

**FOSTERING RACIAL AND ECONOMIC DIVERSITY IN  
PERFORMING ARTS ORGANIZATIONS:  
IDENTIFYING SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE  
BARRIERS TO INCLUSION**

by

Laura Cohen

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Honors Bachelor of Arts in Music with Distinction

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Approved: \_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Anne Bowler, Ph.D.  
Professor in charge of thesis on behalf of the Advisory Committee

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Maria Purciello, Ph.D.  
Committee member from the Department of Music

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_  
Dr. Eric Rise, Ph.D.  
Committee member from the Board of Senior Thesis Readers

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_  
Michael Arnold, Ph.D.  
Director, University Honors Program

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In my UD admissions essay, I was asked to discuss how I would be interdisciplinary in my studies at the University of Delaware. Though I did not know what major I wanted to pursue, I knew I loved music, and decided to write about combining that passion with other paths, choosing the examples of marketing and sociology on a whim. Little did I know, two years later, I would have the opportunity to combine these three areas of study into a major curriculum as a Dean's Scholar of the Marketing and Promotion of Fine Arts Institutions, and that I would culminate my time at UD by writing a senior thesis on these topics.

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## **ABSTRACT**

Recent trends show a large decline in arts audiences in the United States, as well as significant underrepresentation of racial minority and low-income individuals in performing arts audiences. This study uses a two-pronged approach to examine the underrepresentation of racial minority and low SES populations in performing arts audiences and to understand organizational and administrative attitudes and responses to racial and economic diversity in arts participation. The first portion of the study analyzes three organizations through a review of their organizational literature and a series of twelve interviews with key staff and board members. These three case studies measure how audience expansion activities and attitudes towards audience diversification vary based on each organization's level of accessibility to the community—determined by factors such as cost/location, relevance of programming, and reputation. Results indicate that while each type of organization identifies audience diversification as a priority, each responds to the issue differently and identifies different challenges for enhancing representation. The second portion of the study analyzes the mission statements and outreach activities of a sample of 20 Philadelphia performance institutions, finding that organizations with multi-dimensional presentation elements, such as theater, opera, and dance, are more community focused and more easily facilitate innovative outreach programming to nurture a diverse constituency. The information found in these studies can assist in understanding the breadth of diversity initiatives in place at performing arts

organizations and determining solutions regarding how to successfully cultivate a racially and economically diversified audience base.

## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

There is no date attributed to the invention of art or music; the arts have existed as a fundamental part of society throughout human history. Interaction with music and performance, historically, has ranged from the intellectuality and complexity of Stravinsky to the simplicity and familiarity of *Greensleeves*. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, arts organizations in the United States were varied, but offered little separation between fine and popular forms, with symphonies being played alongside popular melodies. By the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, individuals at the top of the social hierarchy began distancing elite tastes and leisure activities from those of the masses. This pressure to create distance between high and lowbrow tastes created a high culture model, which remains influential in audience cultivation (McDonnell and Tepper 2014; DiMaggio 1982). Today, even though there are no formal or legal barriers to artistic participation, this divide between elite and mass culture still exists. High culture performances are still largely stereotyped as pretentious, inaccessible to the average citizen, and meant to be serious and intellectually demanding rather than entertaining.

In addition to the sustained elitist reputation of the arts, the choices for how to spend leisure time and discretionary income have increased. Due to these factors, traditional and classical entertainments are being passed over in favor of other activities, leading to the lowest arts participation rates in the United States since the NEA began researching audiences in the late 1970s. A number of studies have

examined the barriers that preclude underserved constituencies, such as racial minority and low-income communities, from engaging with the arts. The lack of artistic participation in these constituencies, however, cannot be fully attributed to external sociodemographic and psychographic variables of audiences, such as education level or cultural background. Administrators must also understand the internal barriers to arts engagement, within the organizations themselves. If the performing arts are going to remain relevant in U.S. culture, performance institutions need to examine the hurdles to participation they might be perpetuating and develop solutions to effectively counter downward trends in arts attendance.

### **Introduction to Arts Participation**

In 1982, the National Endowment for the Arts, in collaboration with the United States Census Bureau, developed the Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (SPPA) with the purpose of understanding the multiple avenues through which individuals and groups participate in the arts. Since its conception, the SPPA has been conducted six times, most recently in 2008 and 2012. The survey measures how individuals interact and engage with the arts over a twelve month period, examining arts attendance, arts consumption through electronic media, arts creation and performance, and arts learning, including experiences via multimedia and the Internet (Iyengar 2009; Iyengar 2013).

While the SPPA measures all aspects of arts participation, from production (performing) to consumption (attending an event), it is especially important to emphasize the consumptive arts attendance patterns of the U.S. population, as they reveal the most about the state and health of the performing arts sector (Bergonzi and Smith 1996). That being said, the downward trend in physical arts attendance over the

past 30 years indicates a state of instability in the non-profit performing arts industry. In 2012, while 71% of the population participated in the arts through electronic media, only 49% physically attended a visual or performing arts event (Iyengar 2013).<sup>1</sup> The NEA breaks participation down further by tracking classical arts attendance through benchmark activities—Jazz, Classical Music, Opera, Musical Plays, Non-Musical Plays, Ballet Performances, and visits to Art Museums or Art Galleries. While 49% of the U.S. adult population attended any arts event, only one third, or 33.3%, attended a benchmark arts event, representing a sizable decline in classical benchmark activity attendance since the 1980s (see Figure 1). The largest decline occurred from 2002 to

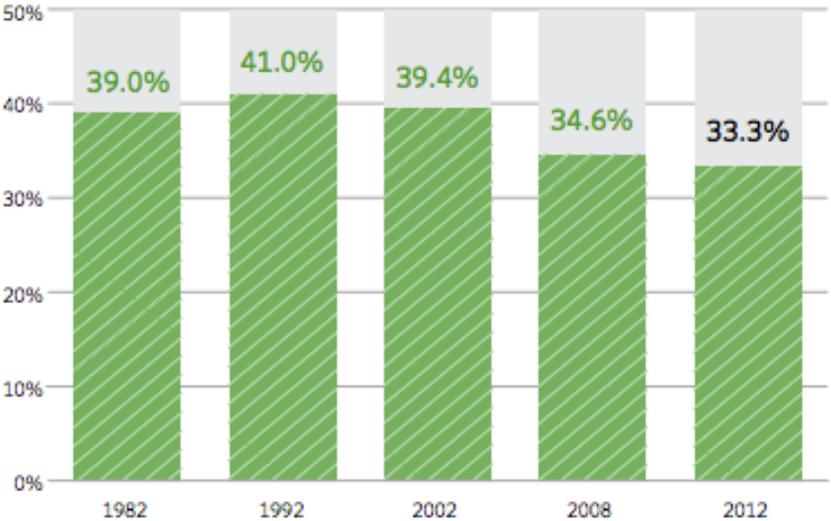


Figure 1 Percent of U.S. Adults Who Attended at Least One of Various Types of Arts Performance or Visited an Art Museum or Gallery: 1982-2012 (Iyengar 2013)

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<sup>1</sup> 2012 SPPA Sample Size = 37,266 U.S. Adults

2008, but the 1.3% drop in attendance from 2008 to 2012 was statistically significant at a 90 percent confidence level (Iyengar 2013). While this was less than a two percent decline, it revealed a considerable and continuing downward trend in arts attendance.

In 2012, 37% of U.S. adults attended *any* live performance, including benchmark activities and other events such as music festivals and Latin music concerts (see Table 1). Breaking down this 37% into individual genres, it is evident that the

Table 1 Percent of US Adults Attending a Performing Arts Activity in 2012

ACTIVITY	Percent of US Adults
An outdoor performing arts festival	21%
A musical or non-musical play	18%
A classical, jazz, Latin, Spanish, or salsa music concert	17%
Dance performance of any kind	7%
Opera	2%

audiences for many benchmark activities, such as ballet, classical music, and opera, are struggling with low levels of attendance (Iyengar 2013). Figure 2 displays the

	2002	2008	2012
Classical Music	11.6%	9.3%	8.8%
Jazz	10.8%	7.8%	8.1%
Dance Other than Ballet	6.3%	5.2%	5.6%
Latin, Spanish, or Salsa Music	NA	4.9%	5.1%
Ballet	3.9%	2.9%	2.7%
Opera	3.2%	2.1%	2.1%

Figure 2 Percent of U.S. Adults Who Attended a Performing Arts Activity, by Type (Excluding Musical and Non-Musical Plays): 2002, 2008, and 2012 (Iyengar 2013)

percentages associated with multiple sub-activities, illustrating the low levels of participation, and their decline over a ten year period. The SPPA findings from 2008 to 2012 found no statistically significant increases or decreases in participation in these sub-activities over the four-year period. Data showed, however, that arts organizations had substantial decreases in audiences from 2002 to 2008. Even though these figures remained steady from 2008 to 2012, the significant decreases from 2002 to the present illustrate a substantial decline in arts attendance, signifying that performing arts organizations need to increase their efforts to attract audiences (Iyengar 2013). Also, in order to remain relevant in the community, institutions need to diversify their audiences, both demographically (i.e. race/ethnicity, class, age) and psychographically (i.e. values, interests, attitudes, lifestyles).

### **Diversity in Arts Participation**

The Survey of Public Participation in the Arts is a helpful tool in measuring general attendance, but also attempts to understand audiences by deconstructing them into sociodemographic categories, such as race/ethnicity, age, income level, and educational attainment. By examining attendance rates through the lens of social location, trends appear as to who regularly participates in the arts (as both producers and consumers) and who does not. On a macro level, the SPPA gives arts administrators, advocates, and policy makers the opportunity to gain an understanding of the standard arts constituent in the United States—a White, upper-middle class, college-educated baby boomer.

