
**CULTURAL SYMBIOSIS:
CULTURAL PARTICIPATION AND
COHESIVE COMMUNITIES**

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Presented at
New Alliances - Culture - Social Cohesion - Civil Society
CIRCLE Seminar
Vienna, Austria
November 24, 2000

Reference: SRA-541

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Introduction

I am pleased and honoured to have been asked to address the CIRCLE Seminar on “New Alliances - Culture - Social Cohesion - Civil Society” and to continue the dialogue on these subjects that we began in Edmonton last May at the CIRCLE / CCRN Round Table on “Making Connections: Cultural and Social Cohesion in the New Millennium”.

For a Canadian cultural researcher, it is always gratifying to come to Europe. In some ways, it is like coming home because so much of our cultural policy in Canada derives from European models. Beyond a sense of homecoming, however, Canadians often feel that Europeans are kindred spirits in the way that you look at culture. For Europeans and Canadians, culture is not simply “entertainment” : a market-based concept that looks on the arts as a product and on the audience as consumers. We share the conviction expressed by the 1998 Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies for Development that:

Cultural policies should promote creativity in all its forms, facilitating access to cultural practices and experiences for all citizens regardless of nationality, race, sex, age, physical or mental disability, enrich the sense of cultural identity and belonging of every individual and community and sustain them in their search for a dignified and safe future.¹

We in Canada do not believe that cultural participation can be reduced to the “consumption” of cultural products or that the federal government’s role is simply to intervene in cases of “market failure” where the law of supply and demand has faltered. We believe that participation in culture also creates what the economists refer to as “positive externalities”, namely:

- Social trust and social capital
- Greater democratic inclusiveness and equity
- Social innovation and experimentation with new symbolic resources.

I would therefore like to look at cultural participation in Canada with these positive externalities in mind. In doing so, I will be guided by the following questions:

- Who participates in culture?
- In what activities do they participate?
- Why do they participate?
- What are some of the outcomes of this participation?

I will attempt to demonstrate that one of the outcomes – perhaps the most important one for societies that are becoming increasingly fragmented by globalization and demographic change – is the creation of sustainable and cohesive communities.

Who participates in culture?

In 1998, Statistics Canada, a federal government agency, conducted an overview of time use in Canada as one of the cycles of its General Social Survey (GSS). Since people spend part of their time on cultural activities, this survey allowed the agency to construct an overall picture of cultural participation in the context of an average day. Table 1 shows the breakdown of hours spent in what Statistics Canada terms “free time” in a typical day.

¹ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Action Plan on Cultural Policies for Development, 8 April 1998, p. 2.

Table 1 Average time spent on leisure activities 1998 (Hours per day) Canadian population 15 years and over Participation by sex			
Activity	Total	Male	Female
Watching television	2.2	2.4	2.0
Reading books, magazines, newspapers	0.4	0.4	0.5
Other passive leisure (e.g. watching videos)	0.1	0.1	0.1
Sports, movies and other entertainment events	0.2	0.2	0.2
Active sports	0.5	0.6	0.4
Other active leisure (e.g. singing in a choir)	0.5	0.5	0.5
Totals	3.9	4.2	3.7

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1998

Of the approximately four hours of daily leisure time enjoyed by the average Canadian, watching television and other forms of passive cultural activity clearly dominate. So-called “active” cultural pursuits take up only about one-eighth of the average Canadian’s free time or about one-half hour per day. However, this is more than the amount of time spent going to cultural or other “entertainment” events. A small gender gap is also apparent, with men having about one-half hour more leisure time than women, on average. This extra male time appears to be spent mostly on watching television and playing sports.

A recent survey on arts and heritage participation prepared for the Department of Canadian Heritage by the Environics Research Group found that women are more likely than men to attend live performances and artistic events and to participate in arts activities. Canadians 65 years of age and over are less likely than younger age groups to attend live performances and artistic events and to have visited a heritage institution. Young Canadians between the ages of 15 and 24 attend more live theatre performances, rock concerts and literary events than the general population.

In addition (and in common with many other surveys of cultural participation), the Environics Group found that affluent and better educated Canadians are more likely to attend live performances and artistic events and to visit heritage institutions. Community size and language also have an effect on cultural participation. Canadians living in larger communities are more likely to participate than those in smaller communities, and anglophones are somewhat more likely than francophones to have attended live performances or artistic events in the previous five years.²

In what cultural activities do Canadians participate?

