

LOS ANGELES COUNTY ARTS COMMISSION

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT IN THE ARTS
A Review of Recent Literature

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Enriching Lives



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LOS ANGELES COUNTY ARTS COMMISSION
DEVELOPING A COMMON FRAMEWORK FOR
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Do all Americans have equal access to the arts? Are the arts accessible and inclusive for all communities? National rates of arts participation as measured by attendance at live benchmark events have been trending down for the past few decades.¹ Consequently, a narrative of arts decline in the US has been largely accepted, even as some accounts show cultural engagement experiencing a renaissance enabled by advanced communication technologies and changing demographics (Wali et al., 2002; Alvarez, 2005; Brown, Novak & Kitchener, 2008; Novak-Leonard et al., 2015).

This report, informed by a review of practitioner and academic literature, charts the concerns of arts stakeholders surrounding public arts engagement since about 2000, beginning with the discovery of a statistically significant decline in benchmark attendance as observed in the Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (SPPA). It also traces the role of the “informal arts” (folk, traditional and avocational arts) in broadening the definition of arts and cultural participation.

Authors Henry Jenkins and Vanessa Bertossi (2007) have suggested that we are living in a “new participatory culture” distinguished by four factors:

1. Low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement;
2. Strong support for creating and sharing what one creates with others;
3. Transmission of knowledge and skills through informal mentorship networks; and
4. A degree of social currency and sense of connectedness among participants

This new culture makes measuring arts participation more difficult because traditional distinctions between amateur and professional, hobbyist and artist, and consumer and producer are blurring. Broadening the definition of arts participation to include leisure time investment in creative pursuits and arts-making helps enlarge the definition of art’s value to society (Ramirez, 2000). Expanding our sense of “what counts” initiates new conversations by reframing the old question “Why aren’t people attending?” as “What *are* people doing with their creativity-focused leisure time?” New cultural indicators are revealing the value of arts and culture in people’s everyday lives, shifting the narrative about arts participation in the early twenty-first century from decline to resurgence.

Even as both the concept and measurement of “engagement” in the arts has evolved over time, the understanding of the purpose of that engagement has varied. For some organizations, engagement has meant creating new inroads to existing programming. For others, engagement has meant developing new programs to capture the attention of new audiences. In 2015, this conversation took a new direction as people moved from talking about engagement as a process to focusing instead on a key outcome: cultural equity and inclusion. In Los Angeles County, as well as across the U.S., arts organizations began to focus

¹ Benchmark arts activities as defined by the SPPA include live attendance at jazz or classical music concerts, opera, plays, ballet, or visits to art museums or galleries.

their attention on ensuring that everyone has access to the benefits offered by the arts. Viewed through this lens, this literature review should be seen as a companion – a prequel, even – to the literature review on cultural equity and inclusion published by the Los Angeles County Arts Commission in March 2016.²

The purpose of this literature review is to capture the evolution of that conversation. Research and writing on arts engagement has been as diffuse and wide-ranging as the activity itself has been in practice. This literature review brings together and summarizes key lessons from a field. In addition to summarizing the past, they help to set the stage for understanding today’s discussions of cultural equity and inclusion in the arts. Among the key top-level findings in the literature:

When defined more broadly than benchmark experiences, arts participation in the US is robust and, in fact, is not declining.

When the definition of arts participation is expanded to include creative activity and media-based participation, estimates range from about 71 to 74 percent of US adults. Estimates reach as high as 95 percent when informal arts are taken into account. The use of electronic media to produce, share, and consume art increased 30 percent between 2008 and 2012.

“Creative expression” resonates more with the general population than “arts and culture.”

As the definition of what counts as arts and cultural participation broadens, the value of the arts in people’s everyday lives becomes more evident.

Individuals seek out artistic and creative activities that allow them to connect with family and friends.

Overwhelmingly, *socializing with family and friends* is the top reason given for participating in arts and culture events, and over fifty percent were accompanied by one or more friends at the most recent event they attended.

Overall educational attainment is the best predictor of benchmark arts participation, playing a much more important role than age and cohort or race and ethnicity.

Once education is accounted for, race and ethnicity are especially weak predictors of arts participation. Prior experience with arts education in particular also plays a role.

² See **Cultural Equity and Inclusion Initiative: Literature Review** available at http://www.lacountyarts.org/UserFiles/File/CEII_LitRev_Final.pdf.

Americans who engage in creative activities are six times more likely to attend arts events than those who do not create art.

In 2008, 33 percent of U.S. adults (74.2 million) both attended and created art, more than the number who only attended (17 percent) or only created or performed art (12 percent).

The meaning people derive from arts experiences is subject to some factors under the control of the designers of those experiences and some that are not.

For example, an arts organization has the ability to change the locus of creative control from the artist to the audience, creating greater opportunity for participation. However, they have no control over participatory arts activities that take place in the home. The home is increasingly recognized as an important setting for arts and cultural engagement, as is the outdoors. This kind of “unincorporated” or “informal” art making is an important part of the lives of Americans but that is not yet fully understood.

I. BASIC DEFINITIONS

The terms *arts engagement* and *arts participation* are used in different ways depending on who is doing the participating, who is performing the acts of engaging, and to what end. Before approaching the literature discussed in this paper it would be helpful to sort out some basic definitions.

Outside of the arts, both “participation” and “engagement” are widely used terms, especially in the political sphere. *Public participation* is a concept based on the belief that those who are affected by a decision have a right to be involved in the decision-making process. *Community engagement* is a process of inclusive public participation designed to support the well-being of the community (International Association for Public Participation, n.d.). *Civic engagement* often refers to the ways citizens participate in the life of a community in order to improve conditions or shape the community’s future; it has been defined broadly as community service, collective action, or political involvement (Adler & Goggin, 2005).

Arts participation is sometimes thought of in the field as *a measure of arts engagement*—of individuals or communities—where engagement is synonymous with involvement (Jackson, Herranz & Kabwasa-Green, 2003; Alvarez, 2005; Brown, Novak & Kitchener, 2008; NEA & AHRC, 2014; Novak-Leonard, Wong & English, 2014; NEA, 2015, among others). But in some corners, arts engagement is a process and a correlate of *community engagement* as defined in the paragraph above, specifically a “mission strategy of building deep relationships between the arts and their communities for the purpose of achieving mutual benefit [in which] the arts and community are equal partners” (Borwick, 2015).

This paper serves as an introduction to the broader literature and follows that literature in using “engagement” and “participation” synonymously unless otherwise indicated. *Participatory* (or “active”) *art-making* is a special type of artistic practice in which there is little artist-audience distinction, and the primary goal is to involve the maximum number of people in some performance role (Turino, 2008:26). This is often contrasted with the consumption of *presentational* (or “passive”) *art*, a situation in which artists prepare and provide the artistic experience for a receptive audience. Some treat these two modes as opposite ends of a spectrum (Brown & Ratzkin, 2011; Brown, Novak-Leonard & Gilbride, 2011).

