCU and he works with theatre, music and visual arts. The second artist is a theatre maker; she has worked for ACCU before as an intern and a freelancer. She is also employed at a juvenile correctional facility. The Crea-teachers (one man, one woman) teach visual arts and music.

The following art disciplines are included in Johnny Future: theatre, music, visual arts, dance. The project was done before in the same prison and by the same artists four years ago. This year, rehearsals took place between May 1 and July 4 (thirteen in total) and lasted for two-and-a-half hours. On July 9, a dress rehearsal was held as well as two performances for other inmates. The third performance took place on July 10 which was meant for people from outside (family members and those with a professional interest). A very basic storyline was decided upon by the artists before the start of the project: the story would be about Johnny Future, who has prison experience, dies and goes to heaven, but is sent back to earth. It was up to the participants to create Johnny's character and the rest of the storyline. The story created by the participants did not reflect their personal experiences or characters (i.e. it was not autobiographical). During the project, inmates chose different roles in the project, such as acting, music, décor. Some chose to take on two or more different disciplines to participate in. A detailed timeline of the rehearsal process can be found in appendix C.

SEPE-certificate

Through participating in the project, inmates could earn a SEPE-certificate (Supporting Employability and Personal Effectiveness). To qualify for this certificate, several requirements have to be met: spend a certain number of hours on the project, show improvement on learning outcomes, fill out an action plan. Evidence was collected by the artists and Crea-teachers to prove that inmates qualify for the certificate (mainly by writing down observations). Inmates were informed about the SEPE-certificate, but the rehearsals

focused on putting together a performance and not on achieving certain learning outcomes. The certificate was created by EdExcel and is awarded by Superact! UK. The European Union has given a subsidy to fund the testing of SEPE in different European countries; Johnny Future is one of the pilot studies. The implementation of SEPE in the different pilot projects is being researched by Jo Cursley from Exeter University.

The participants

Participants were all male, most were young adults (about three-quarters was under thirty, the rest over thirty). Of the nineteen inmates that started the program, thirteen completed it successfully and six dropped out. These six dropped out for different reasons: two dropped out by their own choice, others because of transfers to a different ward or disciplinary measures. Participants' release dates and sentence duration differed greatly, some were released a few days after the performance, while others have several more years to go. The participating inmates came from several different prison wards and generally only knew participants from the same ward. Two of the participants had participated in the previous edition of Johnny Future.

The Prison

Prison Krimpen a/d IJssel is a medium security prison, which houses 468 prisoners. The prison has three different departments: a prison (336 inmates), a jail for those awaiting sentencing (102 inmates), and an Extra Care Facility for vulnerable inmates (30 inmates) (*Inspectie voor de Sanctietoepassing*, 2011).

Only those in prison were able to join the Johnny Future project. The prison offers the following activities: work (four to six days a week), sports (three times a week), education (literacy, numeracy, vocational training), library visits, Crea (music and visual arts).

3.3 Methodological considerations

In field research, the researcher is part of the field that (s)he studies and is often actively participating. As a result, the distance between the researcher and the research subjects, is very small. Interpretation by the researcher is crucial in determining the research outcomes (all research is to some extent a matter of interpretation, but in field research, it is most prominent, because the researcher is in some ways the data collection instrument when it comes to observing). This makes reflexivity on the part of the researcher of the utmost importance (Wolcott, 1995; Pellet, 2003). So what is meant by reflexivity? Different definitions have been given. What they all have in common is that reflexivity entails the researcher being aware of how (s)he is part of the research and in which way (s)he affects the research process and outcomes. As a researcher, this means engaging in a continuous dialogue with yourself about what you are experiencing at the moment you are experiencing it and reporting about this in your study: a reflexive account (ibid.). This reflexive account does not only contain reflexive thoughts, but also reports about the researchers own emotional reactions. Reporting about your reflexive account, will aid the reader in forming an opinion about the results and their validity. According to Liebling (1999) and Wolcott (1995), emotions should not be seen as standing in the way of objectivity, but as potentially valuable research data. Your own emotional experiences can in some instances further understanding of the 'emic' perspective (see next section for an example).

To help structure such a reflexive account, Pellet (2003) has formulated three main questions which cover three different areas of reflexivity. These questions are:

- 1. How have I affected the process and outcome of the research?*
- 2. How has the research affected me?*
- 3. Where am I now?*

The answers to these questions constitute my reflexive account.

3.4 Reflexive account

1. How have I affected the research process and outcome

I have influenced the project and in turn the research by participating in the field as a choreographer. Had I not been in the field, the project would have been different (there would not have been another choreographer, so dance would have been a smaller part of the project) and so would the experience of the participants. For example: there were a few inmates who were especially excited about the dance-part of the program, they indicated that they want dance to be an important part of the project. There were also inmates who did not like to dance at all. Both groups would have had a different experience, had dance not been part of Johnny Future. My influence has not only been on the content of the project, but also on the rehearsal process and communication between artists and participants. For example: the artist in charge was leading the rehearsals in a rather unstructured way, a so-called open rehearsal process. For many of the inmates, this was quite frustrating and they found it hard to understand what exactly was expected of them. They were also worried that they would not be ready in time for the final performance and that the end result would not be good enough. Some of the participants came to me to ask questions or complain about this and when they did, I explained to them what would happen and reassured them that we would be ready for the performance.

During the field work, I noticed that the participants were very interested in my opinion and easily influenced by it. Because of this, I have decided not to conduct interviews half way through the project. I felt that many of the questions I would have liked to ask half way during the project, would be interpreted as suggestions and therefore have to great an influence on the research outcomes. I would have liked to ask for example if they had talked about Johnny Future with family or other inmates.