Without looking at the hard numbers, managers at traditional arts organizations can see that their audiences are overwhelmingly White by observing the individuals that walk in and out of the performance hall doors. This blatant homogeneity suggests

that the demographic breakdown of those sitting in the seats is by no means an accurate racial cross section of the United States population. In 2008, 78.9% of all arts attendees were White, 8.2% were Hispanic, and 7.0% were African American (Iyengar 2009). According to the 2010 United States Census, only 63.7% of the U.S. population was White, 16.4% was of Hispanic descent, and 12.6% was African American or Black (US. Bureau of the Census 2011). By comparing these statistics side by side, we see a huge gap between racial minorities in the population and those who participate in the arts (see Figure 3). As the population of the United States is becoming increasingly

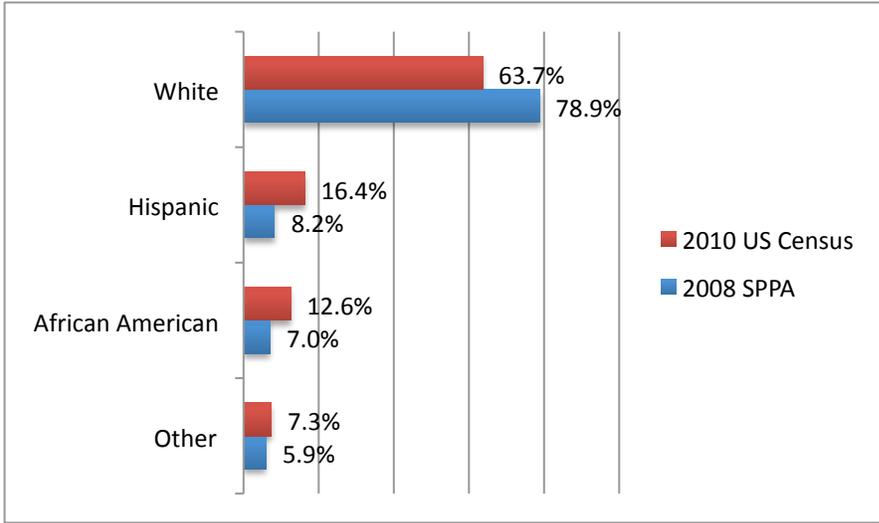


Figure 3 Racial composition of arts audiences (2008) compared to U.S. Census data (2010) (Iyengar 2009; US. Bureau of the Census 2011)

racially diverse, audience demographics are not shifting at the same pace, augmenting these disparities. Because of this, organizations must use these statistics to strategize about how to effectively market, program, and reach out to underrepresented racial minority communities.

The economic issues that plague the United States, with growing income gaps and increasing poverty rates, supplement this lack of racial diversity in performing arts organizations, as there is a lack of economic diversity in audiences as well. According to the 2008 SPPA, 70% of audience members earned an annual income upwards of \$50,000, while the 2010 U.S. Census recorded that only approximately 50% of the population was earning above \$50,000 per year. The 2008 SPPA recorded that the income group with the highest rates of attendance earned between \$50,000 and \$75,000 in annual income (20.5%), which was also the largest income group in 2010 (20.3%). However, the groups earning below \$50,000, while representing 47.7% of the U.S. population, were underrepresented, composing only 30.2% of arts audiences, illustrating a correlation between financial status and attendance (Iyengar 2009).

These disparities are not new. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, arts activities in the United States, such as classical music concerts and opera performances, gained a reputation of being exclusionary and reserved for the upper class. This notion evolved from the urban elites of the time, who worked to isolate high culture from popular forms, creating a distinction between high culture institutions and the commercial popular culture industry (DiMaggio 1982). Over a century later, this marked separation between high and popular culture still exists, with popular culture growing significantly over the past 100 years. The arts still act as a symbolic boundary between “highbrow” and “lowbrow” individuals and exclude lower class individuals from what have been traditionally defined as fine and genteel genres.

From a racial standpoint, African Americans were physically limited from participating in high arts due to the discriminatory laws existent in the United States up until the 1960s. Twenty years later, according to a study based on the 1982 SPPA,

with the exception of jazz concert attendance, Hispanic and African American respondents were still vastly underrepresented in performing arts audiences. The only genres with visible African American patron support were jazz, soul, blues, and gospel—all genres with African roots (DiMaggio 1992). Similarly, in 2008, the National Endowment for the Arts added “Latin Music” as an activity category on the SPPA; data illustrated that Latin Music events had the highest attendance rate among the Hispanic population at 48.7%—the only category in that year’s report where a racial minority’s attendance exceeded that of Whites (Iyengar 2009). While African American and Hispanic participation in Jazz and Latin music is impressive, the underrepresentation of these demographics in other types of audiences and at classical institutions is worrisome.

### **The ‘So What’ Factor**

For organizations with dwindling and demographically homogeneous audiences, it is necessary to reach out to underserved groups in new and creative ways. Why is this a necessity if arts institutions have operated for decades without worrying about these populations? There is an economic influence; non-profit arts organizations suffered through the economic crisis of the early 2000s, operating at deficits, losing subscribers, and eroding multi-million dollar endowments. Therefore, there is a great economic advantage in expanding audiences and tapping underrepresented populations. Arts organizations have the opportunity to grow both their profit margins and future audience bases by offering previously unexposed populations entry level or gateway experiences. However, the benefits from expanding audiences and developing outreach initiatives to reach racially and economically underrepresented communities are even greater for the potential audience members.

For prospective performing arts constituents from these underserved, and sometimes underprivileged, backgrounds, there is an opportunity cost to be considered. By attending a play or a concert, there is interplay between what the individuals are giving up and what they are gaining (McCarthy 2001). By participating in the arts, individuals are giving up leisure time and money that could be spent on something other than a ticket. In return, audience members gain enjoyment from attending an arts event, but also the social, academic, and economic benefits associated with the arts.

Cultural capital, a concept termed by Pierre Bourdieu in 1986, refers to an individual's knowledge of prestigious forms of art and culture and the utility that knowledge can serve in elevating one's social position. Beyond acting as a marker of status, an accumulation of cultural capital also implies a level of comfort and ease in an elite environment. Building on this concept, sociologist Paul DiMaggio explores cultural capital further, defining it as an "easy and familiar relationship with prestigious forms of art." This comfortable relationship implies not only knowledge of artistic forms, but also a level of ease and assurance navigating the institutional settings of elite culture. Studies have demonstrated the long-term benefits from arts exposure. Cultural capital can lead to the reproduction of parental elite status and social mobility, as well as higher test scores, increased college matriculation rates, and successful entrance into white-collar professions (DiMaggio 2004). Attendance at arts events and familiarity with high culture are predictors of social and academic success, leading to a cycle of attendance influencing achievement influencing attendance, etc.

A longitudinal study, commissioned by the National Endowment for the Arts, followed a sample of teenagers to adulthood, in order to determine if arts involvement

influenced their futures. Researchers found in both high and low socioeconomic status students, those with high arts involvement were more likely to participate and excel in academic and civic activities. This correlation was overwhelmingly positive for socially and economically disadvantaged and at risk students (see Table 2). The benefits of the arts and the influence of cultural capital, especially on students from low socioeconomic status, are clearly visible in this study. The children and teenagers in the sample with high levels of arts education and engagement showed more positive outcomes in academic and civic activities than their peers. These individuals were more likely to graduate high school and matriculate into colleges and universities. Also, the study illustrated that low SES students with high arts involvement often showed achievement levels sometimes even exceeding those of high SES students and the general population (Catterall 2012). As positive as these findings are, the benefits from the arts extend further than academic achievement and civic participation.

Table 2 The Effect of Arts Involvement on Low SES Students (Catterall 2012)

	Low arts, low SES	High arts, low SES	Overall Samples
Mean GPA (2005)	2.55	2.94	2.84
13- to 17-Year Olds Who Did Not Graduate from High School (2008)	22%	4%	7%
8 <sup>th</sup> Graders Who Planned to Earn A Bachelor's Degree (2007)	43%	74%	71%
10 <sup>th</sup> Graders Who Went on to Enroll in a Bachelor's Degree Program (2006)	19%	32%	46%
Young Adults Who Volunteered within the Last Two Years (2006)	26%	47%	43%
Young Adults Who Had Registered to Vote (2000)	67%	78%	76%
Young Adults Who Participated in a Political Campaign (2000)	2.8%	4.1%	3.6%

In a study commissioned by the Wallace Foundation in 2004, the benefits of the arts were split into two categories: intrinsic and instrumental (see Table 3). When

Table 3 A Summary of the Instrumental and Intrinsic Benefits associated with the Arts (McCarthy 2004)

<b>Instrumental Benefits (COMMUNAL)</b>	<b>Intrinsic Benefits (INDIVIDUAL)</b>
<p><b>COGNITIVE:</b> Improved academic performance and test scores, improved reading and writing skills and capacity for creative thinking, improved attitudes towards learning and the ability to learn</p> <p><b>ATTITUDINAL AND BEHAVIORAL:</b> Development of attitudes and behaviors such as self-discipline, self-efficacy, frequent school attendance, reduced drop out rates, general life skills, and pro-social behavior</p> <p><b>HEALTH:</b> Therapeutic effects, stress reduction, improved health for patients with specific conditions,</p> <p><b>SOCIAL:</b> A sense of community identity, construction of a community’s organizational capacity, civic involvement</p> <p><b>ECONOMIC:</b> Art as an economic activity, arts employment and spending</p>	<p><b>CAPTIVATION:</b> Absorption in an artistic work that can pull an individual into focused attention</p> <p><b>PLEASURE:</b> Art providing an imaginative experience ending with deep satisfaction</p> <p><b>EXTENDED CAPACITY FOR EMPATHY:</b> Art drawing individuals into different conditions and experiences</p> <p><b>COGNITIVE GROWTH:</b> Enabling individuals to make sense of what is before them, influencing the way they perceive the world</p> <p><b>CREATION OF SOCIAL BONDS:</b> Communally experiencing a work of art, facilitating discussion and social connections</p> <p><b>EXPRESSION OF COMMUNAL MEANINGS:</b> Art offering commentary and giving voices to communities</p>

the National Endowment for the Arts was established in the 1960s, public and private investment in the arts increased. In order to justify this increased support for the arts, it became necessary to demonstrate the “social and economic goals” achieved through arts funding. These arguments focus on the instrumental, or public-centric, benefits from the arts that are measurable and impact the general population. These measurable

benefits revolve around financial success, economic growth, and academic achievement, producing benefits that influence the well being of the American people. Specific instrumental benefits included cognitive, attitudinal and behavioral, health, social and economic benefits, such as those found in Catterall's study (McCarthy 2004). By promoting these benefits and highlighting the associated academic achievement, self-discipline, and creative thinking benefits, arts advocates and administrators are able to justify government and private funding for artistic endeavors.

