



Arts & Culture: Community Connections

CONTRIBUTIONS FROM NEW SURVEY RESEARCH

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For most people who participate in arts and culture, the experience involves community connections – with particular people or acquaintances in their communities; through community organizations that are important to them; or at places that are familiar, friendly and accessible. These community connections represent “paths of engagement,” and a deeper understanding of those everyday connections can open new opportunities for arts and cultural organizations to build participation. This is a key finding from a survey of residents in five places where programs have been working to broaden, deepen, and diversify cultural participation. In the Community Partnerships for Cultural Participation (CPCP) initiative, a total of 10 community foundations around the country received grants from the Wallace-Reader’s Digest Funds to induce more people to attend arts and cultural events, encourage people who attend to contribute their time and money as well, and attract people who do not usually attend.

Information about the CPCP survey sites is displayed on page 5.

The survey was conducted by the Urban Institute as part of an evaluation of the cultural participation initiative. The findings are important to providers, funders, and policymakers who aim to increase involvement in arts and culture because the community connections of people who participate represent paths of engagement in arts and cultural activities. The survey asked people about the types of arts and cultural events they attended and how often, their reasons for attending, and where the events they attended took place. The respondents’ answers point to several types of community connections beyond the instant communities that are created by performance events:

IN THIS BRIEF

- How Community Connections Support Participation
- Survey of Residents in Five Communities
- Using the Findings

Social and family connections

are particularly important to people who participate in arts and culture occasionally. The reason most frequently given for participation, by 59 percent of those responding to the survey, was “to get together with friends or family” and the second most frequent reason, cited by 49 percent, was “to support friends or family.”

Connections to organizations, including religious institutions,

are important to people who participate frequently. Forty-seven percent responded that they often choose to attend arts and cultural events in order “to support an organization or event important to the community.” In addition, organizational membership is much more prevalent among people who attend frequently than among those who attend less often, and membership in an organization that sponsors arts and cultural events practically guarantees participation. Religious institutions are a path of engagement in arts and culture because religious organizations are important non-arts sponsors of arts and cultural events, and worship services constitute an important venue for participation in arts and culture, especially music.

CULTURAL PARTICIPATION SURVEY

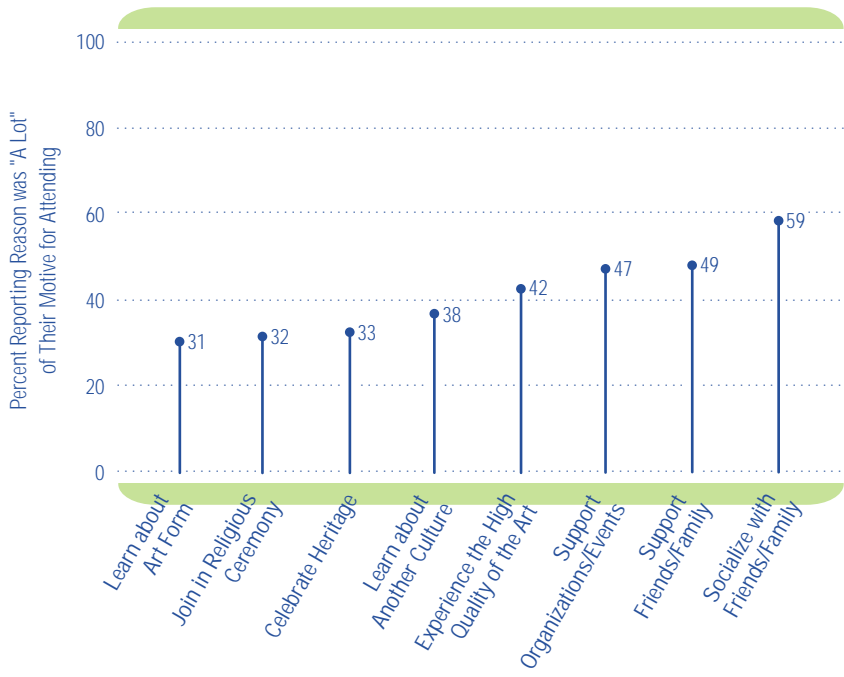
The Urban Institute conducted a telephone survey of adults in five of the CPCP communities in the fall of 1998. The purpose was to collect information about individual participation in a range of arts and cultural activities. A random sample of adults in the five communities was contacted, producing 2,406 responses. The main topics of the 20-minute survey were:

- 0 **Methods** of participation, defined as attendance at live arts and cultural programs and events, donations of time and money to arts and cultural organizations, and pursuit of personal artistic expression.
- 0 **Motivations** for participation.
- 0 **Venues** for participation – i.e., *where* people had attended live music, theater and dance performances and *where* they had viewed painting, sculpture, architecture, and other visual arts.
- 0 **Participants’ Background** – questions about respondents’ income, education, religion, immigrant status, organizational memberships, and other personal and household characteristics.