The research results have also been influenced by my personal ideas, associations, experiences and expectations about prison life (cf. Wolcott, 1995). To help me understand how these have influenced my observations and interpretations, I wrote a Journal Entry prior to the start of the project, in which I make these ideas explicit (see p. 37). An example of how my association of prison with TV documentaries such as 'America's hardest prisons' have affected my observations is given when I answer the next question.

2. How has the research affected me?

In my field journal, I wrote about what I observed, but also about my own reaction to my

experiences. In some cases, these reactions are relevant for the research. One quite emotional response has helped me in understanding a particular feeling of inmates:

'I thought I was completely at ease, not even aware of being in prison. But when I ask one inmate if he is growing a beard for the play, he says he just hasn't had time to shave yet and shows the razor in his pocket. I must admit that at that moment, images from 'America's hardest prison' and similar documentaries about prison life of correctional officers searching for and finding razors (to be used as weapons) in prison cells flash through my head. I wonder if they are allowed to have razors on them and if I should tell someone. I decide that I'm being irrational and that there is no danger, so I say nothing.'

This experience had helped me to understand the inside/outside dichotomy that inmates refer to constantly. For us artists, it was easy to say, 'we are all just people working on a project together and we do not even notice that we are working in prison with inmates'. Yet my response to the razor was completely different from what it would have been in a setting outside prison. Apparently the prison setting does have importance, albeit subconsciously most of the time. My emotional reaction has made me aware of the distance between insiders and outsiders and how it can be painful for prisoners if people seem to deny the difference. It reinforces the stereotype that prisons in the Netherlands are so humane, you do not even notice you are in prison. It was very important for some inmates to make it clear to outside world that it is really hard to be in prison and that you never forget where you are.

3. *Where am I now?*

In Pellet's (2003) article, this question relates to doing disability research. She points out that when researching disability, you can be seen as part of an oppressive system, which may in turn result in research outcomes with low validity. According to her, there are however also ways to establish rapport with informants in disability research, making people feel comfortable to criticize the system. Although I have not researched people with a disability, I might have encountered similar problems in doing research in prison. The penal system is often seen as repressive and during my field work, inmates often referred to this system and the people higher up the organization in a negative way. From these comments it became clear that they did not see the artists and me as part of this system

and they were not in any way reluctant to express how they felt about this system. They also had no problem criticizing the project Johnny Future and the leading artists. Although we were not seen as part of the system, we were also definitely not considered 'one of them', the boundary between inside and outside remained there and it seemed important to some inmates that I was aware of the fact that I could never really know what it is like to be in prison. This distance did fortunately not lead to bad rapport, they were actually very willing to help me understand as much as possible.

Johnny Future Scene 4: Knocking on Heaven's Door

EXT. GATES OF HEAVEN. DAY

INT. HEAVEN'S WAITING ROOM. DAY

MUSIC: KNOCKING ON HEAVEN'S DOOR – BOB DYLAN

Johnny arrives at the gates of heaven, where Peter is already waiting for him. Johnny declares that he would like to go to heaven, but Peter explains that he can not help him right now. Hasn't Johnny seen the waiting room? It is completely full with people, even Michael Jackson and Elvis are still waiting! Johnny begs Peter to let him go first, because he really wants to go to heaven and he has done so many good things in his life. Peter does not know what to do with Johnny and decides to consult with God. She also says that he cannot come to heaven now. Instead, they are going to send him back to earth. Johnny gets a second chance at life and to help him, Peter gives him a suitcase.

Johnny is happy, it is after all a very lovely suitcase. But when he opens it, it turns out to be empty. What is Johnny supposed to do with an empty suitcase!?! Peter tells Johnny to go to the waiting room, maybe the people there can help him fill his suitcase. Johnny does as he is told. He asks for help and Gerrie de Graaf starts to sing: “there's a place in the sun, there is hope for everyone...”. When he is finished, he says to Johnny: “I give you hope” and puts some hope in his suitcase. Then Johnny hears some music by Michael Jackson, Michael himself gets up, dances for Johnny and gives him some faith for in his suitcase. The last gift comes from Elvis who sings “Love me tender” to Johnny and fills his suitcase with love.

Carrying hope, faith and love in his suitcase, Johnny returns to earth.

4. Results

4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 My first time in prison...

Journal Entry April 2011

The project Johnny Future is about to start and soon I will enter a prison for the first time in my life. I do not have any friends, relatives or even acquaintances who have ever been imprisoned. As a result, my only sources of information about prison life are the media. I have watched documentaries about American prisons which gave the impression that prisons are basically gang war zones, with danger lurking behind every cell door. If someone were to say the word 'prison' to me, my first associations would probably be images from those TV shows: tattooed men in orange jumpsuits working out in the prison yard, correctional officers looking for contraband, weapons manufactured out of pens and razorblades, et cetera. On the other hand, I know that prisons in the Netherlands are not like this at all. It is often argued that Dutch prisoners are too much like hotels. Thinking about this brings to mind a scene from a documentary about a Dutch women's prison, in which a woman's cell is searched. This infuriates the woman, who yells at the warden: "Who do you think I am, some kind of criminal?". This makes me think that maybe in Dutch prisons you are not always aware that you are in a correctional facility.

Speaking to my mother about going to prison, it turns out that she has actually been to prison. She did an internship there when she was studying at university. According to her, you forget that you are in prison within fifteen minutes or so.

I still do not have a very clear idea of what the prison experience will actually be like, but I am certain that it will not be like we are used to seeing on the Discovery Channel. I definitely do not think that I will be in any danger.

