THE BENEFITS OF ARTS EDUCATION:  
AN INVESTIGATION OF CAUSALITY AND  
INDIVIDUAL PERCEPTIONS  

DISSERTATION  

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate  
School of The Ohio State University  

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*****  

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ABSTRACT

Recently a number of studies and articles have been published with the claims that education in the arts causes improvement in academic performance and causes life successes. The literature on this topic, information regarding arts education and causality flows predominantly from advocates to the public. The purpose of this study is the investigation of the public’s perceptions of cause and effect relationships (causality) between arts education and academic and life successes. Through this study, causality is defined and discussed as it has been applied to advocacy arguments in support of arts education. The goal of this study is to uncover alternative ways of viewing causal linkages and arts education through the opinions of the public, and to suggest potential paths for future research.

A survey was conducted involving a randomly selected sample of Columbus, Ohio residents. The results of the survey, found that respondents believe arts education contributes to academic and other life successes; however, it does not directly cause increases in academic performance nor does it directly cause success in life. Survey respondents most frequently discuss the non-cognitive benefits of arts education such as appreciation and alternative ways of thinking. These benefits can lead to desirable outcomes.
This study is significant in that it provides evidence that statements of causality involving arts education and increases in academic performance may be unfounded. Furthermore, the presentation of the nonexistent causal relationships involving arts education serves the major purpose of providing heightened attention in an effort to maintain arts education on public policy agendas. Arts education researchers and advocates should consider the consequences of such actions. Based on the results of this study, advocates are encouraged to help the public become aware of their individual connections to arts education. If people have a personal stake in arts education, they will support arts education.
Dedicated to my Dad
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INTRODUCTION

As a child, I remember listening to an evening radio show called *Mystery Theater*. My brothers and I would crawl into bed with our mom, late on Friday night, snuggle under the blankets, and listen intently for the creaky door sound effect that started each episode. As we listened to each show, we would reenact the sounds we heard by doing little things like placing shoes on our hands and clomping them on the floor, as we heard the footsteps of the villain approaching the unnerved victim. When I was a child, I valued those “artistic” experiences; they were fun. As an adult, I value those experiences even more; they were fun, they are cherished, they are irreplaceable. As an art teacher, I incorporate those experiences into my classroom by engaging my students in imaginative activities and challenging them to bring their art projects to life. I ask them to dream it, envision the logistics of the project, and do it.

John Wilson (1998) says that “artmaking” is particularly a human behavior. Creating art is often dismissed by those researching elements of human behavior, as a nice activity, one that is illogical and immeasurable. In contrast Wilson says, “Artmaking behavior should be taken very seriously indeed for it reveals at least as much about
humans as a culture-building, cognition-driven species as any other of our many social behaviors” (Wilson, 1998, pp. 2).

Arts education researchers are taking the “art making” behavior very seriously. The past two decades have seen a number of research projects take place with the purpose of understanding the importance of arts education and how it impacts cognitive and social skills. In 1997, Brent Wilson wrote that the principal goal for art educational research is to provide knowledge:

about the ways art-learners use special artistic insights to expand their conceptions of themselves, past and present worlds, imagined and future worlds, and the norms by which individuals govern their lives through writing the texts of art into the texts of their lives within and beyond school (1997, p. 3).

In recent years, research has been conducted with the purpose of understanding the ways that skills learned in the arts classrooms can be applied to “lives within and beyond school” (Wilson, 1997). A number of studies have reported that children who study the arts perform better in other academic and life areas. One study that is cited frequently is the experiment conducted by Frances H. Rauscher, Gordon L. Shaw and Katherine N. Ky (1993) regarding the effects of listening to Mozart on students’ performance of spatial reasoning tasks. Since the 1993 report was published in Nature, some have championed these findings and have used them to promote arts education. Music and other products have been marketed based on this and similar research.
(Campbell, D). On the other hand, a number of researchers, including Project Zero’s REAP (Reviewing Education and the Arts Project), have questioned these types of statements as they have looked for evidence of the transferal of arts learning to other academic areas (Harvard College, 2003).

The impact of arts education on cognitive and other life skills has been a selling point used to raise public awareness of the importance of arts education. Currently, Americans for the Arts, a nonprofit organization dedicated to the advancement and support of the arts, is running such a campaign. The subject has garnered a great deal of interest across arts fields. Thomas L. Birch (2002) author of The NASSA (The National Assembly of State Arts Agencies) Advocate, Strategies for Building Arts Support, states that funding for the arts on federal, state and local levels has increased two-fold within the past ten years due in part to advocates’ abilities to demonstrate the benefits of the arts in economic, social and educational manners. According to Birch:

The arts give policy makers the tools to address a wide range of civic concerns in creative and cost-effective ways. Advocates can draw on a wealth of research demonstrating the arts’ role in improving student learning, in building a strong workforce, in developing America’s creative industries, and offering positive alternatives to troubled youth (p. 1).

Birch goes on to say, “With education a top public policy priority, the role of the arts in learning is of increasing interest to parents, educators, legislators, civic leaders and business owners” (p. 1).
There has been much discussion in the field of arts education as to whether or not these studies should be used in support of arts education. Opponents such as Eliot Eisner (1998) and Lois Hetland of Harvard’s Graduate School of Education (Cromie, 2000) believe that the arts should be studied based on their own merit versus what they can do for other academic areas.

Clearly arts education advocates are working to get the arts education message out to the public. The emphasis of causal claims made by advocates, researchers, and arts administrators are targeted toward the public. The missing link is, what does the public have to say about the impact of arts education? What are the public’s perceptions regarding the impact of arts education? Furthermore, does the public perceive a causal link between arts education and successes in other academic disciplines or other areas of life? And why should we care? If the field of arts education is going to grow, flourish or conversely, wither and die, it depends on public perceptions.

This research project is the exploration of public opinions of cause and effect relationships (causality) between arts education and academic and life success. The debate of whether or not the arts should be used as a tool to enhance academic and life achievements will not be resolved in this study, rather this research will provide a basis for understanding the discussion, for bringing in the voice of the public, as well as exploring potential alternatives for consideration.
Chapter one provides an understanding of causality, or impact theory, and its application to arts education. The chapter provides the framework for this study and sets the tone for the following chapters.

Chapter two is a review of literature that summarizes some of the other studies and analysis regarding the transfer of skills learned in arts classes to other academic and life areas. The point can be argued that the arts include any number of subjects ranging from visual arts and music to the literary and language arts. For the purpose of this study, arts education is defined as education in visual arts, music, drama and dance. This is consistent with the areas of focus in the arts in the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP, 1997) and the National Standards for Arts Education (Consortium of National Arts Education Associations, 1994, p. 23).

In January of 2003, a pilot survey of the public’s opinions on this subject was conducted. The purpose of the survey was to perfect the instrument and serve as a benchmark for this study. Respondents were asked if they and/or their children had taken visual arts, music, drama and dance classes, in or outside of school. The results indicated that very few people participated in drama or dance classes inside or outside of school. (The Methodology chapter includes more information about the pilot study.) For this reason, questions about dance and drama education were deleted from the final instrument. The review of literature is therefore reflective of this trend. I must also acknowledge that as an artist and researcher my background is in the visual arts and as such this study will also reflect that bias.
Chapter three demonstrates how concepts of public opinion and research in arts education have been used as advocacy tools. It is important to have a sense of individual perceptions not only for how they influence views, values, and actions, but also for how they can be influenced, enhanced and changed. This chapter details the survey method used to gather public perceptions, and the research that informed the creation of the questions in the survey instrument. The chapter also includes a description of the demographics of the population from which the sample was randomly selected.

Chapter four includes the analysis and results of this investigation. Chapter five brings the discussion full circle by summarizing the findings, pinpoints key items with significance to the field and provides suggestions for future research.

I believe our world has become more complex with electronic communication, split second information distribution and greater access to people, cultures, gizmos and gadgets. We stand at the mouth of a new beginning; a new way of looking at things, concepts, philosophies and even ourselves. As with any new beginning there is often conflict or struggle even chaos. We as a people are struggling to make sense of it all and to some degree grasp for roots that are familiar as we stretch ourselves to learn something new. It is therefore necessary to conduct research that will inform arts educators of the views held by the public. Maybe what is beneficial about arts education includes the artistic experiences, sharing and communication. If public funding for arts education
ceases to exist does that mean people cease to create or pass on to others what they know? Do Americans stop singing, dancing, writing, telling stories, drawing, acting and sharing those gifts with others? If what is valuable about arts education is the process, does that not mean it is necessary to ensure the continuation of the process? If what is beneficial about arts education is the end product, does that not mean it is a necessary to ensure the continuation of the product through education?

So as I endeavor to assess the question of the benefits of arts education, I do so with an open mind and the realization that one person’s junk is another person’s treasure. In the end, perhaps the value of arts education, like the time honored saying about art, is worth and meaning in the eyes, ears, minds and hearts of the beholders. The trick is connecting those eyes, ears, minds and even hearts, to a unified thought that arts education is what it is, and perhaps it is like the universe; too big and all encompassing to define. The field of arts education can benefit from new ways of looking into public views. We can gain a sense of where gaps exist in public understanding of arts education. We can learn new ways of communicating our message. We can learn what is important to the public. We can plan for the future.
References


ARTS EDUCATION AND THE CAUSAL RELATIONSHIP

Recently arts education advocates have turned to establishing causal relationships between the arts and academic or life skills as a means to prove the value of arts education. The roots of the current vein of this discussion focusing on the transferability of arts education skills can be traced back to the education reform activities of the 1980’s and 1990’s and the NEA’s *Toward Civilization: A Report on Arts Education*. This “causality” movement can be traced to at least two factors.

Factor One

The first factor includes the education reform events of the past 15 years. These events call for accountability in education through measurement and outcomes. Additionally, these events include evaluation, research and reporting of the state of arts education in America’s schools. The National Educational Goals were established in 1989, and were to be reached by the year 2000.
The nation’s governors, educators and members of the White House agreed to six goals.

The goals:

• All children in America will start school ready to learn.
• The high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90 percent.
• American students will leave grades four, eight, and twelve having demonstrated competency in challenging subject matter, including English, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, art, history, and geography; and every school in America will ensure that all students learn to use their minds well, so they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our Nation's modern economy. (It is important to note that education in areas such as the arts and foreign languages were not added until 1994.)
• U.S. students will be first in the world in science and mathematics achievement.
• Every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.
• Every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning (U.S. Department of Education, April 20, 2004).

In 1990 a group was created to oversee progress towards the six goals. This panel agreed upon the need to set achievement standards. Congress then established “the National Council on Education Standards and Testing” (U.S. Department of Education, April 20, 2004) for the purpose of creating national voluntary standards for education and assessment. In 1991 President Bush called on Americans to adopt the America 2000 strategy of achieving the six goals for improving education in America. The strategy called for accountability in school performance, the adoption of National Education Standards, and local community mobilization to achieve the goals.
When President Clinton took office in 1993, his administration agreed with a great deal of the language contained in America 2000, however there were some partisan differences of opinion. The Clinton Administration therefore introduced a comprehensive legislative package, and the Goals 2000; Educate America Act was introduced. This Act put into law the original six goals and expanded the list of goals. This Act also spawned numerous additional legislative activities governing education in the United States. Additional legislation included the authorization of the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) to measure educational performance across the country.