The five communities surveyed are diverse. They are:

- 0 **The Kansas City Metropolitan Area**
- 0 **Humboldt County, California**
- 0 **Mayfair, San Jose, California**
- 0 **Milpitas, California**
- 0 **Gilroy, California**

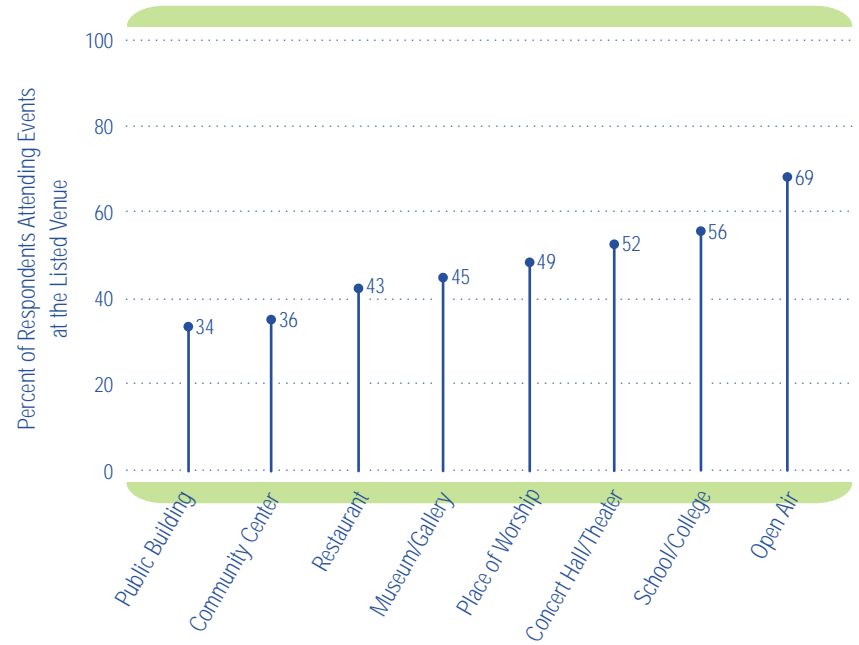
EXHIBIT 1: REASONS WHY PEOPLE ATTENDED ARTS AND CULTURAL PROGRAMS AND EVENTS OVER THE LAST YEAR



SOURCES

Urban Institute:
 1998 Cultural Participation Survey
 Note: Percentages based on combined responses from five communities.
 The weighted N for each site is:
 Kansas City: 1,169, Humboldt: 1,218,
 Milpitas: 972, Gilroy: 958, & Mayfair: 1,143.

EXHIBIT 2: PLACES WHERE PEOPLE ATTENDED ARTS AND CULTURAL PROGRAMS AND EVENTS OVER THE LAST YEAR





Religious organizations are important non-arts sponsors of cultural events.

Connections to community spaces are stronger than connections to traditional arts and cultural venues. Three of the four places most frequently named by the respondents who attended arts and cultural events were community spaces – open air spaces (69 percent), schools and colleges (56 percent), and places of worship (49 percent).

Connections to people of the same heritage underlie arts and culture participation in some communities. “Celebrating heritage” was cited by 33 percent of those responding.

Connections to people who are “connectors” in communities. Some people participate in community activities in several different ways, such as attending events (including arts and cultural events), volunteering their time to the “causes” of community organizations, and engaging in the political process. These community activists usually have wide circles of friends and acquaintances with diverse interests and act as “connectors” in their communities. People who participate frequently in arts and culture tend to be such connectors and thus represent a path of engagement for others who participate infrequently in arts and culture or not at all. ●

CPCP SURVEY COMMUNITIES

The Kansas City Metropolitan Area, including 1.4 million residents of five counties in Missouri and Kansas. This area resembles the rest of the country in its mixture of urban and suburban, rich and poor, and crowded and sparsely populated sections. More than four out of five residents are white; most of the rest are African American and, increasingly, Hispanic.