The General Social Survey delved more deeply into this question, asking if in the last 12 months Canadians had participated in a number of cultural activities. Tables 2, 3 and 4 provide a breakdown of high, medium and low-frequency cultural activity, according to the numbers who

² Environics Research Group Limited, *Arts and Heritage Participation Survey - Final Report*, (Toronto, September 2000), pp. 8-9.

responded “yes” when asked if they had participated in the past year. (Percentages have been rounded.)

Table 2 Incidence of Cultural Participation 1998 Canadian population 15 years and over High-participation activities	
Activity	% Participating
Watching television	96
Listening to radio	91
Reading newspaper	82
Listening to CDs, tapes and cassettes	77
Watching movies on video	73
Reading magazines	71
Reading books	61
Going to the movies (cinema)	59

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1998

Looking at Table 2, a number of observations can be made. First, most of the activities in this category, with the exception of going out to the movies, can be done in the home in relative solitude. While watching television, listening to radio or reading can be done in the company of others, these types of cultural activities lend themselves to “cocooning” – a phenomenon of the 1980s and 1990s in which people retreated to their homes as a haven from the stress of the outside environment. However, this isolation is mediated and attenuated by the second point, namely that all of the activities in the high-frequency category are mass media-related.

The mass media plays multiple roles in post-industrial society. As Alexander and Jacobs, two prominent media researchers, have recently observed:

At the micro-level, ... the media is filtered through multiple communities, multiple webs of interpersonal relations, and multiple identities. At the macro-level, it suggests that the media is concerned not only with the diffusion of information to a mass public, but also – and this is particularly true of media events – with the dramatization of civil society and the creation of a common cultural framework for building common identities.³

Leaving aside the question of whose content is being used to create a “common cultural framework”, this understanding of the mass media’s role would suggest that all those Canadians sitting in their homes watching television, listening to radio or reading magazines may not be simple passive recipients. If, as Alexander and Jacobs suggest, “citizens actively construct their own understandings of real and ideal civil society by filtering overarching discourse and narratives through multiple public spheres and communities”,⁴ more may be happening in the family rooms of the nation than the simple cocooning theory would suggest. The nature of the

³ Jeffrey C. Alexander and Ronald N. Jacobs, “Mass communication, ritual and civil society” in *Media, Ritual and Identity* (eds. Tamar Liebes and James Curran). (New York, 1998), p. 28.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

linkages between the micro-sphere of private cultural participation and the macro-sphere of civil society is a theme which will recur repeatedly in this paper and which deserves more research attention than it has received to date.

Table 3 profiles cultural activities in which Canadians participate at a lower frequency than in the case of the media-related activities described above. Again, a few pertinent observations can be made. First, the activities in this category are much more publicly-oriented than those that appear in Table 2. One must get out of the house to enjoy them and, even if one goes by oneself and does not interact with other participants, cultural participation of this sort is usually a collective experience.⁵ Second, these activities are somewhat more actively experiential than those outlined in Table 2. A visit to a museum, gallery, historic site or park is often a pedagogical or wilderness experience requiring a significant level of intellectual or physical effort by the participant. The participant is forced to go outside of the electronic “cocoon” and to engage with the environment in a more active fashion than is generally the case with regard to the activities in Table 2. Third, particularly in the case of heritage-related cultural experiences, the participant is confronted in a very direct manner with the “dramatization of civil society and the creation of a common cultural framework for building common identities”. Internet attempts to digitize collections aside, it would appear that museums and other heritage institutions serve and will continue to serve as sites where citizens congregate to absorb and think about collective identity and achievements.

Table 3 Incidence of Cultural Participation 1998 Canadian population 15 years and over Medium-participation activities	
Activity	% Participating
Going to a conservation area or nature park	45
Attending any concert or professional performance	35
Going to an historic site	33
Going to a zoo, aquarium, planetarium or botanical garden	32
Going to any public museum or art gallery	30

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1998

The long list of low frequency activities in Table 4 is somewhat more difficult to categorize. This table includes both individual and collective, media and live, and emotive and intellectual pursuits. In the case of the museums and the public performances included in this table, they represent breakdowns of the aggregate figures on “going to any public museum or art gallery” and “attending any concert or professional performance” that appeared in Table 3.⁶ The first impulse is to see these activities as mere sub-categories of the aggregates mentioned above and to focus on the overall participation rate. However, a more useful research question is to ask is why these activities seem to appeal to such a narrow audience, as compared to the other two categories.

