

*Identifying with the Objects*  
**The Image and Identity Project**

**A Small Scale Evaluation**



Supported by The Paul Hamlyn Foundation

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# **1. Introduction and Overview of the Image and Identity Scheme**

## **1.1 Background to the Image and Identity Project**

Image and Identity is a project initiated by a consortium of six museums and art galleries, led by the V&A Museum, as an integrated endeavour. It seeks to engage young people in six regions of the UK in responding creatively to museum collections and displays. In its first phase, 2003-04, the project was funded jointly by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) through the Strategic Commissioning Fund for Community Education.

The project focused on the museums' collections from different cultures and set out with the aim of fostering a greater awareness and understanding of cultural difference, and of social issues common to all cultures, such as conflict between generations, territorial groups and social classes. The project sought to encourage children, young people and community groups to explore ways in which museum and gallery collections convey social, historical and cultural messages about the societies in which they are produced, and to explore their own image and identity.

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport commissioned an evaluation report of Strategic Commissioning projects in 2003-04 by the Research Centre for Museums and Galleries (RCMG). This was followed by a conference 'Talking Partnerships', which reviewed the project and considered ways of working in the future. The first phase of the project was also evaluated by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) which focused on the learning outcomes for the participants. In 2004-05 and 2005-06 NFER are evaluating the involvement of teachers and NCH Managers in the project, their associated learning outcomes and continuing professional development opportunities. The project has been continuing to strengthen its partnerships and to develop the outcomes of its activities.

In 2005-06, the project received continued funding from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and the Department for Education and Skills, and also secured additional funding from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation and the Lloyds TSB Foundation for England and Wales. The participating museums and galleries were the Victoria and Albert Museum, London; Tyne and Wear Museums Service; Sheffield Galleries & Museums Trust; The Royal Pavilion, Libraries & Museums, Brighton & Hove; Birmingham Museums & Art Gallery; and Manchester City Galleries. The other key partner was NCH the Children's Charity.

A total of 78 projects were devised, each with their own outreach sessions and individual aims. The overall aims of this phase of the project were to strengthen partnership working with regional museums in the field of children and young people's education and to build on and sustain elements of the

2003-04 regional partnership project, increasing sensitivity to cultural difference and strengthening links with the museum and gallery collections. The projects will culminate in an exhibition to be mounted at the V&A Museum in London in April 2006. This small scale evaluation was intended to utilise qualitative research to derive an in depth evaluation of the ways in which the project links the participants, the museum and gallery collections and the theme of Image and Identity.

## **1.2 Linking the Project Outcomes 2004-05 to the Collections**

The first phase of the project was evaluated by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER). Although the remit of the NFER research did not include a focus on the impact of the Image and Identity theme, the findings suggested strong evidence that,

*The theme of Image and Identity appears to have been both enabling and productive. It lent itself to a variety of interpretations in different settings, suited to the needs of the participants and the resources available. It enabled learning about other cultures as well as about self and in several cases resulted in learning about the relationship between those two aspects of Image and Identity. (p. vi)*

The NFER evaluation identified where the theme was enabling, and areas to concentrate on in future. Some of the findings and recommendations are particularly pertinent for this study:

- The project enabled learning about other cultures as well as self, and in several cases resulted in learning about the relationship between these two aspects of image and identity.
- The project appeared to encourage young people to 'live with difference' and instil tolerance. The process of sharing experiences appeared to contribute to increased understanding of other cultures leading in some cases to mutual celebration of cultural difference.
- The project enhanced understanding both of cultural difference and individual identity, but also the relationship between the two.
- The link is often made between enjoying participation in a project and increased visiting of museums. But as the NFER findings suggest, this is not an inevitable outcome. Considering the different experiences of participating in a project and visiting a museum or gallery, this is not surprising. However, if the link between the project and the museum or gallery experience is made more explicit, then interest in museum and gallery visiting is more likely to increase.

These results suggest real achievement in helping young people appreciate the diversity of identity, and in recognising the relationships between 'self' and 'other'. Despite this, it was clear that the full potential of the museums had not been fully utilised. It was notable in a number of the projects that the emphasis was largely placed on the aim to develop creativity through drawing and image making. It appeared that in some cases the museums were not as

central to this activity as they might have been. There was scope for a deeper engagement with the objects in the museums involved. In 2005-06, the project intended to rectify this, and promote the link between the theme and the museum or gallery and its collection.