In 1994 a consortium of arts education associations developed the *National Standards for Arts Education: What Every Young American Should Know and be Able to do in the Arts*. This document was a result of major arts education policy success in that it means that the federal government recognizes the importance of arts education in nation’s schools. The roots of arts education reform that resulted in the establishment of the National Standards can be found in the educational reform activities of the 1980’s. The Summary Statement of the Standards and Exemplars of *The National Standards for Arts Education “What Every Young American Should Know and Be Able to Do in the Arts”* states,

With the passage of the Goals 2000: Educate America Act, the national goals are written into law, naming the arts as a core academic subject as important to education as English, mathematics, history, civics and government, geography, science, and foreign language (Consortium of National Arts Education Associations, p.1).
The standards were constructed through broad based consensus building among arts educators and organizations. Such development involved, “the review of state-level arts education frameworks, standards from other nations, and consideration at a series of national forums” (p. 2). There are two stated reasons for the importance of the establishment of national standards in the arts. The first is that the standards define, by drawing on established knowledge of the discipline, that which is good arts education. Secondly, the adoption of the standards by states, local districts, etc., means that a stand has been taken regarding the level of arts education that is provided (Consortium of National Arts Education Associations).

The standards are suggested, meaning that states can choose to implement them or not. Although a majority of states have adapted the standards, there is currently no way of knowing which school districts are actually applying them. As the standards for arts education were developed, a coalition of arts educators developed assessment guidelines for evaluating student learning in arts education. In 1997 the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) included evaluation of the arts of dance, music, theater and visual arts. Many of the same people took part in the creation of the National Standards for Arts Education as well as the NAEP framework for the arts. The feat of creating both the standards and framework for assessment had not been accomplished in any other discipline (Lehman, P. 1999, p. 12).
The purposes of the National Standards for Arts Education include rendering “in operational terms, the value and importance of the arts for the educational well-being of our young people and our country” (Consortium of National Arts Education Associations, p. 3). Since the creation of the National Standards and the arts assessment of the 1997 NAEP, a number of studies have been published regarding the merits and perils of both items and the state of arts education research.

In January 2002, President George W. Bush signed into law the *No Child Left Behind* legislation that focuses on the improvement of public schools through accountability. The law requires, “States to implement statewide accountability systems covering all public schools and students. These systems must be based on challenging State standards in reading and mathematics, annual testing for all students in grades 3-8, and annual statewide progress objectives ensuring that all groups of students reach proficiency within 12 years” (U.S. Department of Education, March 2004).

In an effort to comply with the legislation and ensure a place for the arts in schools, arts education advocates were determined to impress upon policy makers, educators and school boards the importance of arts education. To accomplish this task, advocates had to establish or communicate a sense of value in terms that would be tangible. Therefore, studies to show the impact of the arts in education were commissioned and funded by foundations and the National Endowment for the Arts. It was through these events that a coalition of agencies dedicated to arts education was
created; Goals 2000 Arts Education Partnership renamed the Arts Education Partnership (AEP) in 1999. AEP is a chief source of information regarding the value of arts education and has created several noted reports (e.g. Champions of Change: The Impact of the Arts on Learning) responsible for guiding arts education advocacy efforts and policy decisions.

Factor Two

The second factor that contributed to the need to show causality between arts education and other academic areas is closely related to the first. As noted in factor one, there is and has been a perceived need to improve public education as well as the state of arts education in America. As a result legislation was passed and various public programs were instituted to impact those needs. Because public programs receive funding from a number of public sources, there is a need to show measurable outcomes as a result of the program. This is factor two. One example is the New York City program “Learning to Read Through the Arts”, which as cited in Eloquent Evidence, produced improved reading performance by students taking part in the program.

Program evaluation often uses causality, or program impact theory, to evaluate the cause and effect relationship between program activities and socially desired outcomes. Through these actions, future resource decisions are made in relation to the continuation or cessation of a public program. Program impact theory, or causal theory,
is used to study the social benefits that result from the implementation of a particular program.

In order to prove a causal relationship between a program and its outcomes, an evaluation of that program, through the experimental process, must determine that the outcomes are a direct result of that program and could not have come about due to other internal and external factors. William Trochim of Cornell University puts it this way:

If X then Y
If not X then not Y (Trochim, p. 2)

To evaluate the New York City program, therefore, it would be necessary to rule out all other plausible factors that could have affected the outcomes of that program. To eliminate other potential causes of the outcomes one might ask, if the improved performance could have resulted due to students being placed in a special environment, or having special attention from their instructors, (Hawthorne effect)?

Applying Causality

The use of causality to justify the need for arts education is a strong way to insinuate benefits to which policymakers, legislators and the public can relate. As pointed out in the previous section, causal arguments have been used to show the benefits of arts education in tangible terms. A number of programs have been implemented due to
the research that has used causal statements. This type of research has spawned additional research, experiments and public programs involving the arts and arts education. Perhaps the most important benefit to this type of research application is its usefulness in gaining the attention of the public to establish the arts and arts education as a public purpose. This is necessary because, as Wyszomirski (2000) points out, “all public purposes must meet one fundamental requirement; the assembly and sustainment of a manageable consensus that recognizes the value of each purpose and therefore legitimates the allocation of public effort and resources” (pp. 50-51). Therefore, another benefit of using causal arguments for studying the arts is that due in part, to these studies, and the publication of their findings, the arts and arts education have garnered a greater amount of attention in the public arena. Consequently, legislative actions have taken place and public programs have been instituted. More attention on the arts and arts education is therefore positive and has the potential to increase the interest of not only congressional leaders and policy makers, but also their constituents whose participation, patronage and support ensure the livelihood of the arts and arts education.

Two Sides of the Debate: The Problem

The limitation of applying causality to the arts and arts education is the use of it as a tool to resolve public problems. Elliot Eisner and others have questioned, what happens if another solution provides greater resolution to those problems? Arts education is then relegated to constant repositioning and morphing for the purposes of identifying and
curing public ills. Researchers are therefore creatively limited to finding any shred of evidence that the arts and arts education can provide a “fix” for any number of public issues.

In *Evaluation: A Systematic Approach* (1999) Rossi, Freeman, and Lipsey, describe causal theory by saying, “It describes a cause-and-effect sequence in which certain program activities are the instigating causes and certain social benefits are the effects they eventually produce” (p. 102). They go on to describe causal diagrams, which demonstrate the causal linkage patterns that connect program activities with outcomes. Based on Rossi, Freeman and Lipsey’s discussion of causal theory and diagrams, a causal diagram of the cause and effect relationship between the arts and academics would look like this.

![Causal Theory Diagram](image)

Figure 1.1: Causal Theory Diagram (We will revisit this figure again in this analysis of these arguments.)

*Eloquent Evidence: Arts at the Core of Learning* is a document that resulted from a “project of the President’s Committee on the Arts and Humanities, the Arts Education Partnership and the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, using material published by the National Endowment for the Arts” (Elizabeth Murfee, p. 14). This brief brochure
makes reference to a number of studies that demonstrate the links between the arts and success in other academic subjects as well as cognitive learning skills. The brochure states, “students of the arts continue to outperform their non-arts peers on the Scholastic Assessment Test, according to the College Entrance Examination Board” (p. 3).

_Eloquent Evidence_ goes on to say, “Many studies document the role of the arts in improving basic skills, the 3’Rs. Because of the mounting evidence linking the arts to basic learning, some researchers refer to the arts as the Fourth R” (pp.4). The brochure then provides examples of a number of studies and the corresponding documentation.

One such study is the program “Learning to Read Through the Arts”. “Students improved an average of one to two months in reading for each month they participated in the “Learning to Read Through the Arts” program.” (pp. 4) A causal diagram that demonstrates this particular statement would look like this.

![Figure 1.2: Learning Through the Arts Diagram](image)

The field is divided on this topic. The program “Learning to Read Through the Arts” is an integrated curriculum program whereby the arts are integrated into reading curriculum for the purpose of teaching reading. Some arts education proponents such as Elliot Eisner believe that the merits of arts education are such that arts education should
be able to stand on their own. According to Eisner, a disservice is rendered to the field when advocates focus on what the arts can do for other academic areas (1998). Eisner says that studies that link the arts to success in subjects such as reading and mathematics use examples where the arts were used as tools to show improvement in those specific areas. His point is illustrated in Figure 1.2. Eisner believes that such examples often are not taken from situations where arts education activities are taking place for the purpose of arts education. Eisner’s position would look like this.

Figure 1.3: Causal Theory Diagram #2

Thomas Hatfield comments in his article, “The Unevenness of Art Education Policies” that teaching the traditional “R’s” of education by using the arts can be valuable; however, it is possible that still other tools may provide greater results. “If arts education can produce higher reading scores, maybe more effective reading programs can yield even higher reading scores, thus eliminating the need for the arts” (p. 3). Hatfield goes on to say, “…decision makers could also conclude that the only role of arts education programs is to improve those cognitive achievements and behavioral outcomes that can be measured – easily omitting learning the content of the arts themselves” (p. 3).
Although causal statements concerning the transfer of arts education skills to other academic disciplines have brought visibility to arts education, they have also spawned debate within the field. Some arts education proponents question the plausibility of such arguments and note the dangers of becoming dependant on the link between the arts and core subjects as an advocacy tool. As such there are two camps, which will be called “administrators” and “academics”. These administrators and academics are both very dedicated to the success of the arts and arts education and the literature is very clear on their differing positions. With this in mind, the question arises,

- What does the public have to say about the benefits of arts education?

![Diagram](image-url)
Some additional philosophical questions that require consideration are:

- Is it possible to make causal linkages involving the arts education?
- If the public’s perceptions concerning the benefits of arts education were known, would it be possible to determine linkages between arts education and success in other academic areas or even career endeavors?
- How does one evaluate the effectiveness of arts education on the lives of American citizenry?

If people were asked to reflect on their own experiences with arts education, would they indicate a causal relationship between what they learned in their arts courses to other areas of their lives, academic and otherwise?

Advocates for arts education have been working, through a variety of methods, to establish and maintain the value of arts education as a public purpose in order to support policies, current or future, that involve arts education. Research and the distribution of findings are among the methods used by the field to justify public support for arts education. Returning to the quote from Brent Wilson listed in the introduction, the principal goal of arts education research is the investigation,

about the ways art-learners use special artistic insights to expand their conceptions of themselves, past and present worlds, imagined and future worlds, and the norms by which individuals govern their lives through writing the texts of art into the texts of their lives within and beyond school (1997, pp. 3).
An additional point that could be added is that researchers have a duty to not only understand these points but also communicate them to the public to ensure the continuation of the provision of arts education skills. To do so effectively means that the public must be included in the conversation as a two-way exchange.
References


What are the benefits of arts education? How does one evaluate the effectiveness of the arts on the lives of American citizenry? What does the public have to say about the importance of arts education? The roots of the current vein of this discussion focusing on the transferability of arts education skills can be traced back to the education reform activities of the 1980’s and 1990’s and the NEA’s *Toward Civilization: A Report on Arts Education*. The 1988 report commissioned by the 99th Congress in accordance with the reauthorization of the National Endowment for the Arts, outlines four purposes of arts education. The purposes of arts education in America are civilization, creativity, communication and critical thinking (pp. 14-18). *Toward Civilization* provided an important status report of arts education in America in the 1980’s. The report pointed out the lack of resources, both human and material, necessary to provide meaningful arts education. The report was a kind of call to arms for arts education.

The following literature summary has provided a foundation for this research project and includes publications produced by the Arts Education Partnership, the US Department of Education, the National Endowment for the Arts and academicians such as
Elliot Eisner, Arthur Efland and Howard Gardner. This literature provides a number of lenses through which to view the main question of this research project: what does the public have to say about the value of arts education?