Humboldt County, California, a largely rural county of about 120,000 people, with the largest population centers in the cities of Eureka and Arcata. Humboldt County's economy was built around the timber industry, although the southern part of the county is dotted with farms. About 88 percent of the county's population is white, although there is a substantial Native American population, which was oversampled in the CPCP survey.

Mayfair, Milpitas, and Gilroy, California. Within Silicon Valley, a popular name for Santa Clara County, Mayfair is a one-square mile, low-income neighborhood in San Jose, with about 6,000 Hispanic and, increasingly, Asian residents. Milpitas, an affluent suburb of San Jose with about 50,000 residents, is about one-half white, one-third Asian, and one-fifth Hispanic. Gilroy is an agricultural town – known locally as the “garlic capital of the world” – containing 39,000 residents, about half of whom are Hispanic.

Turning Community Connections Into Engagement

People who participate in arts and culture have a variety of community connections, which suggests a multiplicity of strategies for broadening, deepening, and diversifying participation. Such strategies could involve venues, programs, sponsors, appeals, and outreach methods as well as partnerships with non-arts organizations. Some are already employed extensively, but others are new to many arts and cultural providers. The CPCP research provides factual confirmation for these common strategies for audience development:

- Taking music, dance, theater, and visual arts to places where people are, i.e., schools, community centers, open air spaces, and public buildings.
- Drawing people into museums, galleries, theaters and concert halls by putting on events that celebrate the heritage of targeted audiences.
- Fostering a new generation of arts and culture participants by sponsoring activities for children and families.
- For arts and culture donors, in particular, engaging others as supporters of a “cause” by supporting the causes of others.

The research supports important new strategies for building engagement. Strategies that have not been widely employed include:

- Creating marketing strategies and messages that highlight and provide incentives for bringing family members and friends to arts and cultural events.
- Designing events so that they provide opportunities for socializing.
- Creating connections between arts and cultural programs and events and local non-arts causes and organizations.
- Developing formal roles in the arts and cultural sector for “community connectors” that take advantage of their potential to be natural marketers of arts and culture.
- Establishing partnerships between arts and cultural organizations and other non-profit and voluntary organizations, including religious organizations, to produce arts and cultural programs and events. ●



Cultural participation may be a “path of engagement” to other forms of civic participation

What Counts as Arts and Cultural Participation

When asked about their own participation, people go beyond narrow, conventional definitions of art and include more varied, popular forms. Therefore, how the question of participation is posed, and how broadly participation is defined, are critical and can lead to sharply different conclusions. The survey of five CPCP communities asked about *any* live music, theater and dance events attended during the previous year and *any* visual arts seen during that time. The answers were analyzed to compare participation broadly defined – that is, including the full range of music and dance styles, types of theater, and examples of visual arts that respondents identified – with participation narrowly defined – that is, including only the music, theater, dance, and visual arts that have been specified in previous national surveys. (See exhibit 3 on page 8.)

A majority of community residents participate in some form of arts and cultural activities – a sizable majority in four out of the five communities surveyed. Active support for arts and culture is not limited to an elite minority. The difference in rates of participation, comparing broad and narrow definitions of arts and culture, was significant for all five communities and for all of the art forms within each community. The difference was most striking in the Mayfair neighborhood of San Jose, California, a low-income, predominantly Hispanic neighborhood, where the overall rate of participation in arts and culture under the narrow definition was 31 percent, but 55 percent when arts and culture were broadly defined. (See exhibit 4 on page 9.)

PROFILE OF FREQUENT PARTICIPANTS IN ARTS AND CULTURE:

Frequent participants in arts and culture are more likely than less frequent participants to:*

- 0 Engage in other civic activities, such as voting and being a member of a voluntary organization or association—that is, to act as “community connectors.”
- 0 Attend arts and cultural performances of both popular and classical styles.
- 0 Attend performances or exhibits of multiple art forms—that is, music, theater, dance, and visual arts.
- 0 Have attended worship services at least once in the previous year.
- 0 Have been taken to arts and cultural events as a child and to have taken lessons in an art form.
- 0 Participate in order to support an organization or event important to the community, to experience the high quality of the art, and to learn about another time or place.