### **1.3 Aims of the Research**

The aim of this research was to further explore the ways in which young people might develop a sense of their own identity, and the identity of others, through engagement with museum collections. The research questions were as follows:

1. How do the young people respond to the museum or gallery collections they are working with?
2. What do the young people think about the way the objects are presented in the museums or galleries?
3. What impact do the objects make on how the young people view their own identity and image?
4. What do the young people find out about other identities?
5. How might the young people display and label their own work in response to the project theme?
6. How do the young people view the work created by their peers for the project?

The research was conducted using qualitative methods during two of the projects, one organised at the V&A Museum, London with a secondary school group and the other at the Shipley Art Gallery, Gateshead with an NCH group. The findings outlined below are based on preliminary interviews with museum staff; participant observation of a day's activities; informal discussions with the young people in the galleries and during their activities; a focus group session with one of the case study groups; and informal discussions with the facilitators.

## 2 Case Studies of Two Image and Identity Projects

### 2.1 V&A Museum, London Brentside High School

This was a large group of students from Brentside High School, London, visiting the V&A Museum for the first time in July 2005, subsequent to an introductory session at the school led by the 'Image and Identity' co-ordinator. The group consisted of two groups of 16 Photography GCSE students and two groups of 10 Graphics GCSE students. The group of participants were mixed gender and from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

The aims of this introductory session were to relate the themes of the project, 'Image and Identity', to the museum's collection; to enable the students to identify objects/aspects of the collection to work on back in the classroom; to achieve the GCSE syllabus objectives. The students would be continuing with the 'Image and Identity' project in their school lessons until February 2006, linked to GCSE project work. There was also a December 2005 deadline for submission of work to be included in the V&A Museum exhibition in April 2006.

The teacher had clear priorities for the trip, which he hoped would give the students the opportunity to '*look at different cultures and come to a better understanding*'. The teacher also hoped that it would encourage the students to develop a positive attitude to museums so that the students would return to the V&A Museum in their own time. He had clearly had positive encounters with museums and galleries in his childhood, and was recounting stories to the students of his visits to the V&A Museum when he was a child. A key outcome for the teacher was to create a positive image of museums and galleries and overcome negative perceptions which had '*come from their parents that the Museum was not for the likes of them or that it would cost a lot of money to visit*'. He pointed out that despite the school, which is based at Ealing, being only 30 minutes away from the Museum, only four students had previously visited.

One of the groups of Photography students was accompanied by the researcher during the morning of the visit. The students had been issued with cameras to take photographs of objects throughout the Museum. They would then include these in the journals which they were keeping and record why they liked these objects, and include some information from the label with discussion on how it fitted with the theme. The teacher wanted the students to consider how the objects in the Museum would fit in with their own projects which explored Image and Identity through themes such as 'Fashion' and 'Jewellery'. The students also had a session with a photographer in one of the galleries, in which he was discussing how image and identity are constructed through photography.

In the afternoon the researcher accompanied the Graphics group to the Indian and South East Asian Study Room, where they viewed a selection of Bollywood posters. A curator from the V&A Museum introduced the posters to the students highlighting some of the issues arising from the posters relevant to the 'Image and Identity' theme. The students then made some sketches of the posters and asked the curator questions specific to their own projects, which were to relate to their own culture. Their projects required the students to pull together their ideas to create a poster, write about it, evaluate it, and exhibit it.

The research findings are based on:

- Discussions with the teacher who organised the trip and who led one of the Photography groups and with the leader of the Graphics group; discussions with the photographer leading one of the sessions.
- Observation and informal discussions both individually and in their groups with the Photography students during their exploration of the galleries and in their session with the photographer.
- Observation and informal discussions both individually and in their groups with the Graphics students during their Bollywood poster session.
- A focus group session, lasting 20 minutes, with the 10 students in the Graphics group at the end of their visit.

### **2.1.1 Collection**

The young people appeared to have enjoyed their visit to the Museum. In terms of learning outcomes, the day would have been particularly successful, having encouraged the young people to think beyond their own experience:

*I think it really helped us, to think about different ideas and different ways to use graphics.*

*It gave me new ideas, of combining things together.*

The aspects which seemed to invoke most interest were the variety of objects on display and the portrayal of different cultures. The latter, in particular, captured the imagination of many of the young people, who when asked 'If it could have been done differently today, what would you have liked more of?', responded that they wanted to see and learn more about different cultures.