Journal Entry May 1: Entering the prison

We arrive at the prison and have to go through some security measures before we can enter. Cell phones, lap tops and any other possible data carriers are not allowed in. Our passports are checked, our bags X-rayed and we go through a metal detector. After we are cleared, we are met by a member of prison staff who will take us to the rehearsal area. When the door to the prison opens, the first thing I notice is the typical smell, best

described as a mixture of hospital and factory odors. I wonder if all prisons smell like this.

We arrive at the education and religion area of the prison. A man comes up to us who already knows the other artist from last time they were here. I wonder what his job is. From his conversation with the others I understand that he is actually one of the inmates. Other inmates come into the room and I see now that inmates and staff cannot be distinguished from one another on the basis of their appearance. The CO's wear a uniform, but all other staff members wear plain (and very casual) clothing. The inmates are dressed similarly, some are even more dressed up than staff, wearing dress shirts and a sports jackets. They all come up to us, to shake our hands and make small talk. From these interaction, you would not be able to tell that they took place in a prison setting. But I am quickly reminded of my location when I want to go to the ladies room, but have to find someone with a key first. The rehearsal is about to start when one of the inmates gets up and leaves. It turns out he was the pastor who lead the church service that took place before the rehearsal.

4.1.2 The results

The objective of this research is to find out how prison art projects are experienced by the participants. This experience is of course not only dependent on the project that is experienced, but also on who is experiencing it. People all have different histories, personalities, preferences, expectations, etc cetera which influence their experiences. It is therefore impossible to give a singular description of the way the project Johnny Future was experienced and what it meant to participants. Instead I will describe a variety of experiences and meanings, many of which were shared by several or even most participants, but certainly not all. I will begin by showing what role the project played in participants' lives. Next, the different ways in which the project has affected the participants will be discussed. Finally I will turn to the question of what the significance of the artistic component was for the inmates. But first I will offer a description of the group and how it developed over time.

4.2 'The Boys'

When we entered the rehearsal space for the first time, most participants were already there. The atmosphere was very positive and they were clearly excited about the project and anxious to find out what exactly was going to happen. Some inmates were already making music and dancing, while others were talking to each other or asking us about the project. After observing the group for several rehearsals, it became clear that there were large individual differences when it came to attitudes towards the project and active participation. To describe different types of participants, their attitudes towards the project and their developmental paths, I have created the following typology:

The Enthusiastic Type

This is a participant who is very enthusiastic from the beginning until the end: actively participating, taking initiative, practicing outside of rehearsals, verbalizing that he enjoys the project, supporting others by saying things such as: '*good job*' or '*you can do it*'. These participants developed strongly when it comes to artistic skills, such as acting, singing and dancing. They also developed (inter)personal skills, such as listening to others (although some had already very good social skills) and gained a sense of pride and achievement with respect to themselves and others.

The Slow start, strong finish Type

This is a participant who is a bit shy or reluctant in the beginning, not sure what to make of all the strange activities, but who gradually becomes more enthusiastic towards the end. People in this category start to participate more actively as they start to feel more comfortable as the project progresses (e.g. one participant in this category was at first very quiet and unwilling to join singing exercises, but half way through the program he initiated conversations and even tried to sing). They develop slowly but strongly on a personal level and as they start to participate more, also on an artistic level.

The Distant Type

This is a participant who is actively engaged at one moment and withdrawn or pre-occupied with unrelated business the next. People in this category seem to keep a certain distance and experience difficulty stepping out of their comfort zone. They are sensitive to peer pressure (which can have positive as well as negative effects) and are often seen

whispering to another *Distant Type*, making comments about others such as: '*he is acting crazy*' or '*I would never do that*'. With these participants, it is most difficult to judge their development. Some put on an air of not caring too much during rehearsals, but when you read their action plans and self evaluation stars, they come across as very serious.

Of course, not all participants fit neatly into a category, but it gives an impression of the group and also helps to understand the different experiences and meanings assigned to those experiences that are described later on. The division of group members over the three types also affects group interaction. Of the three types of participants, the Enthusiastic type was the most common in the Johnny Future project.

Development happens not only on an individual level, but also on a group level. At first the rehearsals were a bit chaotic, with lots of people talking at the same time. The artists had decided to go for an open rehearsal process with little structure. The participants complained about this and said they found it hard to deal with, because they are used to the highly structured prison environment. After several sessions, it was no longer necessary to ask for silence all the time. Group discussions changed from 'individuals stating their ideas' to 'individuals sharing ideas, listening and responding to one another'.

With the performance coming closer, a group feeling really started to develop. This was most obvious during and after the performance where they were very supportive of one another and referred not only to individuals, but also to the groups as a whole: "*we did it*" (P1⁵), "*we made something good*" (P2). This increased feeling of togetherness was also mentioned by a member of educational staff during her interview. It must be said that even during the final performance there were some participants (of the 'Distant type') whispering negative comments. Up until the performance, the participants were all still a bit nervous that they would not do it good job (it also did not help that the dress rehearsal did not go very well). The first performance was received very positively by the audience and also by the participants. Between the first and second performance, group confidence and pride increased dramatically.

5 It is common practice to report age and gender of the person quoted for each quotation. I will not do so as all participants were male and their age might reveal their identity to prison staff. Instead, I have assigned a number to each participant, so the reader knows which quotes came from the same person.

4.3 Role in life

The participants rehearsed between two-and-a-half and five hours a week, so the minimum role Johnny Future played in their lives can be described as 'having something to keep me occupied a few hours a week'. For most participants however, their participation in the project meant much more to them than just a diversion during rehearsal hours. The different ways in which the project had significance for (some of the) participants, are discussed below.