The literature indicates that recent requests to justify arts education have been focused on how the arts benefit other academic pursuits as well as life skills. As previously discussed, more and more people in the field are questioning the research claims made regarding the transfer of arts education skills. It seems that there are a number of issues at the core of this debate and recent studies attempt to cover all bases. The research that examined arts education skills and their links to other areas of human life is vast, and includes scientific discussions, which involve physiological and sociological aspects of human beings. The literature reviewed in this chapter is only a piece of the research that has dealt with this topic. In accordance with the model presented in chapter one, these summaries have been organized into three categories: publications from or by administrators, publications by academics and reports on public opinions of arts education. It should be noted that public opinion investigations are usually conducted by members of the other two categories; however, for this study public opinion will be considered separately.
In 1999 the Arts Education Partnership published *Champions of Change; the Impact of the Arts on Learning*. It was touted as a landmark document that provided two years worth of evidence on the causal relationship between the arts and academic success. Key researchers involved with the project included James Catteral, Shirely Brice Heath, Steve Seidel, and others who evaluated programs that incorporate the arts into other subject curriculum and or other social programs such as those that take place after school. *Champions of Change* finds that the arts alter learning experiences because:

- The arts reach students who are not otherwise being reached
- The arts reach students in ways that they are not otherwise being reached
- The arts connect students to themselves and each other
- The arts transform the environment for learning
- The arts provide learning opportunities for adults in the lives of young people
- The arts provide new challenge for those students already considered successful.
- The arts connect learning experiences to the world of real work (pp. ix-x).

The researchers taking part in *Champions of Change* are credited with establishing successful ways of conducting research in arts education that produce outcomes. They indicate the arts can successfully alter the experience of learning through programs that provide students interaction with artists and the arts, through programs with sizeable staffs and resources, through programs that allow for the process of art making to take place over time, through programs that provide opportunities for
complex and self-directed learning experience that allow students to fail from time to
time, and through programs that involve the community.

Many of the programs described in *Champions of Change* are targeted toward at
risk students, as the document is a response to the calls of *Goals 2000, No Child Left
Behind*; however, the results are generalized to the greater population. The National
Educational Longitudinal Survey was used to analyze student performance and make
comparisons between those involved in arts education and students who are not. It is
very clear that making the connection between arts and other academics is one of the
major focuses. In the chapter on Involvement in the Arts and Human Development, the
authors acknowledge that causation is difficult to prove but that does not stop them from
attempting to make a case for it in scenarios involving music and theater arts.

Interestingly, they comment on their focus on non-art outcomes and say they will leave
the study of art related outcomes to other scholars. Varying opinions and focuses are
present in this document. As such, it serves as a good foundational document for this
literature review. The tone and feel of the publication is one of discovery as other socio-
economic factors are also presented as having an effect on academic outcomes and the
propensity for students to study the arts.

The same tone exists in *Gaining the Arts Advantage; Lessons form School
Districts that Value Arts Education*, which was also created in 1999 and compiled case
studies and profiles of school districts that make the effort to incorporate arts education in
the curriculum. Interestingly, many of the districts that accomplish this feat, do so with little funding and resources. Neither of these documents taps directly into public opinion, but they provide an institutional version of the topic.

*Learning Through the Arts: A Guide to the National Endowment of the Arts and Arts Education* provides a summary of the Endowment’s involvement in arts education activities. It also provides a list of the partner agencies through which the Endowment is able to support arts education. The summary document leads to the National Center for Education Statistics report, *Arts Education in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools 1999 – 2000*. The report provides a sense of the extent of arts education offerings in public elementary and secondary schools. It is especially germane because the arguments for the need to show that the arts contribute to academic success and thus produce measurable outcomes are rooted in the need to ensure that the arts are not cut from public school curriculum. The study makes use of the Fast Response Survey System to gain information from some of the nation’s public schools.

*Eloquent Evidence* is a promotional brochure that utilizes a compilation of information previously published by the National Endowment for the Arts in Schools, Communities and the Arts: A Research Compendium. The document, written by Elizabeth Murphy (1995) was a project of the President’s Committee on the Arts and Humanities, the Arts Education Partnership and the National Association of State Arts Agencies. *Eloquent Evidence* has been used as a media piece to communicate the
importance of the arts in education by focusing on cognitive benefits as evidence from “sound” studies.

Learning to Read Through the Arts (LTRTA), which was discussed briefly in Chapter One, is one of the programs described that provides proof of Murphee’s claims. A review of the document cited in *Eloquent Evidence*, finds a program evaluation by New York City’s Office of Research, Evaluation and Assessment (OREA). The goal of the program, which began in 1971, is to assist eligible students who have fallen behind, with their academic performance. The report describes specific objectives for the 1992-1993 school year and discusses the results of discussions with parents, students, staff and teachers taking part in the program. The program integrates art projects into the curriculum and includes field trips and special workshops. Additionally, the parents of the children involved in the program are also required to take part in the program. The LTRTA program has produced positive results and to that end it has been replicated in other cities throughout the country.

The statement made in *Eloquent Evidence* is, “Students improved an average of one to two months in reading for each month they participated in the “Learning to Read Through the Arts” program” (Murphy, 1995). What one does not derive from the brochure is whether or not there was a control group. Did the researchers take steps to rule out threats to validity? The students who took part in the program were students who were previously not performing well. Have students, who were performing well
academically, taken part in the program? If students who were already meeting standards were provided with the same tools would they excel? Based on the program evaluation, it is appropriate to say that the program is successful; however, it is not correct to say that the arts were the cause of the students’ academic progress.

The Arts Education Partnership published *Critical Links* a survey of research on the links between the arts and cognitive skills in May of 2002. The Arts Education Partnership (AEP), “is a national coalition of arts, education, business, philanthropic and government organizations that demonstrates and promotes the essential role of the arts in the learning and development of every child and in the improvement of America’s schools” (AEP, n.d. p. 1)). The *Critical links* compendium of 62 studies covers the transfer of arts education skills in dance, music, drama, visual arts and multi arts to other academic and social development. The purpose of the compendium is to collect the best research being conducted at this time and to make research recommendations based on that collection. The compendium committee was responsible for compiling the data and writing summaries of the studies that are included. Similar to *Champions of Change*, *Critical Links* gathers existing data and presents it in addition to summaries that provide readers with interpretation of the findings. The content is generally made up of program evaluations that are rarely focused on improving students’ learning in the arts; rather, they are often community programs targeted to “at risk” populations.
*Critical Links* describes a number of cases in which the experiments are not repeatable and which do not take into consideration external factors that may have affected the results. Upon reviewing the comments in *Critical Links*, one may be left questioning whether any causal statements can be made about the benefits of arts education. There has been some criticism of this document; however, it is very valuable because it is not a blanket statement for casual linkages between arts education and academic and social skill development. The essays and summaries of findings provide a number of issues for consideration and emphasize that the issues are not cut and dry. The document calls for the consideration of assessment of skills, setting standards as well as the skill levels and capabilities of teachers. It is interesting to note that one of the editors of *Critical Links*, James S. Catterall, indicates, “Despite the “goes without saying” quality of transfer of learning research over the years has failed to corroborate transfer far more often than it has managed to support its existence” (AEP, 2002, p. 151).

Organization such as the AEP, NEA, DOE and Americans for the Arts have strong voices in the arts and arts education fields. These institutions are representative of the fields to many outside of the fields, including legislators, policy makers and the public; however, academicians are questioning the validity of the studies that are being promoted through these organizations. What is the danger of relying on these studies for advocacy and influencing policy makers and legislation? Arts education researchers should be concerned about the integrity of that which is representing the field. In *Power & Choice*, W. Phillips Shively (2003), professor of political science at the University of
Minnesota, tells readers that politics, among other things, involves the making of
decisions by a group of people. If arts education researchers seek to improve or change
what government entities and national service organizations use to promote arts
education, they will have to find a way of getting the attention of those organizations. It
may require more advocacy and political involvement on the part of researchers to make
their studies known to those in a position to promote them for public benefit. These
resources and attention may lead to the creation of public policies. Samuel Hope (2002)
defines policy as, “a decision about how to proceed, based in part on knowledge or
research and in part on values and opinion” (p. 11). According to Hope “Policy is made
because of a perceived need to act” (p. 11). Studies, as well as any number of program
evaluations, have attempted to communicate the importance and wider appeal of the arts
and arts education for the purposes of raising additional support of financial allocations to
ensure the sustainment and improvement of and access to education in the arts.

Academics

In 1992, Gordon Shaw and Frances Rauscher conducted an experiment at the
University of California Irvine on the effects of listening to Mozart on spatial-temporal
reasoning. The results of their experiment were printed in the October 1993 edition of
Nature. The study involved 36 college students who listened to Mozart’s Sonata for two
pianos in D major, a relaxation tape or silence, and then were given three standard IQ
tests for spatial reasoning. The results were interesting, as they have sparked a number of
questions and further research projects; however, they were just the beginning. The results of this study were publicized in the media as proof that listening to Mozart would cause an individual to be smarter (Shaw, p. 163). The research drew criticism and accolades alike. In 2000, Rauscher presented a paper titled, *Is the Mozart Effect “Debunked”?* at the International Conference on Music Perception and Cognition. In the paper she comments, “Despite the excitement generated by exaggerated media reports claiming, “Mozart makes you smarter,” attempts to replicate the effect have been inconsistent” (pp.1) Frances Rauscher has continued her research in this area. Some studies involve experiments targeting specific age groups (early childhood), to evaluate the effects of music on brain development. Shaw, who has a background in brain theory, (Shaw, nd), published the book *Keeping Mozart in Mind* in 2000. Shaw does not take the position that music is causal; rather, he sees the current research as leading to unlocking a greater understanding of the brain and its development. He provides a model for seeing “music as a window to higher brain function” (p. 305).

There is quite a bit of debate on the best way to address this subject. Some researchers have taken to demonstrating the value of arts education based on the measurable success in other academic areas. Eisner believes this route leaves the arts to act as tools for other academic subjects and in time there are other tools that may produce better results thereby negating the necessity of arts education. In 1998 Elliot Eisner wrote the article, *Does Experience in the Arts Boost Academic Achievement*; in which he reviewed the arguments about the transferal of arts skills to other academic areas and
life skills. Eisner’s review of the research finds that most studies are focused on solving learning issues in the areas of reading and math. He cites, for example, *Eloquent Evidence*, which reported that students in 1995 who had taken arts courses, scored better on the verbal and math portions of the SAT. He calls into question the validity of often-cited causal relationships between arts education and academic success. A review of *Eloquent Evidence* verifies Eisner’s position and finds that the brochure does not provide the best examples of empirical evidence through research studies proving the transfer of skills learned in arts education to other academic subjects. According to Eisner, a disservice is rendered to the field when advocates focus on what the arts can do for other academic areas. Eisner says that studies that link the arts to success in subjects such as reading and mathematics use examples where the arts were used as tools to improve in those specific areas.

In his 2002 publication the *Arts and the Creation of the Mind*, Eisner states, “the aim of such information is public relations rather than an even-handed exposure of the facts” (p. 218). *Arts and the Creation of the Mind* is a book in which Eisner seeks to “…dispel the idea that the arts are somehow intellectually undemanding, emotive rather than reflective operations done with the hand somehow unattached to the head” (p. xi). To achieve this, he talks about the effects of the arts on consciousness, but also delves deeper into the responsibilities of the field of arts education. It is interesting to read the listing of the various missions of the field of arts education, including fostering creativity, teacher development and setting standards, as having a role to play in the discussion of
the transferability of arts skills to cognitive and social development. Eisner remains in a cautionary role as he asks members of the field not to lose sight of the aesthetic value of the arts. He reminds us to consider when art making, drawing and scribbling, becomes art. As he does in his 1998 article, Eisner repeats his exceptions to the idea of causal linkages between the arts and other academic areas and scrutinizes the research that has been conducted on the subject. The arguments set forth in this document are very thoughtful, as they encourage researchers to consider alternatives to focusing on this debate.