*I would have liked to have seen more cultures because we only went to East Asia and Europe and I wanted to see Africa and would have liked to have spent more time.*

*I would have liked to have seen more on Western cultures. More cultures.*

*I would have liked to have known more about the history of all the cultures, because I think that is important because if you don't know the history you don't know where the patterns are coming from and why they are there. I would have liked to have known why were the patterns used, on what occasions, on what fabrics, and why they were used.*

Amongst the young people in the focus group session there was an overwhelming sense of awe but also of inspiration at the collection. This distilled into a desire amongst many to return to the Museum.

Interviewer: *Did you like the collections? Did you find it useful seeing the collections?*

Respondent: *I like in the print room they combined different ideas. It was really encouraging. When I first came here I didn't have any real idea of what the V&A offered, what their exhibitions were about.*

Interviewer: *Do you want to come back?*

Respondent: *Oh yeah.*

The use of a variety of media appeared to augment the 'Image and Identity' message, with the young people engaging with the objects in the collections during their tour and with the objects presented to them in the photographic and poster sessions. For example, in the Bollywood poster session, a number of the respondents commented on the variety of colours and styles of poster which had inspired them to expand their own horizons in terms of their own work.

*I really enjoyed the poster session. It made me think about all the different ways in which I could create my own poster – the colours, the textures, the variety of designs.*

### **2.1.2 Object Presentation**

A number of the young people had chosen 'Fashion' as their project topic. Consequently, the Fashion Gallery proved extremely popular. The object which struck a large number of the students, both male and female, was the Coronation Dress worn by Queen Maud of Norway.

*I liked it because it was rare, not many people would wear something like it - it wasn't common.*

The fact that the dress had been displayed as an object on its own was commented upon, as making it special, standing out from the rest of the items.

A number of the students were relating the objects to the Image and Identity theme, and relating the objects to themselves and those who would have worn them.

Interviewer: *Would you wear any of these clothes?*

Respondent 1: *The Thierry Mugler evening dress and ensemble – it's a statement, it's too extrovert. I wouldn't wear it. I could wear the Yves Saint Laurent suit – it's about me. I'm not an extrovert, I would feel comfortable in that.*

Interviewer: *Would you wear any of these clothes?*

Respondent 2: *Such beautiful dresses. It's how people in other centuries were, their image and identity. Yes, I could imagine wearing them. I could imagine living the life of one of these people – it must have been great, going around in dresses like that all day. It would make you feel good, just wearing it.*

There was also real engagement with the objects and the ways in which they had been interpreted in the gallery. In the Japanese Gallery, there was a lot of excitement at the textiles, and 'Seeing how they work'. Again, there was a sense of wonder at the diversity of styles and the differences from the familiar.

Interviewer: *How do you think you are going to use what you did today in future work?*

Respondent: *Things like they use more colours and ideas, they are much more metaphorical. In the British and Western style, compared to the Japanese there was more text.*

### **2.1.3 Objects and Self**

A number of the young people strongly identified with particular galleries or objects in the Museum. One student was standing for a long time in front of 'Madonna and Child', and when questioned what she liked about it, replied 'It's my religion. It's who I am'. Another student was excited about seeing Michaelangelo's David, claiming 'I've seen it before'. He could relate to the object because of this familiarity.

Another student was gazing at a badge in one of the collections. A long discussion with the interviewer ensued based around the student's interest in the badge because it was Russian, and was 'very much about my own identity', an identity which she felt others misrepresented and misunderstood. Up until that moment she had been one of the few students who was quiet when questioned. Viewing this object, which reminded her of her home country, brought her out of her shell.

In a similar vein, another student in the photography gallery was struck by a photograph of a hidden temple in Madras taken in 1858. When asked why she was so interested in it, her response was that it was familiar to her because she had been to that very site on a visit to Madras, '*where I suppose I am from*'. She was intrigued at the changes which had taken place between the time the photo was taken and of her visit, and was pointing out the differences. She began to reminisce about her visit, identifying herself strongly with the site.

