

## DESIGNING POLICY FOR ARTS DEVELOPMENT THE 2005 SURVEY: SUMMARY

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October, 2007

The Wisconsin Arts Board asked us to replicate the 1973 study of the five test communities and the four comparison communities. We added three additional communities that are now as underserved as these four comparison towns were in 1973, making a total of 12 towns.

While we recognize the great changes that have happened in small American communities, and in the arts, and in technology since 1973, we felt that there was a value in doing this study, even if the findings could only be suggestive. Typically, studies take a picture of a moment in time; we have the great fortune to look at patterns over 32 years.

We sent 150 surveys to addresses selected from the telephone book as randomly as possible; we were unable to locate a complete mailing list for all households in all towns without considerable expense, which we could not do. We recognized all of the drawbacks of just using the phone book (we did not include cell phone users, post office boxholders, etc) but we felt that it was the best that we could do. We did a second mailing to people who did not return a survey. And we did a third distribution of surveys – 100 in all – by hand, making 250 surveys distributed in each town. We achieved a response rate of about 40% overall. An independent test confirmed that our three populations in each town were similar so that they could be treated as a single group.

Cross-tabulations and regression analysis yielded several interesting sets of findings.

### General Observations

We asked people to simply identify who produced arts activity in their communities. The list (ranked by which group was listed first by each respondent) is useful because it suggests that arts policy development cannot be limited to nonprofit arts organizations. The ranked order was:

- Schools, 498
- Clubs (local arts or other nonprofits), 206
- Don't know, 133
- College, 93
- Church, 88
- Touring groups, 43
- UW Extension, 27
- Other, 19

Turning to the data, we found that across-the-board, whether communities are project towns, former comparison towns, or newly-included underserved towns, women express more interest in the arts than men do:

		Female	Male
#		639	333
<b>Q1a Arts in Community Important (Top 2 of 4 choices)</b>	552	70.9%	59.8%
<b>Q1b Arts in Community Should Be (Top 2)</b>	870	93.6%	81.2%
<b>Community Gap</b>		22.7%	21.4%

At the same time, we found that women and men don't feel that the arts are important enough in schools, and both aspire to more arts for their children.

	#	Female	Male
#		639	333
<b>Q2a Kids Important Arts (Top 2)</b>	498	54.5%	44.3%
<b>Q2b Kids Important Arts Should Be (Top 2)</b>	841	89.5%	79.1%
<b>Kids Gap</b>		35.0%	34.8%

We asked whether people had attended a live play, concert, or arts-and-crafts event in the past year, and whether they left town to do so. Of all of these, attendance at plays is the most useful indicator of interest in the arts - "concert" could refer in 2005 to ambient music in bars, for instance, and arts-and-crafts are often included in other festivals. But drama is typically not integrated into other events and is a more intentional destination. Further, people typically leave town in 2005 to shop at a superstore much more than they did in 1973, and often "make a day of it," so leaving town isn't the indicator of "hunger for the arts" that it was 32 years ago. With this in mind, men and women participate differently:

		Female	Male
<b>Q6a Seen Drama</b>	466	50.9%	41.4%
<b>Q6b Seen Concert</b>	536	57.5%	50.0%
<b>Q6c Been to Arts/Crafts</b>	622	69.8%	51.5%
<b>Q6e Gone Out of Town for These</b>	496	52.4%	47.8%
<b>Q6f Would Go Out of Town for These</b>	732	79.1%	67.9%

Education, too, remains a classic predictor of people's interests and behaviors, with better-educated people perceiving "too little art" in the community, and acting on their interest:

	Educational Background		
	K-12 Only	Voc Sch	CollegePlus
<b>N</b>	380	258	366
<b>Q1a Important Arts in Community (Top 2)</b>	62.2%	64.8%	74.4%
<b>Q1b Arts in Community Should Be (Top 2) Community Gap</b>	83.8%	88.6%	95.0%
	21.6%	23.8%	20.6%
<b>Q2a Kids Important Arts (Top 2)</b>	69.4%	67.9%	70.4%
<b>Q2b Kids Important Arts Should Be (Top 2) Kids Gap</b>	86.6%	92.7%	95.7%
	17.2%	24.8%	25.3%
<b>Q3 Arts Activity Too Little</b>	47.6%	57.9%	61.3%
<b>Q6a Seen Drama</b>	36.4%	42.4%	62.4%
<b>Q6b Seen Concert</b>	43.5%	49.8%	69.3%
<b>Q6c Been to Arts/Crafts</b>	51.9%	64.3%	76.0%
<b>Q6e Gone Out of Town for These</b>	39.8%	48.2%	65.1%
<b>Q6f Would Go Out of Town for These</b>	62.7%	76.0%	86.8%

Educational background correlates strongly with occupation status, so it is not surprising that we found very similar results when we looked at occupation.