In *Arts with the Brain in Mind*, Eric Jensen (2001) reviews a number of the studies that relate causal benefits from arts education. In this book he suggests there is evidence of neurological benefits from music, visual arts, dance and drama education. Jensen talks about the development of the brain and effects that the arts can have. Jensen’s arguments are interesting in that he says that there is evidence of various causal relationships, but that it is early in the research to provide definitive statements. Jensen points out the benefits of symbol recognition and the ability to critically assess what one sees is something learned from visual arts. He talks about spatial recognition, the ability to learn and memorize through playing music as well as the simple benefit of stress relief through listening to music. This publication from the NAEA Supervision and Curriculum Division takes that stance there are no proven negative aspects to teaching arts education. Additionally, Jensen provides guidance for teachers and supervisors regarding ways to incorporate the arts into the classroom and across the curriculum.
He suggests it is an issue of time and that the arts should be afforded a greater amount of the school schedule. Jensen, as others have done, discusses what he calls outdated models for evaluating schools through the compilation of data and testing. He says, “…schools should be about people, not data. Schools provide powerful, social contexts for orchestrated, meaningful experiences. If we are in the people business, arts ought to play a major part of the learning experience” (p. 118). Both Eisner and Jensen speak of the need to place the focus back on the arts.

Arthur Efland (2002) published *Art and Cognition; Integrating the Visual Arts in the Curriculum* to investigate curricular potentials that cross academic disciplines. In this book Efland does not argue for one side or the other of the debate on whether or not arts education should be linked to other academic and life success. Instead, he uses the literature and his investigation into cognition to show evidence of cognitive skills learned or experienced through the study of the arts. His investigation is based on research in psychology, philosophy and cognition. Efland talks about the arts as cognitive in that, “…they provide encounters that foster the capacity to construct interpretations” (p.161). He makes the connection between the need to interpret what one sees and the necessity of one to make meaning of what is seen, heard and experienced in life. Thus, interpretation is a necessary part of life in which everyone participates. Efland also points out an interesting link between the act of drawing and problem solving as developed by Rudolf Arnheim. Efland’s book informs the reader that the linkages between arts education and cognition exist and have been documented in literature. Efland indicates that
implications for arts education include an integrated approach to cognition, essentially changing the way cognition is perceived. Aware of the need for tangible evidence, Efland suggests an integrated theory, one that would adopt the ideas of “meaning making and understanding as organizing principles, as opposed to computational competence or information processing” (p. 79). To accomplish this task, arts educators need to bring more of popular culture into the classroom in a way of making the arts seem more real and attainable.

In April 2001, at the American Educational Research Association (AERA), a panel of researchers, lead by Kent Seidel, met in an interactive symposium session titled, *Arts, Academics and Advocacy; Reviewing the Past and Focusing the Future of Arts Education Research*. Overall the panelists indicate that arts education research should “seek to understand the potential and role of the arts in education for all students and teachers” (Seidel, 2001, p. 22). Seidel notes that the panelists, like others in the arts education field, were divided on whether or not researchers should seek evidence that connects the arts to academic outcomes. Although they did not come down firmly on one side or the other of the debate, a number of panelists said that to justify arts education with such evidence is dangerous. In general, panelists cautioned that arts education research should provide a number of lenses through which to view the value of arts education.
Thomas Hatfield comments in his article, “The Unevenness of Art Education Policies,” that teaching the traditional “R’s” of education by using the arts can be valuable; however, it is possible other tools may provide greater results. “If arts education can produce higher reading scores, maybe more effective reading programs can yield even higher reading scores, thus eliminating the need for the arts” (p. 3). Hatfield goes on to say, “decision makers could also conclude that the only role of arts education programs is to improve those cognitive achievements and behavioral outcomes that can be measured – easily omitting learning the content of the arts themselves” (p. 3).

Both Hatfield and Seidel’s panelists were referring to the many causal statements that have been made about the effects of the arts on learning in other academic disciplines. Recent efforts have been made to scrutinize these claims more closely. The Arts Education Partnership just published Critical Links, a survey of research on the links between the arts and cognitive skills in May of 2002. The Arts Education Partnership (AEP) “is a national coalition of arts, education, business, philanthropic and government organizations that demonstrates and promotes the essential role of the arts in the learning and development of every child and in the improvement of America’s schools” (AEP, n.d. p. 1).

In early 2004, NAEA published the Handbook of Research and Policy in Art Education. The book, edited by Elliot Eisner and Michael Day, includes submissions from a number of very well known names in art education. The book presents a large
amount of insight into the realm of art education and policy that touches on everything from the critique of child development and learning in the arts to reflections of public policy on the field of arts education. There are many notable chapters in this collection; however, the most relevant to this study is the chapter, Cognitive Transfer From Arts Education to Nonarts Outcomes: Research Evidence and Policy Implications. Lois Hetland of Harvard’s Project Zero, and Ellen Winner of Harvard’s Psychology Department, have written a concise summary of the results of Reviewing Education and the Arts Project REAP. REAP is the meta analysis of studies that report the effects of arts education on non-arts learning. This study came to light due to the need to provide a summary of the research that made claims of transferable skills to other academic subjects. Through their analysis the researchers found some evidence of causal links between the arts and other learning. They also found in some cases claims made were unsubstantiated. Hetland and Winner provide five recommendations based on this study. They believe the field needs to refocus on teaching and learning. They indicate that research is needed on the noncognitive outcomes of arts learning. Additional investigation should take place to point out what other subjects can learn from the field of arts education. The authors also say research should include the “search for reasonable “bridges” between arts and specific subject matters” as well the “effects of explicit teaching for transfer in the arts” (p. 156). The policy implications are first and foremost the need to refrain from using claims that cannot be demonstrated. Hetland and Winner call for “honest arguments for the importance of the arts” (p. 157).
Constance Baumgardner Gee echoes these same sentiments in “Spirit, Mind, and Body: Arts Education the Redeemer”. She calls attention to the many claims made in the public arena regarding the benefits of the arts. She says, “The frequently held claim that “arts education improves overall academic performance” capitalizes on the collective, hazy angst that our public schools are somehow failing us” (p. 122). Gee states that though some statements of transferal are assumed “common knowledge”, they are in actuality only assumptions.

The January/February 2003 issue of Arts Education Policy Review includes a symposium of articles written about the studies summarized in Critical Links. In “Uncritical Pronouncements Build Critical Links for Federal Arts Bureaucracy”, Constance Baumgardner-Gee points out that there are discrepancies in the purpose of the compendium. She also says,

Critical Links pays little to no attention to what students learned in or about any art form and provides minimal data on the substance and quality of the so called “arts experiences that were reported as having so many significant correlations and positive effects on students academic and social development (p. 18).

The sentiment is shared by Anita Silvers who finds that Critical Links misses the point that the arts inspire individuals and contribute to the growth of individuals and communities. Critical Links therefore provides the basis for critically questioning the focus on arts and academic connections. Members of the field seem to have begun to
express frustration with all of the importance placed on other academic subjects and are calling for placing attention on assessment of arts education that indicates how well students are learning and performing in the arts.

Public Opinion

Prior survey studies were funded and coordinated by agencies such as the National Endowment for the Arts, the Arts Education Partnership and the US Department of Education, as well as other foundations and service organizations dedicated to the health and promotion of arts education in America. One such organization is Americans for the Arts, “the nation's leading nonprofit organization for advancing the arts in America” (p. 1). In 2001 the organization conducted a survey of public opinion. The purpose of the survey was to:

- Verify the findings from the qualitative research efforts
- Benchmark current general attitudes towards the value of arts education prior to the implementation of Americans for the Arts’ national public awareness campaign.
- Benchmark the grassroots actions currently being taken in support of arts education prior to the implementation of Americans for the Arts’ national public awareness campaign. (p. 2)

In 2001 Americans for the Arts kicked off their arts education public awareness campaign. As a precursor to the campaign, they conducted a survey of public opinion of arts education. In doing so, they contacted, via phone, more than 1,000 households in the
United States. The survey was used, in addition to several interviews and focus group meetings, to serve as a benchmark for public attitudes prior to the commencement of their campaign. The survey was composed of closed-ended questions where respondents were provided with a statement and asked to what degree they either agreed or disagreed with that statement. The method does not allow for respondents to state their own opinions without the “lead” or guidance of the interviewer. It limits the respondent’s feedback as well as their way of thinking about the subject to the statements made by the interviewer. It doesn’t allow for other ways of thinking about the value of arts education. This method is an efficient way of obtaining data to verify a supposition. It does not, however, seek out all of the potential responses or opinions that participants may have.

Americans for the Arts states the results were to be used in benchmarking public opinion prior to its awareness building campaign. The organization also conducted focus groups that would provide valuable support on the subject. The purpose of the follow up survey will be to evaluate the effectiveness of the campaign. If it is conducted in the same way, survey results may only change slightly because they will again only ask for verification of the statements that are posed.

*Americans and the Arts 7: Highlights from a Nationwide Survey of the Attitudes of the American People Toward the Arts,* indicates that Americans value arts education and believe that students benefit in a number of ways from involvement in arts education. The summary does not mention specific correlation between arts education skills and

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The struggle to keep the arts in the elementary and secondary school curriculum across the country has been difficult. In a time of budget crunches, in most states, school administrators give the arts a lower priority and, very often the arts are simply eliminated from the curriculum (p. 21).

The results of the 1996 survey are favorable towards arts education, although they indicate a slight drop in public opinion from the 1992 study. Harris’ observation follows:

By any measure, public belief that exposure to the arts in school benefits young people is deep and abiding. The irony is that at a time when educators report that they have trouble getting the attention and enthusiasm of students for learning, the arts are widely perceived as being a trigger mechanism in education for young people to get excited about learning, to appreciate the educational process, to learn skills which they can be proud of, can teach them real discipline, and can help them later on when they get to a work situation or move on to college (p. 21).

A review of the instrument used in this survey finds that participants were asked closed ended, leading questions. This study also did not allow for individual perceptions of the linkages between arts education and other life areas to emerge. It therefore would be valuable to conduct a study that would investigate individuals’ perceptions through
both closed and open-end questioning that provides participants with the opportunity to
describe the benefit (or lack thereof) of arts education.

In 1999 the Ohio Arts Council (OAC) collected data for the “State of the Arts
Report” for the State of Ohio. One piece of this project included a public opinion poll of
Ohioans. The OAC utilized The Ohio State University Consulting Service, which
contacted a sample of 526 individuals via phone using random digit dialing. The report,
written by Therese Filicko, provides information regarding the way the Ohio public sees
the arts environment of Ohio. It also discusses key items such as the frequency of
participation in arts activities, access to information about arts events and the importance
of artists to society. The document provides a great deal of useful information about the
Ohio arts climate, and it serves as basis for the strategic plan for the OAC from 2002-
2005. The report also provides some useful statistics for comparison regarding the
participation in arts education activities.