There were also some highly perceptive responses to the day. When asked 'Have you got a message that you have taken away today?' one student replied

*That everyone has an identity of their own culture, and there is nothing to be ashamed of, because each and everyone's identity and culture mixes in some way, and it shows that everyone is their own individual and you don't need to be ashamed of who you are, because some way or other it is kind of like back to somebody else's culture and identity.*

This student had a fully formed understanding of the 'Image and Identity' theme.

#### **2.1.4 Image of Others**

The photographer who ran the session in the galleries, and had run a similar session previous to this one, was keen to instil in the young people a sense of the 'other', and attempted to achieve this through relating his discussion to celebrities in magazines. He felt that by referring to something that the students would be particularly interested in, they would be more likely to absorb the points he was trying to get across. Certainly, the celebrity photography books were the object of much attention from the students.

The visit had also instilled an increased understanding about other cultures and their relationship to self. In the focus group session this particular topic elicited the most responses.

Interviewer: *Did you get a better feel of other people's identities?*

Respondent 1: *That there are differences but looking at objects from other cultures, there are some things in common.*

Respondent 2: *I got to see how similar and different cultures can be and the different types of things people have in their cultures – different dishes, different clothes they might wear. I think it's good. I would like to come back and have a look round and take longer looking at the ornaments and stuff of other cultures.*

Interviewer: *What was the best thing you saw today that you will remember?*

Respondent 1: *Asian, Japanese, Chinese, seeing different cultures. Seeing how close they are together, same but different.*

Respondent 2: *Mostly things from different cultures, seeing how people live in different countries.*

Respondent 3: *Getting an insight in to different cultures. Like Asia.*

One of the students went in to detail about her project, the goals of which were reinforced by her mixed race background, being born to parents of Sri Lankan and Malaysian origin. She was keen through the exhibition of her work to highlight some of the problems she had encountered because of her mixed race, and to promote tolerance of mixed cultures and increased understanding of both differences and commonalities. Her message was that *'we're all the same, whatever culture we come from'*. She had found the objects *'really useful in aiding understanding'*, and saw ways of incorporating the objects in to her work in order to *'combat racism'*.

### **2.1.5 Display and Labelling of Own Work**

The students also appeared to be getting in to the spirit of the theme. For example, when asked why he was staring so intently at a Greek face in the Cast Court, one of the students replied that he was thinking about putting a different face on the cast, how that would change the identity of the figure. He had noticed that it was in fact a French sculpture, and was ruminating on the changes of identity between different nations, in this case France and Greece.

When asked about the display and labelling of the work, the students were non-committal and felt that they could add few additional insights.

Interviewer: *How would you label something like that? Could you say it better than they do here?*

Respondent: *No, I think they have shown their images and why they have created it, and I think that's good because it is good to put your ideas across and tell everyone.*

### **2.1.6 View of Peers' Work**

At this initial stage of their endeavours it was difficult to elicit any sense of attitudes towards their peers' work. Certainly when asked about what the other students were doing on their projects there was very little response.

## 2.2 Shipley Art Gallery, Gateshead NCH Group

The visit took place in August, the last day of the NCH group's four visits in the summer holidays to the Shipley Art Gallery. The group consisted of 16 children aged between 8 and 12 who had attended all or most of the previous three sessions in the gallery, and two key workers from Families First and Young Voices. The children had attended art projects before but not previously with the Shipley Art Gallery. The session was facilitated by an artist who had considerable previous experience of working with groups of young children. The intention was that the children would meet again later in the year to be consulted on the display of their creations in an exhibition to be held at the Shipley in February 2006, and ultimately at the V&A Museum in April 2006.

For the Shipley Art Gallery, the overall aim of the project was to enable use of the gallery as a resource for creativity and to provide a professional and interpretative environment in which to work, which is accessible to all. Within this overall aim, each group had different interpretations to the project both conceptually and creatively. The Shipley Art Gallery recognised that it needed to work around the needs of the children, whilst at the same time producing a high quality outcome with the children and artist. It was felt that *'This obviously adds a certain pressure to proceedings and so the learning processes are in a sense although important, become less enjoyable because they are production based'*.

The children had attended three sessions before the session which was under scrutiny. At the first session the children visited the gallery where the organisers addressed the subject of 'Image and Identity' from the aims of the project remit and then echoed back on a personal level from the young people through the experience of looking at objects and working with the artist. This was a new experience for the children who had not been to a gallery before, and inspired thoughts about paintings and objects. From there it was decided as a group to look at the figure as a means of locating identity within the physical form. Although the organisers had a few practically orientated plans in the background prior to the session, they felt it was important to encourage the young people to try and take a lead. The artist facilitator, being a sculptor, led it into a 3d world, which lent itself to a very 'hands on' practical activity. Casts had been made from the children's hands which would then be added on to the figures which were in their initial stages before the start of the final session.