SOURCE

Urban Institute:
1998 Cultural Participation Survey

*Note: The term “participant” refers to attendance at live arts and cultural programs and events over the past year.

In other words, those who participate in arts activities, both narrowly and broadly defined, are more active in each. Not only do more people attend when participation is “broadly defined,” but the “broad participants” are more frequent attendees of the arts under both narrow and broad definitions.

These findings suggest another strategy for increasing support of arts and culture: offering programs and events that encompass the range of styles and types that people who participate identify as arts and culture. ●

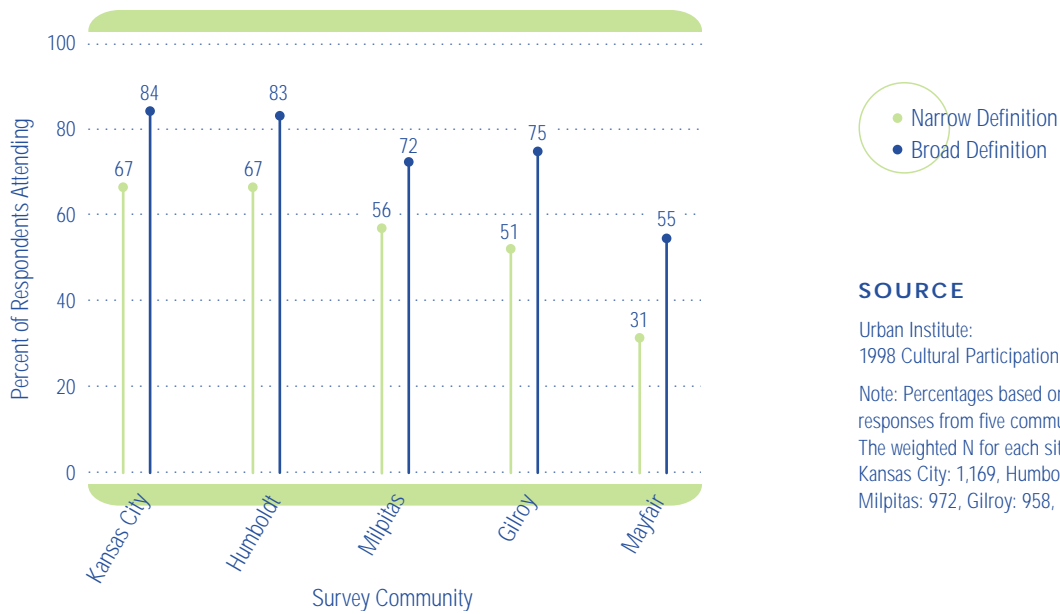
EXHIBIT 3: TWO DEFINITIONS OF ARTS AND CULTURAL PARTICIPATION

Activity	Narrow Definition	+	Expanded Activities	=	Broad Definition ¹
Music	Jazz/Blues, Classical, Opera		Pop, Rock, Soul, Ethnic, Other		ALL Live Music
Theater	Professional, Community, Amateur		K-12 School, Other		ALL Live Theater
Dance	Ballet, Tap		Ethnic/Folk, Native American, Other		ALL Live Dance
Visual	Viewing of any visual art form and visited a museum or gallery in past year		Viewing of any visual art form and did not visit a museum or gallery in past year		ALL Visual Arts

¹ The broad definition equals all items in the narrow definition plus those in the expanded activities category. For music, theater, and dance, many respondents participated in both narrow and expanded activities (e.g. attended reggae concerts and Rachmaninoff concerts). For visual arts, the narrow and expanded activities are mutually exclusive, based on whether or not the respondent had been to a museum or gallery. The broad definition of visual arts therefore includes all people who reported experiencing visual arts anywhere.

EXHIBIT 4: ATTENDANCE AT ARTS AND CULTURAL PROGRAMS AND EVENTS

Participation according to Narrow and Broad Definitions of Arts and Culture by Survey Community



SOURCE

Urban Institute:
1998 Cultural Participation Survey
Note: Percentages based on combined responses from five communities. The weighted N for each site is: Kansas City: 1,169, Humboldt: 1,218, Milpitas: 972, Gilroy: 958, & Mayfair: 1,143.