⁵ One might argue that going to a conservation area or nature park is often an attempt to find solitude, but in Canada, this experience is increasingly marred by crowded campgrounds, restaurants and parking lots.

⁶ In both cases the participant may have attended more than one event or visited more than one site or institution.

Part of the explanation may be that these are specialized interests. For example, one is not likely to attend a performance for children unless one has children or to use library services unless one is a student or researching a specific topic. However, the fact that so few Canadians choose to participate in more broadly appealing activities, such as theatre or popular stage shows, suggests that more complex motivations are at work than are evident on the surface.

Table 4 Incidence of Cultural Participation 1998 Canadian population 15 years and over Low-participation activities	
Activity	% Participating
Accessing the Internet (for other than work or study)	29
Using library services (including the Internet)	28
Attending a cultural or artistic festival	22
Attending a theatrical performance (including musical theatre)	20
Attending a popular music performance	20
Attending a popular stage show (e.g. stand-up comedy, circus)	16
Attending a cultural heritage performance (e.g. ethno-cultural dance)	14
Going to a science or natural history museum	13
Going to a human history or community museum	12
Attending a classical music performance	8
Attending a dance performance	7
Attending a choral music performance	7
Attending a performance for children	7
Attending an opera	3

Source: Statistics Canada, General Social Survey, 1998

In their analysis of Australian cultural participation, John Frow, Michael Emmison and Tony Bennett found a steep educational and class effect in patterns of involvement. In general, the more educated the participants, the more they participated in “subsidized” cultural activities, such as public musical performances, ballet, opera, theatre and cultural festivals. The researchers observed that the participant profile in the so-called “public culture” sector -- museums and art galleries, botanical gardens and public libraries -- was considerably more democratic than in the subsidized cultural activities. However, this may have been because, in Australia, such institutions have a tradition of placing “greater stress on access and equity objectives than does the realm of subsidised culture”.⁷ Based on their analysis, Frow, Emmison and Bennett concluded that public broadcasting was the most open and accessible of all the

⁷ John Frow, Michael Emmison and Tony Bennett, *Accounting for Tastes: Australian Everyday Cultures*, (United Kingdom, 1999), p. 242.

through programming that “renders visible, and symbolically affirms the centrality of, people who are being marginalized and excluded by the economic system”.¹⁰ As suggested above, all that time watching television may not be entirely without social value, at least if one is watching public television. Nevertheless, relatively low participation rates in so-called “active leisure” may have deeper implications for the macro-sphere.

Putnam has speculated about the significance of falling participation rates in “doing culture” in the United States, noting that the percentage of Americans who play an instrument has fallen from 30% to 20% over the 1976-1999 period. He has suggested that it is symptomatic of a general decline in social capital in the U.S. such that “we spend less time in conversation over meals, we exchange visits less often, we engage less often in leisure activities that encourage casual social interaction, we spend more time watching ... and less time doing”.¹¹ Are the low rates of active cultural participation in Canada (where we seem to play musical instruments even less frequently than Americans) indicative of an erosion in social cohesion? We have not even begun to explore these questions, but we may begin to develop the beginnings of understanding by examining recent Canadian research on reasons for participating (or not participating).

Why do people participate in culture?

The Environics Arts and Heritage Participation Survey asked respondents their main reasons for attending live performances and artistic events, for visiting cultural heritage institutions and for participating in cultural activities. The motivations are revealing and tend to reinforce the hypothesis that complex individual needs may be shaping collective behaviours.

Table 6 outlines the stated reasons for attending live performances and artistic events. Overwhelmingly, the primary motivation, cited by 62% of the respondents who reported attendance in the previous 12 months, was the desire to be entertained, to relax or to enjoy oneself. Only small minorities mentioned other incentives, such as a specific interest in the performance or artist, the desire for intellectual stimulation or the desire to educate children. For some, the primary motivation for attending such events appeared to be social – an activity to do in the company of friends or family.¹² In general, the main reasons tended to be based more on the desire for diversion rather than for enlightenment, which may help to explain why cultural events have been increasingly treated in recent years as consumer choices rather than as civic or public assets.

