This publication presents the findings of evaluation research conducted as part of a 12-week collaborative arts and publishing project that took place in Cork city in 2021-22. This project comprised two series of workshops: one with a group of Roma children and young people, and one with a group of Traveller children and young people, resulting in the production of two books (*The Real Us* and *Grow Up Strong*) featuring participants' stories and artwork.

The collaborative book-making project was developed by Kids' Own Publishing Partnership in partnership, Cork Traveller Visibility Group (TVG) and Cork STAR Project.

This evaluation was commissioned by Kids' Own.

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OUR LIVES OUR VOICES

A Kids' Own Publishing Partnership Project with Traveller and Roma children and young people in Cork

Evaluation Report

By
Dr. Susan McDonnell
and
Dr. Tamsin Cavaliero

kids' own PUBLISHING PARTNERSHIP

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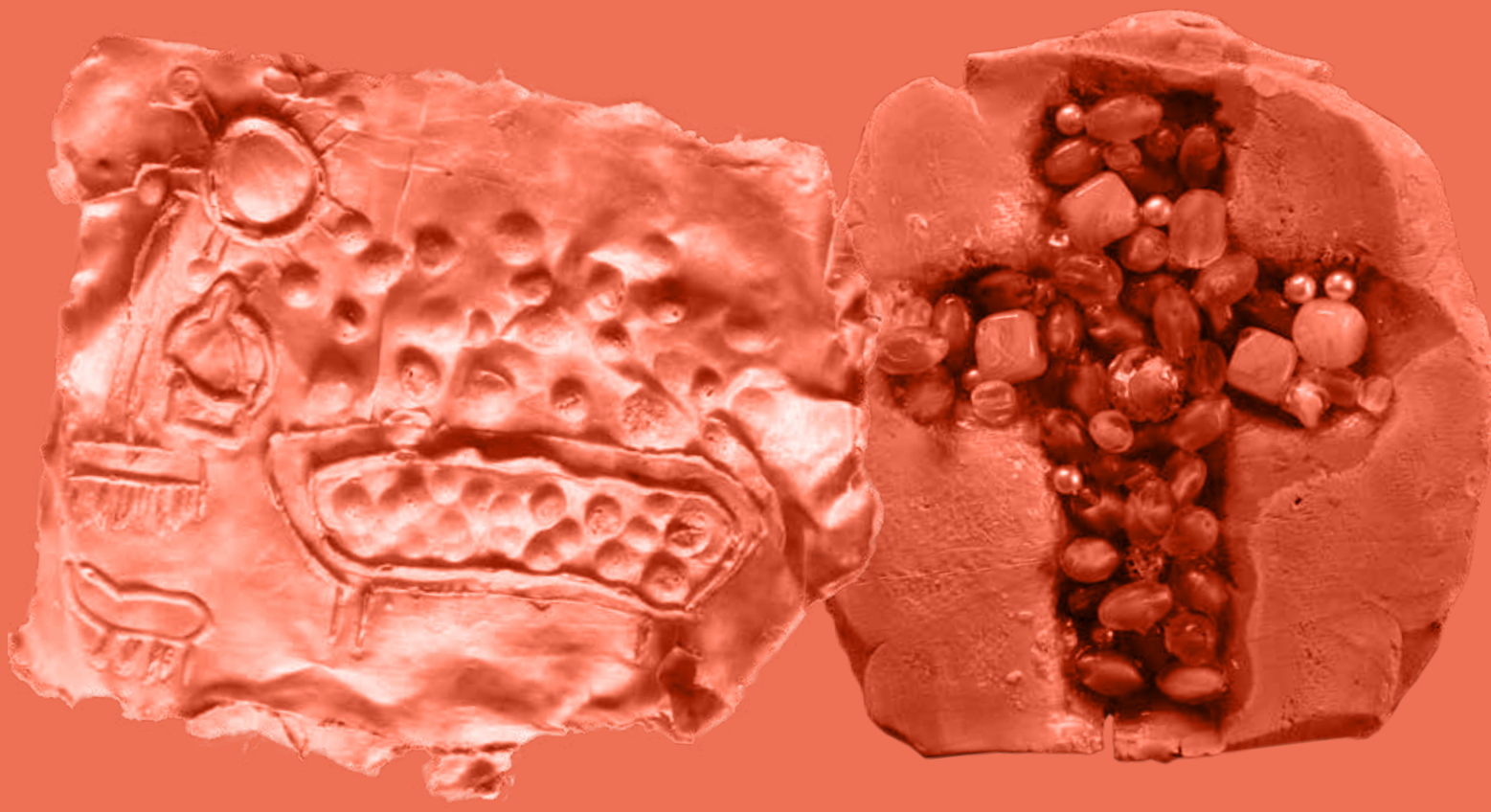

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1 INTRODUCTION

This report presents the findings of evaluation research conducted as part of a 12-week participatory interdisciplinary arts and publishing project that took place in Cork city in 2021-22. The arts project comprised two series of workshops: one with a group of Roma children and young people, and one with a group of Traveller children and young people, resulting in the production of two books featuring participants' stories and artwork. The project was initiated by Kids' Own Publishing Partnership and planned in partnership with Cork Traveller Visibility Group and Cork STAR (supporting Traveller and Roma) Project, with support from the Irish Traveller Movement (ITM). It was carried out by Kids' Own artists, with support from the community groups and Education Workers from the Supporting Travellers and Roma in Cork STAR Project. The project was funded by the RTE Toy Show Appeal and Community Foundation for Ireland, with additional funding support from Cork Traveller Visibility Group, the Cork STAR Project, and Tusla Education Support Service (TESS). This evaluation report engages with qualitative data in order to capture the participants' and stakeholders' voices and illuminate important information around experiences of the project (Daykin and Stickley, 2015).

2 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Kids' Own and Cork TVG began to collaborate in mid 2021, and arrangements were made for Cork TVG and the Cork STAR project to become partners on the project. Although the initial funding application envisaged the production of one book by young Travellers and Roma, it was decided following conversations with Cork TVG that the project should allow for the creation of two separate books by children and young people from the Traveller and Roma communities to reflect their distinct backgrounds and experiences. Cork TVG and TESS (one of the funders of the Cork STAR project) provided additional project funding to ensure that two books could be created.

Key Project Personnel and Organisations

Kids' Own
Kids' Own Publishing Partnership is a children's arts organisation and publishing house, and a registered charity. It is the only publisher of children's books made by children for children in Ireland, established 25 years ago, the organisation has always published books made by diverse communities of children. Its mission is to develop, publish and promote artwork and writing created by children for children and their communities, through meaningful engagement with professional artists. Through arts initiatives and publishing, Kids' Own seeks to amplify, make visible and give credence to the voices and creative expressions of children and young people of all backgrounds. The organisation has previously published books by Traveller children including *Charley Barley and all his friends* (2001), *Clotty Malotty and all her friends* (2003), *Stand Up, Sit Down* (2003), *Can't Lose Cant* (2003), *Fishing for Food and Mushrooms* (2005), *Can't Turn Back* (2008), *Through the Eyes of Traveller Children* (2014) and more *recently This Giant Tent (2019). Kids' Own has published books addressing topics as diverse as Children's Rights (Ding Dong, Right or Wrong?* 2010; *The World of Children* 2012), Syrian and Palestinian Refugees (*A Strong Heart* 2018; *Kind Hearts, 2022*), Children living in temporary accommodation (*I Hope You Grow* 2018), LGBTQIA+ experiences (*Love is Love*, 2022), Children in care (*My Own Jungle*, 2021)

Cork Traveller Visibility Group
A community development organisation which works to support Travellers in their day-to-day lives so that they can participate in Irish society as equals. Member of the ITM.

Cork STAR Project
One of 4 pilot Traveller and Roma projects established across Ireland. Aims to help children reach their full potential. Support projects that promote cultural awareness and inclusion. Funded by Tusla Education Support Service, Department of Justice and Equality, Department of Education and Skills.

- Gina Miyagawa – Roma Education Worker
- Rachel Coffey – Traveller Education Worker

Irish Traveller Movement
Irish Traveller Movement is a national membership-based Traveller organisation representing local, regional and national Traveller organisation groups and organisations across Ireland. The ITM works toachieve equality for Travellers in all aspects of their lives. ITM promotes pride in Traveller culture and identity within the community and to non-Travellers.emotional development, resilience and wellness for disadvantaged children through creative programmes and activities.

Mary Branley
Mary is a Kids' Own Associate Writer and a mentor for new artists and writers joining Kids' Own. She has worked on Kids' Own arts and publication projects for many years. She holds a Masters degree in Intercultural Education, and previously worked as a Visiting Teacher for Travellers in County Sligo.

Francesca Hutchinson
Francesca is an Offaly based multidisciplinary artist, working in a variety of media and materials, who takes inspiration from her family's heritage coming from the Travelling Community. Francesca is a member of the Kids' Own Associate Artist panel.

Danny Brennan
Danny is a Dublin based collaborative artist, working in the area of film, theatre and text. Danny is a member of the Kids' Own Associate Writers panel.

Travellers and Roma

Irish Travellers (or Pavees or Mincéirí as they refer to themselves) are an indigenous group of people traditionally resident on the island of Ireland. They enjoy a unique heritage, culture and identity, separate from that of the wider community (Ní Shúinéar, 1994; Farrell and Watt, 2001 p.99), which can be traced back over 1000 years (Murray and Urban, 2012). They enjoy a common language called Gammon or Cant by Travellers themselves and Shelta by scholars (Van Hout and Staniewicz, 2011 p.195). Irish Travellers, along with other Roma groups, have a rich cultural heritage and have significantly contributed to both European and world cultures (Im' Nin'alu, 2017).