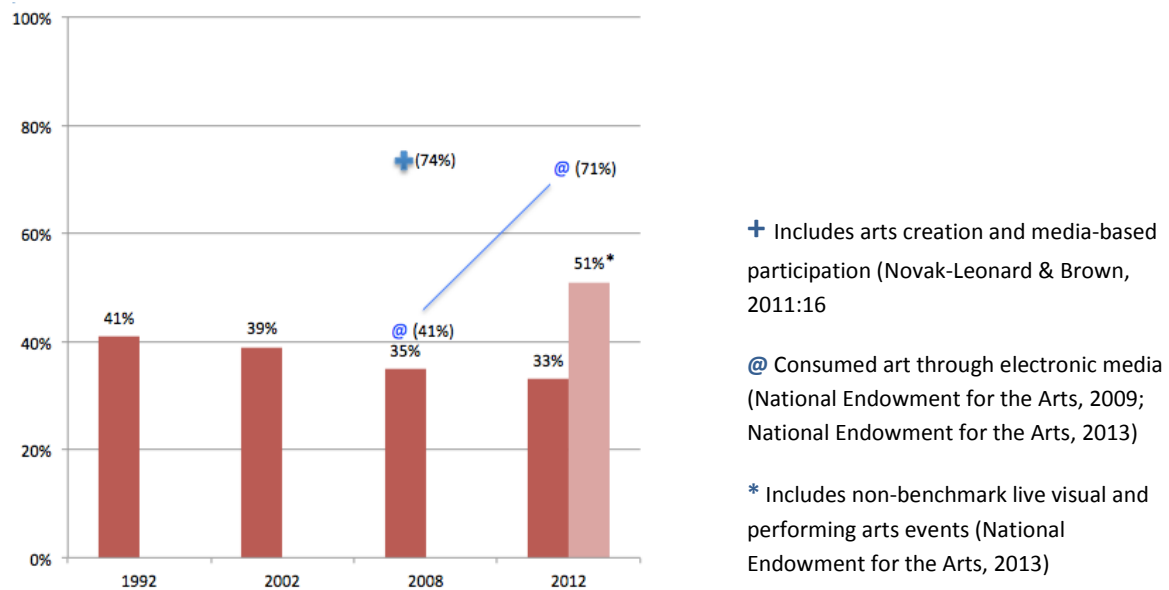
Common ways of measuring both these forms of participation have included tracking attendance at programs (arts-going) and varied methods of counting arts-making and arts-learning in specific populations. Sections II and III in this paper examine some recent analytical methods and ways of conceptualizing what counts as arts and cultural participation. A few of these sources examine *arts participation as civic engagement* (Moriarty, 2004; Wali, et al., 2002; Carreira da Silva, Clark & Cabaço, 2013) or *engagement as audience development* with equity of access as a key indicator of success (Regional Arts & Culture Council, 2014; Reidy, 2014), but these are in the minority.

Other useful sources on arts engagement are aimed at organizations, where engagement means *turning audience members and visitors into active participants* (Brown, Novak-Leonard & Gilbride, 2011; Brown & Ratzkin, 2011; Sidford, Frasz & Hinand, 2014). From an organization’s perspective, learning to engage the public means gaining a greater understanding of what its audience responds to, new ways to revitalize its existing programs, and how to bring its secondary spaces to life. Sources that aim to help organizations better engage their audiences are covered in Section IV.

II. WHO, HOW, WHY AND WHERE: MEASURES OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT IN ARTS AND CULTURE

With the Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (SPPA) the NEA tracks, among other forms of participation, US adults' attendance at six "benchmark" arts activities (jazz, classical music, opera, musical, play or ballet performances) and visits to art museums or galleries. It is the largest national periodic survey of adult involvement in arts and cultural activities. The 2002 SPPA data were the first to hint at declines in attendance of the benchmark arts, but this was seen at the time as statistically insignificant. The 2008 SPPA showed that only 35 percent of U.S. adults visited an art museum or gallery or attended one of the six benchmark arts activities at least once in the 12 months that ended in May 2008, a significant decline from 2002 (39 percent) and 1992 (41 percent). That year also marked an almost 20 percent drop in attendances at every benchmark art form (408 million attendances, down from 497 million in 2002). Using a regression model for predicting arts attendance, NEA analysts estimated the expected participation rate for 2008 respondents at 42 percent, not the 35 percent actually observed. The largest percentage point declines in attendance in 2008 were for people with the most education. Of respondents who had completed some graduate school, two thirds attended the arts in 2008, down from three quarters in 2002.

Figure 1. Arts participation by the numbers, 1992-2012.



Despite these discouraging figures, there is a sense that rapidly advancing communication technologies and changing demographics have contributed to the flourishing of arts and culture more broadly defined. The chart in Figure 1 shows data collected in the last four administrations of the SPPA. The four dark red bars show a decline in participation as measured by attendance at benchmark arts activities—from 41

percent (of U.S. adults) in 1992 to 33 percent in 2012. The pink bar in 2012 signals the inclusion of attendance at non-benchmark live visual and performing arts events, bringing the measure of overall participation to 51 percent.

When arts creation and media-based participation were added to benchmark attendance in the 2008 data, the participation rate rose to 74 percent of U.S. adults (Novak-Leonard & Brown, 2011). Importantly, US adults' consumption of arts-related electronic media rose dramatically between 2008 and 2012 (41 to 71 percent). From this chart we may surmise that **arts participation is not in decline, but it is changing significantly**. Arts and culture practitioners now face a special challenge: how to support individuals in their own art-making while maintaining excellence as providers of professional arts experiences.

Historical context The shift in arts participation discussed here is not entirely new. It dates back to the immediate post-WWII era, when the theoretical argument of “market failure” emerged as a reason that the arts—especially the fine arts—could not withstand the deleterious effects of the cultural industries (for example, entertainment media) without government protection (Heilbrun & Gray, 2001). This principle informed arts policy decisions beginning in the 1940s and led to the establishment of the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities.

In the 1960s this began to change. A national movement toward *cultural democracy* (the idea that cultural differences should be celebrated and culturally diverse peoples given equitable treatment by the larger society) emerged in response to a growing acknowledgement that numerous vibrant subcultures were continuing to thrive despite the increasing prominence of cultural industries in everyday life. By the 1980s, US and British administrations under Reagan and Thatcher began to posit the idea that the arts could not only survive without governmental welfare but actually thrive in the marketplace.

The 1980s and 90s saw an increase in small nonprofit arts institutions, which sparked a corresponding increase in arts participation, according to the NEA (1998). This increase appeared to be more connected with amateur “hands-on” activities and participation through the media than with attendance at live events. To adapt to these changes, arts institutions began to re-examine their missions and roles, aiming to provide greater service to their communities and reach out to local populations that traditionally had not participated in their activities, in order to broaden their definition of art and reinvigorate themselves (McCarthy & Jinnett, 2001).

Broadening the definition of art and “what counts” as cultural participation is a major theme of much of the literature reviewed in this paper and signals a rhetorical shift in the arts world from an emphasis on professionalized *arts and culture delivery* systems to the *creative expression* of the individual. This rhetorical shift is often traced to the UK New Labour party's reframing project informed by the work of author (and Tony Blair's former advisor) Charles Leadbeater.³ UK-based Media Studies scholar Nicholas Garnham showed how the (now widely used) term “creative industries” began to supplant “cultural industries” in New Labour planning documents around 2000 to rationalize the placement of computer

³ Leadbeater's most cited work is the pamphlet “The Pro-Am Revolution” (2004), but most pertinent to this review is his “Personalization through Participation” (2004).

software in the same sector as the other 11 traditionally defined cultural industries (Garnham, 2005). Rebranding the new sector as the creative industries framed its common denominator in terms of creativity rather than artistry (Levine, 2015). Influenced also by Richard Florida's "creative class" theories, leading arts institutions in the US have followed suit, and reports on the "creative economies" of various US cities, states, and regions proliferate.

None of this fully explains, however, the decline in benchmark arts attendance noted in the last three waves of data from the SPPA (2002, 2008 and 2012) or the cultural forces at work that influence why ordinary Americans overwhelmingly prefer arts and culture when it is framed as "creative expression." In a recent survey, 59 percent of respondents strongly agreed that it is important that "everyone have the opportunity to express themselves creatively or to experience the creativity of others every day" ("Creating Connection," 2015:17). The report's authors explain that a conversation around *arts and culture* "is less personal for people because it is perceived as being about the expression of other people's creativity, not their own" (18). Philosophies of personalization echo and redeem a set of policies, strategies and practices that reinforce cultural preferences for individuality—long a defining characteristic of American culture.