We looked at whether attending arts events K-12 and participating in the arts in school makes a difference. Although we didn't find that participation makes more of a difference than attendance, we did find that there is a relationship:

### Attend performances in School?

		YES		NO	
		#	%	#	%
<b>How do you feel about the amount of arts activities available?</b>	Too much	11	1.5%	13	6.9%
	Just right	275	37.8%	106	56.4%
	Too little	441	60.7%	69	36.7%
<b>Seen a live drama performance in past year?</b>	Yes	413	53.8%	58	27.8%
	No	355	46.2%	151	72.2%
<b>Seen a live concert?</b>	Yes	470	61.4%	67	32.2%
	No	296	38.6%	141	67.8%
<b>Been to arts-crafts event?</b>	Yes	540	70.4%	92	43.8%
	No	227	29.6%	118	56.2%

We found that age makes a difference, with younger people feeling that the arts should be more important than they are, at a greater rate than their parents or grandparents:

	Age		
	Up to 45	46-65	65
<b>N</b>	342	408	213
<b>Q1a Arts in Community Important (Top 2)</b>	62.0%	69.1%	70.9%
<b>Q1b Arts in Community Should Be (Top 2)</b>	91.0%	88.9%	88.8%
<b>Community Gap</b>	29.0%	19.8%	17.9%
<b>Q2a Kids Important Arts (Top 2)</b>	64.9%	71.3%	79.3%
<b>Q2b Kids Important Arts Should Be (Top 2)</b>	93.4%	91.3%	89.5%
<b>Kids Gap</b>	28.5%	20.0%	10.2%
<b>Q3 Arts Activity Too Little</b>	63.8%	56.0%	36.0%
<b>Q6a Seen Drama</b>	49.7%	49.5%	42.3%
<b>Q6b Seen Concert</b>	65.0%	57.0%	44.8%
<b>Q6c Been to Arts/Crafts</b>	64.6%	67.2%	55.3%
<b>Q6e Gone Out of Town for These</b>	50.9%	55.1%	41.9%
<b>Q6f Would Go Out of Town for These</b>	81.6%	86.4%	62.2%

Finally, we found that newcomers are more likely than others (88% to about 72%) to leave town to attend arts events.

### Arts Exposure/Underserved Communities

Three of the towns we studied – Florence, Medford and Grantsburg – were deemed “underserved” by the Wisconsin Arts Board. They are not near population centers or interstate highways, and they do not appear to have any “arts infrastructure. Nonetheless there are some noteworthy items:

- Their response rate was especially high – it seems like they want to be heard
- The demographics of these towns are not especially different from the other towns
- Their aspirations for the importance of the arts in their towns, and for their children, are almost identical to the other communities

We designed an “Arts Exposure Index,” and grouped towns into three clusters which included the Creative Industries count from Americans for the Arts, the perceptions of arts activity by the Wisconsin Arts Board coupled with the number of entries in the WAB data base from these towns, and the self-reports by respondents about the level of local arts activity. While we found that, once again, people's aspirations for their children are about the same, even the respondents in the highest of the three groups wanted more arts:

**Arts Exposure**

	Low	Mod.	High
<b>Q1a Arts in Community Important (Top 2)</b>	50.9%	70.1%	80.0%
<b>Q1b Arts in Community Should be (Top 2)</b>	84.8%	90.9%	91.8%
<b>Community Gap</b>	33.9%	20.8%	11.8%
<b>Q2a Kids Important Arts (Top 2)</b>	48.2%	50.1%	54.8%
<b>Q2b Kids Important Arts Should Be (Top 2)</b>	82.7%	86.4%	88.2%
<b>Kids Gap</b>	34.5%	36.3%	33.4%
<b>Q3 Arts Activitiy Too Little</b>	62.7%	58.1%	45.8%