Contact with outsiders

From the first rehearsal on, the participants were very eager to talk to me about my life. One of them literally said: "*Please come chat with us. We do not often get the chance to talk to people from outside*"(P3). They were interested in things such as what I was studying and where I was from. It turned out that several participants were familiar with the neighborhood I live in and some had lived there as well. They particularly enjoyed talking about places that we both know (e.g. I used to volunteer in a community centre where one participant used to have music practice), it was a subject they brought up on several occasions. Later on, a few participants also started to share more information about themselves, talking about aspects of their lives with which they were struggling and sometimes asking for advice.

Challenging stereotypes

The project did not only allow inmates to talk with outsiders about their life in the outside world, but it also presented them with the opportunity to challenge existing stereotypes about prison life and prisoners. Two inmates told me explicitly that it was important to them to change the incorrect perceptions people have about prison. Interestingly, they were both referring to different stereotypes (both of which can be found in my journal entry where I reflect on my thoughts about prison life). One participant told me that people often say that prison life is too easy in the Netherlands and that he wanted to assure me that it is not. He talked about how you never forget that you are not free and about the inhumanity of all the rules and regulations: "*You can never understand what it is like, unless you have been to prison*" (P3). In order to convey his message to a larger audience than just me, he decided to incorporate it into the play. He was the narrator and wrote his own texts. In his introduction of the play he said: "*It may not seem like it right now, but this is still a prison*

and being in prison is really hard”.

Another prisoner wanted to challenge a radically different stereotype. I was asking him about his family and if they were coming to see him. He told me his parents and siblings were coming and when I asked him if they were going to enjoy the play he said:

P2: “Yes I am sure they will. I am sure they will laugh and find it funny.”

Me: “Is it important to you that they are coming?”

P2: “Yes very much, because I want to show them that it is not like, you know like you see in the programs on the discovery channel.”

So for him, challenging stereotypes was mostly about reassuring his family that their son and brother is not in a place of the type they are used to seeing on TV.

Contact with other inmates, being part of a group

Prisoners do of course have the opportunity to interact with one another on a daily basis in different settings. But what is different about Johnny Future, is that they were working together as a group during a ten week period. As mentioned in the previous section, the feeling of togetherness within the group increased as the project progressed. The opportunity to work together and create something as a large group was mentioned by many inmates as something they experienced as positive, not surprisingly mostly during the final stages of the project.

Diversion

When participants talked about prison life, they talked about how it involves spending a lot of time by yourself in your cell. Participation in Johnny Future not only provided them with diversion in the form of rehearsals, but it also gave them new things to do when they were alone in their cells. Sometimes they were given homework, such as: writing a scene, practicing a song. On many occasions however, they spent time on the project outside of rehearsals without being asked to do so. They would for example: practice music, practice dance routines, write a song, write texts for the play. This indicates that they welcomed a meaningful way to spend their time.

An opportunity for self development

The majority of the participants saw the project as a way to learn new skills, such as playing music or dancing. Some had already learned to play music before the project, for them the project enabled them to improve their skills and to spend more time on something they enjoy doing. In the next section, I will elaborate on this as I discuss how the project has affected the participants.

4.4 Effects

I (Interviewer, not me): "What will you take away from this project for the future?"

P4: "Nothing."

I: "Maybe there was something you learned?"

P4: "No. I am exactly the same person now as I was before the project."

Other participants look really surprised and express disbelief. One asks:

P2: "But did your self-confidence not increase?"

P4: "No, I was already confident. Otherwise I would not have joined the project."

These were of course not the answers the interviewer was hoping to hear, but what is very interesting is the reaction of the other participants. They find it hard to believe that he has not been affected in any way and has not even experienced a boost of his self-confidence. This implies that they have been affected and assumed others had been as well. This was also shown by their answers, in which they mentioned several ways in which they had changed. During the rehearsal process, I also observed several different ways in which participants were affected by the program. Three different types of effects can be discerned: improved artistic skills, improved non-artistic skills, changed feelings about oneself/others.

Improved artistic skills

Some participants had learned to play a musical instrument prior to the project (either in prison or before entering prison); several participants attended *Crea* classes in the prison, where they practice visual arts and music. Except for the two inmates that had joined Johnny Future the first time around, none had experience with theatre and dance. How much they have developed in the different art disciplines, varies greatly between participants. This is among other things related to their own attitude towards the project (as discussed in the section about different types of participants), as well as their natural ability. Some unexperienced participants turned out to have talent for several art disciplines, combined with their eagerness to learn and willingness to practice, this resulted in a rapid improvement of singing/dancing/acting skills for a few. This was recognized by others and they were complimented often. One participant with a very nice voice, but little singing experience was struggling with a song the first time he tried singing it. The next rehearsal he said proudly: *"I have been practicing hard all week and I can do it*

now!" (P5). This shows that he also recognized his own improvement. Others showed less dramatic improvement, these were mostly the ones who were less passionate about the project and less eager to improve their acting, singing or dancing. Some participants only developed skills in a particular discipline, because they chose to only be part of the band or the décor-making group. At the final performance, many individual compliments were exchanged within the group, but the belief that the artistic ability of the group as a whole had improved was expressed as well, by comments such as: "*We did a good job, in the beginning I really did not think we would.*" (P2).