¹⁰ James Curran, “Crisis of public communication: A reappraisal” in Media, Ritual and Identity, p. 194.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 115.

¹² Arts and Heritage Participation Survey - Final Report, p. 25.

Table 6 Top Eight Reasons for Attending Live Performances and Artistic Events Canada 2000	
Motivation	% Citing
To be entertained, to relax or enjoy oneself	62
Interest in specific events, performers or work	14
Just for something to do	4
To learn, to stimulate or challenge oneself	4
To accompany friends or relatives	3
To see well-known works or performers	2
The live, interactive experience	2
To educate / entertain children	2

Source: Environics Research Group, Arts and Heritage Participation Survey, 2000

On the other hand, the main reasons for visiting heritage institutions appeared to be much more mixed, but dominated by intellectual or pedagogical concerns. As Table 7 indicates, about 40% of the Canadians who had visited such institutions in the past 12 months indicated that they went to learn something or to encourage learning among their children. Another 25% were driven by a specific interest in the subject matter displayed at the institution. Relaxation and diversion were cited by about 25%, less than half the percentage who mentioned this as their primary reason for attending live performance and artistic events.¹³ These data tend to reinforce the findings of Frow, Emmison and Bennett with regard to the role of “public culture” institutions in Australian society, which they believe have been “committed to bridging the divide between social classes” and which have been “closely related to other, similar initiatives – to adult education and ... to the development of public schooling” in the course of their evolution since the nineteenth century.¹⁴

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

¹⁴ Frow, Emmison and Bennett, p. 242.

Table 7 Top Eight Reasons for Visiting Cultural Heritage Institutions Canada 2000	
Motivation	% Citing
To learn	32
Interest in specific place / event / work / artifact / something new / different	20
Enjoy visiting / to be entertained / relax / enjoy oneself	19
To educate / entertain children	8
Something to do	6
Interest in history / culture / art	5
To accompany friends / relatives	4
Something to do while traveling / on vacation	2

Source: Environics Research Group, Arts and Heritage Participation Survey, 2000

The smaller sample of Canadians who said that they participated in artistic or cultural activities in the past 12 months were also asked to indicate which reasons were very important motivations for participation. Table 8 shows the responses.

Table 8 Reasons for Participation in Artistic or Cultural Activities Canada 2000	
Motivation	% citing as “very important”
To relax / enjoy oneself	65
To learn new things / improve skills	49
To work with / share with others	42
To express oneself	40
Inexpensive entertainment	29
To connect with cultural / ethnic background	21
Something to do	21
Source of income / extra income	13

Source: Environics Research Group, Arts and Heritage Participation Survey, 2000

While these responses are not directly comparable to those for attendance at cultural events and heritage institutions, they nevertheless highlight the equivocal nature of motivations for active involvement in cultural activities. Relaxation and diversion were considered the most important motivation for both active and passive types of cultural participation. However, important secondary reasons for active cultural participation included personal improvement (learning new

things and expressing oneself) as well as working or sharing with others. The collective benefits to society of citizens who are actively engaged with others are currently the subject of much social science research. There is no doubt that the relatively small number of Canadians who do crafts, play instruments, paint or write consider the collaborative aspects of these activities to be important. However, these motivations are intertwined with several significant personal reasons which make it difficult to state unequivocally that active cultural participation springs from unadulterated collective impulses. Again, this suggests a need for a better understanding of the linkages between the “macro” public sphere and the “micro” private world of individual cultural participation.

The Environics Arts and Heritage Participation Survey also asked respondents who did not attend live performances, artistic events or heritage institutions what were their main reasons for not engaging in these activities.¹⁵

Table 9 Top Eight Reasons for not Attending Live Performance and Cultural Events or Visiting Heritage Institutions Canada 2000		
Motivation	Performance and Cultural Events % citing	Heritage Institutions % citing
Not enough time	30	28
Not interested / too boring	21	21
Too expensive	17	6
Few performances / facilities in my area	9	10
Hard to get to venue / too far	8	10
Health problems	5	8
Family responsibilities	3	3
No one to go with	1	1