The 2008 SPPA hinted at new forms of arts participation becoming more significant in American cultural life. That year, 41 percent of U.S. adults watched, listened to or otherwise explored the arts through some form of *electronic media* (National Endowment for the Arts, 2009:35).⁴ Additionally, ten percent said they had *performed or created* at least one of the art forms examined in the survey (choir/vocal group, classical music, dance, jazz music, musical play, non-musical play or opera) (43). Though this number may seem low, personal creative expression as tracked in the SPPA showed a two percent increase from 2002 even though it measured only these few benchmark art forms.

THE GOALS OF ARTS ENGAGEMENT

Lurking in the data were hints of a dramatic shift unfolding in the American cultural landscape. The artistic expression with which most benchmark arts are concerned is that of Western Europe, yet the US is becoming a majority-minority society and increasingly less European in the cultural background of its citizens. Rapid change in digital technologies is enabling new forms of self-expression, but the SPPA had (until 2012) examined mostly spectator-based art forms. Indeed, for the past several decades, arts participation had been defined largely as consumption and measured in ticket sales and number of attendees. Correspondingly, "audience development" was prescribed to many arts executives as a straightforward remedy for declines in the consumption of their product.

Audience development aims to get more audience members "through the door" of an arts organization and it maintains the art's centrality as the key commodity and entry point. Borwick offers an explanation

⁴ Defined as watching or listening to a recorded or live broadcast arts performance on television, radio or on computer, including watching or listening on a portable media device such as an mp3 player, cell phone or portable DVD player.

for why the arts and arts institutions often stand removed from a considerable portion of their communities by observing that in the 1980s the market for new arts audiences had reached a maximum of likely participants. “Those who were predisposed to be interested in the arts had simply gotten onto the bandwagon because the wagon had gotten to where they lived” (Borwick, 2012:19). This was the culmination of a decades-long effort by the NEA to decentralize arts activity in the United States and support it in smaller cities and rural areas.

Borwick recommended that organizations adopt, instead of an audience development framework, one based on a genuine understanding of how and why people in a particular community actually participate in the arts. Such a framework requires a wider lens than participation-as-attendance that considers an array of professional and avocational arts, and creative and cultural activity, as well as people, places and organizations. It must also consider differing goals of arts engagement and outline some principal outcomes and possible indicators. Those goals and outcomes should, in fact, drive the activities of the arts organization, and success measured by those indicators associated with each.

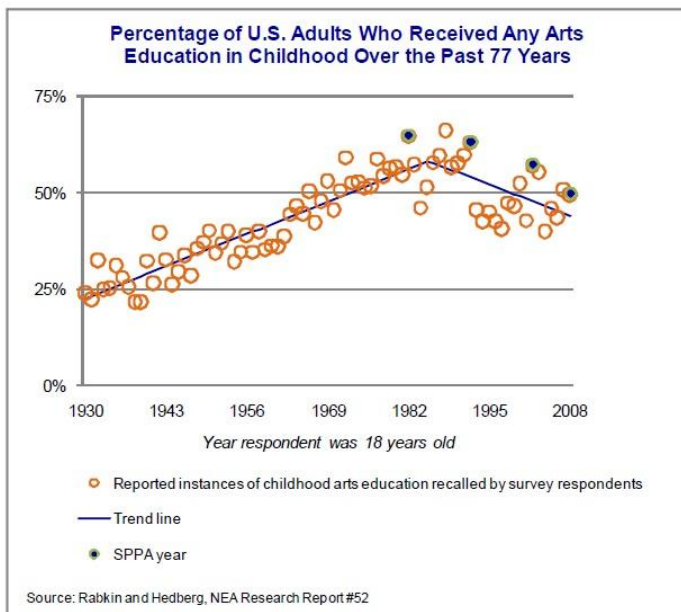
FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH ARTS ATTENDANCE

In 2011 the NEA commissioned a series of reports that reinterpreted SPPA data and combined it with other data sets to discover *how* and *why* Americans were engaging in arts activity or not and to examine the policy implications of recent trends. Jennifer Novak-Leonard and Alan Brown (2011) provided a fresh analysis of 2008 SPPA data by dividing arts participation into three interconnected modes: arts attendance, personal arts creation and performance, and electronic media-based participation. They suggested that this more comprehensive picture of arts engagement yields a different narrative about US adult participation than prior NEA reports. Specifically, 74 percent reported having participated in the arts via at least one of the three modes. This was more than double that of attendance at benchmark events in 2008. Another key finding was the relatively high attendance rates at arts festivals, schools and places of worship. This suggested the importance of *venue* to overall participation rates, a finding that would be reproduced and developed as a theme in subsequent studies (such as Reidy 2014).

Rabkin and Hedberg, in *Arts Education in America: What the Declines Mean for Arts Participation* (2011) mined data from the four previous administrations of the SPPA (1982, 1992, 2002, and 2008) in an attempt to find the relationship between childhood arts education and arts participation in later life. Their methods involved linking the age of respondents to their self-reported childhood arts education activities, drawing a picture of the ebbs and flows of arts education over much of the twentieth century (with data points going back as far as 1930). The most accurate data on childhood arts education in the SPPA were likely the responses of the youngest cohorts (18 years old), since they were the least likely to have forgotten their experiences in childhood. To determine the level of childhood arts education for the years before those represented by 18-year-olds in 1982, they relied on the reports of older survey-takers. The authors acknowledge that these may have been somewhat less reliable, but argue that they are still the best evidence available about young people’s arts education across the twentieth century.

Rabkin and Hedberg found that the relationship between arts education and adults' rates of arts participation has been consistently strong throughout the SPPA's history. Adults who took childhood arts classes in at least one art form were about 50 percent more likely to attend a "benchmark" arts event.

Figure 2. Cited in "Three NEA Monographs on Arts Participation: A Research Digest," (Nichols, 2011:8)



Adults who took childhood classes in at least four art subjects were three times more likely to attend the arts. The picture of U.S. arts education that emerges from Rabkin and Hedberg's analysis is that it rose across most of the twentieth century before declining in its final decades, which the authors attribute to federal disinvestment in arts in the public school system (Figure 2). In 1982, nearly two thirds of 18-year-olds reported that they had lesson or classes in at least one art form as children. By 2008, this number dropped 23 percent to less than half.⁵

Their results also revealed large differences in the socioeconomic status of Americans who have received an arts education versus those who have not. Accepting parents' education level as a proxy for

childhood socioeconomic status, the rate of childhood arts education among respondents whose parents' formal education had progressed no further than high school declined by 36 percentage points (from 70 percent to 34 percent) between 1982 and 2008, compared with a 15 percentage point decline for those whose parents had a bachelor's degree or higher (Figure 3).

Since the SPPA began in 1982 arts practitioners have worried about the "graying" of arts audiences. Stern (2011) analyzed data from the previous four SPPA administrations. After a thorough review of literature on civic participation, Stern's analysis concluded that age and generational cohort differences account for less than 1 percent of the variance in the total number of arts events that Americans attended over the period 1982-2002. Much more significant are differences in educational attainment.

⁵ This findings of this study should be seen as suggestive rather than definitive. Due to sampling methods the results of the study are not generalizable. Also, the survey did not ask respondents about the intensity of their arts education experiences.