In the observed session the children were finishing the figures to which would be added the casts of their hands. These were then going to be exhibited around the Shipley Art Gallery prior to their display in the V&A Museum exhibition. The research findings are based on:

- Discussions with the Gallery's education officers, the artist facilitator, and the two representatives accompanying the children.

- Participant observation of the activities (at times very much participating at the request of the children).
- Discussions individually and in small groups with the children.

A decision was made by the researcher during the session that it would be inappropriate to conduct a focus group session with these children. It proved particularly useful to actively participate in the session, whereby the children considered the researcher to be another member of staff and accordingly were not intimidated by any covert questioning.

### **2.2.1 Collection and Object Presentation**

In the first session at the gallery, the artist facilitator had brought examples of his own work on slide and had shown these to the children. Then the 'Image and Identity' project organiser had talked in general about the project, followed by a curator who talked about a range of objects in the Shipley's craft arcade which were essentially personal statements by the designer makers.

The children clearly remembered the tour of the gallery on their first visit, and when questioned appeared to have liked particular items of the collection, notably the temporary exhibition which included 'tents' that they could play in. Their comments were universally favourable:

*I liked the colours.*

*It was nice looking at things.*

After the initial session in the gallery, the gallery spaces were not used in any formal way, although it was noticeable that a number of the children chose to wander round some of the gallery spaces in their lunch break. In particular the tents proved popular with a number of children choosing to play and just sit in them to talk together. The children were making themselves at home in the galleries, although when questioned, none of them indicated that they would consider initiating a repeat visit.

The artist facilitator succeeded in enthusing the children with the creative process, although in this particular session little reference was made either to the theme of Image and Identity or to the Gallery's collection. The artist facilitator was concerned that he should keep the activity at a level which was relevant to the children, and that '*it would be lost on them if we went too deep*'. However there was an opportunity here to re-enforce the collections and the theme at the heart of the project, which would also have helped the children to reflect on the creative work that they were producing.

### **2.2.2 Objects and Self**

In an earlier session the children had been asked to complete a sketchbook, which was used as a general resource book in which to record their thoughts,

sketches, collages, mood boards, and so on. The NCH key workers referred to these, and indicated that they had been very successful with the children. The project facilitators had asked the children to complete these, so that they could consider '*the positions their sculptural models would take, how they saw themselves in relation to what they made*'. For some children they had been a highlight of the project, mainly because they had been able to take them home with them. When questioned, some of the children got quite excited about discussing the sketch book, describing what they had included in theirs. They were very much seen as reflecting the children's sense of self, who they are and where they came from. The key workers agreed with this, stating that for some of the children they had few possessions which they could call their own, and that they had been excited about having something that was their own. Similarly, some of the children repeatedly asked when they would be able to take home the key rings that they had made at a previous session.

In the discussion with the children a number of them indicated that they had enjoyed the gallery which dealt with the history of the area. Clearly, the children were relating to the objects in the displays, particularly as they pertained to family connections and belonging to a locality. It gave them a sense of place and of their own and their family's position in that place:

*My granny had things like this.*

*It's like your nan's stuff.*

*I liked it. (Why did you like it?) Because it was about where I live.*

### **2.2.3 Image of Others**

The children were working quite co-operatively with each other, with some helping their friends create their sculpture rather than working on their own. However, questioning failed to elicit much sense of 'other' from the children either in relation to the sculptures they were creating or the objects in the gallery.

### **2.2.4 Display and Labelling of Own Work**

The models which the children were making were to be exhibited in the Shipley Art Gallery prior to the V&A Museum exhibition. The artist facilitator envisioned them appearing throughout the galleries, '*in poses which reflect the children's intentions, maybe having one of them kicking a football*'. When asked how they would like their work to be exhibited the children made the connection with their creation and their own sense of self:

*I want it to be me playing football.*

Respondent: *It's me; it's going to look like me.*

Interviewer: *How do you see yourself?*

Respondent: *As an ice maiden. Cool, different.*

They were relating the objects to their personalities and their interests. It was clearly making them think about who they were.