In European policy the term Roma is used to describe diaspora, commercial and nomadic groups for those who identify as Roma, Sinti, Kale, Gypsies, Romanichels, Boyash, Ashkali, Egyptians, Yenish, Dom, Lom and Traveller (European Commission COM, 2011; FRA, 2012). Roma are the largest minority ethnic group in Europe, estimated at between 10 and 12 million people (CoE, 2016). Throughout this document we will refer to Travellers when speaking about Irish Traveller groups, Roma when speaking about Roma communities and Traveller/ Roma when referring to the two groups together.

Organising the Project

Two artists who are members of Kids' Own Associate Artist panel were recruited: visual artist Francesca Hutchinson and writer/video artist Danny Brennan. Participants for the project were identified by the two Education Workers (Gina Miyagawa and Rachel Coffey) employed by the STAR project. Both workers had longstanding links with the communities and with formal and informal education providers. This capital ensured buy-in for participation by local Traveller and Roma children, young people and families. The STAR project, supported by the National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy (NTRIS) aims to improve the lives of Traveller and Roma families through engagement in education. Following the development of the NTRIS 2017-2021, four pilot STAR projects were launched across Ireland in Cork, Tuam, Wexford and North Dublin. The projects are funded by the Tusla Education Support Service, Department of Justice and Equality and the Department of Education and Skills. Participants for the Kids' Own project were recruited from 14 schools across Cork City.

Two series of two-hour weekly workshops were held for twelve weeks between December 2021 and March 2022: one with a group of young Travellers and one with a group of young Roma people. In the young Travellers' workshop series, there were twelve participants, while fourteen children and young people participated in the workshop series for young Roma. The age group in the workshops was approximately 10 to 14.

The venue chosen for the project workshops was Cork Community Art Link in Blackpool Cork, which is a community arts organisation and registered charity that encourages meaningful collaborations between artists and people to create a sense of community identity and pride.
This Kids' Own project was funded by RTE Toy Show Appeal and Community Foundation for Ireland grants under the Creativity and Play strand. This strand aims to enhance personal and emotional development, resilience and wellness for disadvantaged children through creative programmes and activities.
The role of the Education Workers emerged as key in encouraging initial participation in the project, in facilitating ongoing attendance, and in actively supporting young people during the workshop sessions. Both workers had been involved with

Attendance and role of Education workers

the young people, their families and communities for many years, and as such had built strong relationships and levels of trust. In some cases, this trust was important in parents' decisions to allow their children to attend the project on the condition that they were accompanied by the Education Worker.

In practical terms, the Education Workers facilitated attendance by texting reminders and by collecting and driving young people to the project venue, as well as remaining at the venue to provide ongoing support during workshops. On the level of organisation, Education Workers contacted all families, and administered the consent processes for children's participation, both for the art/publication process and for the evaluation research, on behalf of Kids' Own and the researchers. The Education Workers played a crucial role in negotiating the particular challenges posed by the Covid pandemic during the project timeline.

Creating an inclusive space

The role of the artists
The approach taken by the artists focused on experimental-based learning utilising a child-led open-ended approach, which was exploratory and began with giving the children creative freedom to try new materials and methods. Their aim was to create a space where the children felt confident to express themselves, through visual arts and collaborative storytelling processes. After a few weeks of experimentation, a theme of identity objects in the form of talismans was identified.

The role of the mentor
Mary Branley drew on her longstanding work on Kids' Own arts and publishing projects to inform and support the artists through the planning and facilitation stages of the project, offering opportunities to talk through ideas. She also had a valued input in understanding the on the ground issues that may arise when working with diverse communities of children. In addition, the mentor assisted by tapping into extensive existing networks, and modelled the importance of relationship-building with community organisations to ensure the success of the project.

3 PROJECT AIMS AND EVALUATION AIMS

Aligning with the intention of Kids' Own projects to amplify the voices and creative expressions of children and young people of all backgrounds, this project aimed broadly to facilitate self-representation by Traveller and Roma young people through participation in an arts and publishing project, resulting in two publications that would foreground their perspectives on themes of interest to them.

It was proposed to achieve this through:

i Providing a safe and non-directive space for children and young people to participate in a meaningful creative process over the course of 12 weeks.

ii Development of artwork and stories by children and young people in collaboration with visual artist Francesca Hutchinson and writer Danny Brennan.

iii Production of two child-authored, non-fiction books, one by Traveller children and young people, and one by Roma children and young people.

iv Dissemination of the books and accompanying resources to classrooms, libraries, and community settings across Ireland.

The evaluation research detailed in this report aimed to explore:

- Children's and young people's perspectives on participation in the arts project, and the role of the arts in their lives.
- Participant perspectives on contributing to a publication giving opportunities to represent themselves and their communities.
- Artists' and Education Workers' perspectives on the project.
- Potentials and challenges for arts-based projects in contributing to ensuring that the voices of children and young people from minoritised groups are heard, respected and acted upon.

4 THE PROJECT IN CONTEXT

Children and young people are active participants in their societies, individually and with peer groups or families, through work, play, engaging with media and caring to name a few modes (Nieuwenhuys 2009, Fives et al 2010, Wyness 2013, Nolas 2015, Nolas, Varvantakis and Aruldoss 2016, Tisdall and Cuevas-Parra 2019). The academic field of Childhood Studies has focused on children's social participation since the 1980s, and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) brought growing emphasis to children and young people as rights-bearing, competent social actors, and to valuing children's perspectives and contributions to decision-making (Horgan 2016). In particular, Article 12 of the UNCRC addresses children's 'voice, audience and influence', and a model for operationalising these concepts has been developed by Lundy (2013).

Participatory arts

Collaborative and participatory arts projects, such as the interdisciplinary project that is the focus of this report, are one means of operationalising societal participation, both with children and with adults. In work with children and young people, arts projects may address the elements of Space, Voice, Audience and Influence as set out in the Lundy model, by providing inclusive opportunities to form views, supporting expression of these views, and listening to and acting on these views.

Participatory arts projects vary in their particular modes of operation, but broadly speaking they aim to offer access to high-quality arts processes, engagement with which is central and afforded intrinsic value. Participatory arts also tend to be associated with work towards social change and advancing cultural democracy (Matarrasso 2019:63), which is the right and capability to participate equally in the cultural life of the community, including opportunities to express values and self-represent through the arts, particularly through publishing and distributing artistic work (Matarrasso 2019:74-77, see also Wilson Gross and Bull 2017). Other potential outcomes for participants have been noted across the spheres of personal development, social cohesion, community empowerment, identity, imagination, health and wellbeing and educational achievement (Matarrasso 1997, 2019 see also Cultural Learning Alliance 2017, Jindal-Snape et al 2018, specifically in relation to children). Increased wellbeing, social interaction, self-confidence, hope and sense of self-worth are further documented outcomes identified with the impact of arts participation (Jensen and Bonde, 2018). This is particularly important for societal groups who are misrepresented, marginalised, excluded or silenced in mainstream arts and media (McDonagh 2018).

Cultural Identity

A number of writers have identified particular lifestyle or cultural characteristics which are attached to Roma and Travelling Communities through the literature about them. These include; a primary focus on extended family networks (Turner, 2000) as a source of emotional and financial support (Watson, Kenny and McGinnity, 2017; Hegarty, 2013; Collins, 2012); value of collective over individual; nomadic existence (Turner, 2000) or nomadic mindset (McVeigh, 1997); a tendency towards self-employment (Turner, 2000); sibling childcare (Helleiner, 2000); marrying earlier (Helleiner, 2000); observation of distinct hygiene codes (Turner, 2000); separate language (Okely, 1986); opposition to dominant group (Liegeois, 1987; Belton, 2005); patriarchal gender relations (Smith and Greenfields, 2013); and low literacy levels resulting from historically problematic interactions with educational systems (Holloway, 2005). Whilst practitioners and researchers should certainly familiarise themselves with cultural details surrounding particular communities, these signifiers serve to paint a picture which fails to take into account the variations that exist within any community.

Despite state recognition as a distinct ethnic group being awarded in 2000 in the UK and many years of campaigning by the Traveller community, it was not until 2017 that Irish Travellers finally gained state recognition in Ireland as a distinct ethnic group (O'Halloran and O'Regan, 2017).

Whilst Travellers and Roma are grouped together within resource allocation and funding bands, it is important to recognise that although the groups share some characteristics as outlined above, they are not homogeneous and important distinctions exist at local, national and international levels. For example, the Roma communities residing in Cork "chain migrated" (McDonald and McDonald, 1964, p. 82) from Romania over the last two generations, they observe different religious practices including Christian Orthodox and Pentecostal and speak different languages, and as such their levels of integration into local communities varies. On an international level, racism towards Roma is increasing (European Network Against Racism (ENAR), 2015) and is fuelled by media driven negative stereotyping and anti-migrant discourse (Fekete, 2014).

Whilst State curtailment of Traveller spatial practices is documented (Bancroft, 2005; Bhreatnach, 2006), it is important to understand that nomadic practices also serve to reinforce spiritual and emotional connections to family and community which enhance wellbeing (Balanda and Wilde, 2003; Walker, 2008).

The impact of cultural erosion is seen in a significant impact on wellbeing; according to O'Mahony (2017), 90% of Travellers agree that mental health problems are common in the community and 82% have been affected by suicide. This has led to the demand for increased recognition of Traveller and Roma culture and pride in identity. The revised National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy emphasises the need for recognition of Traveller cultural identity as a key factor in addressing intergenerational discrimination that has impacted the community: *"The key point is that recognition of the distinct heritage, culture and identity of Travellers and their special place in Irish society would be hugely important to Traveller pride, to Traveller self-esteem and to overcoming the legacy of marginalisation and discrimination that the community has experienced."* (p.6).