The “State of the Arts Report” indicates that Ohioans give the state a grade of “B”
when it comes to the arts. An additional part of this initiative included the collection of
data about arts education offerings in Ohio schools. This report written by Erik Stewart,
provides information regarding level of funding for arts education, the frequency of arts
related field trips, the amount of class time devoted to arts education and the existence of
extra curricular arts activities. There is a great amount of information detailed in both of
these analyses; however, individuals were not asked to comment specifically on the
causal linkages between arts education skills and other academic or life successes.
A wide variety of literature has been written about the arts link to academic skills. There are publications written by administrators for promoting arts education needs in the policy arena. Individuals in the academic community have been looking to find scientific evidence of arts education effects on cognitive development. Academics and administrators have debated the use of the arts as a tool for improvement in academic and life skills. The NAEP and other assessment programs can and do assess the K-12 student knowledge base in the arts. The purpose of this particular study is not to resolve the debate of whether or not the field should pursue integrated arts and academic curricula. The goal is not to prove that arts education, on its own or used as a teaching tool, will produce better academic results; however, it is an exploration of the perceptions of individuals regarding the benefits they assign to arts education. It is the hope of this researcher that potential linkages between arts education and other academic as well as life components will arise. The public’s opinions regarding causal linkages between arts skills and other academic or life skills have not been fully investigated.
References


CHAPTER 3

THE INVESTIGATION

Methodology

What does the public have to say about the benefit of arts education? Thus far the positions of those individuals in the field of arts education have been discussed. The survey method was used to investigate the perceptions of the public, based on their experiences. What is the rationale for exploring the value of arts education through survey research? Richard M. Jaeger (1997) points out, “The purpose of survey research is to describe specific characteristics of a large group of persons, objects, or institutions” (p. 449). Surveys make it possible for the inferences drawn, if from a randomly selected sample, to be generalized back to the larger populations from which the sample was taken. Floyd J. Fowler (1988) states, “Analysis requirements may dictate a special-purpose survey. Even if there is information about some set of events, it may not be paired with other characteristics needed to carry out a desired analysis” (p. 12).
*Priorities for Arts Education Research*, published in 1997, lists research agenda items of importance for the field of arts education. Among the calls for action, *Priorities for Arts Education Research* insists, “Surveys should be conducted regularly to determine the attitudes of the public, policy makers, employers, parents, school administrators, teachers, and students about arts education” (p. 14). For these reasons a mail survey was conducted.

One of the foremost authorities in the field of survey research, Don A. Dillman (2000), professor of Sociology and Rural Sociology at Washington University and former senior survey methodologist to the Census Bureau, has found that self-administered mail or other surveys are benefiting from a societal change. He says that due to cultural change, many activities that previously involved person-to-person interaction have been replaced with self-administered actions such as the use of ATM’s (Dillman, 2000). However, this study is different in that proof of one hypothesis or another is not the goal. The goal is to uncover the public’s perceptions of the benefits of arts education based on their own experiences and/or the experiences of their children through quantitative and qualitative research. The methodology was chosen in an effort to secure a depth of information that can best serve the purposes of this investigation and thereby benefit the field.
Research Approach

Dillman’s (2000) Tailored Design Method (TDM) was used as a guide for the activities related to the design and conduct of this survey. The TDM emphasizes the use of an administrative plan to carry out a number of activities with the purpose of assuring the greatest possible response rate. A key concept that guides TDM is the theory of social exchange. As Dillman (2000) states,

Social exchange is a theory of human behavior used to explain the development and continuation of human interaction. The theory asserts that actions of individuals are motivated by the return these actions are expected to bring, and in fact usually bring from others (p. 14).

Dillman goes on to list three elements used to predict action; reward, cost and trust. Reward is what the subject expects to receive for his or her participation. The cost is what is expended in order to receive the reward. Trust, therefore, is the belief that the reward for participation will outweigh the cost for that participation. Dillman asserts that a great deal of research has proven that a good faith incentive given to participants of a survey (social exchange) produces greater response rates than the promise of payment upon completion of the survey (economic exchange).
There are several ways to incorporate reward, minimize cost and ensure trust in conducting a survey. Rewards based on TDM, for example, include thanking respondents, creating an interesting questionnaire, avoiding complicated or lofty language, as well as providing tangible gifts. The survey instrument, designed in consultation with The Ohio State University’s Center for Survey Research is provided as Appendix B. Efforts were made to keep the survey short, simple and visually appealing. Additionally $1.00 was enclosed with each survey in appreciation for participants’ time and involvement.

The approach to this research topic and the survey design was informed by Sense-Making methodology as developed by Brenda Dervin of The Ohio State University.

Sense-Making is an approach to thinking about and implementing communication research and practice and the design of communication-based systems and activities. It consists of a set of philosophical assumptions, substantive propositions, methodological framings, and methods. It has been applied in myriad settings (e.g., libraries, information systems, media systems, web sites, public information campaigns, classrooms, counseling services, and so on), at myriad levels (e.g. intrapersonal, interpersonal, small group, organizational, national, global), and within myriad perspectives (e.g., constructivist, critical, cultural, feminist, postmodern, communitarian) (Dervin, n.d.).

Sense-Making is based on three assumptions, “(a) That it is possible to design and implement communication systems and practices that are responsive to human needs; (b) That it is possible for humans to enlarge their communication repertoires to pursue this
vision; (c) That achieving these outcomes requires the development of communication-based methodological approaches.” (Dervin, n.d.)

Dr. Dervin has been developing Sense-Making for over twenty years and has found its way into arts policy arenas as an approach to better understanding audiences and the public. (Dervin, Wyszomirski, and Foreman-Wernet, 2000)

The following citation provides a clear description of Sense-Making.

The term "Sense-Making" is a label for a coherent set of concepts and methods used…to study how people construct sense of their worlds and, in particular, how they construct information needs and uses for information in the process of sense-making. Since sense-making is central to all communicating situations, (whether they be intra-personal, interpersonal, mass, cross-cultural, societal, or inter-national) the Sense-Making approach is seen as having wide applicability. (Dervin, 1983, p. 3)

The “Sense-Making approach posits information seeking and use not as "Transmitting" activity, as has been traditionally assumed. Rather, information seeking and use are posited as "constructing" activities--as personal creating of sense. It is assumed that all information is simply the sense made by individuals at specific moments in time-space” (p. 5). Strengths of the Sense-Making approach are found in its focus on “how individuals use the observations of others as well as their own observations to construct their pictures of reality and use these pictures to guide behavior” (p. 6).
Some of the theories of the concept of Sense-Making were applied to this investigation of the topic in which survey respondents were asked to reflect on their experiences and those of their children, when appropriate, as they reply to the questions asked. The idea of developing a tool that is responsive to respondents communication needs was the goal throughout the development of the survey instrument. This method, though informed by the concepts of Sense-Making, does not make use of the full structure of Sense-Making methodology, which includes the theorizing of time, space, movement and gaps through asking respondents to communicate regarding how they have moved from an initial opinion or thought, through problematic situations to a current thought. This researcher, through experience in doing Sense-Making interviews, finds this approach most useful in face-to-face, one-on-one settings. This researcher suggests the use of this approach for interviews on this topic to add a new perspective toward the end of gaining a more holistic view of the research question. Similarly to the research activities of Americans for the Arts Public Awareness Campaign, this survey could serve as a benchmark for follow up interviews and/or focus group meetings, the difference, however, would be in the approach to those activities, and the use of the Sense-Making method.
The Sample

A mail survey was conducted of a randomly selected sample population of 500 residents of Columbus, Ohio. GENESYS Sampling Systems was employed to obtain a randomly selected sample from the city’s phone and address directory (the “white pages”). Founded in 1987, GENESYS is a company that provides services to the survey research community. The company has much experience in sampling, statistical analysis, project management, data collection management, data processing management and market research sales (GENESYS). It is important to acknowledge that this study’s sample did not include households that are not listed in the directory, nor does it include those who do not have a phone. With these factors in mind, I believe that the sample is reflective of the general population of the Columbus metropolitan area.

Demographic questions were not included in the survey to keep the instrument to a reasonable length and not scare people away from responding. Furthermore, the sample was randomly selected and therefore is representative of the population. The following demographic information of Columbus, Ohio is provided to give the reader a sense of what the population looks like.

Columbus, Ohio has demographic characteristics that are very similar to that of the United States as a whole. According to the 2000 Census, the population of Columbus, Ohio is made up of 711,470 people. The racial make up of the city is mostly
white/Caucasian with 69.8%. (67.9% Caucasian and 1.9% white and another race.)

(Columbus is the capital of the state and is located in Franklin County. Seventy five point five percent of the residents in Franklin County are white/Caucasian, comparable to the 75.1% of white/Caucasian residents in the United States.) (U.S. Census Quickfacts).

Columbus’ largest minority group is African American, which makes up 24.5% of the overall city population. The Asian population is about 3.4% and the Hispanic/Latino race accounts for about 2.5% of the city’s residents. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000)

The Census also reports that the median age for Columbus residents is 30.6 with the majority of the population (19.6%) between the ages of 25 and 34. The percentage of the population that is over the age of 18 is 75.8%. The percentage of individuals under the age of 18 closely matches the 25.7% reported for the nation (US Census Quickfacts, 2004). The average income of the population in 2003 was 47,233 (City of Columbus Department of Development Planning Division, 2004). Additionally, the median value of owner-occupied housing in Columbus during the 2000 Census was 116,200, comparable to the 119,600 for the country.

It is interesting to note that 83.8% of residents 25 and older have high school diplomas. This percentage is comparable to the 80.4% reported by the Census for the nation (U.S. Census Quickfacts). Private individuals, corporations and public agencies support the arts in Columbus. Columbus benefits from the programs of the Greater Columbus Arts Council and the Ohio Arts Council. A number of suburban areas also
maintain arts councils such as the Dublin Arts Council and the Worthington Arts Council. Arts Education activities are promoted through these arts organizations. The Greater Columbus Arts Council provides a service through its website (http://www.columbusarts.com/html/ed_finder.asp) which allows visitors to the site the opportunity to locate arts classes throughout the city and its suburbs. As is the case with a number of public institutions, Columbus Public Schools are dealing with budget issues. The recent plan to reduce budget short falls as presented by Superintendent Gene Harris (2004) includes a number of items that may affect arts education in the district.

The plan includes the reduction of three special assignment teachers and the realignment of teachers in accordance with NCLB. Additionally the superintendent included a number of items for consideration, one of which is the elimination of athletics.

The Instrument

In the construction of the survey instrument, this researcher sought to provide opportunities for respondents to indicate how they see or construct sense of the topic of the value of arts education. The survey created to address the research questions with the use of closed and open-ended, non-leading questions. Respondents also had an opportunity to provide any additional commentary they may have. This survey elicited desired responses to the focal and secondary research questions of the project in that any response is a desired response. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions.
As stated earlier, the proof of a hypothesis is not the goal; rather, a constructivist approach was used to uncover information that will provide valuable insight for further research and direction in the field of arts education.

The Pilot

In January 2003, a pilot survey was conducted using this methodology. The purpose of this pilot was to test and improve the survey instrument and to gain a sense of the value of this exercise. The introductory cover letter provided participants with information about the researcher, described the reason for this study, explained the procedures for the completion and return of the survey, and assured participants of the confidentiality of their responses. The pilot process showed that this letter was acceptable and would require only the minor revisions based on the distribution to the larger sample population.

The results of the pilot survey provided some interesting information for consideration. The original survey asked respondents to comment on the experiences of their children and themselves in the areas of visual arts, music, dance and theater education. Very few participants or their children had any experience in dance or theater education. As a result those questions were eliminated from the survey instrument. This is an interesting finding and could be a topic for further investigation.
Respondents were asked questions about the application of the skills learned in arts education classes to other academic and life areas. This question only focused on the tangible aspects of how the respondent or their children were able to transfer skills to other areas of life and academics. It did not allow them to detail the intrinsic benefits that may not be measurable in tangible ways. For this reason, questions were added that asked if they observed or experienced benefits from participation in arts education courses. If they answered positively, respondents were asked to describe those benefits.