### **2.2.5 View of Peers' Work**

The children were working quite co-operatively, but despite this, rarely expressed an opinion of their peers' work. The one exception was one child referring to his friend's model:

*He'll be a footballer.*

### **2.2.6 Further Comments**

Creatively the day was a great success. The children concentrated on the task, enjoyed making a mess, but also realising a finished product which they found satisfying. The artist facilitator's contribution to the enjoyment was immense. The children spent much of the time calling him over to look at their work and to chat to him. He proved very popular and certainly made the day interesting and stimulating for the children. He encouraged participation to the extent that the children expected everyone, including the researcher, to join in. The created objects lent themselves to further reflection on the theme of Image and Identity. During the session, though, the emphasis of the artist facilitator was on the creative process. The session released the creative potential of the children and led them to gain new skills. Although lack of time meant that the children did not realise the end product, the figures were nevertheless sufficiently complete for the children to feel a sense of satisfaction with their work.

### **3 Conclusions**

Before analysing the results of this study it is worth pointing out two factors which have clearly influenced the findings. First, the two case studies were at different stages of the project. The school party visiting the V&A Museum were on their first visit to the museum and had only recently got underway with the project. At the Shipley Art Gallery the group of young people were at the final stages of the project and were realising their creative endeavours. Second, the circumstances of the groups varied. The group at the V&A Museum were older (15-16 years old) and were school pupils studying for a GCSE examination. The group at the Shipley Art Gallery were young (8-12 years old) and were from children's homes or had disrupted family backgrounds. Accordingly, the findings varied quite markedly in terms of value to achieving the aims of the research.

#### **3.1 Relating to the Collections**

In the school group the young people were making connections to the objects in the galleries, not only in terms of their own selves, but also to other ways of life and to learning more about the past and present. They were engaging with the objects, relating to the diversity of styles and difference from the familiar. There was a sense of awe and wonder at the objects, which inspired the young people to creative self-expression. There was a general desire to see more in the Museum, with a number of the young people expressing their exasperation at lack of time to look at galleries of particular interest to them. They were building up a familiarity with moving through the galleries, and appeared to have a sense of cultural competence at engaging with the objects.

The visit was received positively, and it was possible to discern in the young people that they had increased their confidence at relating to the objects in the collection. The objects were acting as 'cues' for the young people to relate to the theme of 'Image and Identity'. The use of a variety of media throughout the session augmented this and facilitated discussion amongst the participants and between the participants and the facilitators.

The NCH group had enjoyed visiting the galleries and it was apparent that they felt more familiar in them than before. Although the project may not have overcome a sense of lack of cultural competence, there was nevertheless an ease in the galleries, with the young people choosing to spend time in them during their lunch hour.

#### **3.2 Making Connections**

Amongst the school group, the young people identified strongly with the objects, some focusing on specific objects in the collections. They were clearly making connections with 'self' in a number of ways, in terms of their

personality; cultural background; family; beliefs; and in relation to 'other'. Many of the young people had a fully formed understanding of the 'Image and Identity' theme, and how it related to their sense of self. The objects were clearly playing a significant part in their reflection on their own sense of self. Some of the participants were particularly struck by objects which they related to on a very personal level, and were provoked in to reflecting on them in relation to the theme of the project. These young people were privileging a particular aspect of their identity in relation to its reflection in the object. They were actively selecting a particular aspect of their own identity which they could relate to through the object. For some, it gave them a sense of mission, to ensure that others came to a better understanding of who they were within society and how they linked with that society. The young people were also beginning to appreciate that they assumed multiple identities, referring to their selves in a number of different ways, in terms of personality, culture, beliefs and so on.

The 'object effect' for the NCH group alluded both to the museum's collections and to their personally created objects. The use of alternative media was extremely important in enabling the young people to reflect upon their 'selves' and their own personalities. The sketch books in particular had been successful in allowing for a degree of self-expression and for creating something that was personal to them. This group also made connections between the objects in the museum and themselves particularly in terms of family and locality. The collection clearly gave them a sense of place and belonging. Once the personal objects are placed in the museum it will be interesting to see if any further connections are made with the other objects already existing in the displays.