Developing other skills

Of the non-artistic skills, listening and working together were mentioned most often as areas they had improved in (during the focus group, as well as in their self evaluation stars). One participant said: "*I have learned to listen during this project, yes that is what I have learned. Because I never listened to anyone before, no never in my life.*" (P6). These improved listening and cooperation skills, were also noticeable during the rehearsal process. Towards the end of the project, there was less and less need for the artists to guide the group interaction (e.g. in the beginning it was necessary to ask for silence very often, but later on this was needed only occasionally). Outside of the rehearsals, it was noticed by the educational staff member that their listening skills had improved. In her opinion, they had also become tighter as a group and were more active in motivating each other.

Feelings about oneself and others

Joining the project was not without risk for the inmates; if the performance would be 'bad' or 'embarrassing', they could look foolish in front of their fellow inmates. Due to the open rehearsal process, it remained unclear for a long time what the performance was actually going to be like and who was going to play which role. As one inmate put it: "*I know we are having fun and stuff, but we need to get a bit more serious. Because the other prisoners will see us and we do not want to look stupid in front of them.*" (P7). This was a cause of stress for the participants, who had little faith that they would be able to put on a good show on the day of the performance. For some the chaos and insecurity was so unpleasant, that they considered quitting the project, and one actually did. When roles were finally divided and a final script was distributed among participants, they started to have more faith, reassuring one another that it would be all right. Although they believed in

a good show enough to stick with the project and invite family or friends, they were also a bit worried that there was not enough time to practice it all. During the dress rehearsal they were understandably very nervous and still worried that it would not go very well and had not practiced enough. The performances surpassed the expectations of participants by miles. The audiences laughed at all the right moments, gave them lots of compliments afterwards and at the last performance they got a standing ovation. After the first performance they were relieved, proud and very excited about their accomplishment. They received positive feedback from their fellow inmates and the ones that dropped out of the project told them that they regretted dropping out, now that they had seen the performance.

During the focus group, they expressed being happy that they did not give up, but stuck with it even though it was difficult some times. For one inmate, learning to trust was the most important thing he learned. He explained how did not trust other people before, not in prison, but also not prior to his incarceration. Sticking with the project has taught him that people can be trusted. This participant was very passive and quiet in the beginning, came across as if he was trying to be invisible. After a few rehearsals, he started participating more and more and was also interacting with others more (staff as well as inmates). It seems that as he gained more trust, he also felt safer to show more of himself. For many of the participants, the positive experience of the performance increased their self-confidence. They said they were proud of each other for doing a good job, to quote one of them: "*We did it, we started with nothing and we really made something out of it. That is something.*" (P1). The educational staff member said that she certainly hopes that their confidence in themselves rises, because it is something they lack severely. Although it is too early to tell if it will last for this group, she has noticed an increase in self-confidence with the group that participated in the Johnny Future project four years ago.

4.5 Role of art

In this part of the results, we take a closer look at how the artistic aspect of the project was experienced by the participants. Here we also see different experiences for different participants. One participant said: *“I am not really the artistic type of person, but I enjoyed working together as a group and the fact that we all contributed.”* (P3). So for him the process that was required to make the work of art (the play) was more important than the art work itself. The majority of participants did however join the project because they were interested in one or more of the art disciplines that would be practiced.

Because the project involved quite a lot of social risk (see the previous section) and commitment (they were required to attend almost all sessions or make up for them later in order to receive the SEPE-certificate), it is improbable that inmates stayed in the project who absolutely disliked all artistic activities that we did. It is also unlikely that any of the participants were indifferent to the type of activities they joined. As the educational staff member explained during her interview, they had to give up recreation and even visits by family members, because they coincided with the rehearsals. During the rehearsals, this was also discussed by the participants. Some complained about the scheduling of rehearsals during recreation time, while others did not have a problem with it, because *“this is a lot more fun.”* (P2).

Desire to learn specific artistic skills

The desire to learn or improve their skills in one or more art disciplines, was a popular reason for signing up for Johnny Future. In their action plans, participants were asked to write down their plans for the future and what steps they would take to make those plans happen. These plans did not have to be related to the project or art in general in any way. Many did however stipulate a plan to improve a specific artistic skill. Musical instruments proved especially popular; one example of a music oriented action plan (P5):

Future plan: (passion: guitar) I want to learn to play the guitar well in the future.

Information sources: X (X=P1) is my great example. I find it beautiful that someone can play like that.

Action plan: 1. In prison, I am busy with Crea. So far I have learned to play chords. I practice those. 2. Outside I am definitely going to take classes at school X with teacher X.

3. End phase: Hopefully, god willing, I will play in a band as a guitarist.

Other musical goals were for example: I want to improve my knowledge of music theory, I want to become a better drummer, I want to learn how to play the keyboard. Acting was not mentioned as something they wanted to pursue in the future; it did however feature on several self-evaluation stars as something they wanted to improve on during rehearsals. Besides acting, music and dance were also mentioned as areas they wanted to improve in.

Participants not only improved their skills, but their ideas about art changed as well. One participant told me during the first rehearsal that he had always wanted to try dancing. During the group interview he explained what he had learned:

“I learned that I like dancing and that I want to take dance classes when I am free. Because dance is really like a sport, it makes you sweat as well and I like that. Before, I did not know that it was like that.” (P2).

Another participant explained that he would have never signed up for a project like Johnny Future during his life outside of prison (*“I used to sing in the shower, but no more than that”*). (P5)), but now that he has experienced it, he wants to continue singing and making music.

Need for artistic expression

Journal Entry, June 6

The energy was really great today, from beginning till end. Some were literally bouncing through the rehearsal space, excited to get started. We arrived a bit late, so the participants had been waiting for us (they were not upset about this in any way, some were very concerned about us, because we had not had the chance to eat dinner yet. One had even prepared some food for us, because he knew we were coming around dinner time). A group of about six was making music and dancing when we entered the room. Because we started late, we also continued a bit longer. While some asked to be taken back to their cells sooner rather than later, others, again about six, just could not stop playing music, singing and dancing after the rehearsal was already over. It is not easy to put into words, but it is like you can just see that some are bursting with creative energy. Artistic

expression seems to be satisfying a need that they have, rather than just being an enjoyable way to spend time (which is of course a feeling I am familiar with as a dancer/choreographer).