Arts & Cultural Connections for Community Building

The community connections of people who participate in arts and culture are a potential resource for community organizers, funders and policy-makers who are seeking ways to strengthen communities. When community builders recognize arts and cultural participation as a form of civic participation and as a potential path of engagement to other forms of civic participation, new possibilities for engaging people take shape. Arts and cultural events attract people in ways that some other types of community activities do not, and they attract people who might not

participate in other types of community activities. For example, arts and cultural events are central to how people celebrate their heritage in many ethnic groups and are thus a tool for community organizing in communities where such celebrations are valued. Also, the “community connectors” who are natural marketers of arts and culture can be natural marketers of other forms of civic participation as well. These people represent a bridge between the arts and cultural sector and community builders because they are active in both worlds.



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The Boston Foundation, one of the 10 community foundations participating in the CPCP initiative, has pursued arts and culture as a way to help people who were outside the social and economic mainstream. It has supported a wide variety of approaches to encourage participation and community building, including:

0 The Cambridge Multi-Cultural Arts Center, which presents culturally diverse music, theater, and visual arts programs, created “Arts and Dialogues on Race,” a program to facilitate conversation on race through arts and discussion.

0 The Asian Community Development Corporation, a CDC working to preserve and revitalize Boston’s Chinatown community, was the lead agency on “A Chinatown Banquet,” a youth development and public art project. Led by artists familiar with community work and Internet technologies, the program linked youth with their elders to explore, map, and create a website (www.chinatownbanquet.org). The group also organized an exhibit about their changing neighborhood.

0 The Huntington Theater Company created and presented a dramatic work based on the oral histories of Roxbury (black) and South Boston (white) residents who lived through the school desegregation conflicts of the 1970s. The effort connected different generations by using young people to conduct the interviews with seniors in the community.

0 ZUMIX and a five-agency collaboration produced “Cultural Connections,” an arts engagement project to facilitate connections between youth and adults, and between new immigrants and long-time residents. Their series of outdoor performances and festivals draw a large and diverse group of people from the region. ●

Arts Participation *is* Civic Participation

The CPCP evaluation and survey suggest that if arts and cultural activities, broadly defined, are taken into account, civic participation may be more extensive than pessimists have warned. The research also suggests that cultural participation may be a “path of engagement” to other forms of civic participation.

Further, cultural participation may provide a basis for strengthening community bonds. In this view, cultural participation helps people articulate important aspects of themselves and their communities, thus encouraging attitudes, values and social ties that underpin a well-functioning society.² The Community Partnerships for Cultural Participation initiative provides a meeting ground for people interested in expanding arts and cultural participation and people interested in strengthening communities. ●

EVALUATION OF THE COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS FOR CULTURAL PARTICIPATION INITIATIVE

In January 1998, the Wallace-Reader's Digest Funds commissioned the Urban Institute to conduct a five-year evaluation of the CPCP initiative. The initiative is part of the Funds' long-term commitment to support a range of cultural organizations and private and public arts funders to enhance broad participation and to make the arts and culture an active part of people's everyday lives. This policy paper draws heavily from the first monograph published from the study, *Reggae to Rachmaninoff: How and Why People Participate in Arts and Culture*. Among the topics of upcoming monographs are: making the case for cultural participation; partnerships among arts organizations; and the role of non-arts organizations in cultural provision.

COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS PARTICIPATING IN CPCP

The Boston Foundation
Community Foundation Silicon Valley
Community Foundation for Southeastern Michigan
Dade Community Foundation
East Tennessee Foundation
Greater Kansas City Community Foundation
Humboldt Area Foundation
Maine Community Foundation
New Hampshire Charitable Foundation
San Francisco Foundation

² This view is most closely associated with the group that convened as the Saguaro Seminar to discuss ways to reinvest in America's social capital. See *Better Together: Report of the Saguaro Seminar on Civic Engagement in America*, John F. Kennedy School of Government (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, 2000).

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The Wallace-Reader's Digest Funds seek to create opportunities for people to enrich themselves through better schools, enhanced community activities, and participation in the arts. Using a range of strategies over the past decade, the Funds have worked to propel the development of cultural organizations that are effectively increasing participation in their communities; to foster partnerships with states and other public and private funders to increase arts participation; and to develop new knowledge and tools that help make the arts part of people's everyday lives.

Arts4AllPeople

A web community for those committed to building participation in the arts.

Visit: www.arts4allpeople.org



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