This concentration on the instrumental benefits of the arts, which focus on the gains of the general community, overshadows the intrinsic benefits that accrue at the individual level. McCarthy's study, aptly subtitled, "Reframing the Debate About the Benefits of the Arts," extends the benefit framework to include the benefits that those involved with the arts directly receive. These include captivation in a work of art, the pleasure of an imaginative experience, extended capacity for empathy, cognitive growth, the ability to create social bonds, and expression of communal meanings (McCarthy 2004). Other past studies have explored this idea, such as Howard Becker's "Art Worlds," which discusses art as a form of collective action with musicians, conductors, composers, architects, and artists all collaborating in the creation of a work of art or music (Becker 1974). Thomas Turino also discusses these ideas in his work, "Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation," indicating that cultural practices, such as engaging with art and music are a way to "articulate collective identities" and are "fundamental to sustain social groups" (Turino 2008).

The collective instrumental and intrinsic benefits that people and communities receive from the arts are all positive effects from arts involvement and the acquisition

of cultural capital that derives from that involvement. Nevertheless, due to the disparity in arts audiences, with the vast underrepresentation of racial minorities and low-income individuals in arts organizations, there is an inherent inequality in terms of who has access to these benefits and how they are distributed.

### **The Purpose of this Study**

As low-income and racial minority populations are underrepresented in arts communities, they have unequal access to the arts and their associated benefits. Catterall's longitudinal study about arts in at-risk youth documented that low SES individuals who have prior exposure to the arts show levels of success and achievement surpassing those of the general population. However, it is not easy for underprivileged populations to gain access to high culture forms. The schools in lower-income communities have fewer resources. In inner city neighborhoods, especially, low property values mixed with a diminishing tax base equates to a lack of resources. Many public schools, therefore, do not have the ability to teach art and music at a high level, if at all (Erickson 2008). Arts programs are the first to be cut when budget issues arise—giving children from the middle and upper classes, who attend schools with stable art and music programs, an additional edge.

For those lucky enough to receive an arts education, it typically occurs at the primary and secondary school level, with art class, music class, choir, band, and 'composer in the classroom' programs. However, school districts in all areas have made substantial cuts to school-based arts programs since 2001; the percentage of 18 year olds who reported any arts education in childhood fell from 64.6% in 1982 to 49.5% in 2008 (Rabkin 2011). Because of this, the only remaining source for an arts education and its corresponding benefits comes from community organizations—such

as theatres, orchestras, ballet companies, etc. Millions of parents seek to involve their children in the arts outside of school, but many of these programs are inaccessible due to time, money, and convenience constraints (Rabkin 2011). In Pierre Bourdieu's discussion of the forms of capital, he notes that the acquisition of cultural capital is only possible if individuals are free from economic necessity—meaning an individual must have time and money in order to support artistic involvement (Bourdieu 1986). Therefore, if school districts do not have the resources to facilitate arts education programs and if parents do not have the time and money to dedicate to arts activities, responsibility falls upon community organizations to reach out to and engage with underserved populations.

The purpose of this study is to understand the barriers to participation in performing arts institutions and to determine the administrative barriers that keep individuals from underrepresented backgrounds from participating in the arts. By analyzing both the barriers faced by constituents and arts organization, this study aims to examine the factors that facilitate, inhibit, or constrain audience diversification. The ultimate goal is to understand the current state of arts organizations and how to make them more accessible, present in the community, and relevant to individuals of all backgrounds. In doing so, this study will ultimately propose a framework of strategies for arts institutions to utilize in developing, expanding, and cultivating their audiences.

## **Chapter 2**

### **BARRIERS**

The SPPA identifies racial minority and low-income individuals as underrepresented populations in arts audiences. However, it is important to understand *how* and *why* individuals of any sociodemographic background become involved with the arts. Additionally, it is necessary to understand the structural conditions within society that support the arts, arts institutions, arts participation, and the barriers that preclude arts involvement in underserved populations.

The “Cultural Ecology Framework” is a theoretical framework that discusses how arts participation exists within the context of society and the factors necessary to sustain arts engagement in the population. (see Figure 4). In this framework, there are three “spheres” or levels of understanding: 1) “Cultural Literacy,” 2) “Participatory Cultural Practice,” and 3) “Professional Cultural Goods and Services.” Cultural literacy is equivalent to general social and cultural knowledge: an understanding of traditions, customs, the arts, and ways of approaching critical thinking and creativity. Once a society, group, or individual is culturally literate, it can engage in participatory cultural practices in both amateur and professional settings. Practices could include activities such as singing in a church choir or taking an acting class at a community theatre. The result of these participatory practices is the consumption of professional cultural goods and services. Once individuals have knowledge of art and culture on a participative level they are more likely to engage as consumptive audience members, sustaining an environment where art institutions can thrive (Novak-Leonard and



Figure 4 The Cult (Brown 2011)

Brown 2011). In this societal context, there is a “More-More” principle, which states that those who actively participate in arts activities are more likely to attend performances. Similarly, those who attend more performances are more likely to become active arts participants (DiMaggio 1992). For example, a woman who attends performances at her local theatre company will be more likely to sign up for the theatre’s acting classes, just as the man who sings in his church choir is more likely to attend performances at the opera.

If a society is culturally literate, a sector of the population will become regular participants and consumers at professional cultural institutions. In a 1990 study by Alan Andreasen, six steps were identified as stages in the cultural ‘adoption’ process. The steps include disinterest, interest, trial, positive evaluation, adoption, and confirmation (See Table 4). Within these six steps are five pivotal transition points. The most difficult transition in this process is from interest to trial, as illustrated

Table 4 Steps in the Adoption Process (Andreasen 1990)

STEP	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE
1) DISINTEREST	No knowledge or interest in the institution or event	"I don't want to go to that play. I don't even know what it's about"
2) INTEREST	The stimulus of interest in a prospective constituent	"I saw an ad for that play in the paper! It looks interesting, we should get more information"
3) TRIAL	Attending a first arts event	"We have tickets for that play tonight"
4) POSITIVE EVALUATION	Having a positive gateway experience and seeking information about future performances	"That was fantastic, we should see what else they're producing this season"
5) ADOPTION	Attending more events in the future	"Let's buy tickets for the next play"
6) CONFIRMATION	Becoming an invested patron through future attendance, subscriptions, donations, etc.	"This organization is wonderful! Let's subscribe for season tickets and donate"

through a disparity between stages two and three; there are more individuals interested in attending arts activities than those who engage in trial. This is especially apparent in racial minority and low-income individuals in the adoption process. Approximately 9.2% of Black individuals and 5% of Hispanic individuals were interested in attending an arts event, while only 4.7% and 3.5% of Black and Hispanic individuals, respectively, actually attended. This study also displays that individuals at stages one through three have significantly lower incomes than those at stages four through six (Andreasen 1990). Though the SPPA indicates the unequal demographic distribution of arts audiences, this disparity is not necessarily due to a lack of interest, but rather a lack of engaging in trial and any other further stages of adoption. The movement from interest to trial is the essential step in cultivating audiences. Therefore, it is crucial to understand the barriers that stand between passive interest and active trial and engagement in the arts, especially in low-income and racial minority populations.

## Barriers in the Constituency

In the adoption process proposed by Andreasen, the transition from interest to trial also represents the transition from non-participation to participation. According to a model developed by Louis Bergonzi and Julia Smith (see Figure 5), this transition is the product of sociodemographic characteristics, such as race, socioeconomic status, arts education, both in school and in the community, and lifestyle choices (Bergonzi and Smith 1996). In this model, participation is most closely linked with arts education. Multiple studies find that childhood socialization and education in the arts is the most significant predictor of arts attendance and engagement later in life. Those who have childhood music lessons and appreciation classes have been found to have higher rates of consumption and production in the arts (Andreasen 1990; DiMaggio 1992; Orend 1989). However, the type of arts education one receives is a direct product of his or her sociodemographic characteristics.



Figure 5 Representation of Bergonzi and Smith's Analytic Model of Arts Participation (1996)

It has been theorized that an influential barrier to arts participation in racial minority and low socioeconomic status individuals is a lack of arts education

opportunities. The 1992 SPPA shows that socioeconomic status is the strongest determinant of obtaining an arts education and that childhood arts education has not been equally distributed by socioeconomic status or race, concentrating arts education opportunities among middle and upper class White children (Rabkin 2011). A study examining high school music ensemble demographics finds that socioeconomic status is the strongest predictor of retention in instrumental ensembles and that family composition, parental education, native language, and race/ethnicity are all determinants of inequality in music courses in secondary education (Abril and Elpus 2011). With fewer opportunities to socialize children in the arts, these communities have lower levels of arts engagement.

This lack of arts education is often due not to sociodemographic characteristics, but rather the conditions and structural constraints that accompany these characteristics. Race, especially, is a weak predictor of arts attendance. The difference between White and African American participation in the arts is influenced more by educational attainment and location rather than race alone. Additionally lower participation rates in the Hispanic population are not attributed to occupation, income, or education, but difficulty in enjoying and understanding art forms involving aural and written materials that require proficiency in the English language. Only 25%-40% of the gap between White and Black arts participation can be explained by sociodemographic position (DiMaggio 1992). Therefore, instead of attributing differences in participation to skin color or income, they are more directly correlated with the codependent factors.

Race and income, themselves, may not represent barriers to arts participation, but their influence on group affiliations, customs, traditions, and lifestyles directly

result in barriers to arts production and consumption. Educational attainment is often cited as a large predictor of arts participation (Schuster 2000; Stern 2011; Abril and Elpus 2011; DiMaggio 1992). In the 2008 SPPA, 67% of individuals with graduate degrees attended at least one benchmark activity compared to 19% of those who only had a high school diploma. Additionally, college graduates were 48% more likely to attend a benchmark activity than those who had only completed grade school (Iyengar 2009). When discussing educational attainment in the context of arts attendance, however, sociodemographic factors such as socioeconomic status and race come into play. For example, there is a strong correlation between educational attainment and average income. In 2009, individuals with less than a Bachelor's degree earned far less than the U.S.'s median weekly income, at \$774 per week. High school graduates made \$626 per week while college graduates earned upwards of an average of \$1025 (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2009). Race also showed a correlation with education, as Hispanic and Black individuals were less likely to achieve a high school diploma or GED and less likely to graduate from college, or obtain a higher professional degree than White individuals (US. Bureau of the Census 2012). Due to the socioeconomic and racial demographics that correlate with lower education levels, it can be deduced that there is also a correlation between low-income and racial minority status and arts participation. Nevertheless, correlation is not equivalent to causation; it is the factors associated with these sociodemographic characteristics that more directly influence arts engagement.