The need for artistic expression is not something that is easily observed or expressed verbally. Yet there were some behaviors and comments that indicate that for some participants, their creative impulse is strong. As described in the journal excerpt, some participants were singing and dancing before and after rehearsals. This happened during most sessions and often they played music that was not part of the play, so the purpose was not to practice. It was not just that they played and danced unrelated to the project that indicates a need for artistic expression, but also that they found it difficult to stop. Instead of walking 'normally' or standing still, certain participants would continue to make dance-like movements during rehearsals (not in a way that interfered with rehearsal activities).

This inability to stop artistic expression, was also observable within rehearsals, for example during the rehearsal of the first scene. In this scene we see Johnny, his mother, his two brothers and the salesman. The two participants playing the two brothers, had to act like they were young children. So they sat on their knees and spoke in a high pitched voice, whining about wanting candy. They acted without reservations, whining louder and louder. They got into it so much, that they forgot that the salesman had to speak as well. The first time they tried the scene, he could not get a word in edge wise. Even when reminded of this, they found it hard to tone down the whining. When they were done rehearsing the scene, one of the two brothers continued to speak as if he was still in character. For him, acting seemed to be a liberating experience. When another inmate said that he would never act that way, worried that he would look crazy, he asked me excitedly: *"But this is allowed right, because it is theatre, you are allowed to exaggerate in theatre right?"* (P2). This demonstrates that the letting go of inhibitions and ideas about how you are supposed to behave that acting requires, is experienced as frightening and unpleasant by some, but as liberating and pleasant by others.

'There is a lot of talent in prison'

This was said to me by one of the inmates during one of the rehearsals, whilst we were listening to a participant sing. They often got excited about each other's talent and made

comments to me like: ' He is really good isn't he?'. The performance was an opportunity for their talents to be recognized by other inmates as well as staff, family and other 'outsiders'. It also enabled them to identify themselves as 'band member', 'actor', singer, et cetera, which is undoubtedly more positive than 'inmate'. According to the interviewed educational staff member, they tend to see themselves as 'losers', because they are 'prisoners' and have very low self-confidence. Showcasing their talent and receiving many compliments for it afterwards, at least for a moment, they were winners, because they were artists.

Johnny Future Scene 5: Casino

INT. CASINO. NIGHT

MUSIC: PLACE IN THE SUN – STEVIE WONDER

Johnny is back on earth and goes to the casino. Confident that the suitcase will help him win, he joins a poker game. But there is no good luck in his suitcase and he loses the poker game. Johnny doesn't have any money and tells the other players he cannot pay them. They get angry at Johnny and they look like they're about to throw him out of the casino. Just in time, Johnny remembers what is in his suitcase and says to the men that he can offer them something better than money. He has a suitcase full of hope, faith and love, which he would like to share with them. The men accept this and once again we hear: "there's a place in the sun, there is hope for everyone". Is it coming from heaven or is it just the waiter singing? In any case, Johnny leaves the casino with renewed hope for the future and decides for the first time in his life, to search for an honest way to make a living.

5. Conclusions

The experience of the Johnny Future participants can be described as positive and meaningful. As one participant said it: *“I hope they do this again next year. I mean, I won't be imprisoned anymore, but for the others, so that they can do it too.”* (P8). To say that the experience was positive, does not mean that it was always easy. Participation also included dealing with challenges, struggling with unknown activities and insecurities, sometimes to the point where they were worried that the end performance would turn out disastrous. These challenges made the impact of the success of the final performance more powerful; it made participants feel a great sense of pride and achievement because they had done something that seemed almost impossible a few weeks (or for some even hours) earlier.

The characteristics of the project interacted with individual characteristics, leading to different developmental paths which can be categorized by the following typology: the Enthusiastic type, the Slow start, strong finish type, and the Distant type (see results section for a detailed description). In this particular group, there were many participants of the first category, who had a positive effect on participants in the other two categories. They did this by motivating others and creating a supportive atmosphere and trying to convince others to participate. Over time, the group interaction became more and more positive and the feeling of togetherness increased. Participants started to recognize achievements by the whole group, on top of individual achievement.

This experience of working together as a group with all members contributing to a group creation, was one of the aspects that made the project meaningful to participants. When looking at the role the project played in participants lives, it was found that, although the diversion was certainly welcomed, the project meant more to them than just 'keeping them occupied' for several reasons. Participation provided them with an opportunity to communicate with 'outsiders'. They enjoyed talking to me during rehearsals about things we had in common. On a more profound level, the project was a way for them to challenge stereotypes about prison life by means of the performance (both through incorporating ideas they wished to convey upon the audience in the play and through the project as a whole).

Participation was also seen as a way to develop certain skills and most inmates felt they had been affected by their participation in Johnny Future. An improvement in artistic as well as non-artistic skills was clearly observable in many of the participants (especially

those of the first two categories). They also recognized these developments in themselves and others, which precipitated change on a more personal level. Increased self-confidence and a sense of pride (of themselves and the group) was expressed after the first performance. They took a risk by participating and were challenged along the way. When the final performance was a success, they were rewarded for sticking with it with a sense of achievement.