Source: Environics Research Group, Arts and Heritage Participation Survey, 2000

As Table 9 indicates, a simple lack of time was cited by 30% of respondents as the most important reason for non-attendance at live performances. With regard to cultural events, those working full time, those with young children in the home and those with postgraduate educations and higher incomes (above C\$60,000) were most likely to say that lack of time was preventing them from attending. Those under 25 and over 65 were most likely to cite lack of interest as the main reason for not attending. Not surprisingly, respondents with annual household incomes under C\$20,000 were most likely to mention financial barriers, while those in small communities (under 10,000 residents) were most likely to say that they had to travel too far or that there were few performances in their area.¹⁶

¹⁵ Unfortunately, this question was not asked of those who did not participate in cultural activities such as crafts, singing or playing instruments.

¹⁶ Arts and Heritage Participation Survey - Final Report, pp. 27-28.

Table 9 also outlines the main reasons for not visiting cultural heritage institutions. In most cases, they are similar to the barriers preventing attendance at cultural events. With regard to heritage institutions, lack of time and interest, physical inaccessibility, personal health problems and family responsibilities had about the same importance. However, financial barriers appeared to be much less of a problem. Lack of time appeared to be the largest barrier for men and those between 45 and 54 years of age, and young people between 15 and 24 were the most likely to cite lack of interest.¹⁷

What can we conclude about barriers to attendance at live performances and cultural heritage institutions, and how do these barriers relate to the reasons for participation?

It appears obvious that lack of time is the principal obstacle to both types of participation. Looking again at Table 1 to see where Canadians' leisure time is spent, it is fairly obvious that so-called "passive" forms of leisure are crowding out not only "active" cultural activities, such as singing in a choir, but also "semi-active" cultural activities, such as attending a live performance or visiting a museum. The question arises: is this an irreversible trend or will it be altered by demographic, social and technological changes?

In a study on the future of Canadian household spending, Roger Sauvé predicted that as the baby boomers age, expenditures on reading materials and other printed matter will have second highest growth rate of 13 major spending categories in the period between 1996 and 2016.¹⁸ However, whether this pattern will extend to other types of cultural activity (as described above) depends on whether the crowding out effect increases or diminishes. In part, the future direction of technology will also play a role. As the authors of an American study of arts participation observed:

The future of the arts depends critically upon their ability to compete for attention with a popular culture that is powerfully propagated by the mass media of radio, television, the movies, and the culture of the advertising and promotion in which they are enmeshed.¹⁹

This observation is undoubtedly true, but the habit of looking at cultural participation as a "consumption" activity in competition with other, possibly more attractive forms of leisure pastimes tends to keep debate of this issue within the economic sphere, obscuring the issue of public subsidy and its aims. The final section of this paper will take a closer look at arguments favouring a more socially oriented rationale for public subsidy of culture and will attempt to link these arguments to existing and possible future cultural participation patterns.

What are some of the outcomes of cultural participation?

Over the past few years, the horizontal "market place" model of cultural consumption has almost completely replaced the traditional vertical cultural model, which was based on a pyramidal hierarchy of cultural expression where meaning was disseminated from a centre to the periphery. A good deal of the current angst within policy circles about the erosion of hierarchical cultural participation (such as in opera and ballet) by marketplace culture participation (such as

¹⁷ ibid., p. 42.

¹⁸ Roger Sauvé, The Future of Canadian Household Spending to 2016, (Ottawa, 1999) quoted in Mary Cromie and Rochelle Handleman, "Consumption and Participation in the Culture Sector", Focus on Culture, Vol. 11, No. 3 (Autumn 1999), p.5.

¹⁹ Richard Peterson, Darren Sherkat, Judith Huggins Balfe and Rolf Meyersohn, Age and Arts Participation, (Santa Ana, California, 1996), p. 117, quoted in Cromie and Handleman, "Consumption and Participation in the Culture Sector", p. 5.

television viewing) is based on the continuing tension between these models. Governments have accepted that the hierarchical model is crumbling, but have been slow to consider other models for culture. Currently, as Robert Hewison has observed, governments, for want of a convincing alternative, have accepted the ascendancy of marketplace model:

Within this new *espace culturel*, individual arts forms have set out their stalls and the audience fills their cultural wire baskets according to their individual taste. ... Unlike the daunting slopes of the cultural pyramid, the market place is horizontal, so that superficially there appears to be a greater democracy in the market model. What we have to constantly remind ourselves, however, is that neither the individual stall holders, nor their potential clients, have equal access to the market.²⁰

A new model, Hewison suggests, could begin by accepting the idea of “horizontal flow” – “multiple chains of communication, with no centre of power ... many centres, many lines, and a plurality of links between them”.²¹ But, how do individuals get plugged into this “horizontal flow”? And what is the role of governments in helping them to do so?