Questions 26 and 27 of the pilot survey asked respondents if they believe arts education contributes to other academic and life success. One hundred percent of those people, who responded to these questions, said yes they do believe that arts education contributes to other academic and life success. Digging deeper into the data found some respondents who indicated “no” when asked if they or their children were able to apply the skills learned in arts education classes to other academic or life areas. Thus, based on their own experiences and observations, they saw no transfer of the skills learned to other areas, but they believe that arts education contributes to other academic or life success. This added credence to the need to ask questions about respondents’ beliefs regarding the benefits of arts education. Additionally, it lead to the addition of follow up questions that asked participants to provide one reason why they believe, or do not believe, that arts education contributes to academic and other life success.
The revised survey, as with the pilot survey, provided participants with the opportunity to provide additional commentary. This option was maintained because of the wealth of comments offered by a number of subjects. One person wrote, “Arts education addresses the needs of alternative learners who often need visual or kinesthetic methods.” Another respondent wrote, “I believe that participation in the arts can save a young person’s life. I’ve known many middle-high school students who may have dropped out of school or even committed suicide were it not for art class, choir rehearsals or drama club keeping them involved with others.” These comments are pretty powerful and lend to the value of doing this study. The revised survey instrument was used and is included as Appendix B.

Statistical Analysis

Working in consultation with The Ohio State University Statistical Consulting Service, it was determined that statistical information, based on the research questions and previous studies, would be valuable. The approach used with the statistical analysis is descriptive and comparative. The objective was to describe responses and make comparisons to other responses within the survey. The results can also be compared with those of other studies such as the Americans for the Arts Public Awareness Survey. The statistical tests employed were limited to those which will provide summary information about the population involved in the survey.
Content Analysis

Kimberly A. Neuendorf (2002) writes, “Content analysis as a research method is consistent with the goals and standards of survey research. In content analysis, an attempt is made to measure all variables as they naturally or normally occur” (p. 49). Content analysis was performed on the text of the open-ended responses. Either computer or human coding can be used to conduct content analysis on open-ended questions. This study used human coding with an emergent approach. Neuendorf describes the emergent coding process as one “in which a coding scheme is established after all responses are collected; then, systematic content analysis is conducted applying this scheme to the responses, with appropriate reliability assessment” (p. 194).

Upon receipt of the completed questionnaires, all of the open-ended responses were reviewed to establish a theme and code system. An additional researcher was solicited to perform the same tasks in an effort to verify and establish reliability with the code system. Once a common code set was established, each response was coded for statistical analysis and descriptive information, which contributed to the statistical results of the closed-ended questions. Though this process adds to the quantitative nature of this study, texts of some of responses were contributed in the analysis of this project. The use of these methods of inquiry on this topic provides a wealth of information and proved valuable to this study. The results of this study are reflective of the randomly selected sample of Columbus, Ohio residents. Further generalization to other populations would require duplicative studies.
References


Su, S and Zhao, L. The Ohio State University Consulting Service (2003) Analysis of pilot survey on public views of the value of arts education. Columbus, OH.


CHAPTER 4

SURVEY RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Five hundred mail surveys were sent to a randomly selected sample of Columbus, Ohio residents in October of 2003. Thirty-two surveys were returned by the postal service as undeliverable. From the potential 468 surveys, 150 were returned for a response rate of 32%. The results provided some interesting food for thought. A review of the instrument is in order at this point. Please refer to Appendix B.

Of the 150 respondents, 10 people did not respond to the question. Seventy-seven, or 55%, of respondents indicated they have children and 63 (45%) indicated they have no children. This provided a very good mix to determine the benefits of arts education based on personal and observed experiences. The following table indicates the frequencies of positive and negative responses to survey questions.
Table 4.1: Responses to Questions 1, 2, and 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>No response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Do you have children?</td>
<td>77 (55%)</td>
<td>63 (45%)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Have your children taken visual art (painting, sculpture, drawing) class or classes in school or outside of school?</td>
<td>48 (62%)</td>
<td>29 (37.66%)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. If you answered yes, to the above question, did your children benefit in any way from the visual art class or classes?</td>
<td>45 (95.74%)</td>
<td>2 (4.26%)</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is obvious that parents overwhelmingly believe their kids benefit from taking visual arts. When it comes to detailing what those benefits are, parents responded to question four in a number of ways.
Figure 4.1: Responses to Question 4 (What benefits did you observe from your children’s participation in the visual art class or classes?)

Though parents were asked to list one way their children benefit from, most respondents provided a more than one answer. It is clear that the top benefits are the enjoyment of the class as a hobby, but parents also listed the benefits of creativity and appreciation for visual arts, very highly. When parents were asked if they thought their
children were able to apply the knowledge and or skills learned in their visual arts class or classes to other academic areas, the majority of respondents indicated, yes (79.07%).

In question five, parents were then asked to provide details of how their children have been able to apply the knowledge/skills learned from their visual arts class to other academic areas. This was a bit of a challenge for parents. Although a number were able to make a link between what was learned in the visual arts class to other academic subjects, the majority of the responses indicate indirect benefits that are more personal or social in nature.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>No response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5. Have your children been able to apply the <strong>knowledge and/or skills</strong> they learned in visual art class or classes to other academic areas?</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2: Responses to Question 5
Figure 4.2: Responses to Question 6 (Please detail how your children have been able to apply the knowledge and/or skills they learned to other academic areas.)

In questions seven through eleven parents were asked to reflect on their children’s experiences with music education. Forty-nine of the 77 people who indicate they have children said that their children have taken music classes. It is also clear that the majority of parents, who have kids that have taken music, believe their children have benefited from taking the class or classes.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>No response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7. Have your children taken music class or classes in school or outside of school</td>
<td>49 (65.3%)</td>
<td>26 (34.67%)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Did your children benefit in any way from the music class or classes?</td>
<td>42 (87.5%)</td>
<td>6 (12.5%)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3: Responses to Questions 7 and 8
In question 9, parents were asked to list the benefits they observed from their children’s participation in the music class or classes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefit</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appreciation</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art / Music making skills</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork / social skills</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence / Self Esteem / Self awareness</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avocation / Hobby / Enjoyment / Stress relief</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation / Attention to detail / study skills</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motor Skills / coordination / rhythm</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline / perseverance / motivation</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication / Listening Skills</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadens the mind / insight / free thinking</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well-rounded education / existence</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of life</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides opportunities / options for success</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciation / Exposure to other cultures</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application with Family / Parenting</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application to other academic areas / subject listed</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question 10 asks about application to other academic areas overall. Thirty-three (71.74%) respondents indicated there were applications to other academic areas, whereas 13 (28.26%) said there were no links to other academic areas. (There were two non-respondents.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>No response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10. Have your children been able to apply the knowledge and/or skills</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>they learned in music class, or classes, to other academic areas?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4 Responses to Question 10

When asked to detail how their children have been able to apply the skills/knowledge gained from music education, parents indicated applications to other academic areas in only 10 instances.
Figure 4.4: Responses to Question 11 (Please detail how your children have been able to apply the knowledge and/or skills they learned from their music class or classes to other academic areas.)
Question 12 is a two-part question. The first part asks individuals if they believe education in visual arts and music contributes to other academic success.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>No response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12. Do you believe that education in the visual arts and music contributes to other academic success? (Such as higher grades or test scores in other subjects like math or science.)</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.5: Responses to Question 12

Overwhelmingly, respondents indicated, yes (93.98%). Six percent responded no, with 17 non-responses. Both parents and non-parents answered this question. It is interesting to see the high percent of people with this belief. In the second portion of the question, people were asked to indicate one reason why they believe visual arts and music education contribute to academic success. Conversely, if respondents indicated that they do not hold this belief, they were ask to provide one reason for their position. In figure 4.5 we see that respondents believe that education in the arts broadens students’ minds, promotes insight and freethinking. Interestingly enough, though respondents were asked to provide one reason, they actually provided several.
Figure 4.5: Responses to Question 12a (Please list one reason why you believe education in visual arts and music contributes to other academic success.)

There were respondents that indicated that they do not believe education in visual arts and music contributes to other academic success. The reasons include the diversion from other academic subjects as well as issues of quality. One individual remarked that
education in the arts broadens the mind and contributes to freethinking but does not actually provide skills that lead to success in other academic subjects. Does this infer the individual does not see broadening one’s mind as something that can help in other academic pursuits? This could be another opportunity for further research.

Figure 4.6: Responses to Question 12b (Please list one reason why you do not believe education in visual arts and music contributes to other academic success.)
The next set of questions asks respondents to provide answers based on their own experiences in arts education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>No response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13. Have you taken visual art (painting, sculpture, drawing) class or classes in school or outside of school?</td>
<td>73 (53.28%)</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(46.72%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Did you benefit in any way from the visual arts class or classes?</td>
<td>65 (91.55%)</td>
<td>6 (8.45%)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.6: Responses to Questions 13 and 14

The number of adults who indicate that they have taken visual arts is pretty even with those who said they have not taken visual art. In question 15, respondents were asked to detail the benefits they experienced from participation in visual art class or classes.
Table 4.7: Responses to Question 15 (What benefits did you experience from your participation in the visual art class or classes?)

Adults indicate that the benefits they experienced are the same benefits parents observed in their children although they are able to see the benefits to their profession and college study. Question 16 asks respondents to think about the application of the benefits they experienced from visual arts classes.
16. Have you been able to apply the knowledge and/or skills you learned in your visual art class or classes to other areas of your life?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>No response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Response</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.7: Responses to Question 16

As is depicted in the next figure adults, having reflected on their own experiences, more frequently listed benefits of confidence and self-esteem in addition to a well-rounded education and existence. Question 17 asks adults how they have been able to apply the knowledge gained from visual art classes to other areas of their lives.
Figure 4.8: Responses to Question 17 (Please detail how you have been able to apply the knowledge and/or skills you learned to other areas of your life.)

Adults most frequently indicated that they have been able to apply what they learned in visual art classes to avocation, enjoyment, and stress relief. Also high on the list is the application to profession and problem solving. It is interesting to note the
application to family and parenting. This could be one reason more children have taken visual art classes than adults.

Questions 18 through 22 ask respondents to reflect on their experiences in music class or classes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>No response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18. Have you taken music class or classes in school or outside of school</td>
<td>82 (59.85%)</td>
<td>55 (40.15%)</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Did you benefit in any way from the music class or classes?</td>
<td>80 (97.56%)</td>
<td>2 (2.44%)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.8: Responses to Questions 18 and 19

This table reflects a greater number of adults who have taken music classes versus the number who have taken visual art classes. The data indicates that 82 respondents have taken music classes, as compared to 77 who have taken visual art. Over 97% of those who have taken music classes indicate they benefited from that class in some way.

Question 20 asks participants to detail the benefits they experienced from their music class or classes.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appreciation</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avocation/ Hobby/ Enjoyment/ Stress relief</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art / Music making skills</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork/ social skills</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence/ Self Esteem/ Self awareness</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well-rounded education/ existence</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of life</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motor Skills/ coordination/ rhythm</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciation / Exposure to other cultures</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation / Attention to detail / study skills</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline/ perseverance/ motivation</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Application</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadens the mind / insight/ free thinking</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem Solving/ Creative thinking</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not make one successful academically or professionally</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication / Listening Skills</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application with Family / Parenting</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application to volunteer/ community/ church</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application to other academic areas / subject listed</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The most listed benefit to music education classes based on these responses was the appreciation of music. Respondents also listed highly avocation, stress relief and enjoyment. This is consistent throughout the results of this survey. Seventy-four percent of respondents indicate that they have been able to apply the knowledge and/or skills learned in music classes to other areas of their lives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>No response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21. Have you been able to apply the <strong>knowledge and/or skills</strong> you learned in your music class or classes to other areas of your life?</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.9: Responses to Question 21
Respondents indicate the following ways in which they have been able to apply those skills to their lives.