A person's skin color or status as rich or poor may be correlated to a lack of engagement in the arts, but there are other related, more direct, causative factors. For example, socioeconomic status relates to many co-dependent factors. If one is of low

socioeconomic status, he may live in a poor area and must send his children to public schools where they will receive limited or no arts education, and where college matriculation rates are low. He may have a job with low pay, probably working long shifts and odd hours, meaning he is unable to engage with arts events or involve his children. Through a Bourdieusian lens, this makes sense, as an arts education and an accumulation of cultural capital cannot be acquired without freedom from economic necessity.

In Bergonzi and Smith's model, race and income are specific sociodemographic factors that lead to *lifestyles*, which influence arts participation. A person's lower class location, work status, or type of occupation and salary influences arts participation. These factors may impede upon an individual's ability to purchase tickets, plan future attendance due to inconsistent schedules, devote time and energy to the arts, and access arts organizations, in terms of cost and location. How far is the performance? Would he have to take public transportation? How much would that cost? Family life cycle also has an impact—how large is the family, how many children are being supported, how self-sufficient are members of the family, would the children need a babysitter? Also, there are personal barriers, such as comfort level, familiarity with presented content, and knowledge of performance etiquette (Andreasen 1990). Many individuals cite that they feel uncomfortable in high arts settings, feeling out of place due to the antiquated belief that the arts are reserved for the wealthy and elite. Some do not want to attend because it disinterests them, as they may have no knowledge of classical music or theater. Also, many have preconceived notions about or lack an education in the etiquette of attending a performance. A number of organizations, such as the Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts and

the New York Philharmonic, are attempting to overcome this lack of knowledge by offering literature and pages on their websites, detailing what patrons should expect, when to arrive, when to clap, and how to dress. Nevertheless, many still believe that one should wear a tuxedo to the opera, maybe even with a monocle, partially due to pop culture's outrageous and inaccurate depiction of high art performances—i.e. Aristocrats sitting in box seats watching a large woman with Viking horns breaking glass with her high C's.

An individual's race/ethnicity has other co-dependent factors that influence arts attendance, such as cultural relevance and community association. The high arts are overwhelmingly associated with the artistic products of the western hemisphere, primarily Western Europe. Therefore, beyond education, income, and socialization, low minority arts participation could be explained by factors such as artistic interest concentrated in specific genres (DiMaggio 1992). As seen in the 2008 and 2012 SPPAs, African Americans are more likely to participate in Jazz, Blues, R&B, and Gospel arts events and the Hispanic population is more likely to participate in Latin or Salsa music events (Iyengar 2009; Iyengar 2013). Therefore, the variance in participation could also be caused by *cultural* lifestyle differences that influence tastes and relationships to specific genres.

Community factors also have an impact on if and how racial minorities participate in the arts. The arts are perceived as overwhelmingly White, and therefore 'uppity' or 'bougie.' While middle and upper class Blacks have the time and resources to participate in the arts, they are less likely to do so, for fear of disconnecting from their community. There is a fear of being perceived as too 'White,' on the inside, to really be part of the Black community, but not actually White due to cultural roots and

skin color. Therefore, in order to participate in the arts, while still making claims to membership in the Black community, middle and upper class Black individuals may participate primarily in African-American musical and artistic forms (Banks 2009). In a study entitled “Reggae to Rachmaninoff,” Black and Hispanic respondents were more likely than White respondents to cite the purpose of participating in the arts as a way to learn about and celebrate their culture (Ostrower 2008). In this way, not only are these individuals participating in the arts, but also aiding in the collective advancement of their cultures’ art and music, legitimizing the genres by giving them an audience.

The combination of these barriers leads to either a disinterest or inability to participate in arts events. For children, they lead to an inability to receive an arts education outside of the classroom. Access to the arts for children is almost completely dependent on parents, as schools are no longer consistently offering arts education programs. Parents need the ability to commit to dropping off and picking up their children at a convenient location, affordable program tuitions and fees, and the time and energy to devote to seeing performances and programs that interest their children (Bergonzi and Smith 1996). Also, depending on resources and lifestyle, some children (and parents) may only want to spend leisure time watching movies or going to sports events. Some parents would prefer children playing on sports teams than taking dancing or acting lessons. These barriers present arts organizations with a challenge to re-strategize how to elicit participation. A challenge arises, though, because certain circumstances cannot be easily changed. There are historical and social foundations of many of these demographic and lifestyle-based barriers. The social hierarchy in the United States has fostered enormous inequality and disparity

between social classes and races, leading to structural barriers that exclude underserved populations from participating in the arts.

### **Social and Historical Origins of Barriers**

Racial and economic inequalities are issues that have persisted in society for centuries. In the United States, racial “equality” is a relatively new idea. Slavery was abolished in 1863, with Lincoln’s emancipation proclamation, but newly freed slaves were severely discriminated against with Jim Crow legislation dominating domains such as housing, employment, and education. Finally, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 eradicated many of the discriminatory laws against racial minorities, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 facilitated easier voting registration for African Americans, and the Civil Rights Act of 1968 prohibited discrimination in housing.

In 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson spoke at Howard University’s commencement ceremony. In his speech, he conveyed that even though these laws were in place, they did not deliver automatic equality.

You do not wipe away the scars of centuries by saying: Now you are free to go where you want, and do as you desire, and choose the leaders you please. You do not take a person who, for years, has been hobbled by chains and liberate him, bring him up to the starting line of a race and then say, "you are free to compete with all the others," and still justly believe that you have been completely fair. Thus it is not enough just to open the gates of opportunity. All our citizens must have the ability to walk through those gates.

This statement, 50 years later, still rings true. Racial minorities in the United States are at a disadvantage, as they have not had the same amount of time and number of resources to accumulate economic, social, and cultural capital, leading to disparities in wealth, as well as housing, education, and arts participation. (Higginbotham and Andersen 2012).

Impacted by structural factors in the postindustrial era, racial minorities had difficulty achieving upward social mobility. After World War II, as jobs shifted from the cities to the suburbs, White middle class families followed. Due to housing segregation, this left African Americans in deteriorating, poverty-stricken, neighborhoods (Higginbotham and Andersen 2012). Similar issues have arisen in Hispanic and Latin American communities, especially in immigrant families with few resources, a language barrier, and, in some cases, no work visa. Due to these issues, many Hispanic families have been forced into poor inner-city communities.

These housing patterns persist today—Philadelphia shows clear groupings and lines that segregate different racial and ethnic groups from one another (See Figure 6). This map shows distinct pockets of different ethnicities, with a large number of

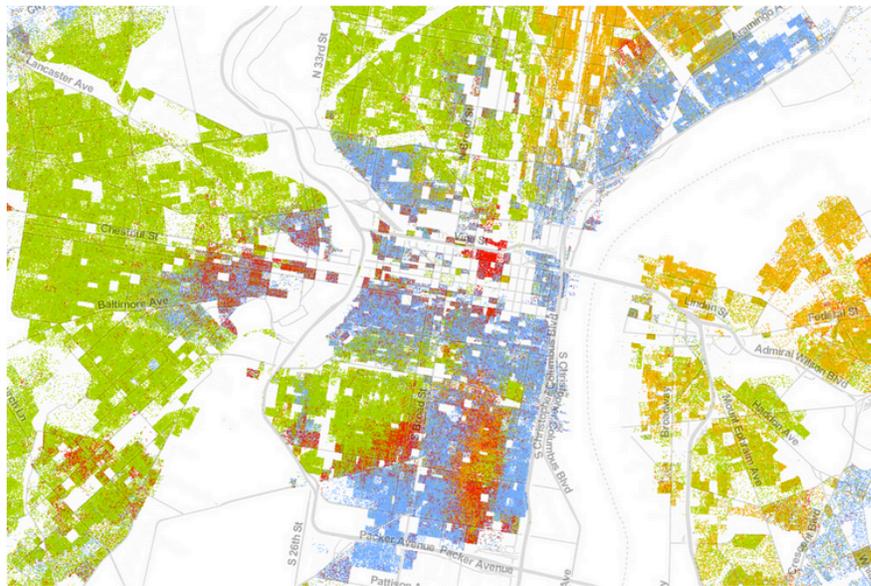


Figure 6 Color-Coded Map of Philadelphia by Race—White-Blue; Green-African American; Asian-Red; Latino-Orange; Other-Brown (Cable 2013)

African Americans living in West Philadelphia, Hispanic communities to the East, and a majority of the White population settled in wealthy sections of center city, such as Rittenhouse Square and Society Hill (Cable 2013).

The institutionalized factors that perpetuate racial inequality seep deeper than just income and housing inequality. These issues impact access to good education, adequate childcare resources, college and university matriculation, involvement in community organizations, leisure activity choice sets, exposure to high art forms, and access to technology—all of which impact arts participation. Structural inequality leads to accessibility issues in arts organizations in terms of cost and location and the barriers that arise from a lack of arts exposure, limited accessibility to the arts, and low-quality public education systems.

Not all racial minorities are of low socioeconomic status and not all individuals of low socioeconomic status are racial minorities. Not all barriers are rooted in economics. Issues of structural inequality influence even upwardly mobile middle and upper class African American and Hispanic individuals. This is seen mostly in the formation and support of cultural communities. Even in upper class minority populations, there is a need to feel connected to the community that shares their roots and heritage. In African American populations many upwardly mobile individuals spend leisure time working towards the collective project of Black advancement, feeling it is their responsibility to uplift the group (Banks 2009). There is a responsibility to the community to share in the remembrance and celebration of collective culture—leading to the patronage of Jazz, Blues, Soul, and Gospel (DiMaggio 1992). In this way, the prevalence of racial inequality has led to collective community identities, producing specific patterns of arts participation.