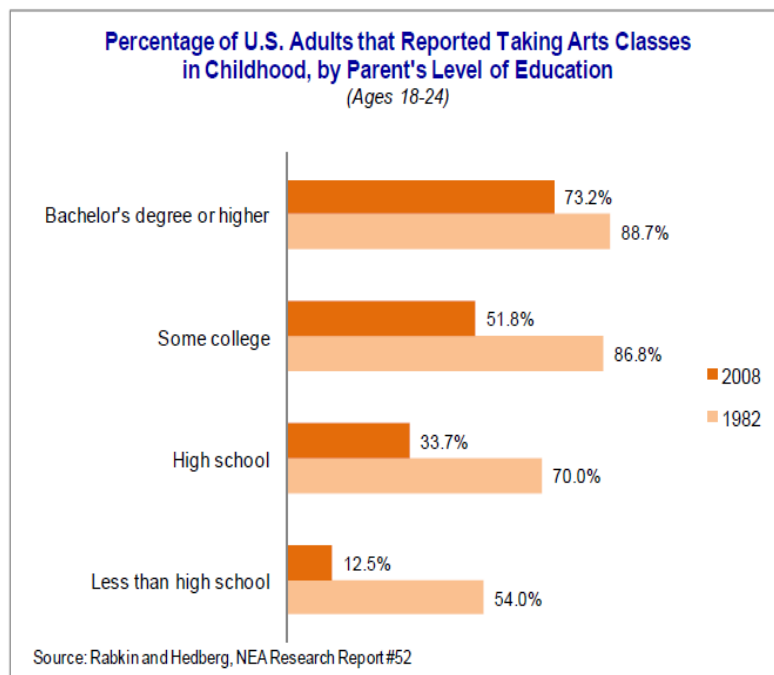
That does not mean, however, that there are no patterns related to age and cohort. Americans born between 1935 and 1954 are more likely to participate in arts-related activities than those born after 1955. Stern attributes this pattern to an overall decline in adults born after 1954 who are characterized as “cultural omnivores,” those who attend a wide variety of arts events, and who attend the arts frequently. He shows that those belonging to the World War II and early Baby Boom generations were more likely to be cultural omnivores than late Boomers and members of Generation X (Stern, 2011:65). He concludes that the decline of these cultural omnivores is a major cause of the decline in overall arts attendance since 1992. It should be noted that this analysis only looked at attendance as it is traditionally defined.

Collectively, these three NEA-commissioned reports (Novak-Leonard & Brown, 2011; Rabkin & Hedberg, 2011; Stern, 2011) challenged received wisdom about which factors are central to our understanding of arts participation, including which Americans participate or do not, and even the full range of what arts participation opportunities are available

(Nichols, 2011). Stern (2011) as well as Rabkin and Hedberg (2011) show that educational attainment is the best predictor of arts participation, playing a much more important role than either age and cohort or race and ethnicity. For example, in 2008 the benchmark arts attendance rate for white adults was roughly twice that of African Americans and Hispanics. Once education is accounted for, however, race and ethnicity are weak predictors of arts participation. More recent research points to self-identified social class as more salient predictor than actual class markers such as income or education (Blume-Kohout, Leonard & Novak-Leonard, 2015).

Welch and Kim (2010) also found that membership in a race or ethnic group is not a strong predictor of attendance at arts events, but it is a good predictor of arts creation activities, with Whites and Asians reporting arts learning experiences at a greater rate than African Americans and Hispanics. Novak-Leonard and Brown found a striking correlation between arts attendance and creation: 33 percent of U.S. adults (74.2 million) *both* attended and created art, more than the number who only attended (17 percent) or only created or performed art (12 percent). They calculated that Americans who engage in

Figure 3. Cited in “Three NEA Monographs on Arts Participation: A Research Digest” (Nichols, 2011:9)



creative activities were six times more likely to attend arts events than those who did not create art. Taken together, these reports confirm that arts attendance is only one component of a much larger picture of arts participation.

In preparing the 2012 SPPA, the NEA sought to respond to frequently raised concerns that attendance is no longer the best representation of the diverse array of participatory arts activities now available. Changes included new indices of arts participation to identify venues where Americans experience live arts, to elucidate how U.S. adults are using electronic media to create and share art, and to find out about participation in arts learning outside traditional classes or lessons.⁶ The 2012 SPPA found that, while attendance at benchmark arts events continued its decline (with 33 percent of U.S. adults attending), using the new framework, *51 percent of U.S. adults attended a live visual or performing arts event* (benchmark or non-benchmark), and *71 percent used electronic media* to watch or listen to art.

WHY AND HOW DO AMERICANS PARTICIPATE (OR NOT)?

Whereas the SPPA is a good tool for finding out *who* participates in the arts and its latest iterations have drilled down on *where* they participate, the data it collects has been less informative as to *why* and *how* people participate (or choose not to). To explore this further, the NEA constructed a survey module about perceived motivations and barriers to live arts attendance that was appended to the 2012 General Social Survey (GSS). Findings were reported in *When Going Gets Tough: Barriers and Motivations Affecting Arts Attendance* (Blume-Kohout, Leonard & Novak-Leonard, 2015). The authors honed in on the 13 percent of Americans they described as “interested non-attendees”—people who would have gone to a specific event in the last year if not for a barrier they identified. They include an in-depth analysis into why certain population segments attend or not (with demographic correlates of motivations and barriers) and how attendance patterns change across life stages, and they cross-tabulate arts attendance variables with a host of other variables collected by the GSS. The report provides insight into, among other things, interested non-attendees’ personal values, political party affiliation, and even their interest in science.

The topline finding was that 54 percent of U.S. adults attended at least one art exhibit or live music, theater or dance performance in the prior twelve months (comparable to the SPPA’s 51 percent). Fully 76 percent of attendees mentioned *socializing with family or friends* among their reasons for attending, and over fifty percent were accompanied by one or more friends at the most recent event they attended. After socializing, the most common motivations were to see an exhibit or performance at a specific location or venue (67 percent), to learn new things (64 percent), and to experience high-quality art (63 percent).

Lack of time was the most cited barrier to attendance among interested non-attendees. Cost and difficulty of getting to the venue were cited as the other top barriers. Not being able to find the time was

⁶ These indices were: “Use electronic media to view or listen to art; Go to the movies; Read books or literature; Attend any live visual or performing arts; Use electronic media to e-mail, post or share art; Create, practice, perform or edit/remix art.”

increasingly mentioned as education and income increased. Only 31 percent of those in the lowest income quartile mention time constraints, compared with 53 percent of those in higher income quartiles. Lack of time, however, is a difficult barrier to address, as the authors note. Comparing their results with time-use surveys yielded some interesting insights. One time-use-related finding was that, excluding parents of young children, over two in five individuals who reported they couldn't find time to attend the arts also reported they spent several evenings per month socializing with friends, and one in four spent at least one night per month going out to bars (22).

This finding in particular provides clues for interpreting another significant but underreported discovery: that, along with education and income, *self-identified social class is a significant predictor of arts attendance*. Despite having similar household incomes and similar levels of education, only 48 percent of those who identified as working class attended at least one exhibit or performance, compared with 67 percent who identified as middle class (21-2). Using multivariate regression the authors found that this result may be largely driven by responses among highly sociable, highly-educated adults who self-identified as middle class, raising some concern about the possibility of social desirability bias in some individuals' responses.⁷ They note, also, that attendees who self-identified as working class were much more likely to mention celebrating cultural heritage and supporting their community as primary reasons for attending, linking attendance with social identity but with different motivations.

⁷ Namely, "that individuals who self-identify with higher social classes may be more likely to claim interest in attending the arts as a marker of their good taste, cultural capital and social identity" (22).

III. INFORMAL ARTS: COMMUNITIES CONNECTING THROUGH NEW FORMS OF PARTICIPATION

Armed with a conviction and growing evidence that participation is not in decline overall but is growing more diverse along with the U.S. population, arts researchers have attempted to understand this shift, broaden the definition of arts engagement, and document how U.S. adults invest their leisure time in creative pursuits. The literature in this section presents attempts to find out where people *are* engaging with each other and their communities by examining community, immigrant and informal art-making.

FOCUS ON THE “UNINCORPORATED” OR “INFORMAL” ARTS

The discussion surrounding informal art-making predates the SPPA findings of a decline in participation. Acknowledging that an enormous amount of artistic activity occurs in this country that is not tied to economic benefit or an exchange of money, Peters and Cherbo estimated in 1998 that if popular and informal art activities were included, the number of U.S. adults' involvement in the arts would probably be closer to 95 percent (123). The informal or “unincorporated” arts sector includes casual or serious participation in a wide range of arts activities that are typically small and organized informally, with little or no recorded expenses, income or payrolls. Counting entities in this sector is onerous because they can “flow in and out of existence, can be volunteer based and hard to locate, can lack permanent addresses, and can have little or no staff to respond to requests for information” (116).