![Bar chart showing responses to Question 22](chart.png)

Figure 4.10 Responses to Question 22 (Please detail how you have been able to apply the knowledge and/or skills you learned in your music class, or classes, to other areas of your life.)
Question 23, like question 12 contained 2 parts. Initially Respondents were asked if they believe arts education in visual art and music contributes to other life successes. They were then asked to provide one reason for their belief.

Table 4.10: Responses to Question 23

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>No response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23. Do you believe that education in visual arts and music contributes to other life success?</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Does not make one successful academically or professionally

Application with Family / Parenting

Application to volunteer / community / church

Art / Music making skills

Future Career

Problem Solving / Creative thinking

Appreciation / Exposure to other cultures

Communication / Listening Skills

Discipline / perseverance / motivation

Observation / Attention to detail / study skills

Teamwork / social skills

Professional Application

Provides opportunities / options for success

Avocation / Hobby / Enjoyment / Stress relief

Creativity

Confidence / Self Esteem / Self awareness

Appreciation

Broadens the mind / insight / free thinking

Quality of life

Well-rounded education / existence
4.11: Question 23a Responses

There were only 4 individuals indicated that they do not believe education in visual art and music contributes to other life success. One person did not provide a reason for his or her belief. The other three reasons are listed in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. It only affects Quality of life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. It does not make one successful academically or professionally.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Arts and music are too random or abstract.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.11: Responses to Question 23b (Please list one reason why you do not believe education in visual arts and music contributes to other life success.)

Question 24 asked respondents if there was anything else they would like to contribute to the survey. A number of these were left blank, while others offered their best wishes for the project and a few offered additional insights. One respondent echoed the causal linkage responses when she/he said that it is necessary to find out what students enjoy and to use that to keep them interested in school. (Anon. #27) Another respondent (Anon. #29) remarked that future artists and musicians need exposure to their talents as early as possible.
Analysis

Throughout this chapter some general themes presented themselves, mainly that the public believes there are a number of benefits to education in the arts. To fully realize the importance of the results it is necessary to first analyze the data in relation to the research questions posed in the first chapter of this study. Additional points of interest also come to light as they add to the wealth of the literature.

The main research question was:

- What does the public have to say about the benefits of arts education?

Additional research questions for philosophical discussion are:

- Is it possible to make causal linkages involving the arts education?
- If the public’s perceptions concerning the benefits of arts education were known, would it be possible to determine linkages between arts education and success in other academic areas or even career endeavors?
- How does one evaluate the effectiveness of arts education on the lives of American citizenry?

It was established early on in this study that public opinion has not been the emphasis of information of the transfer of arts skills to other areas. The answer to the question, what does the public have to say about the benefits of arts education is clear.
Based on the responses to the survey questions, the public believes that education in the arts is beneficial. Parents indicated the frequencies of 62% of their children have taken visual art classes, and 65% have taken music classes. When asked if they observed benefits in their children, 96% of parents responded that their children benefited from taking visual art classes and 88% indicated that their children benefited from taking classes. It is therefore, very clear that children are benefiting from arts education classes. Adults who have taken visual art classes (53% of respondents) indicate a frequency of benefiting from the class at the rate of 92%. Those adults who took music classes (60%) indicate a frequency of benefiting from the subject at a rate of 98%. These results are consistent with information reported by academics, administrators and other public opinion polls. Some of the meatiest information is found in the data provided by respondents in open-ended questions regarding the benefits of participation in arts education classes.

The benefits most often observed by respondents in their children were appreciation, the development of a hobby, enjoyment, creativity, alternate thinking and the skills to make art and music. This is consistent with Harris’ statements in the *Americans and the Arts 7: Highlights from a Nationwide Survey of Attitudes of the American People Toward the Arts*. Harris (1996) says the arts are perceived as a trigger mechanism for raising young people’s interests in learning. Parents also listed stress relief as a benefit. Based on the comments in the open-ended section of question nine and the additional comments for the overall survey, stress relief is interpreted as the
opportunity to think differently. Children found stress relief in thinking in a different way during art or music class periods as compared to the manner of thinking required during other classes. This confirms Jensen’s comments about the stress relieving benefits of listening to music. Other benefits listed by parents included those of a social nature. Students gained a sense of teamwork, specifically from playing an instrument in a band or participating other types of music classes.

Parents also commented that self-esteem, confidence, communication and listening skills and attention to detail were benefits they observed in their children. It is interesting to note that the application to other academic areas and life areas was listed less frequently than all other benefits. This is a telling result in that parents see the benefits to their children’s overall education in a number of ways; however, they do not focus on the transfer of those benefits to other areas. This brings to mind the comments of Eisner and others who think that the arts should be supported for the unique experiences that they bring to education. Based on these results, parents are also focused on the uniqueness of what arts classes provide to their children versus how the arts can improve academic performance.

When asked to directly respond to the questions about their children’s application, most parents indicated that their children were able to apply what they learned in art and music classes to other academic classes. Parents said their children were able to apply visual art skills to other classes when completing projects and assignments. They also
observed their children’s ability to think creatively and problem solve which came in handy in other classes. This is consistent with what Efland says about individuals and the need to make meaning of what they see and hear. Respondents commented that skills their children learned helped them to see things in a non-linear way and to recognize patterns. Some parents with adult children even commented that they observed their children using skills learned from arts classes in raising and interacting with their own children.

Parents ranked the application of skills learned in music class to other classes more frequently than the application of visual art to other classes. One respondent commented music education, “added to historical cultural knowledge, eye-hand coordination, helped in computer keyboard work, elementary math” (Anon. 11).

Adults indicate the application of visual arts benefits not only to enjoyment and stress relief but also to professional endeavors. A number of respondents commented they work as art teachers, music teachers, artists and designers. They also comment that there is application to parenting, well-rounded existence, quality of life, social and teamwork skills, and self-esteem. Adults say music has a strong application to teamwork and social skills. They rank the application of music skills as having a more frequent application to communication and listening skills. Adults also frequently list the application of music to community and church activities, which are very important in their lives. This is an interesting link, one that has not been directly mentioned in the
literature as a causal benefit of arts education. This particular link can be considered the attainment of one of the 2000 goals of education involving the importance of citizenship. Adults, however, list the application of skills learned in arts courses to other academic areas very infrequently. In fact, it was the least listed application indicated by respondents in this survey. Overall when asked if they believe that arts education contributes to academic success, respondents said yes. Respondents, however, say that arts education contributes to academic success through broadening the mind, providing insight and encouraging free thinking. They also say that arts education improves academic performance by teaching observation, attention to detail, discipline, perseverance and motivation. These elements are not unique to arts courses and can be learned or gained through exposure to any number of variables. This is also the case regarding the transfer of skills from arts education to life success. Adults indicate arts education contributes to life success through providing a well-rounded education; quality of life and encouraging freethinking. Based on the wealth of information comprised from the literature and the survey, the answers to the question, “Is it possible to make causal linkages involving the arts education?” is maybe. It has yet to be proven that education in the arts directly causes one thing or another. But, education in the arts has the potential to affect any number of areas of one’s life. Now that we know the public’s perceptions concerning the benefits of arts education were known, it is possible to determine linkages between arts education and success in other academic areas or even career endeavors, however they are not necessarily direct links.
Revisiting Figure 1.1 from chapter one and placing it in this context, it would look like this.

![Art Education Benefits Diagram](image)

**Figure 4.12: Art Education Benefits Diagram**

Thus students have exposure to arts education in addition to any number of other unknown variables. (Variables could include athletics, their environment and even people.) Through arts education and other variables students experience a number of benefits. These benefits then could result in outcomes of self-esteem, hobbies, future career, study skills, etc. A survey participant wrote that he/she played the piano and flute and believes it helped him/her reach the goal of becoming an attorney. (Anon. #3) Based
on this study it is necessary to point out that arts education does not have a direct causal link to the benefits most often claimed by administrators and arts education advocacy agencies. Instead, through education in the arts, and or exposure to other variables, students can gain enjoyment and other benefits that could lead to future careers, improved study skills etc.

An interesting point that came about from this study is students are receiving more exposure to arts education. This study provided a sense of adults and children’s exposure to arts education and the frequency for applying what they learned to other areas of their lives. One survey participant said that as a grandfather with three well-educated children, he regrets that his parents did not guide him towards the arts. (Comments from survey #6) The “State of the Arts in Ohio” (pp. 36-37) indicates strong correlations between participation in arts education activities as a child and continued participation in arts and cultural activities as adults.

The following figure presents the comparison of the amount of arts education children have and the amount of arts education that adults have had. Parents report children have greater exposure to arts education than parents or adults without children.
Figure 4.13 Comparisons of Children and Adults

Children are also benefiting from arts education and have some instances of applying the skills/knowledge learned to other areas. Adults, parents and non-parents, also benefited from arts education and have been able to apply it to other areas, though on a less frequent basis as children. From this information one could gather that the status of arts education has improved over the years and children currently have more of it than did their parents.

(Note: Some data missing for Music Taken for Adults, non-parents)
These findings are contrary to those that have been published. Returning to Harris’ (1996) comments:

The struggle to keep the arts in the elementary and secondary school curriculum across the country has been difficult. In a time of budget crunches, in most states, school administrators give the arts a lower priority and, very often the arts are simply eliminated from the curriculum (p. 21).

Does this mean that arts education advocacy efforts are working? Conversely, could the urgency of issues concerning the amount of arts education in schools be a political tactic to present things in a negative light to ensure policy attention? The evidence says the public believes in the importance of education in the arts. Results could be reflective only of the City of Columbus, Ohio and similar cities.

The results of the survey indicate that people do believe arts education contributes to academic and life success. This belief was even held by individuals who had little to no experience with arts education classes. Those individuals who have taken arts courses believe that they received some benefits from those classes. The benefits listed included perseverance, attention to detail, and problem solving; skills that come into play for learning. But when it comes to the connection that people make between arts education and other areas of their lives, the linkages most often reported were enjoyment, appreciation, thinking differently, and avocation. The results show that people report some of the same linkages discussed in the literature, however, the linkages they report...
most often are not skill related, rather they are non-cognitive and related to enjoyment, appreciation and alternative thinking.

It is possible to make linkages between arts education and other areas of life. The linkages are not, however, causal. The results of this study show the public believes linkages can be drawn from arts education experiences, as well as other experiences, to academic and successes. The linkages, however, are not causal.

To answer the final philosophical research question, we can evaluate the effectiveness of arts education on the lives of American citizenry by understanding the personal connections citizens make to arts education. Public awareness campaigns have been successful. A number of people commented that the arts improve academic and other successes, though there is no proven direct cause and effect relationship.
References


CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

This research study reviews the evolution of the use of causal linkages between the arts and other academic and life successes. The use of the causal arguments in support of the arts can be linked to at least two factors, which are the need to show tangible public program outcomes and to demonstrate accountability on the part of public schools, in educating the youth of America. For these reasons, the desired research agenda for arts education has been focused on studies that address the transfer of skills and knowledge from the arts to other academic subjects. A number of studies and research projects were undertaken to address this need. Many studies focused on what the arts can do for at-risk-youth, but were generalized to a larger population. Most recently other studies such, as Harvard’s Project REAP, call into question the validity of initial research findings that claim causal relationships between arts education and other academic success. My research study focused on the public’s perceptions of the benefits of arts education and the existence of causal linkages. Through the use of open-ended questioning, the objective was to uncover public opinion on the subject and to see if additional linkages come to light as a result.
The results of my study indicate the transfer of knowledge and skills from arts education classes to other academic classes is not a major factor on the minds of the sample population questioned. The public sees many benefits to education in the arts. The public, however, is not focused on what the arts can contribute to other academic or life successes. They do not indicate additional causal linkages, but many people do talk about the importance of arts education as a necessity for a complete or well-rounded education. The indications of my study are that arts advocacy efforts focused on the causal relationships involving arts education should shift to focus on what arts education does for overall education and quality of life. These, after all, are the benefits as described by the population participating in this study. Other populations in other geographical areas may provide different information regarding this issue. To make future arts education advocacy efforts successful, advocates may need to find alternative marketing solutions by tapping into community belief systems.