Income, housing, and education patterns all intersect and have a cumulative effect on arts participation, especially in racial minority and low-income populations. These barriers are persistent and cannot be hurdled easily; therefore, arts institutions need to strategize how to effectively bypass these barriers and develop programming, which will aid in audience cultivation and diversification. From the European noble patronage model of the renaissance to the artistic isolation of the urban elites in early 20<sup>th</sup> century America, there has been a longstanding and visible tradition of exclusionary participation in the arts. Organizations of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, however, realize that this is not a tenable mode of operation and they need to access these underserved populations in order to sustain their audience bases. This pressure to be inclusive stems from many places. Some organizations may be trying to expand their dwindling audience bases and increase tickets sales; some may be promoting inclusion efforts in order to gain federal funding. Others may have a genuine commitment to audience diversification and reaching the largest constituency possible. Whether this desire for inclusivity is driven by money or a dedication to audience expansion, arts institutions are not without administrative, artistic, and managerial barriers to facilitating accessibility.

### **Organizational Barriers**

Barriers to arts participation do not derive solely from the characteristics of underrepresented groups, but the arts organizations themselves. Performing arts administrators understand that their audiences are dwindling, and that those who do attend are too homogeneous. Arts organizations, today, are under pressure to expand their audiences in terms of both numbers and demographic diversity. Therefore, there is pressure to create programming that will attract an expansive audience. To do so, an

orchestra might program an accessible well-known classic, such as Copeland's *Simple Gifts*, or an opera company might perform a crowd favorite, such as Puccini's *Madame Butterfly*. However, this presents a dilemma. Organization administrators and artists may want to experiment and test the results of new repertoire and programming, but the risk is too high to deviate from standard canon.

When discussing non-profit high culture institutions, one must note fundraising strains, financial shortages, bureaucratic issues, and mission fulfillment as important factors to consider. There are different factions and objectives that compete for prominence. Consequently, it is difficult to develop high level and innovative programs and seasons, while remaining attractive and accessible to constituents and donors (Alexander 2003). This dilemma represents a struggle between what Max Weber termed instrumentally rational and value rational action. Orchestra administrators push to program safe and popular repertoire, for the purposes of broad appeal (instrumentally rational action), while musicians and artistic directors urge management to consider more innovative works outside of traditional canon (value rational action). These conditions pit the value rational artistic and instrumentally rational management identities of the organization against one another and lead to internal conflict and challenge.

These economic and artistic identity elements symbolize the dual leadership and dual value system dynamic that exists within arts organizations. In an arts institution, there are two equally important leaders—the executive director, who is the institutional figurehead, and the artistic director, who is the chief creative player. Both have separate staffs and individual visions, and must therefore negotiate between their contrasting goals (Reid 2009). The executive director and his staff are concerned with

cultivating revenue and commercial success by coordinating marketing efforts, box office sales, fundraising efforts, and grant applications. The executive director also has vested interests in developing relationships with community groups and corporations, as well as board members and high-profile donors, valuing financial gain and rational decision-making (Reid 2009). On the other end of the spectrum, the artistic director and his staff focus on the creative output, cultivating an identity by combining different tastes and styles. The artistic director uses spontaneity and a critical eye to produce his vision. Also though, the artistic director prefers thought-provoking, innovative, and daring classical repertoire over commercial programs, valuing artistic quality and integrity (Reid 2009).

When these factions negotiate, it poses a problem for expanding audiences, as the organization's administrators dominate, producing programs that may garner broad and stable interest, but are too safe and or irrelevant to attract new audiences. When arts institutions are having trouble, they perform *The Sound of Music* or a Beethoven Symphony. These pieces anchor a season and attract a secure number of ticket holders, but at the same time, have the potential to alienate audiences for whom these pieces might not be exciting or relevant.

Financial problems dictate the ticket discounts, the outreach/grant programs that can be sustained, and what types of educational opportunities are offered. If a theatre company fills its season with showstoppers that have expensive rights and production costs, they will have less money to devote to educational programming and community outreach, thereby taking a toll on attendance and engagement.

Thus, while underrepresented populations have their own barriers that keep them from engaging with and participating in the arts, the organizations themselves

have barriers such as a split ideology and leadership dynamic, financial troubles, and a risk-averse attitude that keep them from being fully accessible and available to underrepresented constituencies. The barriers in the constituency are grounded in history, institutions, and societal interaction, and cannot be changed easily. Therefore, this study aims to understand the issue of audience diversity from an administrative vantage point. How do organizations perceive and approach these barriers, and how are organizations responding to the need for audience diversification? By examining arts institutions, their missions, programs, and administrators, the goal of this study is to understand organizational responses to audience homogeneity and how they can develop cost effective and programmatically relevant solutions to promote inclusivity and audience diversity in the future.

### **Chapter 3**

## **METHODOLOGY**

The existent literature related to barriers to arts attendance is mostly focused on the constituency, relating to factors influencing the underrepresented population in question, such as education, geographic location, time constraints, disposable income, and other demographic variables. There is less literature that discusses the barriers that exist at the organizational level, keeping racial minorities and low-income participants from attending. To explore this issue further, I performed case studies and content analyses of performing arts organizations in the greater Philadelphia region. The Philadelphia metropolitan area has a reputation of artistic excellence, with countless dance and theatre companies, a big five orchestra, and many top art and music schools.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, as seen through Figure 6, Philadelphia and its surrounding suburban areas are clearly both racially and economically diverse, making it an appropriate and interesting metropolitan region in which to examine the issue of diverse artistic participation. The rationale for focusing on performing arts organizations, as opposed to general arts organizations, is the intense pressure for audience expansion faced by performance institutions in the current climate. This is evidenced by constant closings, strikes, and financial crises, recent examples including

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<sup>2</sup> The term “Big Five” orchestra refers to the five most critically acclaimed orchestras in the United States—Philadelphia, New York, Cleveland, Boston, and Chicago.

the Philadelphia Orchestra's 2011 declaration of bankruptcy and the Philadelphia Theatre Company's 2013 strike.

A two-pronged approach is employed in this study to examine organizations and their perceptions towards audience diversification. The first portion of the study examines three separate arts organizations at different levels of audience accessibility, interviewing staff and board members about audience diversity and expansion initiatives in place.<sup>3</sup> The second is a content analysis of a broad sample of arts organizations in the greater Philadelphia area, analyzing their mission statements and available educational and outreach programs.

### **PART ONE: Three Organizational Case Studies**

The first portion of this study involves inquiries relating to diversity in arts organizations, *administrative* perceptions of levels of arts participation in underserved populations, and methods of audience diversification. This research design is guided by four research questions:

- What are the barriers that preclude racial minority and low-income populations from participating in the arts, from the perspective of arts administrators?
- How do organizations perceive and respond to the lack of racial and economic diversity in their audiences?
- What challenges do these organizations face when they implement diversity initiatives?
- Do administrative attitudes towards audience diversification vary depending on community accessibility?

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<sup>3</sup> Organizational accessibility determined by factors such as cost, location, relevance and understandability of programming, and reputation

To answer these research questions, I performed three comprehensive case studies of arts organizations in and around Philadelphia, selecting the sample based on each organization's reputation and level of accessibility to its surrounding community.<sup>4</sup> One goal of this study is to not only investigate how arts organizations perceive and respond to a lack of audience diversity, but how these perceptions change based on the organization's level of accessibility to the community (accessibility determined by factors such as cost, location, relevance and understandability of programming, and reputation). Therefore, I selected these organizations at varying levels of accessibility—a community performing arts center (CPAC) with low cost tickets and family-friendly programming, a regional theatre company (RTC) with mid-range ticket prices and equity performers, providing a professional theatrical experience, and an elite performing arts institution (EPAI) with higher cost tickets and a wide range of high-level classical and contemporary music, dance, and performing arts programming.

For each organization, I examined its seasonal programming, reviewed its history, and analyzed its mission and institutional goals. Using information from their websites, local news sources, and literature, such as pamphlets and brochures available at their venues, I created profiles for each. Additionally, I used Nielsen's Claritas "MyBestSegments" Market Segmentation tool to define the demographics,

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<sup>4</sup> These three organizations have been promised anonymity, due to the sensitive nature of the topics discussed in personal interviews, such as personal experience with racial and economic diversity, and organizational perceptions of race and income in their constituency, and will therefore be referred to as CPAC, RTC, and EPAI from this point forward.

consumption habits, and income levels of individuals in the areas surrounding the organizations (see Appendix A).

Next, I identified the individuals at each organization to be interviewed, speaking to twelve participants in total. I spoke to the Executive Director, Director of Development, Director of PR/Marketing, Director of Education, Artistic Director, miscellaneous staff members, and up to two board members at each organization. Interviews ranged from 30 minutes to an hour. Information gathered included sociodemographic background (age, race, neighborhood lived in, etc.), background in the arts (first artistic experiences, entrance into the arts administration field), trends in arts participation (thoughts on dwindling attendance and SPPA data), and the importance placed on audience diversification (perceptions of audience diversity, program implementation, and implications for the future).

Each interview was audio-recorded, transcribed, and coded for the attitudes towards and perceptions of audience diversity, types of diversity initiatives in place, and the challenges and obstacles identified. Subsequently, the findings from these interviews were entered into a table on a spectrum of organizational accessibility from highest accessibility (CPAC) to lowest accessibility (EPAI). Through this table, trends emerged—for example, how diversity programming on the community level differs from that of the elite level and how the challenges faced differ depending on location on the spectrum of organizational accessibility.

## **PART TWO: Organizational Content Analysis**

These three case studies offer a detailed picture of how organizational accessibility influences audience expansion programming and challenges in implementing initiatives. In order to gain further insight into and a more detailed

picture of organizational attitudes and responses towards audience diversity, I performed a content analysis on the programming and mission statements of a sample of middle and elite organizations in the greater Philadelphia area.