A similar conceptual model was put forward by John Hannigan at the CIRCLE /CCRN Round Table held in May 2000 in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. He discussed three possible spatial metaphors for considering the interrelationship of culture, social cohesion and globalization. Regions typically are vertical in structure with a centre, a periphery, a concentration of power and a vertical hierarchy. Networks are sets of interconnected nodes that can deliver products and ideas in a standard and predictable way. Global fluids represent the de-territorialized and undirected movement of people, information, objects, money, images and risks across regions. Professor Hannigan suggested that global fluids possess the greatest potential for cultural democratization, since they are neither hierarchical nor territorially-bound. He also noted that confluence of these fluids was increasingly occurring at the sub-national level, specifically within cities.²²

Policies aimed at increasing cultural participation within communities have received scant attention at national level. Yet if one is to accept Hannigan’s premise that cities and communities are a major intersection point of global fluids – the main carriers of cultural content – it makes sense to spend more time thinking about the features of communities where individuals have access to these flows. In the current lexicon of civic engagement, healthy communities are those with high levels of social capital. Acquisition of cultural capital (defined as “instruments for the appropriation of symbolic wealth socially designated as worthy of being sought and possessed” has been empirically proven to have significant positive effects on an individual’s educational attainment and marital selection.²³ However, evidence of the collective benefits of cultural capital has been fairly sparse to date.

Recent demographic analysis of neighbourhood poverty in Canada has suggested that for certain groups, particularly visible minorities, concentration in ghettos contributes to a “culture of

²⁰ Robert Hewison, “New Cultural Models for Old”, *Cultural Policy*, Vol.5, No. 1, p. 102.

²¹ *Op cit.*, p. 105.

²² John Hannigan, Presentation at the panel on “Global Connections – The Good, the Bad and the Ugly” at CIRCLE /CCRN Round Table 2000 *Making Connections: Culture and Social Cohesion in the New Millennium*, *Conference Report* (ed. Ritva Mitchell), pp. 23-24.

²³ See for example, Paul Di Maggio and John Mohr, “Cultural Capital, Educational Attainment and Marital Selection”, *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 90, No. 6 (1985), 1231-1261, and Paul Di Maggio, “Cultural Capital and School Success: The Impact of Status Culture Participation on the Grades of U.S. High School Students”, *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 47, (April 1982), 189-201.

poverty”, characterized by social isolation from the mainstream culture. According to the researchers who carried out this work:

The traditional commitment to ethnic diversity and multiculturalism ... is not adequate in dealing with the problem we have discussed. The maintenance of ethnic identities needs to be accompanied by a commitment to promote inter-cultural contacts. Certainly, this can be partly accomplished through non-cultural measures, such as appropriate urban space planning and poverty alleviation measures. But all such measures only escalate the likelihood of inter-cultural contacts; actual contacts also need to be promoted through concrete cultural measures.²⁴

Both active and passive cultural participation serve as vehicles for such contacts, but as the Australian researchers Frow, Emmison and Bennett have noted, in the realm of publicly-funded culture, public broadcasting appears to have done the best job of “meeting the requirements of a mass-mediated public sphere in regularly involving a heterogenous public in the major affairs – political, intellectual and cultural – of the day”.²⁵ Time use data, at least in Canada, tends to support this view. Moreover, Frow, Emmison and Bennett also believe that “relations of culture and community now play an increasingly important role in providing the grounds upon which support for culture is both sought and provided”.²⁶ If one accepts the validity of their observations, then cultural decision makers at the national level will have to become more proactive in supporting the positive role of cultural participation within communities in order to continue to justify public subsidy.