The artistic component of the project played an important role in the experience of the participants. For many participants, the desire to practice or develop artistic skills was a reason to join the project. Several characteristics of the process and activities that were needed in order to create a group art-performance can be identified, which allowed for and stimulated positive experiences and developments:

- Participants are involved in creating the content of the art work. This increases the sense of achievement they experience after the performances, because they are complimented for something they created themselves. It also allows them to incorporate ideas they wish to express to an audience.
- Creative expression is part of the project. For some participants, the need to express themselves through music, dance, acting, and visual arts is strong and during rehearsals and performances, this need can be satisfied. The experience of playing a role, which requires letting go of inhibitions and ideas about what is 'normal', can be experienced as liberating.
- Creating and delivering a group performance. This requires and stimulates the development of a feeling of togetherness within the group during the rehearsal process. Participants are stimulated to develop listening and cooperation skills. The positive group-feeling can be a new and meaningful experience.
- The task of creating and delivering a performance involves risks and challenges. When this task is completed successfully, it is seen as a great achievement. This results in increased self-confidence, pride and trust/faith in others and oneself.
- There is a performance with an audience. The positive feedback from the audience further increase self-confidence and pride. It is also an opportunity for participants to identify themselves as artists (as opposed to 'inmate').

Above, I have drawn conclusions based on the research results. Before discussing shortcomings of the research and recommendation for further research in the next section,

I will discuss how the results found can be related to the literature discussed in the literature review.

It is difficult to compare this study to studies and professional accounts described in chapter 2, because they used different methodologies which yielded different types of knowledge. Some overlapping themes can however be identified. Johnson (2008) argued that one of the four major benefits of art in prison is that it improves quality-of-life. She refers mainly to a decrease of violence and aggression, which I have not researched, but also to art as a diversion or escape. The art project studied here was also seen to improve quality of life of the participants by providing them with diversion, but also by creating an opportunity for positive interaction with outsiders and other inmates and for satisfying the natural creative impulse (also mentioned by Balfour, 2004). With respect to art as an educational instrument, this research seems to support the idea that offering art training can be a motivator for some inmates to sign up for a program. Therapeutic effects as described by Johnson (2008), Gussak (2007, 2009), Milliken (2002) and Meekums & Daniel (in press), did not play a prominent role in this research, as it was not an art therapy program. Some forms of personal change that were experienced by participants, such as increased trust and self-confidence, could indicate a healing quality of art projects, even if they are not art therapy. Societal benefits were also found. The performance made an aesthetic contribution to society (cf. Johnson, 2008) and it showed outsiders a different perspective on prison life. The participants are part of society and the project was a valuable experience for them; in that sense the project is also valuable for (a part of) society. This brings us to the discussion of the value of the arts for society and what is 'special' about art. The results show that art has played an important role in this project. It was a reason for some participants to join the program and several characteristics typical for (performing) art-projects have been identified which promote positive experiences and developments. The performance aspect was found to be especially meaningful to the participants. The exact same processes which were experienced by Johnny Future participants, cannot be replicated by other projects (e.g. sports), because they stem from characteristics unique to (performing) art projects. Which is not to say that other types of projects will not also for example increase trust or improve listening skills through a different process (although they might be less effective). Yet some experiences can be seen as unique to art programs, such as satisfying the need for creative expression or making an aesthetic contribution to society.

Johnny Future Scene 6: Watering Plants

INT. PLANTATION. DAY

MUSIC: LOVE ME TENDER – ELVIS PRESLEY

Johnny likes to think of himself as a person with green fingers. Therefore he decides to look for a job on a plantation. He finds a small plantation and asks the farmer for a job. The farmer explains that his crops and plants have not been doing very well. In fact, most of them have died already and there is certainly nothing to harvest. But the farmer is a nice man and tells Johnny that if he really wants to, he can water the few plants he has left. Now these plants are not just your ordinary house plants. These plants are very special and if you listen carefully, you just might be able to hear them sing: “water, water, water.” Johnny gets a watering can and starts watering the plants. It is not long before they start singing at Johnny: “love me tender”. Johnny's water and love seem to work their magic, because the plants start giving all kinds of fruits and vegetables. The farmer can't believe his eyes; apparently Johnny was right about having green fingers. Despite the success, the plants feel Johnny has to move on to fulfill his real destiny in life and start singing to him: “open up a dance school, open up a dance school”.

6. Discussion

We ended the conclusion with some tentative ideas about the possible 'special' effects of art. One research can however not answer such a complicated question. The purpose was to contribute to the research base about prison art projects, community art and the value of art in general by providing insights into the experiences of Johnny Future participants. This qualitative exploration of a single case has yielded theoretical notions worthy of further investigation, but much more research is needed. Different types of projects, with different prison populations and art disciplines need to be investigated using different types of research methods to get a more complete picture.

To see if art can be helpful in reducing recidivism, longitudinal research is necessary as well as research which takes into account other variables, which might interact with art participation to effect recidivism. This is necessary to find out if participation in art is associated with lower recidivism, because inmates who are less likely to re-offend are more likely to sign up for art programs (indicating a spurious relation), or because there is actually a causal relation. It would also be worthwhile to investigate if and how art has the potential to be valuable for those who do not wish to actively participate in art projects or programs.

This study has also found some results, relevant for the practice of art in prison. First of all, it seems important to design projects that last at least several weeks, as this allows participants time to become comfortable enough to be open to learning and change. This also gives a group an opportunity to get to know one another and start to feel like a group. Secondly, results indicate that the performance element is a powerful part of the project, which was experienced as very meaningful by those participating. Thirdly, it would be advised to include various artistic disciplines, since different disciplines appeal to different people and more prisoners might be willing to sign up for a program if it included a discipline they are interested in. Finally, the study shows that participants were proud of their art product, partly because they all contributed to its content. If a project was designed in which the content of the performance was predetermined, their feeling of ownership of the art product and consequently possibly also their sense of achievement might be less.