Finally we looked at those four towns in which more than 2/3 of the respondants reported that there was arts activity, suggesting that in these towns the local level of arts activity is so high that no one can miss it! These towns were Adams-Friendship with the high-profile Sand County Players, Spring Green with their arts-infused economy, Baraboo with its vigorous university and county arts programs, and Portage with its downtown arts center. Here, again, towns that had a lot, want more:

	Arts Activity	
	Low	High
<b>Q1a Arts in Community Important (Top 2)</b>	60.4%	71.8%
<b>Q1b Arts in Community Should be (Top 2)</b>	87.6%	92.6%
<b>Community Gap</b>	27.2%	20.8%
<b>Q2a Kids Important Arts (Top 2)</b>	51.6%	50.0%
<b>Q2b Kids Important Arts Should Be (Top 2)</b>	84.4%	88.8%
<b>Kids Gap</b>	32.8%	38.8%
<b>Q3 Arts Activitiy Too Little</b>	58.2%	49.2%

All of this suggests that:

- people who are interested in the arts have the opportunity for access
- people's aspirations for richness of experience in schools doesn't vary much, regardless of where they live
- In places that have considerable arts activity, people want *more* activity. One could argue that having tasted the arts, people develop an appetite for more.

**Changes Since 1973**

Because we didn't keep the data itself, it's hard to make many comparisons. However we did keep one table – women and men who choose the “too little” option when asked about the amount of arts activity available in town. We can compare this perception in the 5 project towns between 1973 and 2005:

	1973	2005
women	50.4%	57.3%
men	39.5%	45.7%

This could suggest that the dramatically increased presence of the arts on cable television, via Wisconsin Arts Board attention to “underserved” communities, the mobility of artists in search of inspiring and affordable workplaces, is also increasing demand - “if it’s there, people will want more.” The increase is small, but this might be suggestive for a next study.

Also striking is that where in both 1968 and 1973 we found that communities with no arts activity and infrastructure were “friendly” to the arts regardless of demographics, here we found that all communities – regardless of the presence of the arts in their towns – showed the “demographic effect” that had previously only shown up in the “arts exposed” towns – there is already a split between women and men, better and less well-educated people. If our original hypothesis is true (that people are initially receptive to the arts but exposure begins to fragment them), then perhaps the presence of the arts on television and the internet have served as “fragmenter.” And are awaiting a deliberate program of local arts development to bring the town even closer together.

#### The Project Towns: Are They Different From Non-Project Towns?

Comparing as best we can the numbers for these five towns with the numbers 32 years ago, we notice that the communities where people are highest in saying that their arts should be more important are three of the project towns. (The last-ranked communities – where people’s hunger for the arts is least – are those three “underserved” communities where there is no apparent arts infrastructure.) Four of the project towns want *more* art than they did 32 years ago, where the fifth (Adams-Friendship) is unchanged with 78% of the people feeling that there is too little art in the community.

Regression analysis is a technique that lets you eliminate the likelihood that certain variables “explain” the data. When Peter performed a regression analysis on this body of data, eliminating the effects of gender, education level, attendance at the arts in school, arts activity level in town, and whether the respondent lived in a project town, we found this:

- Gap between perceived and desired importance of the arts. Education and town activity level are strong and significantly related to how important people think the arts should be, compared to how they are. Gender and school exposure do not relate. *But being from a project town relates modestly at the 90% confidence level.*
- Attending plays: Although gender, education, exposure in school and level of activity in town had “strong, statistically, and independent explanatory contributions to this, *being from one of the original project towns ALSO had a modest independent relationship to whether people attended plays, at the 88% confidence level.*
- Attending Arts & Crafts shows: While the other four factors had “highly significant” relationships to this variable, *being from a project town is statistically significant at the 92% confidence level as a predictor of attendance at these shows.*
- Attending performances created locally: “All four initial background factors – gender, educational level, exposure in school, and level of arts activity in town – show strong, independent, and statistically significant associations with this outcome. *BUT being from an original project town in this case ALSO showed a strong, statistically significant, and independent associate – at the 99% confidence level – with attendance at local performances.*”

Finally, if the project met its goal of “democratization” of the arts, then we should expect to see that that men and women were closer together in their perceptions of the importance of the arts in project towns, and their participation in the arts in project towns, than in non-project towns – in other words, the “demographic fragmentation” is less.