### **3.3 Validating Diversity**

It was evident from the school group that exposure to the museum's objects which included collections of other identities engendered a strong sense of the 'other' and validated diversity. This manifested itself in understandings of both the differences and the commonalities between 'self' and 'other'. In other words at the same time as there was a recognition of boundaries the young people were actively attempting to break down those boundaries. Through exposure to objects of other identity formation they were finding their own pathways to respecting other cultures without it being spelled out to them. Their dialogue suggested increased tolerance which was indicated through their fascination with the 'other' which led to reflection on what made the 'other' intriguing and how this impacted on the relationship between 'self' and 'other'.

### **3.4 Creative Outcomes**

As the NFER research discerned, the theme of 'Image and Identity' was certainly enabling in terms of stimulating the young people creatively and in provoking them to contemplate on identity and issues of diversity, conflict and

respect. For the NCH group, the creative process was highly enjoyable, they were developing new skills, and a sense of self-satisfaction at the creation of an end product.

### **3.5 Stimulation**

The findings reinforced the NFER research which also indicated that the young people had enjoyed their experience of working on the projects. For the school group it was possible to make links with enjoyment and the learning outcomes. For the NCH group enjoyment could be linked both to working co-operatively with other young people and a sense of self-esteem at creating something worthwhile.

### **3.6 Promoting Use of Museums and Galleries**

As with the NFER research, the respondents indicated increased respect for museums and galleries. Although this did not necessarily translate in to an increased likelihood of continued use of museums and galleries, within the school group a number of the young people did indicate that they would return to the V&A Museum on their own volition.

### **3.7 Role of Facilitators**

The NFER research suggested that the project had stimulated new learning relationships with previously unknown peers and adults and different expectations were made of them. The findings from this research confirm this, and also indicate the value of the facilitation. In both projects the enthusiasm of the facilitators and the ways in which the facilitators engaged with the young people greatly enhanced the experience. These cultural intermediaries had superseded any sense of lack of cultural capital within the young people. Their input in terms of reinforcing the project theme and aim were also crucial. In the case of the NCH group at the Shipley Art Gallery, the children had clearly assimilated the messages of the theme through their initial activities, but it was apparent that in the session under review these could have been reinforced. There was a clear link between process and outcome, with the quality of the input impacting considerably on the achievement of the project aims.

### **3.8 Use of Mixed Media**

Introducing a variety of media in the session proved significant in provoking discussion and debate, and in reinforcing the theme in alternative ways. For the NCH group in particular, where the theme was perhaps subsumed by the creative process, the use of alternative media, particularly the sketch book,

enable the facilitators to reinforce the messages they were attempting to project to the young people.

### **3.9 Future Research**

A number of implications for future research have arisen from this small scale study. The approach taken proved even more useful than anticipated. The technique of participant observation was extremely productive, with the young people responding more confidently and without inhibition than had been expected. It was clear that the richer dataset was obtained from the school group. This was because they were focused in their work with a specific outcome in their GCSE results. It was also because they were an older group who responded easily to the researcher's questioning. However, they were at an early stage in the project and had made little progress in making decisions about the display and labelling of their own work, and certainly were not in a position to comment on their peers' work.

It was anticipated that the NCH group would prove more of a challenge in obtaining data, and accordingly the researcher responded to the group's environment and group personality, and 'mucked in'. However, it appeared from questioning the young people that they had responded to the gallery's collection in the first session, and it would have been useful if the researcher had been present during that session. By the time they had reached the fourth session the young people had moved on and their attention was now focused on the creative task at hand.

The conclusion from this would be that it would be extremely useful for the research to track the individual projects from inception to conclusion and beyond. Valuable data is missing from these findings which could only be extracted were the researcher to follow the project through its various stages. Much of the data from the NfER research was obtained through interviews with the participants after the conclusion of the project. Tracking the groups as well as post-project interviewing would enable the researcher to examine 'change' in understandings of image and identity through both process and outcome.

Finally, for the researcher it was an illuminating and refreshing experience to research this project. The young people were surprisingly uninhibited in responding and the theme was not only enabling but appeared to be inspirational. Many of them had recognised that in 21<sup>st</sup> century society the 'self' is increasingly self-obsessed at the exclusion of the 'other'. As Stuart Hall has argued, 'The question for the twenty first century is the capacity to live with difference'. Through engagement with museum collections the young people in this project were beginning to negotiate with difference, through developing a respect for other cultures and ways of doing things. The 'Image and Identity' project has created a forum where we can begin to 'live with difference'.