Cultural trauma and race-based stress (defined as injurious racial micro-aggressions and structural discrimination that impacts People of Colour and Indigenous Individuals (POCI)) is now recognised

within international literature (Comas-Diaz et al 2019). Sindy Joyce's (2015) research on Traveller Youth has noted the curtailment of young Travellers' spatial mobility impacting on cultural identity. Recent research in Ireland exploring Traveller and Roma experiences in education notes that settled spaces are not safe spaces for Travellers and Roma (Quinlan 2021, p. 50). The erosion of Traveller and Roma culture includes (but is not limited to) the oppression of the language and the increased barriers Travellers face preserving cultural practices (Villani and Barry, 2021; Friel, 2021) including nomadic practices. The issue of invisibility in the curriculum is widely agreed by researchers on Roma and Traveller education to be a significant factor contributing towards experiences of discrimination (Liégeois, 1998; Save the Children, 2001; European Commission, 2004a and 2004b; European Union Monitoring Centre, 2006; European Union Fundamental Rights Agency, 2009). This has been highlighted in the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA, 2019[3]) Audit on Traveller Culture and History in the curriculum which has noted a need for resources and accompanying support materials for teachers (McGinley 2020; McGinley and Keane 2021). At the time of publication, this is being further developed by the NCCA.

Recognition of cultural identities plays a role in addressing social justice inequality (Fraser and Honneth, 2003), and utilising a targeted intervention approach is a guiding principle outlined in the HSE's second National Intercultural Health Strategy 2018-2023 (Nurse and Armstrong, 2018). Celebrating cultural heritage and identity is vital and necessary. However opportunities can also come from identity gains that allow participants to experience themselves as both unique and, together / beyond, in order to develop links across groups (NYCI 2017; Smith and Greenfields 2013; Stickley and Hui 2012), which is important for solidarity and social justice.

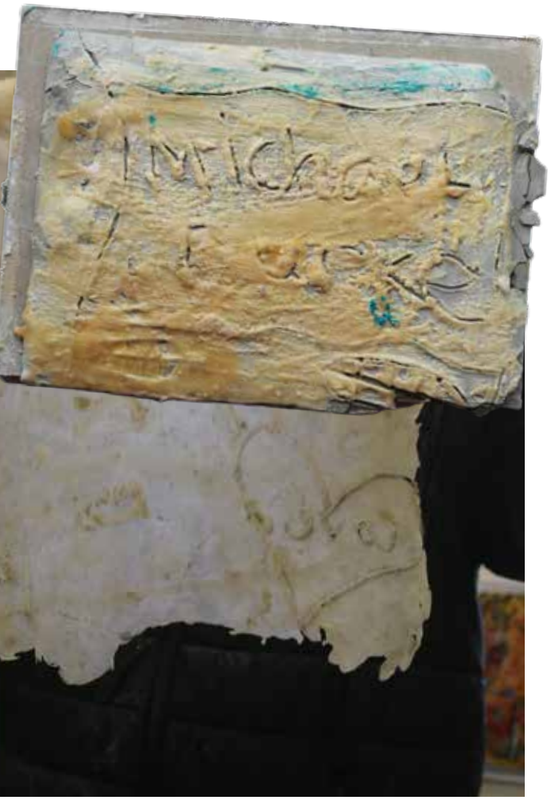
Celebrating cultural heritage and identity is vital and necessary. In addition to valuing identities as Travellers it is important that young people are also supported to develop links across groups (for example being a young Person in solidarity with all Young People) is important for solidarity and social justice (NYCI 2017; Smith and Greenfields 2013; Stickley and Hui 2012). Furthermore, failure to adequately represent divergent identities is a key human rights issue (Baker, 2002; Kurtić, 2014; Bogdán et al., 2015, p.4). However, recognition does not address inequalities in isolation, it requires redistribution of resourcing to ensure actualisation (Fraser and Honneth, 2003). Consequently, a challenge exists when attempting to alleviate disadvantage requiring a balance between mainstreaming and targeting approaches to specific groups (Watson, Kenny, McGinnity, 2017; Pavee Point, 2015).

2 In September 2018, the Minister for Education and Skills, Richard Bruton, T.D., requested the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) to undertake an audit of Traveller culture and history in the curriculum.

Cultural representation

For Travellers and Roma, lack of accurate media representation is problematic as it facilitates discrimination (Helleiner, 2000; Fanning, 2002; Hayes, 2006; McVeigh, 2008; Fekete, 2014) and limited or stereotyped portrayal of Traveller and Roma identities. This further reinforces marginalisation within education settings including reducing teachers' expectations of Traveller and Roma childrens' abilities (Liégeois 1998; Bhopal 2004; Bhopal and Myers 2009). Participation is therefore central in locating Traveller and Roma identities within the sphere of their own authorship thereby providing opportunities for access to the modes and media of representation whilst at the same time challenging widespread stereotypes leading to participation as influence (McGarry and Agarin, 2014, p. 4; Harmon, 2015; ESRI, 2017; Traveller Culture and Heritage in Education Bill, 2018).

The significance of participation and self-representation by Traveller and Roma young people is discussed in documents such as the Traveller Youth Participation and Leadership Strategy (see ITM 2021) which calls for support for young Travellers to be leaders in their communities and in society. The plan focuses on the principle of listening to Traveller children and young people, enabling them to express ideas and opinions and shape ideas that affect their lives. Furthermore, the European Good Practice projects (European Commission, 2015) values the importance of creativity and non-formal learning to support young people as 'entrepreneurs of their own lives' to support hybrid know-how and reduce inequality in a changing environment (Arnkil, 2015).



5 EVALUATION PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY

The evaluation research consisted of a process of qualitative consultation with children and young people who participated in the project, interviews with the artists, interviews with the two Education Workers, and an interview with the project mentor.

Research with children and young people

Research with children and young people

In order to reflect participants' perspectives on this project and its outcomes as fully as possible, a primarily qualitative and dialogical approach was adopted for the evaluation. The project artists, Francesca and Danny, agreed to facilitate opportunities for conversations between the researchers and project participants during their art/writing workshops.

Prior to beginning the evaluation research, consent to take part was given by parents of participants and by participants themselves. Having long-established relationships with families of participants, Education Workers Gina Miyagawa and Rachel Coffey very kindly agreed to facilitate the informed consent process on behalf of the researchers. Information sheets with supporting graphics, consent forms and a video clip explaining the research were sent to Gina and Rachel, who personally contacted the parents of children and young people participating in the project, distributed information, discussed the research in detail, and obtained consent (see Appendices). Completed consent forms were then sent as secure files to the researchers. [3]

Data generation

The researchers attended a total of six two-hour workshop sessions in Cork (3 sessions for Roma children and young people, and 3 sessions for Traveller children and young people), in January and February 2022. Two methods for data generation with participants were used. Firstly, informal interviews were held with individuals and with friendship groups while they engaged with arts processes. Additionally, friendship groups of two or three participants were able to take short breaks from project activities to join focused semi-structured interviews, which were conducted in an adjoining room. These approaches enabled researchers to observe first-hand the artistic and social encounters that participants experienced, and to speak with them while they were actively engaged in art-making and story-making processes, or while these events were fresh in their minds. Material artefacts including children's plans and artworks in progress also served as elements of reflective processes and co-creation of knowledge as they spoke to the researchers. Participants showed and told us about their work, as well as talking about their experiences of the project. This approach resulted in rich and lively conversations.

All interviews were audio recorded. Prior to beginning each interview, participants were reminded of the purpose of the research, and of how data would be used. They were also asked again at this point whether they wished to participate in the interview, and whether they consented to recording. Consent to take part in the research was therefore ongoing and negotiated. All project participants spoke with us at least once during the research, and some interacted with us on a number of occasions. All responses by children and young people are anonymised in the report.

3 Ethical approval for the conduct of research was received from ATU Sligo. Ethical approval was submitted in November 2021 and granted approval (ref: 2021009). Clear information on the evaluation was provided to participants and their parents. Participants in the art project and their parents were assured that they were not obliged to take part in the research evaluation, that all data would be reported anonymously, that all personal details would be confidential, and that data would be securely stored. Informed consent was received from children/ young people and parents.

Conversational interviews were structured by questions exploring participants' experiences of the project overall and their perspectives on art-making and storytelling activities. We also spoke to them about their learning from the project and what they saw as its value for themselves and other children. Finally, we asked them what they thought about the importance of highlighting their artwork and viewpoints from themselves and their communities, in publications that would be available to the wider public, in schools and elsewhere.

Following their meetings with the researchers, each participant was given a 'Research Passport' designed by Dr Tamsin Cavaliero (see Appendix 3). This graphic document provides information on the research, and contact details of the researchers, allowing participants to request clarifications from them either during the research period or in the future.

Research with adult stakeholders

During the course of workshop visits, the researchers informally discussed with the artists and the Education Workers their work on the project, their visions and challenges, and noted themes and observations arising from these conversations. Subsequently, semi-structured reflective interviews were conducted with the artists and the Education Workers over MS Teams in April 2022. An online interview was held with the project mentor in early 2023.

Data Analysis

Data Analysis took place on an ongoing basis. Audio data was transcribed following each interview, and Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step framework was used for analysis. In this process researchers separately become familiar with the data, generate initial codes, first using open coding, and developing and modifying codes as they move through the process. Transcripts are coded separately, and researchers then compare codes, modify them if necessary and discuss. Then themes are identified, modified and developed to move beyond sematic and detect latent themes (2006, p. 84). Care is needed when reporting findings, so as not to assume an overly homogeneous "voice of the community" and therefore we have sought to include a range of perspectives. Both audio files and transcriptions were securely stored on an institutional OneDrive.

6 EVALUATION FINDINGS

In this section, we present findings from the research, grouped under thematic headings, which include: arts engagement, spaces for art, learning, sociality and fun and perspectives on producing a book.

The main focus is on the perspectives and experiences of young participants. Additionally, comments and viewpoints of the Artists and Education Workers are included.

Arts engagement

We asked participants about what initially attracted them to the project, and what their expectations were. Many of the young people were particularly keen to engage in visual art activities, which they already enjoyed. Familiarity with or passion for art was a common explanation for becoming involved. Other young people were attracted by the social element of the project. However, participants were also curious and excited about contributing to the authorship of a book, which presented a new and interesting outlet.