First look at gender: *there is only an 8% difference between men and women who say there is “too little” art in town in the project towns where there is a 17% difference in non-project towns, and behavior is similar:*

		PROJECT				NON-PROJECT			
		Male		Female		Male		Female	
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
<b>How do you feel about the amount of activities available?</b>	Too much	4	3.4%	3	1.3%	13	6.7%	5	1.4%
	Just right	59	49.6%	100	43.1%	92	47.4%	132	35.9%
	Too little	56	47.1%	129	55.6%	89	45.9%	231	62.8%
<b>Seen live drama performance?</b>	Yes	68	53.1%	132	54.5%	72	34.3%	194	48.6%
	No	60	46.9%	110	45.5%	138	65.7%	205	51.4%
<b>Seen live concert?</b>	Yes	69	53.9%	141	58.5%	100	47.6%	226	56.9%
	No	59	46.1%	100	41.5%	110	52.4%	171	43.1%
<b>Been to arts/crafts event?</b>	Yes	81	63.8%	179	73.7%	92	44.0%	270	67.5%
	No	46	36.2%	64	26.3%	117	56.0%	130	32.5%

Similarly, notice that although there is a similar difference in perceptions between project and non-project towns, when it comes to education level, there are dramatic differences when it comes to behavior. The “education effect” is still there, but less in the project towns. *In the project towns, there’s a 19% gap between less- and better-educated people who report having gone to a play where the gap is 29% in non-project towns; a 21% gap in live concert attendance in project towns compared to a 29% gap in non-project towns; and a 14% gap in arts-and-crafts fair attendance in project towns, compared to an a 30% gap in non-project towns.*

The project towns are moving closer to the “democratic ideal.”

College		PROJECT						NON-PROJECT					
		K-12		Vocational		College		K-12		Vocational			
		#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
	How do you feel about the amount of activity?	5	4.1%	2	2.0%	0	0%	13	6.0%	3	2.1%	3	1.5%
	Too much												
	Just right	63	51.2%	45	45.0%	57	40.1%	97	44.7%	52	36.6%	73	36.1%
	Too little	55	44.7%	53	53.0%	85	59.9%	107	49.3%	87	61.3%	126	62.4%
	Live drama?	63	47.7%	45	43.7%	100	67.1%	74	30.3%	64	41.6%	127	59.1%
	Yes												
	No	69	52.3%	58	56.3%	49	32.9%	170	69.7%	90	58.4%	88	40.9%
	Live concert?	63	47.7%	51	49.5%	102	68.9%	100	41.2%	77	50.0%	149	69.6%
	Yes												
	No	69	52.3%	52	50.5%	46	31.1%	143	58.8%	77	50.0%	65	30.4%
	Arts-crafts?	83	62.9%	74	71.2%	114	77.0%	112	45.9%	92	59.7%	161	75.2%
	Yes												
	No	49	37.1%	30	28.8%	34	23.0%	132	54.1%	62	40.3%	53	24.8%

### Conclusions

While nothing can be concluded with absolute certainty we do believe the following may be true, based on this study:

- Even in places where there is a good deal of arts exposure already, people want more
- People in “underserved” places still want the arts
- People feel that the arts should be much more important in schools than they are.
- Exposure to the arts in school increases a person's receptivity to the arts as adults
- There is somewhat more demand for the arts across the board since 1973, possibly as a result of more arts in the general environment
- Where in 1973 towns that were not exposed to the arts at all were generally friendly to the arts, this is no longer apparently the case. Perhaps the pervasive availability of the arts in the general environment has caused the “fragmentation effect” that we believed in 1973 to be the result of arts exposure from the outside.
- Being female still predicts more interest in the arts and more likelihood of participation in the arts, as does having a college education.
- However, men's desire for more arts in schools is as strong as women's.
- In the project towns, the difference between women's and men's perception of the importance of the arts is reduced as is their likelihood of participation – there is greater across-the-board participation. In the project towns, the behavioral differences between people of more and less education are also reduced.
- This suggests that an intentional locally-based program of arts development could be effective in bringing about general friendliness to the arts, where only events from the outside will not achieve this same effect.

Intentional, locally-oriented policy may, indeed, affect the culture of a place over the long run.