Yet the individual and community impacts of the informal arts are substantial, and such activities are increasingly important to quantify for policymaking purposes. Community-based arts require new approaches to measurement, assessment and evaluation. A different kind of inquiry combining field-based or case study methodologies with quantitative research is necessary to understand the non-institutional base of most folk, traditional, and other avocational arts activities.

Using ethnographic methods, a team led by Wali and Marcheschi from the Chicago Center for Arts Policy at Columbia College (CCAP) conducted research in the Chicago metropolitan region investigating adult participation in the unincorporated (or informal) arts (Wali et al., 2002). Wali's team conceptualized all arts production as existing on an “informal-to-formal” continuum, from ephemeral, spontaneous activities occurring in unstructured spaces to formally organized cultural production in arts venues. They examined twelve case studies of informal arts activity that involved small groups, employing participant observation, open-ended and semi-structured interviews, focus groups and a survey completed toward the end of the field research (with a 53 percent response rate).

This study, *Informal Arts*, was a landmark that delved into specific ways the arts contribute to social cohesion. Wali and her team discovered that in the course of informal arts participation, people in Chicago came together across social boundaries including economic and occupational status, ethnic background, age and geography. Participants reported developing certain social skills and inclinations such as a greater tolerance for difference, the ability to constructively give and receive criticism, an improved capacity for trust and consensus building, and enhanced problem-solving skills. The researchers pinpointed a variety of mechanisms through which participants likely acquired these skills, such as the

effective use of humor and mottoes in ritualizing criticism (126-134), or the structuring of space and sharing of equipment and supplies in nurturing inclusivity (141-149).

More generally, the study helped spur the idea of the arts and culture existing within a larger ecology of many interrelated elements, including participants and stakeholders in both the formal and unincorporated arts. Building on the idea of the arts as an ecosystem, Kreidler and Trounstein (2005)

Figure 4. Cultural ecology framework (Kreidler and Trounstein, 2005)



offered a simple framework for conceptualizing the cultural ecology of a community. At their model's base is cultural literacy, what they consider the foundation of a healthy cultural community. This base supports two higher levels of engagement: *participatory cultural practice* and consumption of *professional cultural goods and services*.

Narrowly defined survey measures like those used in the SPPA are unable to capture the broad array of participation happening in communities below the top third of the pyramid, particularly involvement in art-making activities, a behavior that had received little attention from researchers. *Informal Arts* proved that ethnographic methods, better suited to finding out what individuals and

communities consider creative activity, were instrumental in redefining "what counts." Ethnography emphasizes listening carefully and observing real-life actions to understand how people make sense of their lives and how they see themselves in relation to the social dynamics that surround them (Alvarez, 2009:2). Such work, while time consuming, is based on the recognition that what people say (in a phone survey, for example) is not always what they do.

The study also raised a number of questions relevant to the dynamics of the unincorporated arts sector in California, where 30 percent of the adult population is composed of immigrants (Johnson & Mejia, 2013). What does arts engagement look like when a very large share of the community is composed of relative newcomers? Do newcomers use participatory arts differently from how more established residents do? Since California is already a majority-minority population, and the rest of the US is projected to follow suit in a few decades, it is perhaps the best state to investigate these issues.

INFORMAL ARTS ENGAGEMENT IN CALIFORNIA

In Silicon Valley, where fully 61 percent of the population is composed of immigrants or the children of at least one foreign-born parent, Cultural Initiatives Silicon Valley (CISV) commissioned a series of three studies designed to examine neighborhood and community-level cultural activity (Moriarty, 2002). The goal of the research was to inform an initiative aimed at improving the ability of local residents to engage in participatory arts and to imagine what types of interventions were most likely to accomplish this without altering the informal nature of existing practices.

CISV commissioned a cultural anthropologist to examine informal performing arts specific to Santa Clara County's immigrant communities (Moriarty, 2004). Moriarty concluded that the existence of informal arts in these communities is primarily derived from the desires of parents to maintain the cultural structures, values and traditions of their homelands for their children (Moriarty, 2004). She conducted six months of participant observation at immigrant community gatherings in Silicon Valley, finding that participatory arts help immigrants teach their children, bond with their neighbors and assert themselves as authoritative adults. Moriarty explains, "For immigrants, distinctive artistic expression claims a place for cultural communities, and becomes a force to affirm their dignity as new members of their new society" (13). As the report makes clear, the conflict that results from being displaced from the cultural context of one's homeland makes civic engagement in an adopted home all the more important, as immigrants work hard to recreate that social context for their children (18).

Immigrant Participatory Arts builds on concepts originally proposed in Robert Putnam's *Bowling Alone* (2000), an influential study on the collapse of civic engagement in American life. Putnam called for "bridging" social capital, expanding social networks of reciprocal trust and mutual support. He contrasted this idea with "bonding" social capital, a more exclusive form of community building that emphasizes distinctive identities and homogenous groups. Moriarty's most important finding was that about 85 percent of the participatory arts activities she observed showed mixed bonding and bridging attributes. She calls this *bonded-bridging*: "a promising paradox in which the artistic practice of a bonded cultural heritage simultaneously creates bridging energy for new social networks and contributions to the civic whole" (50). Her report provides several examples of bonded-bridging she observed, as in the following cultural presentation by Sudanese immigrants:

When Dinka young men sponsored by Trinity Episcopal Cathedral presented "Azuma: A Sudanese Feast," they were in charge of the event. They prepared special foods from their native Sudan, and invited parish members to contribute to the potluck. A prayer service was planned, and they carefully wrote out speeches in English to thank and welcome the local parish families. Throughout these bridging activities, they interspersed their own bonded tradition, the Dinka participatory arts of dancing, cattle camp songs, and drumming (20).

The non-verbal communication made possible through the arts gave these men a way to re-claim and assert their respected adult status after finding themselves reduced to beginning-level English. Moriarty introduced bonded-bridging as a valid framework in the analysis of cross-cultural participatory arts.

Adding to the evidence that participatory arts happen in a variety of non-arts-related venues—such as public schools, community colleges, mainstream churches, museums, and community centers—Moriarty found that the shared civic identification of a public space casts a welcoming light over even highly ethnic-focused events (28).

Comparing what she observed in Silicon Valley with the results of Wali's 2002 Chicago Center for Arts Policy study, Moriarty noted that California's demographics and patterns of cultural interaction differ dramatically from those observed in Chicago, where the geographic boundary crossing that is normative for California commuters is a relatively rare achievement (51). The comparison offers a cautionary note against making national policy generalizations from local or regional studies.

Kreidler and Trounstein (2005) also discovered relatively high rates of arts participation in Silicon Valley. In their attempt to build a Creative Community Index (CCI) they found that 55 percent reported participating in some cultural activity.⁸ The Creative Community Index has since been used to highlight the degree to which relatively narrow and passive definitions of arts participation used in national surveys like the SPPA underestimate participation among Hispanics, immigrants and people who are not white. This is relevant in areas like San Francisco where ethnic arts and cultural heritage programs make up over 23 percent of all arts and culture organizations (Rosenstein, 2005:3).

ARTS INTEGRATED IN DAILY LIFE

Adding to the mounting evidence that arts and culture participation is related to civic engagement, Kreidler and Trounstein also found a strong correlation between adults who were civically engaged or volunteers and those who said the arts played a major role in their lives.⁹ Pointing again to the importance of setting, only 23 percent of the performances attended by respondents were in facilities expressly designed as art venues, whereas 77 percent were in “multi-purpose” facilities such as gyms, auditoriums, parks or places of worship.