Participants described their engagements with the visual arts element of the project from a number of perspectives. Many of them told us that artmaking was a long-held interest, however they drew attention to their enjoyment of opportunities in the project to experiment with unfamiliar and interesting art materials. They discussed physical and sensory interactions with materials and processes, and developing new skills in a supportive learning environment. For some, these experiences even led them to reflect on future possibilities:

Participant 14: I love art. Art is my life! Lots of colours and drawing new colours – all that!

Participant 13: My favourite bit I think is the clay... Yeah the clay for me... And, you know... I forget what it's called but you can put it onto... and you can peel it off... Latex!... All like a balloon... But the best thing about art is thinking and focusing. You need to know the skills to know how to do art.

Participant 2: I never knew any of these things like latex, waxing.... we do like stuff like that and I think it's very interesting because I'm always in creativity..... I've always loved being creative and like learning new... These things kind of inspired me to see what I can do in my future.

Other participants focused most on experiences of immersion in the process of artmaking, which they found calming, forming a space for quiet reflection:

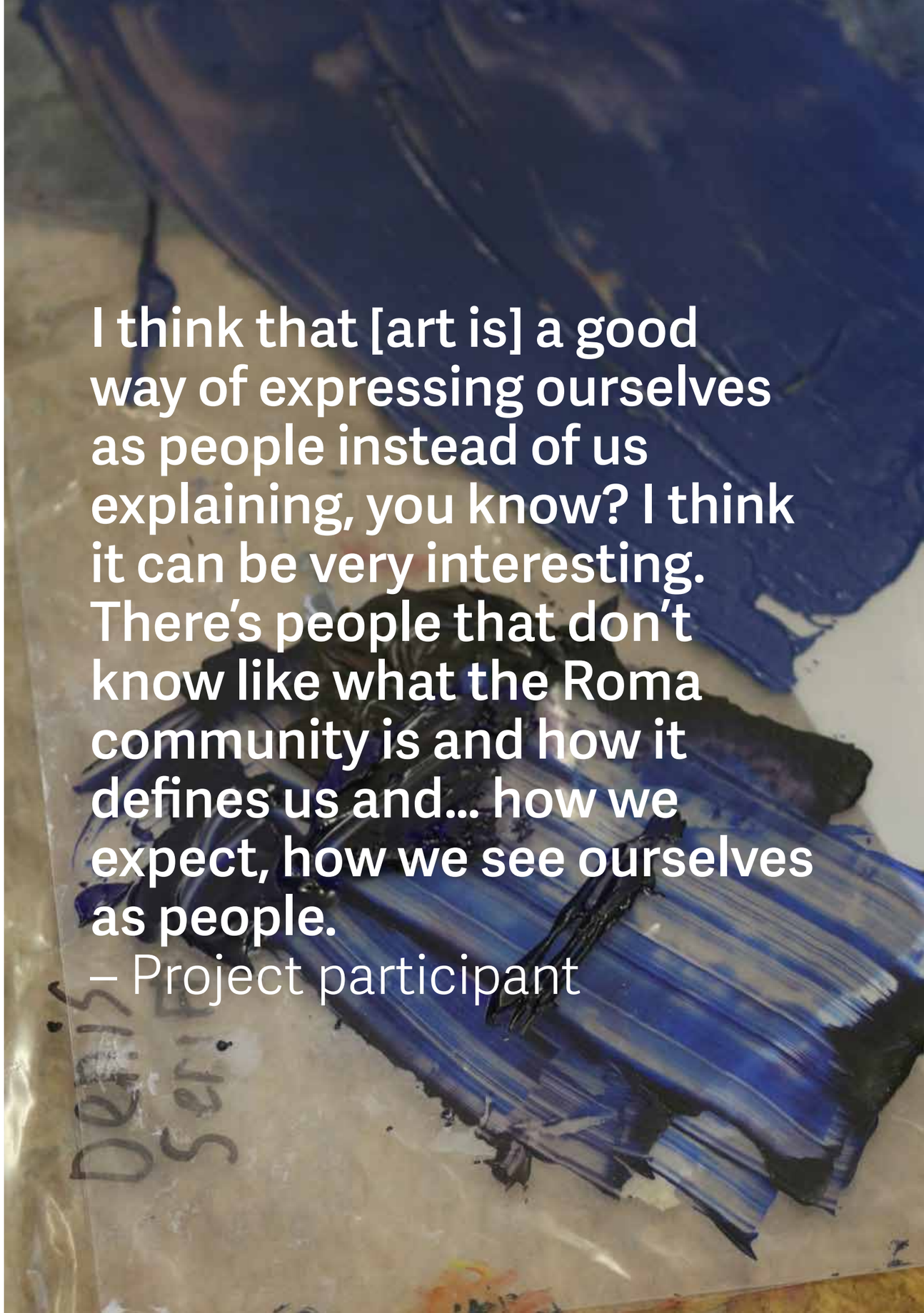
Participant 16: I think the creativity and the fun of it [is important], like the crafting you know, just coming here every single Saturday and just like enjoying the like arts aspect of it. It's kind of like relaxing you know, and you're thinking of what you're doing and it helps you like gather your thoughts and stuff. I used to [do similar] when I was small, and my dad used to buy me a box of beads and I used to like, you know create bracelets and stuff.

They also contrasted the creative space with areas in their lives that were more pressurized or where they had responsibilities, explaining that the project was a place where they could relax and change focus:

Participant 7: Just coming here and just like doing like, even these bracelets just helps.

Participant 2: Even getting away from the things that we have to do every single day like, it just kind of major, it's just kind of major helpful and what we're doing and how we think you know...

Participant 7: And then like I'm in an exam year so it kind of just helps.... Yeah and it's kind of helping me, kind of not think about you know, studying and just doing all that...



Participant 13: There's just something about it that makes you release..... like all I forget what it's called... like all.... Stress.

Some of the young people indicated that their previous experiences of art had been at school, but that activities in this context had been oriented towards exams rather than creative expression:

Participant 5: No, our school's different..... Like we do more like, art stuff towards our Junior Cert and stuff.

Among the foci for art-making was the creation of a personal object or talisman. Participants appreciated prompts for making with structure and support, but also creative freedom:

Participant 7: [I liked] Making a bracelet and making stuff that are cool... I like unusual stuff, you know.

Visual artwork in the project was interspersed with a focus on stories, as individual and group narratives would be woven into the text of the eventual book. Narratives were elicited in work with the project writer through a number of processes, some of which occurred in conjunction with the making of physical 'identity' objects or talismans. Some participants invested these objects with special significance, relating them to important moments, people and animals in their lives:

Participant 9: I'm doing my bracelet on, to protect animals.

Researcher: To protect animals – so you really like animals?

Participant 9: I have a cat. I used to have a parrot, fish and dog but all of them died....My dog, I grew since he was a new one because I found him on the street... And then I had to go back to Ireland, and then my auntie's taking care of him until we come back, but then my mum didn't tell me he died. And after a few weeks then she decided to tell me. But I cried for like one hour.

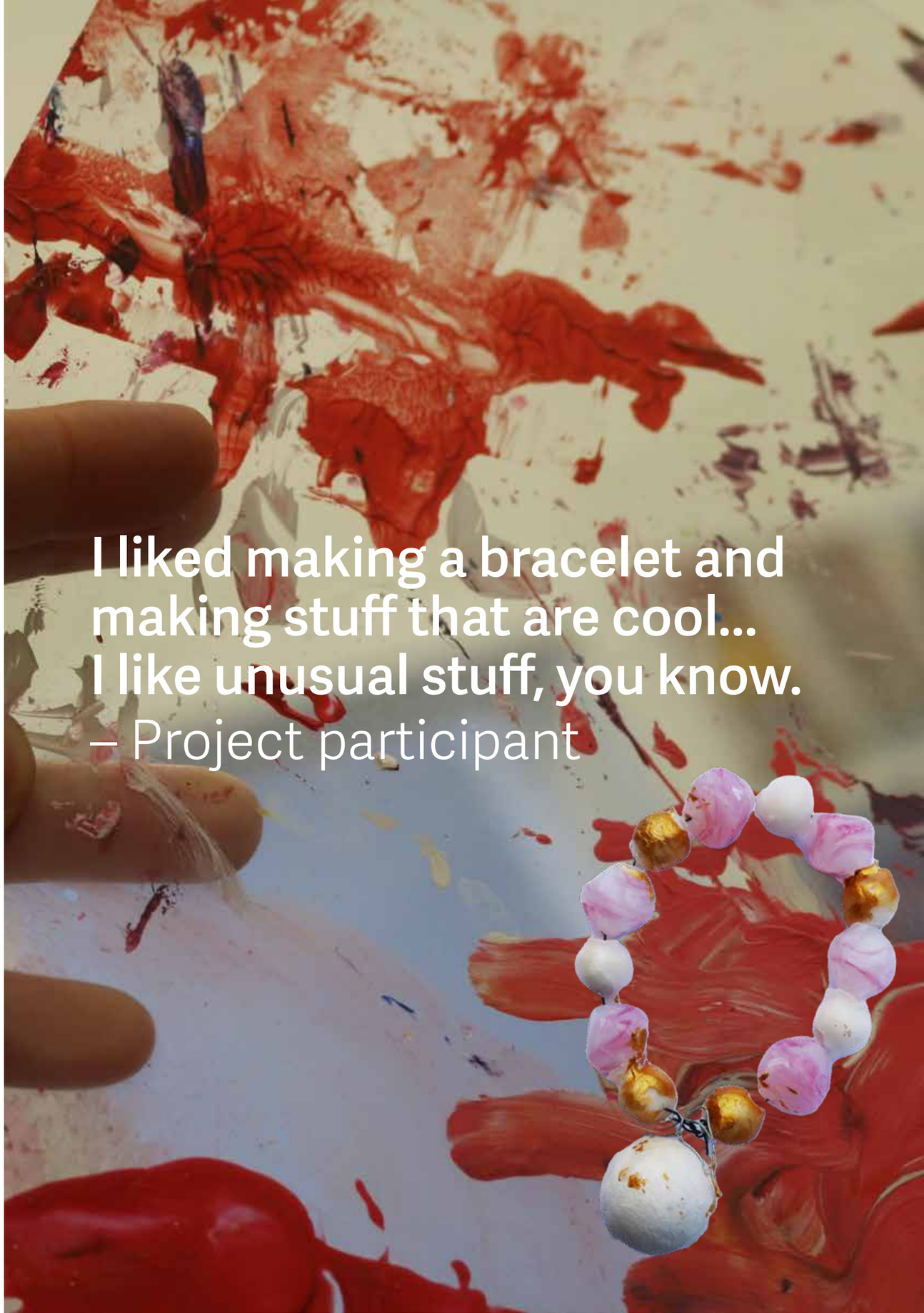
Some participants commented on the process of story-sharing as a means of getting to know others in the group:

Participant 2: We were like communicating the other day about stories we heard during ..... And I thought that was kind of like cool.... We got to like, hear other people's stories and what they heard growing up, you know.