Instead of conducting 100+ more interviews with administrators at select mid-level and elite organizations, I compiled a list of 20 arts organizations in the Philadelphia area, their mission statements, and a list of their community, outreach, development, and educational programming from their websites and literature. After compiling this list, I performed a content analysis in order to identify which types of organizations conveyed which types of ideals to their prospective audience members. The mission statements and program listings were coded for two different categories of words—community-centric vocabulary (words with a focus on the audience, i.e. engagement, dialogue, outreach) and presentation-centric vocabulary (words with a focus on the final product, i.e. world-class, quality, produce). By identifying the organizations that present themselves as either community or presentation focused (or a mix of the two orientations), trends revealed which types of organizations were most successful in conveying accessibility and diversity to their audiences, and which programs and language were most effective for doing so.

The idea for this design stemmed from a recent research study by McDonnell and Tepper's entitled, "Culture in Crisis: Deploying Metaphor in Defense of Art," where McDonnell and Tepper use LexisNexis and Google News Search to identify news reports about different organizations, and analyze the 'metaphors' and descriptive vocabulary used to describe different types of arts organizations. For example, high culture non profit institutions were "jewels," "treasures," "assets," and "gems," while, popular culture non-profits elicited words such as "community,"

“public,” “service,” and “resource.” In my study I decided to take this concept and reverse it—instead of analyzing how individuals perceived the organizations, the goal was to discover how organizations present themselves to individuals with the hope of being perceived a certain way.

The last part of this study, explored in Chapter Six, refers to how organizations can cultivate diversity while attempting to maintain a balance between financial resources and artistic integrity. By looking at a culmination of the results from the two-part study as well as an extended literature review, the objective is to compose a framework of suggestions and potential solutions that arts organizations can utilize to diversify audiences in a fiscally responsible manner. In applying these findings to the suggestions of other arts participation scholars and arts administration researchers, I propose workable solutions that supersede the barriers to arts participation at both the level of the constituency and the organization.

## **Chapter 4**

### **THREE ORGANIZATIONAL CASE STUDIES**

The overall purpose of the three case studies is to examine organizations as community entities that are attempting to expand and diversify their audiences. Organizational brochures, literature, and websites detail the different programs and outreach initiatives existent within the organization. Beyond review of organizational activities, interviews with staff and board members offer more insight into why or why not audience diversification is a priority, or even a perceived problem, at a given institution. The goal of these interviews is to understand administrative attitudes towards racial and economic diversity in audiences, the organization's diversification initiatives in place, and the challenges venues face while responding to audience homogeneity.

#### **Characteristics of the Sample**

The three organizations studied are vastly different in terms of size, presence in the community, location, and programming type. Nevertheless, the individuals interviewed, who were instrumental in developing programming and outreach initiatives at their institutions, had similar demographic and artistic backgrounds. The sample of staff and board members interviewed generally reflected the homogeneous characteristics of arts audiences. Of the dozen arts professionals with whom I spoke, seven were male, five were female, and 100% of the interviewees identified their race as White/Caucasian and their socioeconomic status as middle or upper middle class.

All but one individual lived within a 30-minute commute radius, with three mentioning that they could walk to the organization from their home in a matter of minutes. Additionally, only three individuals called their neighborhoods well integrated, with the other 75% calling their neighborhoods primarily White. Three individuals went as far as to mention the racial segregation apparent in their communities.

A common denominator among administrators at the studied institutions was an engrained background in and passion for the arts, leading to a vested interest in the longevity of arts organizations. When individuals have a history of engagement with and socialization in the arts, they are more likely to encourage arts participation, and advocate arts expansion activities. Of the sample, 83% cited that their interest in the arts began at an early age.<sup>5</sup> Gateway experiences included attending concerts and plays with parents and elementary school groups, performing in school and community center productions, singing in choirs, putting on plays for family and friends, taking acting, singing, and dancing lessons, and even studying theater, music, drama, or arts management in college. These individuals primarily had gateway experiences in the arts in their formative years from parental and educational influences. Anecdotes include:

I started ballet lessons when I was 5, sang in the church choir, and performed in high school musical productions.

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<sup>5</sup> The two individuals that responded otherwise became involved in the arts through their children and/or spouses. Additionally, these two interviewees were the only two of the sample who were not full time or trained professionals in the field—a box office manager and a board member.

My mother had volunteered to do costumes for a performance when I was seven years old for a community theatre. Whether or not I actively volunteered my services, I was cast in the show as a number of roles. I loved it, I had a lot of fun, I was really enthusiastic, and then I moved here and that was the first time I actively went out for something. I always loved to sing, I always loved to act, I always loved to perform, even as young as seven years old

I think my first great experience was in elementary school, and the whole class took a trip to [a local university] to see *Henry IV* parts one and two. It was really amazing, and it was my first really amazing experience with theater.

Socialization in the arts conditioned these individuals to enjoy performance and self-expression from a young age, and it is possible that these experiences influence how these arts professionals operate and prioritize in their organizations.

When asked how often they interacted with individuals of a different race, outside of the workplace, answers varied. This result is possibly due to a social desirability bias, as individuals want to appear tolerant and well cultured. Four confidently responded with answers derivative of ‘all the time,’ citing different associations they belong to, congregants from their churches, neighbors, and close friends. For example, one individual stated,

I have friends who are Black, White, gay, straight—I always have, and it has nothing to do with whether it is based in the arts community or not. I just happen to know a lot of people of all colors, of all races, every community of life, every economic level—people who are multi millionaires and people who have \$10,000 a year as income, so it runs the gamut.

Five individuals gave ambiguous answers, which indicated light to moderate interaction. For example, this might include interacting in a friendly neighborly or acquaintance context. One woman stated,

My next-door neighbors are Black—I would not say on a friendship basis. I do not really socialize or have close friends, but I interact with my neighbors and acquaintances, and we're friendly, but that's about it.

Of the remaining three, all had limited exposure to racial minority populations, but also made sure to justify why they did not have more diverse interactions. For example, this individual responded to the question with a justification before directly responding to the question:

Personally, I try to interact with as many different kinds of people as I can, but I guess because of the community in which I live, I don't have the opportunity to do it that often. So, I would say 5-10% of my time.

The variability in the sample's answers, paired with the common racial and economic backgrounds and neighborhood compositions, reveals limited exposure to cultural and economic diversity.

This collection of demographic and background information offers insight into the *personal* factors in the sample that could influence program development, as well as administrative barriers impacting arts engagement in underrepresented populations at these organizations. Over 80% of the participants mentioned that it was the gateway experiences in their childhoods that led to active arts involvement as adults. These arts professionals have personal accounts of the influence of performance and music on young people, also noting that the survival and growth of cultural institutions is dependent upon the cultivation of youth interest in the arts. However, a majority of those interviewed were middle or upper-middle class and had limited exposure to racial minority populations. Therefore, they may not have an accurate understanding of the disparities that exist in arts engagement and the importance of providing equitable arts access for all children and adolescents. In this way, the relatively non-

diverse backgrounds of board and staff members may impact the organization’s development of programs and initiatives to engage underserved audiences.

**The Organizations**

The three organizations studied, as mentioned in Chapter Three, are of different sizes and levels of accessibility to the community—accessibility being determined by factors such as cost, location, relevance and understandability of programming, and reputation. The three organizations include a community performing arts center (CPAC) as the most accessible, a moderately accessible regional theatre company (RTC), and an elite performing arts institution (EPAI) as the least accessible of the three. Each organization (as summarized in Table 5) has a different breadth of programming, different program offerings, is located in a different community, and attracts a different demographic.

Table 5 Overview of Organizational Characteristics

<b>Community Performing Arts Center</b>	<b>Regional Theatre Company</b>	<b>Elite Performing Arts Institution</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low cost</li> <li>• Affiliated with school district and township</li> <li>• Entry Level</li> <li>• Youth-centric</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mid range cost</li> <li>• Regional theatre company with equity performers</li> <li>• Provides all levels of acting, voice, and dance instruction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mid-higher cost</li> <li>• Affiliated with an academic institution</li> <li>• Venue for a variety of performance artists—focus on jazz, world music, and dance</li> </ul>

**Organization 1: Community Performing Arts Center**

The CPAC is a unique organization, in that it is not its own entity. During the school year, it is part of a school district, but in the summertime, it becomes part of the

local township. Because it is part of the structure of the town, it is tightly integrated with the community. Located on the edge of Philadelphia, between the low-income communities of West Philadelphia and the wealthy neighborhoods of the Main Line, the CPAC's location gives it access to a diverse set of constituencies, including a large population of racial minorities and immigrants, as well as both upper class and lower class families. According to Claritas PRIZM, the median income of residents in the CPAC's zip code is \$67,000 and the community includes upper middle class families with and without children, as well as lower middle class individuals without children.<sup>6</sup> The community is culturally diverse and includes two economic extremes: upper class professionals and a struggling lower socioeconomic status community.

During the school year, the CPAC hosts a variety of performances, including nostalgic cover bands, classical performance groups, family friendly theater productions, and dance presentations. Programming has included *The Nutcracker* and *A Christmas Carol* during holiday times, stage adaptations of children's books, such as *Junie B. Jones*, as well as performances by the local Symphony Orchestra. During the summer, its summer theater program provides entertainment for the community with family-appropriate junior versions of Broadway musicals, a full-blown 'main stage' production, a song and dance cabaret, and a set of one-acts performed and directed by teenagers and young adults. In the past, it has also held ethnic festivals and brought in culturally specific performing groups.

This organization is most well known for its summer programming. It produces a season of children's theater performances from June to August, where

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<sup>6</sup> Claritas Inc., acquired by Nielsen, developed Claritas PRIZM—a set of geo-demographic segments for customer and market segmentation.

hundreds of preteen to 18 year olds perform in up to two shows, learning about acting, dancing, and singing. Teenagers and young adults participate in more advanced performance programs and can be involved in the large-scale production, featuring rising local actors in leading roles. Younger children participate in a choice of two camp programs that teach the basics of performance. Additionally, there is a tech program, where teens learn the basics of sound, set, and light design.

Due to the organization's location in a diverse area and its affiliation with the township, the CPAC easily reaches a diverse audience, especially through its children's programming. With affordable individual and group ticket prices, along with broadly relatable repertoire presentations for families and children, it is accessible for underserved diverse populations. Performances are inexpensive and of good quality. Families with a desire to involve their children in the arts can introduce them at a young age without financial stress. It is centrally located in the middle of the township and near major roads, bus lines, and trolley routes for easy access. In the summer, camps and daycares geared to children of lower socioeconomic status bring large groups to performances at a low cost. During the year, the organization has access to its home and adjacent school districts, accommodating student groups for performance field trips at an affordable price.