In another study commissioned by Cultural Initiatives Silicon Valley, Alvarez used anthropological methods to conduct a field scan of informal art-making among immigrants and non-immigrants in order to find arts experiences and practices by people not conventionally considered artists (Alvarez, 2005). Seeking out cases of art-making in a wide range of commercial and non-commercial settings, Alvarez conducted ethnographic fieldwork in 17 groups, sites, events or associations over a period of five months. Many of the arts practices she uncovered were so visible (that is, seamlessly woven into everyday life) that they were effectively invisible as a separate frame of activity.

In folk communities, at social service agencies, and at other locations where the boundaries between art and culture blurred, people engaged in a range of activity more as direct producers of art than as audience members or consumers of products (14). Commercial entities such as restaurants and craft stores allowed residents to “exercise personal choices without having to subject their aesthetic preferences to high/low valuations” (55). In fact, valuing informality over highbrow social relations was a theme that recurred throughout Alvarez’s interviews. Her data suggests that informal arts practitioners in Silicon Valley tend to refashion ideologies they pick up from the region’s corporate discourse—values including defiant individualism, self-directed creativity, idiosyncrasy, entrepreneurialism and self-

⁸ In the 2002 version of the index, 51 percent of those surveyed responded “yes” to the question, “Do you consider yourself to be an artist in any way?” (Kreidler & Trounstein 2005).

⁹ *The Arts and Civic Engagement: Involved in Arts, Involved in Life* (NEA 2007) demonstrated that arts participation strongly correlates with positive individual and civic behaviors. Americans who read books, visit museums, attend theater and engage in other arts are more active in community life than those who do not. Leroux and Bernadka’s *Impact of the Arts on Individual Contributions to U.S. Civil Society* (2012) also found that individuals who attend or create arts are more engaged in civic activities, have higher levels of social tolerance and higher rates of altruism.

sufficiency (31, 36). Surprised by her interviewees' knowledge of the nonprofit 501(c)(3) arts infrastructure, Alvarez noted that they often defined their activity as an alternative to the dominant local repertoire of arts offerings:

This may appear at one level to be simply a matter of rhetorical preference (i.e., we are not *like you* or *like that*; we seek a different experience) or in some cases, a lack of knowledge about arts opportunities that exist through community nonprofit entities. Yet, on another level, the chosen rhetoric highlights the degree to which a perceived sense of alienation from the arts community affects the artistic choices that entire groups of people in Silicon Valley are making in terms of their involvement with arts organizations (45).

The James Irvine Foundation, wanting a more nuanced understanding of how residents of California's inland regions engage in arts and culture, commissioned researchers to study formal and informal modes of participation and settings "off the radar" of the traditional arts infrastructure in the Inland Empire (Riverside and San Bernardino Counties) and the San Joaquin Valley. Together these areas account for about 22 percent of California's population. The resulting report (Brown, Novak & Kitchener, 2008) is based on data collected in two phases: a door-to-door survey of about 150-200 households in each of six neighborhoods, and a mix of a non-random online survey and an on-the-ground intercept survey. Combined these reached about 5,000 people. Constructing "focus samples" from five communities, additional convenience sampling was conducted on specific populations defined as Hmong, Culturally Active Latinos, African-American Faith-Based, Latino Faith-Based, and Mexican Farm Workers (33).

Many of the report's key findings support those of other studies. Fully 43 percent of respondents said that cultural activities were "a big part" of their lives. Two-thirds of the Hmong and Mexican Farm Worker focus samples reported the same. Most respondents reported doing their creative and cultural activities with family or friends, with 18 percent reporting they do them alone, and 10 percent with co-workers.

Another of the study's findings was the importance of the home as a setting for cultural engagement. Fifty-five percent of respondents reported they most often do creative and cultural activities in their homes or in someone else's home, though that number reached as high as 69 percent in the Mexican Farm Worker focus sample (17).

As part of its Exploring Engagement Fund and later as part of its New California Arts Fund, the Irvine Foundation has, since 2013, aimed to engage new and diverse populations by encouraging California's arts organizations to add active participation opportunities and incorporate the use of non-traditional arts spaces. To further support this initiative, Irvine commissioned NORC at the University of Chicago to produce a two-part study to better understand how Californians participate in the arts and culture. Part one, published as *A Closer Look at Arts Engagement in California*, is based on data extracted from the 2012 SPPA and finds that 54 percent of California adults engaged in art-making or art-sharing in 2012 (Novak-Leonard, Wong & English, 2015).

Part two presents findings from a new *The Cultural Lives of Californians* (Novak-Leonard et al., 2015). The *California Survey* differed from previous studies in how it asked respondents about art forms and cultural activities in which they were involved. Instead of asking about a set of activities carefully circumscribed by researchers in advance, the *California Survey* began with an open-ended question:

“People are involved in different types of activities that they enjoy or that are important to them. Please tell me about any creative, cultural or artistic activities that you do.”

By asking respondents what counts from their own perspective (and perhaps priming their response by saying the word “creative” before “cultural and artistic”), researchers gathered a broad range of responses, challenging the notion that cultural omnivorism is in decline.¹⁰ Based on the responses received, the study’s authors developed new categories of participation, shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5. From *The Cultural Lives of Californians* (2015)



¹⁰ Cultural omnivorousness in arts audiences is explored in detail in Peterson and Rossman 2007.

Also new in the report is the sorting of reported participatory activities into several key dimensions (15):

- Does the activity involve being physically present, or is it online or otherwise mediated?
- Is it a commonplace activity embedded in one's day?
- Is the activity solely based on consumption, or production, or does it fall somewhere in between?

These dimensions informed the final report, which is organized in the following sections:

- Arts-Going and Arts-Making (involving a physical presence)
- Arts-learning, which may involve a physical presence or not
- Arts-supporting (by donating, volunteering or other means)
- Participation mediated through digital technology

They found that 81 percent of Californians read for pleasure in the twelve month period prior to the survey, the largest reported form of arts-doing. Californians also participate in arts-going activities at high rates. Almost two-thirds (64 percent) went to a music concert or performance. Over half went to at least one cultural fair or festival (56 percent), attended a theatrical performance (53 percent) or visited an art exhibit (53 percent). The most commonly reported art-making activities involved hands-on making or customizing. Californians also engage in a wide variety of dance-based activity: 55 percent said they danced in the past 12 months. Additionally, almost half reported having sung (48 percent) or done creative writing (46 percent).

Differing from prior research, the *California Survey* data revealed that California's Black or African American adults, who comprise 6 percent of the state's total population, are involved in arts and cultural activities at comparatively high levels. Even after controlling for the influence of other socio-demographic variables, Blacks or African Americans were significantly more likely to participate in certain activities than other races or ethnicities, such as dancing (as 72 percent did), singing (58 percent) and acting (29 percent).

Also new in this study is a deeper examination of the role technology plays in Californians' cultural lives, including social media. Sixty-two percent of respondents used YouTube to watch or learn about artists and their work. More than half (55 percent) reported using social media to learn about art, artists or art events, with 29 percent doing so on at least a weekly basis. (35)

As in several other studies cited in this paper, immigrant arts-goers were more likely than other Californian adult arts-goers to attend events in community spaces, specifically, schools, churches, community centers and libraries. Again, home was emphasized as the most commonly reported place for arts-making and arts-learning among all respondents.

SUPPORTING CALIFORNIANS' ENGAGEMENT

The research shows that arts-going in traditional arts may be trending down, but arts-going and arts-making of many kinds are popular in California and across the U.S. As the definition of "what counts" broadens, the value of the arts in people's everyday lives becomes more evident. Helped by new technologies and shifting cultural norms, art happens everywhere, not just in designated arts spaces.

Most people report that they would be happier, healthier and less stressed if they were more active creatively. (“Creating Connections,” 2015) Ultimately, connection is the largest driving motivator for people to embrace arts and culture as part of their everyday lives.

The dominant use of community venues and the home, especially among immigrant groups, will prove a special challenge to California’s arts and culture organizations: how to support individuals in their own art-making (perhaps by providing expertise and resources through electronic media) while maintaining relevance as mediators of arts experiences.