They also considered the potential of improving confidence through voicing stories in this way: Researcher: Is there anything else that you feel like you've learned from doing this project so far?

Participant 3: Confidence... people speak up and like they tell us like stories.

It should be noted that some of the young people we spoke to were initially hesitant around the idea of co-producing or 'writing' a book with confidence, and this seemed to be related to struggles they had experienced with reading and writing in mainstream education. Two participants in particular spoke of being in a class with a younger age cohort and requiring additional supports due to diagnoses of ADHD and dyslexia. Additionally, the majority of participants, but certainly not all, told us that they did not enjoy reading as a pastime, tending instead towards phones and gaming. The experience of successfully participating in the co-creation of a print publication as part of this project could potentially represent a re-framing of relationships with books and literacy for these two cohorts of participants.



Some participants commented on the possibilities of visual art to contribute to the telling of their stories:

Participant 2: I think that [art is] a good way of expressing ourselves as people instead of us explaining, you know? I think it can be very interesting. There's people that don't know like what the Roma community is and how it defines us and... how we expect, how we see ourselves as people.

Interestingly, Gina (Roma Education worker) indicated that, within Roma communities, some arts activities tended to be associated with younger children, which could have presented challenges to young people's engagement with the project. However, she had been pleasantly surprised by the extent of their involvement, and indicated that some of the girls in particular had started to show an interest in art as a source of enjoyment and relaxation:

Gina: Arts for the Roma generally, it's kids' play – as in smaller kids, toddlers, you know, drawing and stuff like that. So even to see some of my girls who are just 11, 12, 13 ... seeing them, how much they enjoyed it. ...You know, like every week they would enjoy it even more... It was good to see that, you know, and now I get some of my girls all they want to do is just do some arts...They tell me that they're dedicating that time for themselves when they do something that they enjoy and they think for themselves, whatever they need to think about, you know, which is good. So they're looking at arts now with different eyes, you know.

Arts engagement then, both in terms of visual art and storytelling, had a range of meanings and was valued in various ways by the children and young people who participated.

Spaces for art and learning

The project took place in the Artlink Centre in Blackpool, Cork. Both artists appreciated the opportunity to work in the Artlink Centre.

Fran: Artlink was beautiful. It was a really, really lovely space to work in.

Balancing the tension between a space that was already known to the participants, available and well placed geographically, but which was not specifically dedicated to work with young people presented challenges for the artists at times. Limitations in relation to artmaking included lack of storage facilities, clear wall space, ventilation, drying space and the lack of a sink:

Francesca: I think if there was a sink in the room that would have been fantastic because there's a lot of going up and down the stairs for washing hands and different things.

Other issues concerning the suitability of the facility related to physical accessibility, which has impacts on participation by young people with physical disabilities:

Danny: Just the fact that you have to go up a set of stairs to get there, [if someone has] some difficulty walking, you know.

The large work space was full of chat and activity during the project. It was noted that the option of an additional quiet space for young people who may struggle to concentrate in a large group would have been ideal. However, it should be acknowledged that Artlink kindly offered the use of the office as a quiet space for audio recording sessions.

Space is an important ingredient in any art project, in particular it becomes central when working with marginalised groups – the space represents the way in which the project can communicate with participants about how they are valued. The artists put considerable time, care and effort into ensuring that the space was prepared for each session and clearing up afterwards.

In addition to the importance of the physical space, participants observed that the organised and collaborative approach of the arts practitioners was key in creating an environment that was conducive to creativity:

Participant 13: She's very calm and nice so it's pretty easy to get along with her... And they're all like... it's just something to get you off your phone... I think it's still really nice to have everything organised... like if you wanted to do something, you wanted a colour... You go ahead and colour... but then if you don't have it if you just go try to find it. Danny is really nice as well... He's like the Teller...He's like the storyteller...

This was confirmed by Francesca's summation of her approach to the work:

Francesca: I wanted to give the children like creative freedom and to try new materials and mediums and a new way of working really as well. So it was completely down to the child how they used the material and, what they wanted to do... I wanted to create a space for learning, trying and failing, experimenting and just basically exploring different materials and mediums and processes.

Danny identified the potential of such alternative models and spaces of learning to inform young people's approaches to learning elsewhere:

Danny: They feel like there is education going on in the room – but not in the typical way – [they were] saying, 'I usen't to be confident and now I am'... And those things are so important, that there are those structures and those places where people can figure out how to learn in public.

Some participants, indeed, reflected on the contrast between the child-led, self-directed approach in the project, and the more didactic teaching methods they had experienced in school. They observed that integrating children's interests, perspectives and voices within pedagogic approaches could result in more effective teaching and learning in schools:

Participant 2: I never experienced any teacher asking me what I like or if I want to do that or if this is fitting in what we believe or something like that... Like it's absolutely unnormal that teachers never ask... I think teachers should start asking 'do you think this is good for us?'

Participant 7: Being more inclusive with children and make sure that they like and enjoy this subject.

Participant 2: And I think it's really important for us to be all engaged in the class because we won't learn anything... Like in history class I'm like, I cannot listen because she just talks to us from the book and she just expects us to learn everything that she's just saying. Keep us in mind!

Both artists recognised the importance of the support of the Kids' Own team, and of the mentor in particular in guiding their practice and enabling the creation of a supportive and productive space for art-making.

Francesca: It was really the confidence that Mary instilled in me that kind of helped me with the project. So they were like, you know, 'it's going to take some weeks, you know, for the children, to get into the process' and Mary kept saying to me, 'just give it time, but if something doesn't work out, you know, have a Plan B or look at different ways'... And I actually don't think I wouldn't have been able to do this project as best as I could without their confidence in me and like I'm so thankful to them for giving me the space to bring my own art practice in.

The artists were acutely aware that taking time to build trusting relationships was vital to the participants' comfort and ability to engage in the project, and acknowledged the particular importance of this for Traveller and Roma young people:

Fran: That's something that is really key I think ...that we were able to build those relationships with the children. You know, it took us weeks to do that. It's not as if you could just do this all in one day or in two days and get the same kind of effect because... children needed to know that they could trust us and that, you know they can trust us with parts of their lives, with what they wanted to say... And I think that was just really important because sometimes I think... Traveller children, they feel like they don't want to say something personal because it might be used against them.

The artists additionally acknowledged the role of community organisations and Education Workers in supporting the project and enabling trust-building between artists and participants:

Danny: I think speaking to all the structures we were walking into, whether that's TVG or the STAR project and all of the work that they've done with the young people before did really lay the foundation. Like there was so much going on with [participants], in the really positive and in the really difficult stories as well... so you know there was a lot of building that trust. Especially with the young people who've really gone through it in so many different ways whether it's trauma or coming out of Covid... And the structures and confidence they built with TVG and the STAR project – it's really just outstanding, it was wonderful to just be a small part of that.

Important points in relation to the limitations of trust in relatively short-term projects were made by the Education Workers, who noted that many of the children come from backgrounds where there is an expectation that family matters will not be discussed outside the home. These norms are, of course, grounded in contemporary experiences and remembered histories of mistreatment of Traveller and Roma communities by state agencies that collected information about their lives (Cemlyn, 1995, Warde, 2009). Even with best practices in place around building trusting relationships, it is likely that such experiences may have implications for the degree to which young people feel comfortable in sharing their stories of home and culture in a relatively short-term project.

Gina: Having generation after generation after generation going through what they, you know, what we went through and the trauma. You know that every generation carries it, and you could see that. You could see the trauma being carried onto the youngest, you know?

Rachel: And it kind of just goes back to this internalised oppression and trauma like they have of being fearful everywhere d'you know...When you walk outside as a Traveller like you know they're going to face it somewhere whether from an adult or a young person.

It is clear from the data discussed in this section that both the physical space for art-making and the space of engagement created by the artists and the Education Workers were vital to the success of the project.

Sociality and fun

Many of the participants commented on the social aspect of the project – meeting with others, talking and having fun while working side by side – as a major factor in their decisions to join and to continue attending.

Researcher: Why did you decide to come along to the project, what did you think would be interesting about it?

Participant 9: I just did it because I was bored.

Researcher: Because you were bored... and what about you [ ]?

Participant 10: To have fun... Well something else... because there's like people here and you know...

Researcher: You meet new people

Participant 10: Friends, yeah.

Researcher: When you finish this project, what's the big thing you're going to remember about it?

Participant 11: All the fun we had.

Researcher: All the fun.... what kind of things did you find fun most?

Participant 11: I don't know sometimes we were just working on our projects and all of us would just talk.

The inclusive atmosphere that created in the workshops was of interest to several participants:

Participant 2: I remember, what I am going to remember is the people that made the whole entire atmosphere feel like we're all included, you know, because there would be a lot of times when you feel disincluded and there's a lot of... We're all here together, and we're all wearing our own things and thinking differently and the way... all the atmosphere inside this room is with all these people ... it's just kind of like mind blowing, if you get what I mean?... Because like, it's really nice that Francesca and Danny, they really like, to hear what we say, and they just, they...