While the CPAC has no specific diversity outreach programs in place, it offers scholarships for a limited amount of students from low SES families who wish to participate in its summer educational programming. Also, over the past few years, it has experimented with cultural festivals and ethnic performance groups—garnering some interest from the community, but not enough for the programs to become part of the regularly structured season. Additionally, the CPAC's affiliation with the township

gives it marketing opportunities that it would not have otherwise. It is able to advertise directly through the school system, distributing flyers and materials to students and parents. Also, it has access to the township's Welcome Center, providing resources for a large number of immigrant residents in the district. Through these avenues, the organization is able to pull in a diverse audience and connect with constituents of multiple races, income levels, and educational backgrounds.

### Organization 2: Regional Theatre Company

The Regional Theatre Company is a standard non-profit arts organization with 501(c)(3) designation. Located 30 minutes from Center City Philadelphia, the theatre attracts audiences from the suburbs, as well as Northern Delaware and Southern New Jersey. The organization has received critical acclaim since its start in the early 1990s, winning multiple Broadway World Awards.<sup>7</sup> It has a wide regional draw for audiences and is nationally recognized for its high quality productions, while maintaining strong ties with the surrounding community. The town in which the theatre is located is part of the mid-to-higher income communities of the outer Philadelphia suburbs. The median income of residents in the area is \$78,000, with Claritas PRIZM defining the community as upper middle class, composed of wealthy and midscale families with and without children.

As a regional theatre, the RTC presents five large-scale productions—musicals and plays—in its seasons. Each year, from August to May, the RTC offers a variety of

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<sup>7</sup> The Broadway World Awards, sponsored by [broadwayworld.com](http://broadwayworld.com), allow audience members and fans to vote for their favorite productions, actors, etc. on a Broadway and on a regional level (in the RTC's case, the Philadelphia region). Essentially, it is a 'People's Choice' award for national and regional theatre.

productions, from classics such as *The Sound of Music* and *Annie*, to more contemporary works, such as *Hairspray* and *Spring Awakening*, along with a family friendly production featured during the holidays. The theatre casts its productions in Philadelphia and New York City with Actor's Equity performers and brings in local and national celebrities to star in leading roles, such as Broadway divas and American Idol contestants. Simultaneously, it produces a season of daytime children's theater shows, performed by and for kids. It also offers other concerts and events over the course of the year that may include nostalgic cover bands, such as *Beatlemania*, or Broadway stars performing full concert sets. During the summer, the theatre holds a countywide *American Idol*-esque singing competition.

The RTC offers a variety of educational opportunities, for children and adults alike. It has a theater school for children and adults, a conservatory style program for more advanced students, a children's camp, which focuses on the basics of singing, dancing, and acting, and a teen camp where local teenagers rehearse and perform a full Broadway musical for a three-week run. Lastly, the RTC sponsors a performance group for mentally challenged adults—a program for which the theatre has received much praise and recognition.

Beyond providing access to the arts for mentally handicapped adults, the RTC incorporates other strategies and initiatives to diversify audiences. On a basic level, similar to the CPAC, the RTC chooses the contents of its seasons with care. Like the CPAC, it picks productions that are universally relatable, or that may attract a non-traditional theater audience, through contemporary themes or popular culture relevance. The theater school offers scholarships for promising students who cannot

afford classes or the conservatory program's tuition, and while ticket prices are in the mid-range, they are inexpensive and affordable for children's theater productions.

The theatre has more active initiatives as well, incentivizing and involving community groups that may have a special interest in a specific show, such as asking a community gospel choir to participate in and attend performances of *Aida*. The box office offers free tickets to low-income neighborhoods, and has begun live streaming select performances to overcome both digital and geographic barriers to attendance.<sup>8</sup> Also, the RTC colorblind casts its shows, leading to cultural representation on the stage, deflecting stereotypes about what race an actor should be (i.e. casting an African American woman as Miss. Hannigan or a Hispanic man as Harold Hill). The most innovative and active program the RTC provides is what it terms its "Empowerment Program." This initiative utilizes grant money to subsidize schools from West Philadelphia and Chester to attend performances, giving elementary through high school students a gateway experience in the arts that otherwise may not be afforded the opportunity. Through pricing/repertoire decisions, as well as active outreach programming and relationship building activities, the RTC demonstrates attempts to diversify its audiences, stepping out of the affluent White neighborhood in which the theatre resides.

### Organization 3: Elite Performing Arts Institution

Similar to the CPAC, the EPAI is not a singular non-profit organization, but rather integrated into a larger entity. Just as the CPAC is tied to the township and

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<sup>8</sup> Live streaming is only available for concerts, cabarets, performances, and competitions—not productions where rights were purchased.

school district, the EPAI operates as part of an academic institution. Although the organization is perceived as elite, due to its prestige in the community, esoteric performance offerings, high quality productions, breadth of donor support, and connection with an esteemed university, it is very progressive. Its mission revolves around diversity and cultural advancement through intellectual engagement, offering performances of jazz, world music, and culturally specific programming.

The EPAI's culturally focused programs, mixed with its high prestige status, helps the organization draw audiences from its own neighborhood. Located in West Philadelphia, the community in which the EPAI resides is a lower middle to downscale area, with a median income of \$20,900, surrounded by mostly racially diverse and low-income communities. Still, due to the organization's elite and up-scale status, the organization draws much of its audiences from the suburbs and the wealthier areas of the city.

During the 2012/2013 season, the EPAI conducted post-show audience surveys across genres for six performances. The survey examined a small sample of its audience to observe average participation rates of individuals of different races and income levels. The results showed greater racial diversity than that illustrated in the SPPA, with White and African American attendees composing 68% and 22% of the audience, respectively (see Figure 7). While there is limited representation of Hispanic, Asian, and Middle Eastern participants, the EPAI's audience represents approximately 50% more racial diversity than the sample surveyed by the SPPA. Conversely, the economic diversity of individuals in these select audiences was less than that of the SPPA (see Figure 8). According to the SPPA, 70% of audiences earned an annual income upwards of \$50,000, with the largest income level

represented between \$50,000 and \$74,999. In the EPAI’s sample, 84% made upwards of \$50,000, and the largest group earned between \$100,000 and \$149,000 in annual income, making its audiences substantially wealthier than the SPPA sample averages.

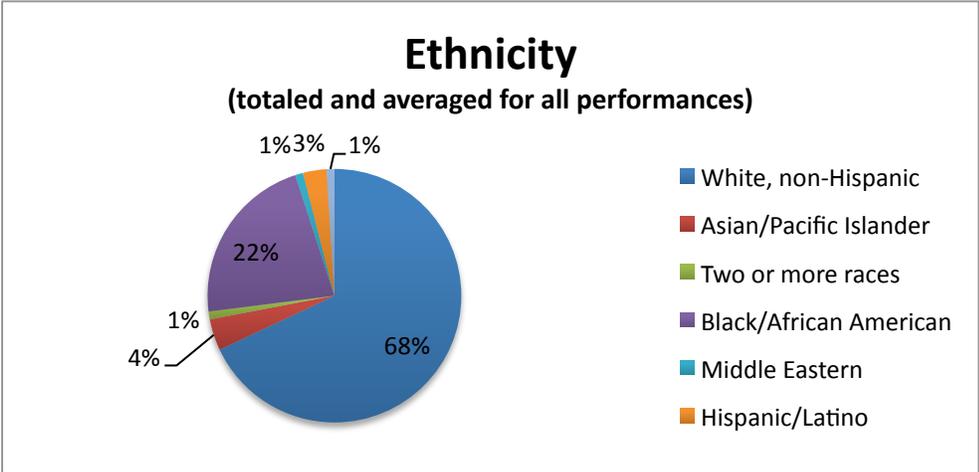


Figure 7 Ethnicity (totaled and averaged for all performances) according to post show surveys for six performances across genres

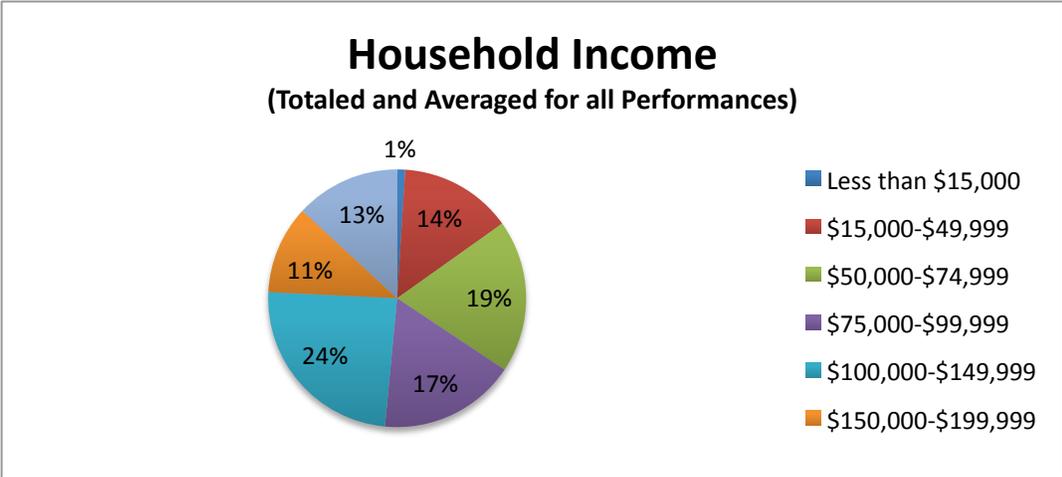


Figure 8 Income levels (totaled and averaged for all performances) according to post show surveys for six performances across genres

Therefore, on paper, while it looks like the EPAI has made strides regarding racial diversification in audiences, the majority of its audience comes from the upper middle class and the very wealthy.