IV. NEW TOOLS, MODELS AND TECHNIQUES TO UNDERSTAND MEANING-MAKING

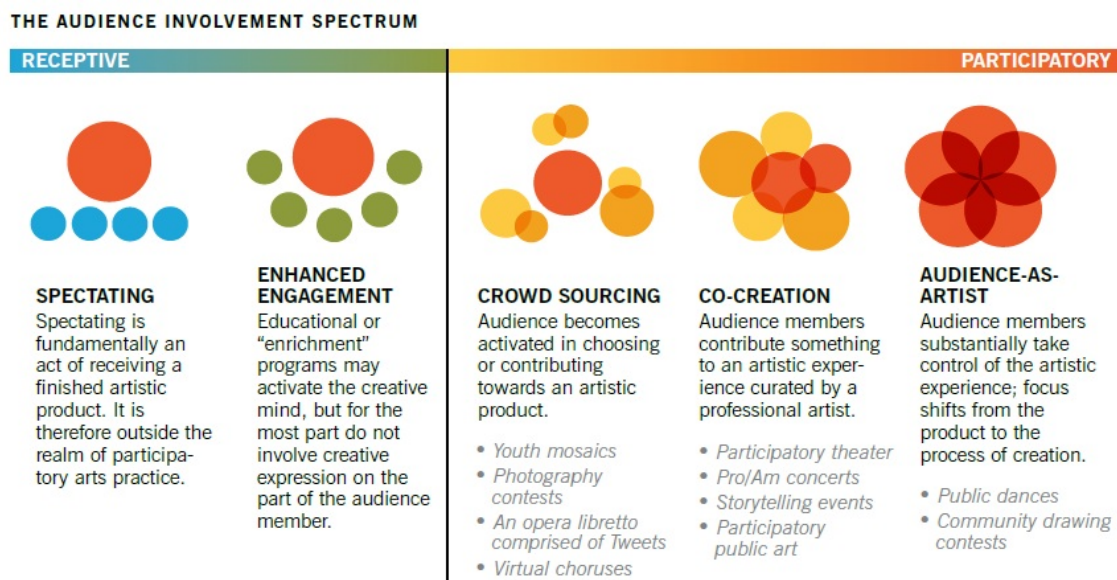
More arts organizations have embraced engagement with diverse and low-income communities through the arts. Some seek to eliminate barriers to participation, with equity of access or representation as key indicators of success. Others seek to find new audiences. This section presents new models traditional arts-presenting organizations are using to rethink how they engage existing and new audiences.

A series of recent reports aimed at arts managers has contributed to refining terminology, tools and techniques regarding new forms of arts participation. Taken together, these reports present a view of participatory art-making from the perspective of mostly-benchmark arts organizations, with the goal of increasing their relevance and long-term viability by attracting new audiences and turning existing audience members into participants. Presenting a typology of participatory arts programs and illustrative case studies, examining the roles place and venue play in arts programming, and defining the characteristics of arts organizations that successfully engage new and diverse participants, these reports offer useful new tools and models to understand how participants make meaning from arts experiences.

ART-MAKING: MODELING PARTICIPATION IN ART-AS-PRODUCT ACTIVITIES

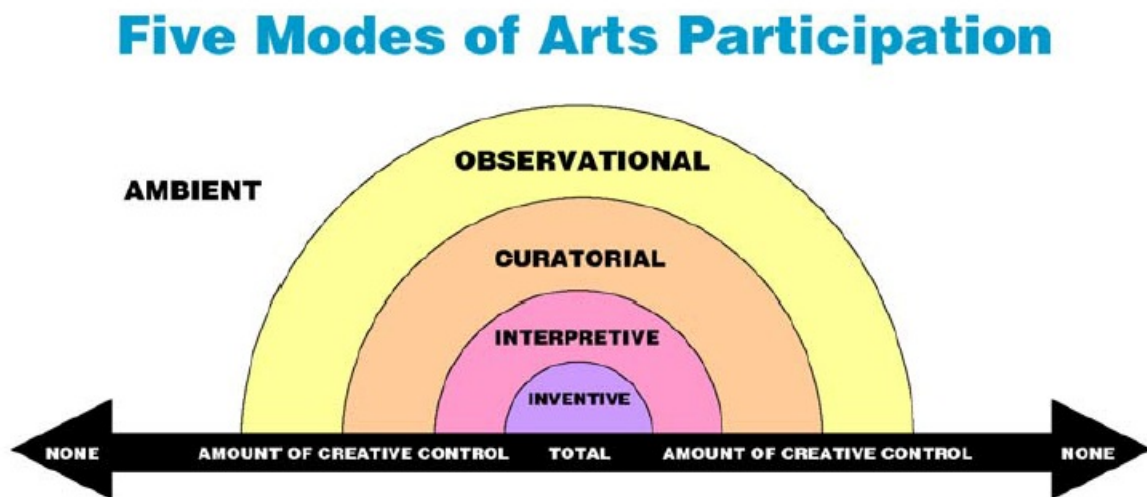
Several of the models developed are intended to help benchmark arts presenters reconfigure their programming for a “making and doing” audience. Noting that the arts nonprofit infrastructure must become part of the larger participation economy in which social connection is increasingly valued, Brown, Novak-Leonard and Gilbride (2011) offer their “Audience Involvement Spectrum,” under which the artist or organization invites the public to participate in art-making with varying levels of creative control over the artistic product (Figure 6).

Figure 6. From “Getting In on the Act: How Arts Groups Are Creating Opportunities for Active Participation” (Brown, Novak-Leonard & Gilbride, 2011)



The participatory side of the audience involvement spectrum above complements Brown’s “five modes of arts participation” framework (Figure 7 below), which models participants’ creative control over the artistic product. Each of the participatory modes of involvement in Figure 6 (Crowd Sourcing, Co-Creation and Audience-as-Artist) could potentially involve curatorial, interpretive or inventive activities from the five modes framework. Within the category of “crowd sourcing,” for example, an opera composed of tweets gives the participants an inventive role, while a mosaic created by young people might invite more curation than invention.

Figure 7. From “Cultural Engagement in California’s Inland Regions.” (Brown, Novak & Kitchener, 2008)



ART-GOING: EXAMINING THE PARTICIPANT EXPERIENCE

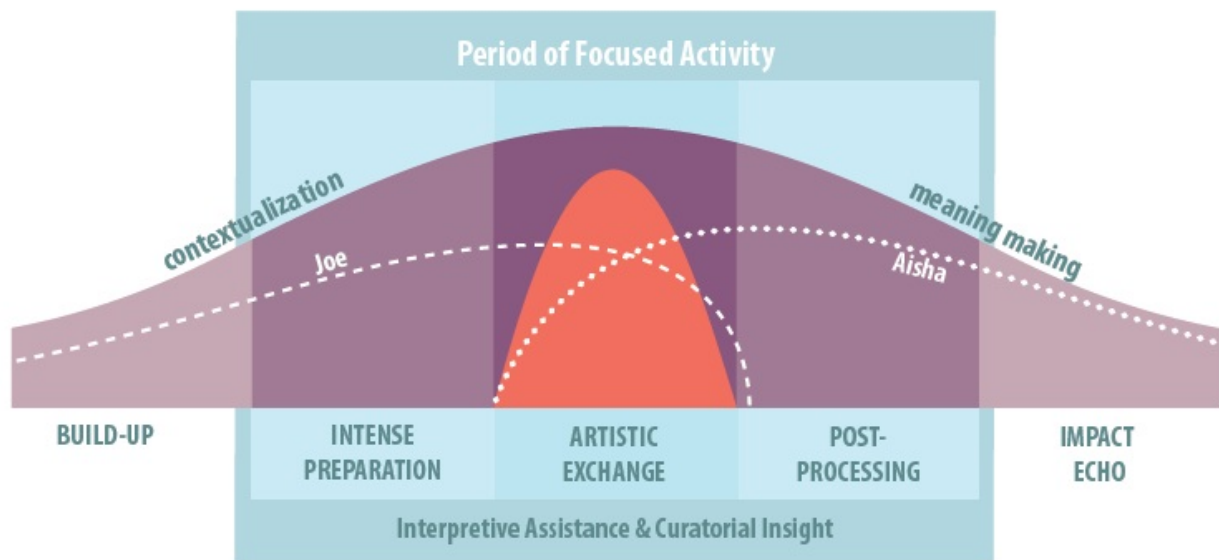
In *Making Sense of Audience Engagement*, Brown and Ratzkin considered an arts experience from the audience member’s perspective. They describe an arc that traces how the engagement process unfolds in five stages from the moment an audience member makes the decision to attend, to the ultimate personal impact of the experience, which can last a few minutes or a lifetime:

- *Stage 1: Build-up* - May occur hours, weeks or months before the event
- *Stage 2: Intense Preparation* - A brief window of time; this preparation is most likely to occur in the hours and minutes just before the event.
- *Stage 3: The Artistic Exchange* - When the audience member encounters the artistic work.
- *Stage 4: Post-Processing and Meaning Making* - Time devoted to making sense of “what happened” and forming a critical reaction.

- *Stage 5: Impact Echo* - Could last for a lifetime or be forgotten soon after the audience member walks out the door.

Figure 8, in addition to showing the overall arc and five stages, is accompanied by a narrative demonstrating two sample trajectories of audience member engagement, those of Joe (shown by the dashed line) and Aisha (the dotted line).

Figure 8. The “Arc of engagement” and accompanying narrative from “Making Sense of Audience Engagement” (Brown & Ratzkin, 2011)



Brown and Ratzkin also offer an audience typology applicable to both performing and visual arts, with types placed along a continuum from low appetite for engagement to high:

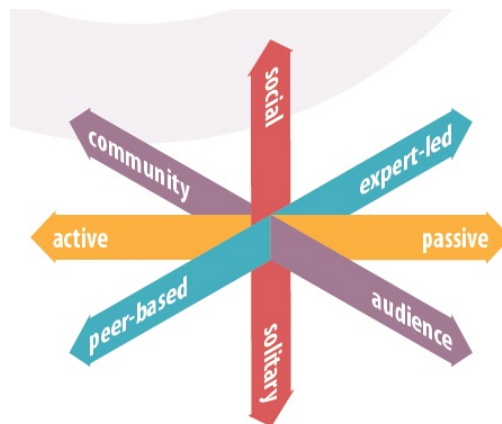
- **Readers** are the most prevalent type of audience member and are light engagers. They enjoy reading program notes but do little else to contextualize their experience.
- **Critical reviewers** seek the expertise of professional critics and other trusted sources and are interested in critical dialogue about the work itself.
- **Casual talkers** seek informal social environments where they can discuss their experience with others, usually their peers.
- **Technology-based processors** love all forms of online engagement. They are most likely to read and contribute to blogs and discussion forums and the arts organization’s website.
- **Insight seekers** like to dive into the meaning of the art at open rehearsals, pre-performance lectures or post-performance talkbacks. They enjoy being privy to curatorial insight.
- **Active learners** want to get their hands dirty. They look for “making and doing” engagement opportunities that offer a way into the art. They are the least prevalent of all the types.

Each artist or organization will have its own unique combination of the above present in its audience. All audience members are likely to fall into multiple types in different contexts. One who enjoys “making and doing” engagement activities in a museum context, for example, may seek relatively little contextualization at a music concert. Personal tastes and preferences also play a role in people’s appetites for engagement. This typology nevertheless offers a helpful tool to assist arts organizations in gaining insight into their audience through tracking participation at different types of engagement activities, as well as careful observation of how audiences interact at them. Lobby interviews and focus groups can lead to additional insight to find the most effective engagement opportunities for an organization’s audience.

There are also four dimensions of engagement with relationships to the above audience types (Figure 9).

- **Social to solitary** defines whether the activity is shared with others or done alone.
- **Peer-based to expert-led.** There are many possibilities for combining these elements. Brown and Ratzkin note that a challenge lies in allowing for both of these dimensions to coexist in one program.
- **Active to passive.** Though few people will admit to preferring passive experiences, there are individuals who decline to participate in more active activities.
- **Community to audience.** The former aims to serve the broader community, and the latter serves those who attend. Unlike the other three dimensions, it is more productive to consider how activities fall along this spectrum rather than relating it to audience member types.

Figure 9. Four dimensions of engagement (Brown & Ratzkin, 2011)



V. CONCLUSION: IMPLEMENTING ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

The work that artists, arts organizations and arts educators are doing today to engage audiences and communities is part of a historical process that often is not well understood by practitioners. This review of the literature has sought to make that history more evident and to clarify differences in types of engagement in ways that practitioners can use them to improve their own work.

The conceptual tools presented here provide new ways for practitioners to think about engagement in the arts. They can be used by organizations to inform logic models, programming and evaluations. Artists can use them to guide their thinking on how best to engage audiences. Arts educators can use them to consider whether their work should target outcomes at the level of the child, the classroom or the school. Perhaps these tools are most useful in raising questions that can be jumping off points in conversations about organizational change, such as:

- What is the end goal of our engagement activities?
- What level of engagement do we want everyone in our audience to have?
- What new kinds of contextualization and engagement opportunities might we be open to offering?
- What is our audience typology composition? Which of the audience types do we serve best, and which should be prioritized for future engagement efforts?
- What dimensions of engagement do our activities represent, and who is the target audience for these activities? For example, are we offering largely expert-led meaning-making activities to participants that we know prefer more social, peer-based activities?

Putting these evolving concepts of “audience” and “engagement” into context also raises questions for future investigation from both practitioner and researcher perspectives. Is more participation always better? Is there a saturation point at which everyone who is already arts-inclined is making or going to see art? Will there always be an audience for the “passive” experience of sitting and watching a professional arts performance or observing visual art curated by experts in a museum or gallery? Should major arts funders shift their priorities from traditional arts presenting organizations to informal arts in underserved communities? To what extent will individual artists be expected to facilitate others’ creative activity in order to make a living? What role should public arts agencies play?

Is there a point at which arts engagement programming, in an effort to appeal to broader swaths of the public, relies too heavily on (to borrow Borwick’s dichotomy) “visceral” experiences that emphasize immediacy of impact? Or will there always be room for “reflective” art that requires more effort from the participant or audience member in deriving meaning from it?¹¹ If popular or visceral art does indeed pass the “market-failure” test and reflective art should not be expected to do so, what are the ramifications for arts funders?

¹¹ These categories are not mutually exclusive. (Borwick 2002:18-19)

If participation is broadly defined and we discover that almost all U.S. adults are engaging in some form of arts activity (benchmark or informal), is that victory for the arts? If taking an online tutorial in Photoshop counts as arts learning, what can data like that tell us about the vitality of the arts within any community, and how do we use that data to drive decision-making?

By early 2016 work on “engagement” in the arts appears to have been superseded by a more urgent conversation in the field about diversity, cultural equity and inclusion. This literature review suggests that rather than seeing these discussions as disconnected from each other they are better understood as an evolution from talking about *process* to talking about *outcomes*. For many, especially the Irvine Foundation that funded much of the applied research on engagement cited in this report, engagement is a process through which arts organizations can ensure the benefits of the arts are available to everyone.

Will we see engagement activities expand or decline with this new focus in the arts? Will we see a refinement of engagement combined with complementary activities all designed to lead to greater equity and inclusion? How can we ensure that as technology is increasingly integrated into both marketing and arts production that all communities have equal access? How can we ensure that traditional, consumer-model benchmark arts activities remain relevant to our changing demographics? Artists, arts organizations and arts educators will have to answer these questions through their actions as they adapt their work to this new conversation. Knowing this rich history of engagement and its complexities can only help to ensure their emerging work achieves its goals.

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