Participant 7: They're really inclusive.

Participant 2: Yeah, inclusive – that's the word.

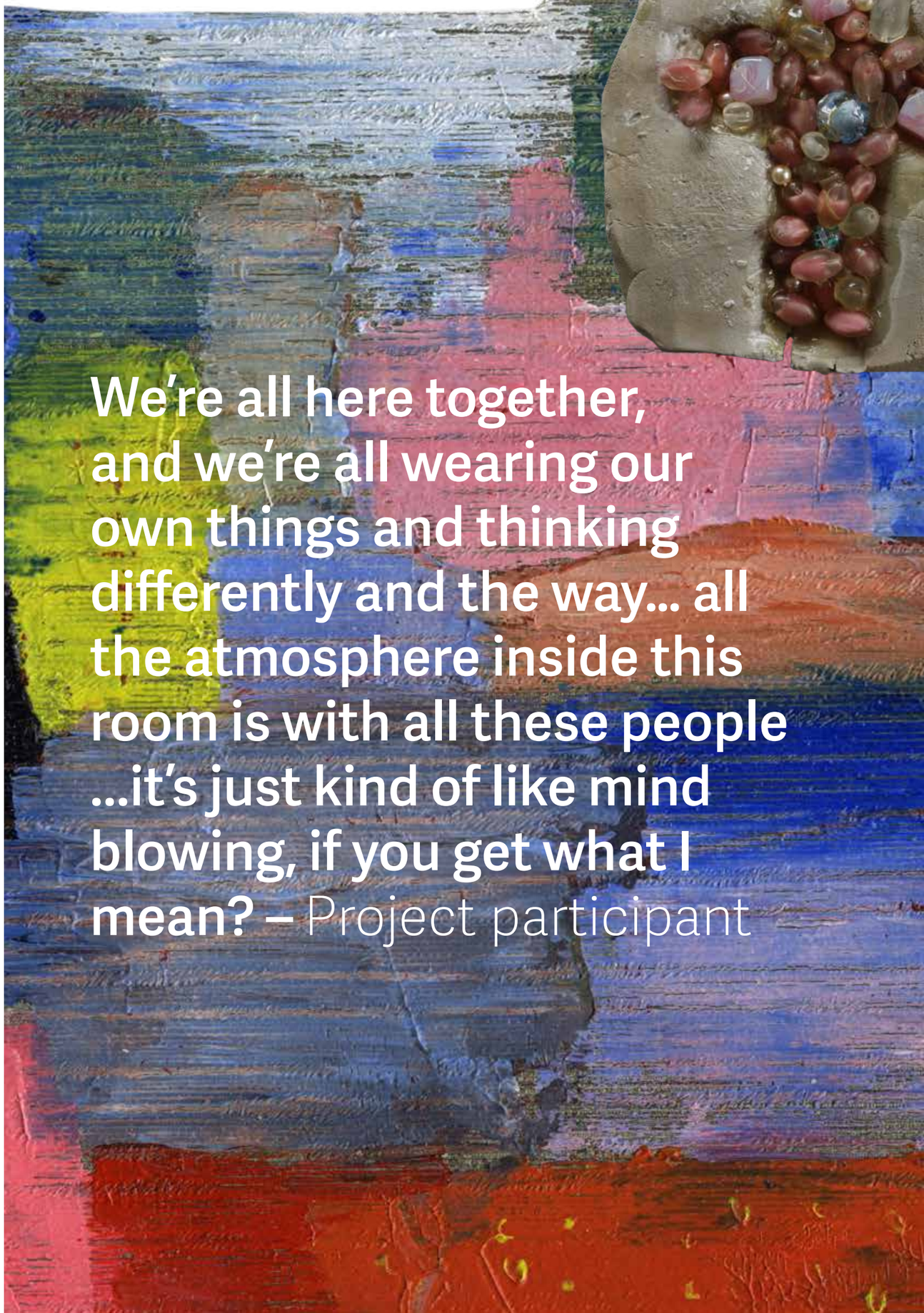
Participant 7: And they really like to make sure that everyone feels equal and feels, you know, part of the project.

It was clear from artists' comments that this non-hierarchical and inclusive framework was very intentional and carefully planned:

Francesca: So, you know, having that inclusivity and in the space and saying that, we all have to listen to each other and that everyone's opinions are equal. And I'm not a teacher, I'm a mentor. So I'm here to help you. And if you have any problems, you know, don't be afraid to ask. So I think it's just about creating that balance in the room that, nobody was higher up than anybody else or nobody was better than anyone.

Danny: I wasn't going to limit the conversation or say that they shouldn't feel that way or you know get into some kind of argument about the nitty gritty of what they were saying. 'Cause what I'm here to do is to hold space for that story.

Within the Roma workshop series, it emerged that participants had met through the project with young people from different sections of the Roma community, whom they would not ordinarily have interacted closely with. The Roma Education worker, Gina, explained to us that groups of Roma people lived in different areas of the city, and that groups differed in terms of, for example, how long



their families had lived in Ireland, the regions their families originated in, or the extent to which they adhered to certain Romani values and traditions. Several participants spoke positively about this experience of meeting and learning about Roma young people with different backgrounds to themselves:

Researcher: Yeah, so when you finish this project, what's the big thing that you're going to remember the most?

Participant 12: That I can fit in with the Roma people and it made me feel like that I am in this Roma culture... like every Roma people has different personalities... and even accents like, I can be like [different]. Because people think that they don't belong in the Roma culture... But here it's like home, basically because it's like we know people from different types of Roma, you know...
So, it makes us fit in, and feel like we belong.

Participant 2: Even though like, we all are kind of out of the same tribe, or something like that, it's just, it's still, it's still like you can feel like... there's some people here that like feel excluded even though they're still out of the same tribe you know... and also like if you go to Romania, there's like all different tribes so for example, where we live it's like we have different costumes, well they're not really different but they might be a little bit.

Gina, the Roma Education Worker, noted the importance of providing social opportunities for young Roma people, many of whom had never participated in any kind of youth club or art project previously, and considered that the experience of the project might lead to joining other groups in the future, such as youth clubs. Additionally, the Education Workers built on the experience of the Kids' Own project by organising activities and trips that included both Traveller and Roma young people.

This section demonstrates that sociality and fun were prioritised by children and young people, and that, in some cases, they experienced new connections and belongings through participation.

Perspectives on producing a book

The prospect of producing a book that would be available to schools and to peers seemed to have piqued the interest of participants in the project. Young people referred both to the importance of representing their cultural backgrounds as Travellers and Roma, and to their personal pride in contributing to the authorship of a book.
Project participants were keenly aware that Roma and Travellers were under-represented and lacking visibility in the books and other educational materials available in their schools. Just a few mentioned having seen some books that featured Travellers as protagonists, whether at school or at the TVG project:

Participant 5: Yeah I think there's a few, like this one time I found a book inside my classroom from the TVG of Kathleen, Bridgie, Mary, John, like they were the characters' names...

None of the children we spoke to had seen books with Roma characters, but they were excited about the potential of developing these resources as a means of developing recognition and understanding, and encouraging other young Roma people:

Researcher: do you ever see books that have Roma people in them, or stories about Roma people?

Participant 2: I've never seen one book that has... Never... I think it's a really good start, to kind of like do it because if we started other people might want to do it as well, because they see it as like an inspiration... There's Roma people all over the world and you know, now I hope that this book will kind of go international, and a lot of people will read it and they will kind of get like inspiration like you know.

Participant 3: I think it's about time we started it... There's no like, I don't know how to explain it because like there was no books about Roma and like nothing, nobody, some people would forget about us.

Similarly, a participant spoke of the production of a book featuring Traveller children as a novel and important endeavour, but not without its anxieties:

Researcher: And have you seen any other books about Travellers?

Participant 13: No, so I'd say we're gonna be the first out. 'Cause I'd say if we don't write it who's gonna write it... And you just want to be like first place.

Researcher: So what do you think about other people seeing the book?

Participant 13: It makes me happy just to know that they like it.

Participant 14: I'm kinda nervous about what they're going to think of that book... like, not like it... I think they'll like it – my teacher will like it anyway.

There was a clear sense that participants saw production of a book as an opportunity to represent their everyday lives as Roma and Traveller young people, in addition to representing their broader communities, and aspects of traditional cultural practices:

Researcher: What kind of things do you want to have in the book?

Participant 15: Like, I mean, how we are, our foods, what I like – like singing. I like singing Arianna Grande, I like singing from American artists you know.

Researcher: And what do you think other kids, might think when they see the book?

Participant 15: They would be like, 'Wow I never knew there was a Roma culture' or like, 'Do they actually eat those foods, or do they, actually dress like that'. Or things like that you know...Like I want people to know.

They also mentioned that the existence of books produced by Roma and Travellers might help to counter stereotypes and misrecognition:

Participant 12: Because like I never grew up, like... I kind of grew up being shy that I'm from the Roma community because of what other people were like defining us as... It means a lot to me because I'm writing something that I think I would like people to know about me as a Roma person.

Researcher: What do you think they'll learn about?

Participant 4: Like how, like it is discrimination and stuff (Traveller participant).

As they spoke about their cultural and ethnic identities that were foregrounded in the two books, some participants, both Roma and Traveller, spontaneously shared their experiences of stereotyping, discrimination and racism:

Participant 12: It's nice to like, break the stereotypes of like, Gypsy people being stupid and just only good for stealing... And it isn't true, it really isn't true... Like we do have brains and we can be smart you know. And it's just like kind of annoying because some people think that we are just good for like, I don't know, stealing, and it's not true because for us, in my family anyway, it's such a big embarrassment to go out and steal.

Participant 1: Say if my sister was like missed school one day, and the school are asking her tons of questions, and like then the other students have missed four months of school and they haven't sent a letter or anything.