All of this information leads us back to Brent Wilson’s (1997) goal for arts education research, that is, to understand how arts education helps students make sense of their lives. We see from this study that arts education is important, for many reasons. We also see that people understand that arts education benefits are evident in a number of parts of their lives. I was very impressed with the comments of a survey respondent (Survey #15) who writes that he/she believes that the US in particular has cultural poverty when it comes to valuing education in the arts. The comments go on to read that children need it and deserve it and that the arts are not fluff; they are integral to the development of a healthy human being.
The results of my study indicate that it is necessary to continue to support arts education and to communicate its benefits. Another survey participant points this out through additional comments. Respondent #19 writes, “Although this survey will probably indicate benefits due to arts education, the results probably cannot be understood independent of other policy considerations. Although I see its benefits, as a taxpayer, I must weigh these against other possible choices. Without this comparison, I am not sure you can determine its relative worth.” These comments can remind us of the need to establish and maintain arts education as an issue of importance in policy arenas. An additional enlightened participant (Survey #16) writes, “Creativity is one of the most important characteristics of mankind. If we neglect this part of us, we will lose that which advances our civilization and enhances our existence.”

How best can we accomplish the sustainment of arts education in the policy arena? One very important statement that the Project REAP (2004) researchers make is that research must pay closer attention to methodology and incorporate the value of synthesis into their results. In adding to the comments of the REAP researchers, it is necessary to point out that the use of causality as a support mechanism for arts education, may not be the best way to market the cause. Researchers cannot control what others decide to do with their research. It is important that arts education advocates fully understand research results and use the clearest and truest language when promoting the virtues of arts education.
This study does not resolve the debate of whether or not arts education should be used as a tool for other academic subject; rather, it posits that it is not foremost on the minds of the public. Study results; however, indicate that regardless of public awareness campaigns, people are tuned into what arts education does for them personally. This, I assert, is the key to future advocacy efforts.

Next Steps

One of the goals of this study was to find opportunities for future research. Throughout this document a number of issues have presented themselves for further inquiry. The first step I will take is to keep the promise I made to the respondents of my survey and share the results with the Columbus Public School Board President and Superintendent. This is important as the Columbus Public Schools is preparing to place a school levy on the November ballot. Additional steps that may offer substantial information to the field include the following research studies.

Through this investigation it was pointed out that the arts have made a place for themselves among the subjects evaluated in the National Assessment of Educational Progress as a result of numerous arts education advocacy efforts. AEP and a number of agencies report that standards have been set for student performance in arts education classes. Thomas Hatfield (1999) writes in his article, *The Unevenness of Arts Education Policies*,

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We have no empirical national data of what is happening in the nation’s eighty-two thousand K-12 public schools or its 15,350 school districts. Thus we have no national picture of whether the standards have found their way into the classroom instructional practices (p. 2).

It is left up to teachers and school districts to implement the standards. Thus, Hatfield asks, “How many arts teachers subscribe to the standards? How many possess backgrounds of arts study and experience that allow them to deliver the requirements of the national standards to students?” (p. 2). To implement the standards successfully means that they must find their way into the classroom. The Ohio Arts Council State of the Arts Report (SOAR) could be used as a springboard to find out how many schools have adopted the arts education in their schools. It would be beneficial to know which schools are following the standards and which schools are not. Schools that are not following the standards could be interviewed to find the reasons for not following the standards. Local arts education advocacy agencies could then be diligent about offering assistance for schools through partnerships with schools that have successfully incorporated the standards or campaigns with school administrators regarding the importance of the standards. Furthermore, it would be interesting to compare results with those reported by education agencies and school boards. The results could also be compared with the 1997 NAEP results and the upcoming NAEP results.

Additionally it could be worthwhile to note whether or not the standards are used as guidelines in reporting student grades or performance. The information from the NAEP would be a good starting point for a study of students who do not perform well in
arts classrooms. It would be a study to more fully investigate how students learn. Are there students that perform well in other academic subjects but not in art classes? What does that student look like, educationally? Does that student differ in a number of ways from the students who perform well in the arts? Is it a matter of interest, presentation or student engagement? If it were determined that presentation had a large effect on the success of a student, further research on integrated arts programs, such as Learning to Read through the Arts, may provide useful. It would be interesting to see the effects of a program like LTRTA on non-at-risk students. If the program helps students who have fallen behind catch up, what could it do for students who are performing well? Would it help students who are performing at standard levels, excel? Could it encourage good students to become mentors or tutors to other students?

Hetland and Winner say research should focus on creating “reasonable bridges” between the arts and other subjects as well as pursuing the transfer of skills from other subjects to the arts. In addition to the aforementioned research projects, I suggest a study involving the evaluation of a typical school day. This would allow one to see if the subject matter, presentation, or environment has greater effect on students. It would also provide information regarding how students use the information gained throughout the day. It may be possible to determine if there is transfer of knowledge and skills across subject matter. This type of study could offer even greater information if one were to investigate the ability of students to apply what they learn in an art course over time.
This could provide greater insight into what people gain from an art course and how or if they put that knowledge to use in some other area of their lives.

Research in another direction, is called for by Hetland and Winner who say, “…we need research that focuses on the non-cognitive transfer of outcomes of arts education” (pp. 155). My study supports this notion. Respondents indicate non-cognitive benefits of stress relief, relaxation and enjoyment through arts education. The State of the Arts Report shows a strong correlation between past arts education experiences and future participation in arts activities. In the previous chapter, evidence was presented which indicates children are receiving more arts education than their parents. One could surmise that those responding to SOAR enjoyed the non-cognitive benefits of arts education and therefore not only participate in arts activities as adults but also involve their children in arts education activities. This hypothesis could be further tested through surveys, interviews or focus group discussions. Research on non-cognitive benefits could be a catalyst for arts education advocacy.

This exploration has come full circle. Returning to the idea of the eyes, ears, minds and hearts of the beholders discussed in the introduction, this is a call to arts education advocates seek out the best ways to connect with the senses of those beholders to ensure that arts education flourishes. Advocacy efforts should be geared toward helping people see a personal stake in arts education. We need to help people see how arts education has affected their lives. When people have a personal stake in an issue, they will support it.
A personal stake in arts education helps people see that the arts are everywhere and a part of everything we do. If the arts are everywhere then everyone has a stake in preserving them. Convincing people they have a personal stake in arts education can also help to break down the stigma that the arts are intimidating. It is important that we are all passionate about arts education. We may never come together in a unified manner on what is important about arts education, but we must unite to find the best way to present those benefits to people outside of the field.
References


October 8, 2003

Dear Neighbor,

I am writing to ask you for your participation in a survey of your opinion on the impact of arts education. This is an important local issue that affects our schools in that it relates directly to school curriculum, teacher preparedness and course offerings. As a graduate student at The Ohio State University, I am pursuing a doctoral degree in art education with a research focus on the public’s opinion on the impact of arts education.

Your address was randomly selected from the Columbus metropolitan area to take part in this survey. This survey should only take 5-7 minutes to complete. The code listed on the survey identifies the survey upon its return to prevent unnecessary follow up mailing. Please complete the enclosed questionnaire and return it by October 31st, in the postage paid envelope provided.

The information you provide will not be associated with your name in any manner. Any answers you provide will be held in the strictness of confidence and will not be shared or sold to anyone.

Your opinion counts! Research results may help local educators and administrators recognize where the public stands on the value of arts education. Please accept the enclosed $1.00 in appreciation for your involvement in this study. If you have any questions please feel free to contact me at 406-0223, or my advisor Dr. Robert Arnold at 292-0132.

In Appreciation,

Barbara J. Airulla
Appendix B

Survey of Public Views on the Impact of Arts Education

1. Do you have children?
   Yes____
   No ____ (Skip to question 12.)

2. Have your children taken visual art (painting, sculpture, drawing) class or classes in school or outside of school?
   Yes____
   No _____ (Skip to question 7)

3. If you answered yes, to the above question, did your children benefit in any way from the visual art class or classes?
   Yes____
   No _____ (Skip to question 5)

4. What benefits did you observe from your children’s participation in the visual art class or classes?

   __________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________

5. Have your children been able to apply the knowledge and/or skills they learned in visual art class or classes to other academic areas?
   Yes____
   No _____ (Skip to question 7)
6. Please detail how your children have been able to apply the **knowledge and/or skills** they learned to other academic areas.

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

7. Have your children taken music class or classes in school or outside of school?
   
   Yes____
   
   No ____ (Skip to question 12)

8. Did your children **benefit** in any way from the music class or classes?
   
   Yes____
   
   No ____ (Skip to question 10)

9. What **benefits** did you observe from your children’s participation in the music class or classes?

   _______________________________________________________________________
   
   _______________________________________________________________________

10. Have your children been able to apply the **knowledge and/or skills** they learned in music class, or classes, to other academic areas?

    Yes____
    
    No ____ (Skip to question 12)

11. Please detail how your children have been able to apply the **knowledge and/or skills** they learned from their music class or classes to other academic areas.

   _______________________________________________________________________
   
   _______________________________________________________________________

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12. Do you believe that education in the visual arts and music contributes to other academic success? (Such as higher grades or test scores in other subjects like math or science.)

   Yes____

   a. Please list one reason **why you believe** education in visual arts and music contributes to other academic success.

   ____________________________________________________________

   ____________________________________________________________

   No _____

   b. Please list one reason **why you do not believe** education in visual arts and music contributes to other academic success.

   ____________________________________________________________

13. Have you taken visual art (painting, sculpture, drawing) class or classes in school or outside of school?

   Yes____

   No _____ (Skip to question 18)

14. Did you **benefit** in any way from the visual art class or classes?

   Yes____

   No _____ (Skip to question 16)

15. What **benefits** did you experience from your participation in the visual art class or classes?

   ____________________________________________________________

   ____________________________________________________________

16. Have you been able to apply the **knowledge and/or skills** you learned in your visual art class or classes to other areas of your life?

   Yes____

   No _____ (Skip to question 18)
17. Please detail how you have been able to apply the **knowledge and/or skills** you learned to other areas of your life.

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

18. Have you taken music class or classes in school or outside of school?

   Yes____

   No _____ (Skip to question 23)

19. Did you **benefit** in any way from taking a music class or classes?

   Yes____

   No _____ (Skip to question 21)

20. What **benefits** did you experience from your participation in the music class or classes?

   ______________________________________________________________________

   ______________________________________________________________________

21. Have you been able to apply the **knowledge and/or skills** you learned in your music class or classes to other areas of your life?

   Yes____

   No _____ (Skip to question 23)

22. Please detail how you have been able to apply the **knowledge and/or skills** you learned in your music class, or classes, to other areas of your life.

   ______________________________________________________________________

   ______________________________________________________________________
23. Do you believe that education in visual arts and music contributes to other life success?

Yes____

a. Please list one reason why you believe education in visual arts and music contributes to other life success.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

No_____ 

b. Please list one reason why you do not believe education in visual arts and music contributes to other life success.

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

24. Is there anything else you would like to contribute to this survey?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Thank you very much for your time!
## Content Analysis Code Sheet 1/12/04

**Benefits of Arts Education Survey**

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<td>Avocation/ Hobby/ Enjoyment/ Stress relief</td>
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<td>Application to other academic areas / subject listed</td>
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<td>W</td>
<td>Does not make one successful academically or professionally</td>
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<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>It is just another pleasure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Diverts attention from other subjects</td>
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<td>aa</td>
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