Johnny Future Scene 7: Johnny the Dancer

INT. DANCE SCHOOL. DAY

MUSIC: JINGOBA - SANTANA

Secretly, Johnny has always wanted to dance. Thanks to Michael Jackson, he now has the faith to follow his dreams. He finds a dance school where the students are in need of a good teacher. Johnny starts teaching them and turns out to be a natural.

A woman walks into the dance school. But wait isn't that the lady from the funeral? If it is, the baby in her arms must be Johnny's son! It is indeed Johnny's girlfriend Alice carrying their son. Johnny, Alice and their baby go home together to live happily ever after.

The end.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Action Plan

LO4 Action Plan

SEPE Action Plan	
Assessor name:	
Learner name:	
Future plans	
Information sources	
Action Plan:	1.
	2.
	3.
Signatures	
Assessor Sig.	Learner Signature
Date	Date

Appendix B: Self-evaluation Star

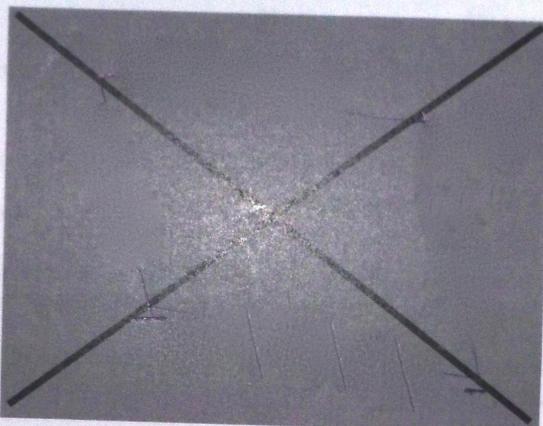
Self Evaluation Star

The Self Evaluation 4 point STAR

As a group decide on 4 things that you have achieved today.

Rate your contribution by drawing from point to point. The closer to the outside of the star the better your contribution has been.

Discuss your ratings with a partner or in a group.



Two things I did really well...







To improve next time I think I will...

Appendix C: Rehearsal Schedule

Johnny Future

**BTEC Foundation Learning Level 1 Certificate in
Supporting Employability and Personal Effectiveness**

ASSIGNMENT TITLE: Johnny Future			
Unit Number:	Unit Title:	Assignment No:	Outcomes/Assessment Criteria:
1	Supporting Employability and Personal Effectiveness	1 of 1	1.1 1.2 2.1 2.2 2.3 2.4 3.1 3.2 3.3 3.4 4.1 4.2 4.3
Date Set: March 31 2011		Date Due: June 16 2011	
Assessor: Jaïri Terpstra & Jos Zandvliet		Method of Delivery: Theatre & Music	
Internal Verifier: T. Hamill			

Learning Outcomes

During this assignment learners will mainly work on the following Learning Outcomes:

Be able to use effective communication skills
 Be able to make a positive contribution within a team
 Be able to demonstrate employability skills in a group project
 Know how to reflect on personal effectiveness skills and qualities for employability developed in the context of a group project

Vocational Context

Through eleven main rehearsals, each lasting 2,5 hours one general rehearsal and the eventually performing dates, Jos Zandvliet and Jaïri Terpstra, will be making a theatre play with male offenders in prison. During this rehearsals we'll be working around one main character, named Johnny Future, who is an offender himself.
 Certain tasks will be given, creating a story and so called script around this main character. There will be

musical tasks, aswell as theatrical tasks. There will also be people making the stage design. Within these tasks, offenders will be working on their assessment criteria.

<p>Task 1: Warming-up / Introduction Completion Date: 07-4-2011</p>	<p>Assessment Criteria: 1.1 + 2.1</p> <p>Evidence</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Getting to know each other - Explanation SEPE-course - Theatrical exercises - Singing / Making Music (Existing music) - Self evaluation - Homework explanation 	<p>Tutor Notes Two written suggestions</p>
<p>Task 2: Devising Completion Date: 14-04-2011 & 21-04-2011 & 28-04-2011</p>	<p>Assessment Criteria: 1.2 + 2.2 + 2.3 + 3.1 + 3.3 + 4.1</p> <p>Evidence</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Creating characters 2. Writing script 3. Writing songs 4. Stage design 	<p>Formal and informal communication Tutor notes Group Register Two action Plans Group Register Tutor notes</p>
<p>Task 3: Formalizing Script Completion Date: 05-05-2011 & 12-05-2011</p>	<p>Assessment Criteria: 2.4 + 3.3 + 3.4</p> <p>Evidence</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Formalizing script - Creating stage design - Formalizing music - Homework => learning music and script 	<p>Tutor Notes Group Register Group Register</p>

<p>Task 4: Rehearsing</p> <p>Completion Date: 19-05-2011 & 26-05-2011 & 02-06-2011 & 09-06-2011 & 16-06-2011</p>	<p>Assessment</p> <p>Criteria: 3.2 + 4.2</p> <p>Evidence</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rehearsing Music - Rehearsing Script (Play) - Finishing stage design 	<p>Two problem solving examples: Tutor Notes 1:1 Discussion: Action plan form</p>
<p>Task 5: Performing</p> <p>Completion Date: Week 12 + performing dates Dates are still unknown.</p>	<p>Assessment</p> <p>Criteria: 1.2 + 2.3</p> <p>Evidence</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Performing play and music for invited audience 	<p>Formal and informal communication Group Register</p>