Researcher: So you feel like they, they differentiate, they...

Participant 1: They judge... Because we're Romanian.

Participant 13 (Traveller participant): Yeah like you know over in Centra? We were over there one time... and we were all over there and my cousin bought a pack of these crisps, and the man thought we stole it but we didn't, and he asked the woman, and [my cousin] said 'why did you blame us for it?' and he said nothing, and then we just walked out...

These accounts of young Traveller and Roma people's everyday experiences of racism provided powerful evidence of the need for representations in schools and in society more generally that counter stereotyped assumptions and highlight unfair treatment of Traveller and Roma people. On a personal level, young people anticipated pride in being involved in and having their names attached to a book that would be seen by their peers (locally and nationally) and their teachers. There was a sense that it might represent a chance for them to exceed the expectations experienced by them in education.

Researcher: How does it make you feel that there's going to be a book that tells people about Roma culture?

Participant 1: Well it makes me feel like kind of famous you know.

Participant 17: And do you know the book we're doing right now... they said that's going to be in all the schools and all over the country.
Researcher: What do you think about that?

Participant 5: I feel like it's cool.

Researcher: What do you think about the idea of like you know teachers or younger kids in the classroom picking up a book that you put something into?

Participant 8: I feel amazed.

Researcher: So what do you think about other people seeing the book?

Participant 13: It makes me happy just to know that they like it.

Recognition and validation was noted by the Education workers also:

Rachel: Do you know what, even giving them back independence, a book with their name on it is going to be massive for them, d'you know?

Participants in the project clearly appreciated the potential impacts of the books they were engaged in creating, both personally and in terms of broader representation of Traveller and Roma people.

Reflections at the end of the project

Close to the end of the project, we asked young participants to offer suggestions to make any future arts projects as engaging as possible. Their main suggestions related to building in further activities to develop intra-group communication and understanding, in addition to art/story work:

Participant 1: Um, I think kind of like stuff to do with teamwork... Yeah because a lot of people like they feel shy... [It] can help us communicate because a lot of the children, it's kind of hard for them to communicate... And if they could just do activities that would help us communicate with each other... Because some of us like have tension.

Participants also suggested integrating outdoor nature activities and music:

Participant 1: And um, yeah, and if we ever did something like this in the future and worked with Danny and Francesca again... We should maybe go for walk... or do instruments, music.

Researcher: Oh okay, so moving around a bit more and music, yeah.

Participant 1: Yeah, music, music is uh, very calming, it makes me feel, it makes me fit in.

These suggestions are illuminating, and may be of value in informing future projects.

7 DISCUSSION

This section of the report presents further discussion of the main thematic areas arising from the research findings, highlighting participants' and workers' perspectives on their engagements with the project, and considers potentials and challenges for arts-based projects in contributing to ensuring that the voices of children and young people from minoritised groups are heard, respected and acted upon.

This interdisciplinary arts and publishing project aimed specifically to engage with Roma and Traveller children and young people, providing an opportunity for participants to engage in visual arts and story-making processes, and to contribute to publications geared at young audiences, which would feature participants' artwork and themes of interest to them.

The role of the arts in children's and young people's lives

Art-making was central to this interdisciplinary arts project, which combined visual arts and storytelling through personal narratives. Hands-on and vocal participation in art and storytelling practices was at the heart of the project.

Participants' accounts of their engagements with visual art-making suggested that the experience of participation in this 12-week programme had both tangible and less tangible effects.
The majority of participants expressed an existing interest in visual art, which had partly contributed to their interest in joining the project. Children's engagements with art processes and materials in the project were accompanied by a sense of enthusiasm, energy and emotional satisfaction. They seemed particularly interested in the exploration of new materials that was facilitated by Francesca, referring to the new sensory experiences and the element of discovery and surprise as they created, made mistakes and tried again, building skills and confidence in their abilities in a supportive space. These observations indicate the intrinsic value and enjoyment experienced by young people through participation in a high quality arts process (see Eisner, 2002), and potentials for additional outcomes such as developing skills and confidence (Matarrasso, 1997, Cultural Learning Alliance, 2017).

Young people also indicated that some of the artefacts they created were particularly meaningful to them, evincing the role of visual art-making in self-expression. In speaking about the intention of making these objects, they voiced feelings about important aspects of their lives, such as religion, family relationships and relationships with animals.

Additionally, a number of participants identified the art-making space as conducive to relaxation and flow (Csíkszentmihályi, 1990), providing an important respite from the everyday pressures of school and other responsibilities.

Some young people suggested possibilities for integrating other art forms, such as music, into future projects, as well as the inclusion of outdoor pursuits in nature, and further team-building activities.

Some of the features of participants' experiences of participation in visual arts processes as part of this project then included: immersion in, and sensory enjoyment of art processes; developing skills and confidence through supported exploratory learning; reflection and self-representation; and potentials for relaxation. They identified possibilities for integrating music and nature-base activities in future projects.

Perspectives on storytelling and co-authoring a book

Participants also expressed their enjoyment of storytelling and story-making processes, saying that it was interesting to hear others' stories and that this sharing of experiences helped to build trust and empathy in the group, as well as building confidence in their own voices. However, accounts by some young people indicated that the idea of co-producing or 'writing' a book was initially regarded with some hesitancy, due to struggles with literacy and academic success they had experienced in mainstream education. As their understanding of the process of co-creating the publication developed through the project, this ambivalence was reduced. Interestingly, the majority of participants, but not all, told us that they did not enjoy reading as a pastime, tending instead towards phones and gaming.

This sense of dissociation with the written word for some of the participants, together with difficult experiences in education, perhaps contributed to the pride, excitement and, sometimes, incredulity expressed by young people at the prospect of co-authoring a book that would be available to teachers and peers, which they considered might potentially alter perceptions of them at school. While these accounts refer to participation in a short project and no claims for long-term outcomes can be made, it is possible that a positive experience of participating in a co-authoring process may contribute to changing participants' perceptions of their own competences in relation to literacy, or their relationships with books.

Participants reported pride in co-authoring a book that would be available to teachers and peers. Some of them felt that this achievement might alter perceptions of their competences by teachers and others. This is significant as it speaks to the issue of low expectations in schools regarding Traveller achievements, as highlighted in the Traveller Education Strategy (2006) and the recent NTRIS (2021) Report, *Out of the Shadows – Traveller and Roma Education: Voices from the Communities*. There is potential for positive arts experiences that engage with young people's voices to contribute to changing their relationships with literacy.

Sociality and fun

In relation to both the visual art and storytelling elements of the project, participants told us about the enjoyment, sociality and fun they experienced, which was vital to their participation, and due in no small part to the careful preparation and focus on building trust provided by the artists, the mentor and the Education Workers. Here, it was clear that the project achieved its aim of providing a safe and convivial space for art creation and collaboration.

In the Roma group in particular, participants told us about opportunities to meet other children and young people from different sections of the Roma community who they would not normally have chances to meet. They suggested that there were some areas of misrecognition existing across these sections of the broader Roma community, and that having opportunities to meet in this forum resulted in greater mutual understandings.

Participants enjoyed the social aspect of the project. Importantly, this included meeting and making connections with young people from different backgrounds within the same community.

Contributing to a publication and representation

Participants' responses to contributing to a publication that would represent some aspects of their lives and cultures, and that would be seen by peers and teachers, was overwhelmingly positive. This is significant as representation of marginalised groups creates opportunities for genuine participation and engagement (McGarry and Agarin, 2014 p. 4; Harmon, 2015; ESRI, 2017; Traveller Culture and Heritage in Education Bill, 2018), counteracting stereotyping and discrimination which impacts on participation in educational spaces (Bhopal 2004, 2008; Bhopal and Myers 2010).

Participants seemed not to have previously considered authorship of a publication as a likely or possible opportunity. Enabling engagement by children from marginalised backgrounds in creating a book offers

significant potentials for expression of themes of importance to themselves and their communities in a public arena, addressing some of the vision of cultural democracy (Wilson Gross and Bull, 2017; Matarasso, 2019). Cultural identity is highlighted as a strategic theme in the revised National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017 - 2021 (Department of Justice, 2017), along with education. The report notes the importance of 'a positive culture of respect and protection for the cultural identity of Travellers and Roma across the education system' (Department of Justice, 2017 p. 26).

'Culture' and 'identity' are complex concepts, often difficult to define, and may be areas that young people have had few opportunities to consider in depth. Whilst recognition and celebration of cultural identity is highlighted in a number of current strategies for Traveller and Roma groups (NTRIS, 2017-2021), the need to reflect young people's culture across social groups is also important and has wider implications for inclusion and access (Smith and Greenfields, 2013). Education Workers supporting this project recognised that Traveller young people may not think about their culture in the same way that earlier generations did. It is important to remember that identities, as well as being a source of pride and connection to community, are fluid, emerging and intersectional (Valentine, 2007). A useful suggestion was made that further opportunities for exploration of these concepts, perhaps with local Education/ Youth Workers, would be fruitful prior to arts projects with Traveller and Roma young people. In particular, it is important that current realities and living culture of Traveller and Roma young people are represented, encompassing broader aspects of their identities alongside traditional Traveller or Roma identities that may have affective resonance for them. Exploring broader aspects of identities contributes to 'identity gain' which has been shown to improve wellbeing in other marginalised identity groups (Stickley and Hui, 2012).

In the current context of embedded racism and discrimination against Roma and Traveller people in Ireland and elsewhere (AITHS, 2010; Bhopal, 2008; Harmon, 2015; ESRI, 2017; NTRIS, 2017 - 2021), it is particularly important to address stereotypes and misrecognition.

Contributing to publications gave participants important opportunities to represent their cultures, identities and experiences, and those of their Traveller and Roma communities. Since these groups tend to be under- or mis-represented in educational resources and other media, representation has been highlighted as a key priority in national strategy documents (ESRI, 2017; Traveller Culture and Heritage in Education Bill, 2018). The publications produced have potential to amplify the voices of young Traveller and Roma in educational contexts, and to counter mis-recognition and stereotyping, if used alongside appropriate teacher resources and training, and engagement with families and communities.