Empirical evidence of the inter-relationship between cultural participation and healthy communities is relatively scarce. However, a long-term case study on the social impact of the arts in Philadelphia, conducted by Mark J. Stern and Susan C. Selfert, has come up with some intriguing findings. The study combined survey information on attendance at cultural and arts activities, as well as information on radio and television viewing habits, with geographical information on the location of 160 cultural groups and 400 social organizations in the Philadelphia area. By comparing an individual’s zip code with the zip codes of the groups, the study was able to correlate arts participation with the number of groups in the neighbourhood. In examining the statistical relationships between these variables, the researchers concluded that the number of arts and cultural groups in the respondent’s zip code area was the best predictor or his or her participation in cultural events. Regression analysis confirmed that this relationship was more powerful than traditional socio-economic variables, such as income and education, in predicting participation in the arts.²⁷ Stern and Selfert examined several reasons for this relationship, but concluded that the only one that was supported by the data was that the social commitment or social capital of community residents led to both the creation of more groups and to greater attendance.²⁸

The Philadelphia study was later replicated in three other American cities – Chicago, Atlanta and San Francisco – and revealed that:

²⁴ Abdolmohammad Kazemipur and Shiva S. Halli, The New Poverty in Canada: Ethnic Groups and Ghetto Neighbourhoods, (Toronto, 2000), p. 158.

²⁵ Frow, Emmison and Bennett, p. 247.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 243.

²⁷ Mark J. Stern and Susan C. Selfert, Working Paper #1: Individual Participation and Community Arts Groups: A Quantitative Analysis of Philadelphia, (Philadelphia, 2000), p 2. (Also available at <http://www.ssw.upenn.edu/SIAP/sp1.text.html>)

²⁸ Ibid., p. 7.

- Diversity was a prominent and under-appreciated element of each city's social structure. In 1990, between 13 and 18 per cent of each city's population lived in economically diverse neighbourhoods. In the least diverse city in the study, more than a quarter of the population lived in neighbourhoods that were either ethnically or economically diverse.
- Diverse neighbourhoods, particularly those that were both ethnically and economically diverse, were the home of more arts groups than other parts of the city.
- Neighbourhoods with many arts organizations were likely to have many non-arts organizations as well.
- Diversity and the presence of arts organizations were tied to the economic revitalization of Chicago and Philadelphia. In addition, the presence of arts groups was related to the preservation of stable diverse neighbourhoods.²⁹

These results led the researchers to conclude that:

... we have established that arts organizations and arts participation feed off one another, that economic and ethnic diversity are strongly associated with cultural participation, and that this merging of diversity, institutions and participation gives rise to the social capital that increases the chances of neighbourhood revitalization.³⁰

Unfortunately, this type of study appears to be quite rare. Cultural researchers have perhaps been too caught up in the market place model and its paradigms of consumer preferences and choices to go beneath the survey data and examine the inter-relationships between cultural participation and the three "positive externalities" mentioned at the beginning of this paper – social trust and social capital, greater democratic inclusiveness and equity, and social innovation and experimentation with new symbolic resources.

Decision makers are increasingly willing to accept Francis Fukuyama's premise that higher levels of social trust and social capital have a positive impact on economic performance.³¹ However, there is less understanding of the social and economic impacts of greater cultural inclusiveness. And we are still further from a solid comprehension of the contribution of cultural participation to social innovation and vibrant, cohesive and sustainable communities. Our understanding is further handicapped by a tendency to look at "snapshots" of current participation in isolation from trend data and projections of future behaviour.

One of the main challenges facing cultural researchers in the next few years will be to assemble the evidence needed to fill these information gaps. The researcher's perennial plea for more comprehensive long-term data is in danger of becoming a cliché, but seems to be fully justified in this case. Progress may also depend on the extent to which we can revise our "mental maps" to discard outdated conceptions of centre and periphery, one-way communication flows, and passive versus active participation models. A lot of what happens within "everyday culture" may have implications for public policies. In fact, national success in tapping into global flows may increasingly depend on the level and quality of cultural activity taking place within diverse and cohesive neighborhoods.

²⁹ Mark J. Stern, Working Paper #9: Is All the World Philadelphia? A Multi-city Study of Arts and Cultural Organizations, Diversity and Urban Revitalization, (Philadelphia, May 1999), pp. 4-5. (Also available at <http://www.ssw.upenn.edu/SIAP/wp9/sp9.draft4.html>)

³⁰ Ibid., p. 3.

³¹ Francis Fukuyama, Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity, (New York, 1995), p. 11.

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