Enabling participation

Opportunities for participation in cultural and artistic activities outside the context of school tend to be reduced for children and young people from lower socio-economic and marginalised groups (Smyth, 2016; Mak and Fancourt, 2021). One of the main aims of Kids' Own in partnership with ITM and TVG was to provide such an engagement with Traveller and Roma young people in Cork through the provision of a project aligning with the aims of these community groups, in particular the ITM Youth Participation and Leadership Strategy (see ITM 2021). Kids' Own staff worked closely with ITM and TVG to decide the scope of the project, and towards practicalities, such as identifying an appropriate venue.

Participation in cultural projects by groups traditionally excluded from such outlets often requires specific practical supports. It emerged during the research that the role of Education Workers was vital in enabling participation by children and young people in this project. Both workers had been involved with the young people, their families and communities for many years, and as such had built strong relationships and levels of trust. In some cases, this trust facilitated parents' permission to attend the project, on the condition that children were accompanied by the Education Worker. Education Workers explained the focus of the project and encouraged participation, as well as facilitating the consent process with parents. On an ongoing basis during the life of the project, they facilitated attendance by reminding participants by text and driving them to the venue, and then remained at the venue to provide support during the workshop sessions.

The insights of Education Workers were essential to the success of this project. Their contributions communicated to the artists and to the participants that they were valued, which was essential for building trust at the start of the project. Their understandings enabled them to respond sensitively to fluctuations in the communities, which was key during the Covid pandemic, and following traumatic bereavements. They are in a unique position to articulate complex community issues which may not be evident at first glance to newcomers. For example, workers would have specific knowledge in relation to generational, gendered and religious observances of both Roma and Traveller communities, and expectations around gender issues (Magyari-Vincze, 2006, 2007). Within Traveller and Roma communities gender polarisations can exist that function to demarcate boundaries which are observed through distinct practices (Magyari-Vincze, 2006, 2007), although it should be acknowledged that not all groups observe traditional practices to the same extent. The Education Workers also noted that being required to answer questions can be problematic for young people from Traveller and Roma communities, perhaps related to their own or earlier generations' experiences of mistreatment at the hands of state authorities. This observation is productive and important for all professionals, artists and researchers engaging with young Traveller and Roma people.

Education Workers' insights into the benefits of the project included the observation that this period of participation had helped to facilitate transitions on to mainstream Youth Clubs, mixing between Traveller and Roma groups, extending social skills, creating communication pathways, developing new friendships, and getting used to public spaces following Covid restrictions. This echoes findings from other participatory arts evaluations that note the value of the stepping stone / journey approach (Makin and Gask, 2012; Lawson et al., 2013). In addition, Education Workers noted the value of Travellers and Roma contributing to educational curriculum resources through the publication, improving recognition in schools, challenging teachers' assumptions and celebrating achievements – aspects identified in current policies and reports as vital (Quinlan, 2021). Finally, they provided valuable insights for future projects, in terms of the necessary balance between emphasising culture and heritage with future possible identity gains.

In addition to ensuring access and supports for Traveller and Roma young people, qualitative dimensions of children's and young people's participation in the project were addressed by the artists, who aimed to create a democratic, inclusive and non-hierarchical space. While providing a framework for group activities in visual art and storytelling, the artist-initiated activities were open-ended and allowed

space for experimentation, without fixed expectations of the end products. This was a finely-balanced undertaking, in that both artists and participants were aware that their twelve-week project was to result in a publication. Young people's voices and suggestions were actively welcomed and supported. Technical guidance was provided when needed, and learning through doing was supported.

It was also significant that one of the artists was a Traveller. Her presence and her biography provided a powerful role model for participants; and her lived experience of Travellers' cultural context was particularly important in facilitating inclusion.

Participants appreciated the supportive and inclusive environment created, and interestingly some of them identified the difference between this participatory approach and their experiences of more didactic approaches to teaching and learning at school. It was actually suggested that teachers and schools would benefit from introducing more participant led approaches. Suggestions for additional approaches that could be utilised in arts projects included outdoor activities and music.

Overall, the approach of the project addressed many of the elements of Lundy's Participation Framework (see Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2015), by creating safe and supported environments for young Roma and Travellers to develop and voice their concerns using a range of modalities, and have these views listened to and incorporated into a publication. The publications created through the project, utilised in classrooms alongside the accompanying teacher resource by Kids' Own have the potential to ensure that the voices of these young people are also heard in educational spaces, possibly influencing change in the form of increased recognition of Traveller and Roma cultures and experiences.

Particular care is needed to ensure that spaces are inclusive for young people from marginalised groups, and this must occur in close collaboration with local community groups, workers and families. As Quinlan (2021) observed in her study: 'While many of the teachers, principals and other members of the school community who participated in this research believe that their schools are inclusive, safe spaces for all students, the majority of parents and students from the Travelling community do not experience this as true for them.' (p. 50)

Children's participation in the project was facilitated through practical and emotional supports by Education Workers, and by artists' creation of a safe, inclusive space where children's stories and artistic expressions were encouraged. Participants identified the less hierarchical, exploratory approaches to teaching and learning as preferable to more didactic methods they had encountered at school. The publications produced have potentials to improve recognition in educational contexts of Traveller and Roma cultures and experiences, if utilised as part of a well-resourced and sensitive classroom approach, to include collaboration with parents and communities, teacher training and use of teacher guidelines (Cavaliero, 2020), such as the Kids' Own teaching and learning resource that accompanies this project.

Artists' and Education Workers' perspectives on the project

At the outset, the project was guided by community organisations ITM and Cork TVG, aligning with their priorities of promoting pride in Traveller and Roma identities, as well as recognition, equality, representation, anti-racism in broader society. The Education Workers and artists directly involved with carrying out the project acknowledged the ongoing work of these organisations with the respective community groups, and the importance of their support for this particular project.

The artists, Francesca and Danny, for their part greatly appreciated the support, training and mentoring provided by Kids' Own personnel, and the work of the Education Workers in enabling young people's attendance. The artists created and maintained an inclusive, supportive and exploratory environment for participants' work together, which was central to the quality of the project, both in terms of young people's artistic outputs and their positive experiences of the project. They noted that young people engaged very well with artistic processes, exploration and creation. While the space the project took place in was conveniently located in Cork, and in many ways very suitable for a project of this type, some room for improvement was identified. This included physical accessibility for participants with disabilities, greater availability of storage and wall space, and more easily accessible sinks for clean-up. It is, of course, recognised that there is a general shortage of such community art spaces.

The Education Workers observed a range of benefits for the young people they worked with through engaging with the project, including discovering new skills and modes of creative expression, developing confidence, making connections and having opportunities to self-represent through contributing to a publication. Importantly, the project provided a first experience of a youth project for some young people, particularly Roma participants, and had the potential to lead to participation in other contexts, such as youth clubs. Gina and Rachel also built on the experience of the Kids' Own project by organising activities and trips that included both Traveller and Roma young people. For the purposes of exploration of complex themes by young Roma and Travellers, the Education Workers suggested that there is scope for supporting greater integration of dialogue with local youth workers close to the communities prior to commencement of art projects, together with opportunities for reflection and feedback throughout the project lifespan. Drawing on in-depth local knowledge of youth workers/ Education Workers, such enhanced practices could play a key role in building relationships between the partner organisations and could ensure that projects are fully informed by and responsive to the specific contexts of children's and young people's lives.

The Artists and Education Workers valued the support and guidance of community organisations and Kids' Own. They observed that children and young people engaged very well with artistic processes, also noting benefits such as confidence, making connections, self-expression and representation. Education Workers also saw the potential of the project to lead to engagement with further youth activities, both those existing in the wider community and inter-group events. Suggestions were offered regarding optimal spaces for participatory arts projects, and scope for further supported involvement by local youth workers in preparation and ongoing feedback for arts projects.

8 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions and Recommendations

1. The project gave participants opportunities to engage in a high-quality supported artistic process that was informed by Traveller and Roma community groups. Important associated benefits to participants included learning new skills, building confidence, expressing views and concerns in a range of modalities, making connections and pride in contributing to a publication that will represent themselves and their communities in public contexts. These outcomes indicate that the aim of the project to provide a safe space for meaningful engagement with artistic processes has been achieved. Research on arts projects suggests that outcomes are even more significant and sustainable where there are opportunities for long-term periods of participation (Wilson Gross and Bull, 2017; Cultural Learning Alliance, 2017; Jindal-Snape et al., 2018; Matarrasso, 2019). It is therefore recommended that state and charitable funders for arts projects enable long-term arts projects for young people from marginalised backgrounds.

2. Education Workers have identified that the positive experience of participating in this arts project has potential to encourage some participants to become involved with further youth/ arts projects. It is therefore recommended that additional resources are allocated by government agencies/ NGOs to facilitate continued engagement of Traveller and Roma children and young people in youth projects generally.

3. Alongside greater resourcing for projects, there is a need for provision of suitable community-based arts spaces by local authorities and/or NGOs.

4. Participants had opportunities to explore and express important aspects of their identities as young Traveller and Roma people through the project. As part of longer- term engagements, there is potential for greater engagement with local Youth Workers/ Education Workers to explore complex and changing concepts, such as Traveller and Roma identities, with young people in conjunction with artists and other key workers. It is recommended that all work of this nature provides supported and resourced opportunities for integration of the local knowledge of Youth and Education workers to dialogue on the specific contexts of children's and young people's lives and to advise on engagement practices.

5. The publications produced have potentials to improve recognition in educational contexts of Traveller and Roma cultures and experiences, and to contribute to promoting equality and anti-racism. It is recommended that the publications are utilised in schools alongside engagement with families and communities, and appropriate teacher resources and training to achieve this.