The EPAI has numerous initiatives and programs in place to hurdle both racial and economic barriers to arts engagement. Similar to the CPAC and the RTC, the EPAI attempts to draw in diverse audiences through repertoire choices, but instead of choosing groups and performers that are universally relatable, it focuses its programming on culturally specific ‘roots’ performances. Due to the cultural nature of this programming, it will often pair with a relevant community organization to reach a more diverse audience—for example, for a Latin music program, it might pair with ALMA—American Latin Musicians Association. The EPAI is also well known for its Jazz performances and its commitment to local artists, further connecting the organization with the community. Its programming also includes a student series and an Artist/Audience interaction program, where audience members and performers partake in a talkback session to break down the wall between audience and artist.

While its programs and initiatives aim to connect with the community on a culturally engaging level, the EPAI also offers outreach and grant-funded programs that attempt to bridge the economic gap. Over the past few years, it has developed a corporation funded ‘rush’ program where individuals from low income zip codes can come to the box office before a performance and buy tickets at a substantially reduced price. The EPAI has also developed a program where businesses can sponsor low-income school groups to come to performances for little to no cost. Lastly, the EPAI offers an annual children’s event, where families and schools in the West Philadelphia community can watch performances and participate in arts activities at a low cost,

giving low-income children a gateway experience in the fine arts that they might not otherwise receive. From its culturally diverse repertoire choices to its corporation-funded programs to reach out to children and low-income constituents, the EPAI represents an elite institution that is attempting to increase diverse participation and engagement in the performing arts.

### **Interviews and Results**

The goal of these organizational case studies is to examine three performing arts organizations from three vantage points: 1) Attitudes towards audience diversification, 2) Types and extent of programming and initiatives, and 3) Challenges faced in developing and implementing diversity programming. In investigating these three components, the objective is to examine how answers vary based on organizational accessibility, as perceived by the community. In this case, the CPAC is the most accessible, and the EPAI is the least accessible.

#### **Attitudes**

Attitudes towards audience diversification, both in terms of “is it an issue?” and “is it important?” showed no variance across levels of accessibility. Every individual interviewed noted that they thought audience homogeneity was an issue, identifying definite trends in the populations that attend—middle aged and older couples with disposable income who were White and upper-middle class. One woman spoke on a broad level, mentioning her own experience as an audience member, saying, “Yes, I think it’s a problem. I was a subscriber to [a theatre in Philadelphia] until this year, and you see a certain type of crowd there.” She also states, “I think it’s a lot of an older crowd, and I get the impression that the people that go, judged by how

they're dressed, have more money. I have to say, I generally don't see many minorities at live performing arts." Another individual commented on the issue, informed by his own experience.

I don't think I would have been of the mindset that I am, in terms of world view—a mindset of being more open to investigating arguments, opportunities, new horizons for myself and new expectations for the world around me—had it not been for my engagement in the performing arts. And that includes music, which includes acting, which includes attending. I think that it is a huge problem that these families, that are typically pigeonholed, socially and racially or even within their own community. To lose that ability to break out of that mindset, 'I can't break out of this, I can't stray, I can't grow,' I think that is the worst part of it. In my mind, that's what is really wrong in this situation, that someone cannot engage in a program on an elementary or educational level in school or even personally.

Regardless of accessibility, each organization recognized the lack of diversity and the barriers causing the problem.

More prominently, interviewees at all of the organizations explained *why* they believed the issue of audience homogeneity must be dealt with. One man said, "I think that any theatrical or arts organization that wants to stay afloat in this day and age needs to diversify as much as possible." Another man said, "Every arts group tries to do it, I don't think there is anyone out there who is not open to [audience diversification]. I think maybe they try really hard, and it's just daunting." Many comments like this, that explain why arts professionals and organizations view the lack of diversity as an important issue to which they must respond, focused on audience development and the influence of a changing population in terms of age: "I think we are seeing declines and consequences because these audiences are getting older and starting to die out." Many also discussed the issue in the context of race: "If you were to read the Greater Philadelphia Cultural Association report, what that

implied was that the biggest audiences that were changing were Latin audiences... [meaning] it's important for programming to grow." With demographically shifting audiences, it is important for audiences to expand and develop from an organizational survival standpoint.

On a deeper level, another commented on the more profound consequences if audience boundaries are not stretched and arts engagement remains primarily in White and wealthy constituencies.

I think you have a harder time moving towards adaptation of civilization. Civilization only grows due to engaging in and bonding to the environment surrounding you. If we see a closed minded civilization, or a larger populace of less analytical thinking, more conservative and resistant to change and ideas way of thinking, it will only be harder for us to grow as a race or human beings.

These statements imply that interviewees believe that audience diversification is not purely a matter of organizational survival, but a matter of sustained relevance in society, education, and information dissemination. Another interviewee discussed the benefits of diverse and broad participation in the arts as a matter of progress and communication.

[The arts] are a great leader in communication to people. Sometimes, you will see something that happens in the arts, such as two men who fall in love. You see it in a musical; you see it in a movie. Then later, you will see all these people voting in their home state as to whether gay marriage should be allowed. The arts are so important in the fact that they propel issues forward to forefront, to get people to talk about them. There are liberal people in the arts, there are conservative people in the arts, but everybody in the arts knows that we're here for one main purpose, and that is to communicate.

The arts are tools of progress and communication, and without audience diversification and expansion, there will be bankruptcies and eventual extinction. To increase arts engagement, there needs to be a change in the arts model. As one

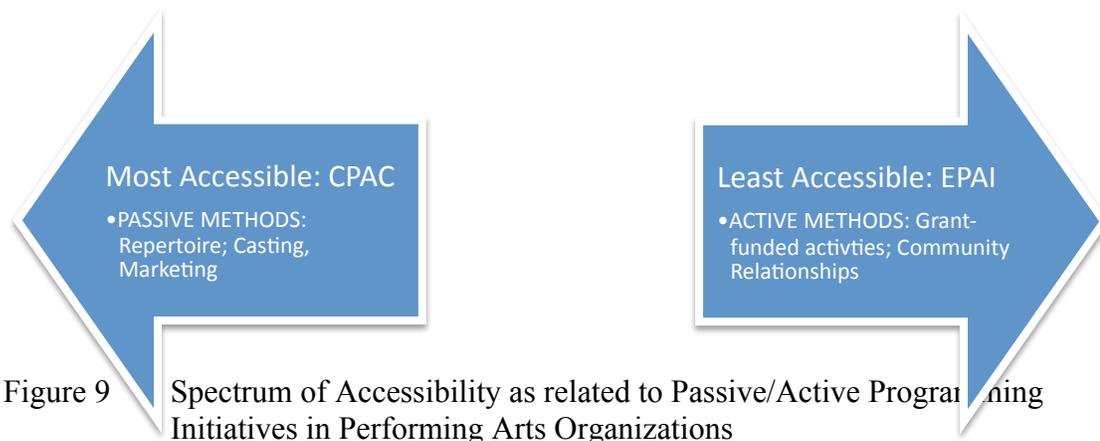
interviewee mentioned, “If you’re talking to the board and talking about change, and they’re not uncomfortable, then you’re not changing,” and these changes will come through innovative outreach, relationship cultivation, and programming initiatives.

**Programming Initiatives**

Each organization has a specific set of performance and outreach initiatives. While each of the three performing arts organizations have multiple programs and initiatives in effect to expand audiences, their strategies and methods of doing so vary greatly across the different levels of accessibility (see Table 6). These ranged from the passive and less expansive methods in the more accessible CPAC to active and extensive programs in the less accessible EPAI, and a combination of the two in the middle-dwelling RTC (see Figure 9).

Table 6 Overview of Organizational Initiatives

<b>Community Performing Arts Center</b>	<b>Regional Theatre Company</b>	<b>Elite Performing Arts Institution</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scholarships</li> <li>• Repertoire choices</li> <li>• Pricing</li> <li>• Marketing efforts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scholarships</li> <li>• Repertoire choices</li> <li>• Diverse casting</li> <li>• Incentivize groups</li> <li>• Free tickets</li> <li>• Live streaming</li> <li>• Empowerment funding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student Programs</li> <li>• Cultural Repertoire</li> <li>• Pairing with community orgs.</li> <li>• Children’s Festival</li> <li>• Rush tickets</li> <li>• Audience/Artist interaction program</li> </ul>



The more accessible the institution, the less effort has to be put forth to engage underrepresented populations and implement diversity initiatives. However, these initiatives at high accessibility organizations are not initiatives per se, but mostly functions of normal operations. At the CPAC and the RTC, much of the effort put into attracting diverse audiences involves repertoire choices and lower price tickets. In this way, organizations closer to the community base their efforts on principles ingrained in their organizations. Both organizations try to present a diverse range of repertoire with universally relatable messages and established popularity, such as *Fiddler on the Roof* or *West Side Story*. They also bring in external groups to perform shows that are family friendly, classic, or nostalgic at low to moderate ticket prices. Because of close community ties and ease of access, it can be assumed that the organizations on this end of the spectrum can rely on their institutions' connection to the community and a general ease of access, in terms of location, programming, and cost, to bring in a diverse set of community members.

At the other end of the spectrum, there is a trend of increased outreach efforts. This could be a way to compensate for lesser community access. While the CPAC relies on who it is, the RTC and the EPAI have increasingly more outreach and development programs in action. The EPAI, instead of pushing repertoire and programming towards broadly relatable themes, offers concerts and performances with a global focus, centering on cultural roots and ethnic diversity as a whole. Because of higher ticket prices and its potentially haughty high-status reputation, presenting culturally and contextually relevant programs is necessary to draw ethnic groups from the community into the seats. Beyond repertoire choices, both the RTC and the EPAI had more extensive outreach programs and development initiatives to compensate for being more distant from the community. The RTC incentivizes group attendance and participation through ticket discounts and sporadic performance participation. It offers live streaming for select programs, and uses grant funding to bring low-income schools to performances. The EPAI has similar initiatives in places, but on a more active and involved level, building relationships with businesses and corporations to sponsor free and discounted tickets for low income individuals and fully sponsoring schools to come to performances. It works with organizations in the community as well, through paired sponsorships with organizations that have a vested interest in the program. Lastly, it facilitates artist/audience discussion through regular talkback sessions, making attending an arts event a more active and engaging experience.

While this is counterintuitive, organizations closer to the community offer fewer programs and initiatives than those on a more elite level. There is an inverse relationship, as once the level of accessibility falls, the volume of dedicated outreach

programming rises. While the CPAC can rely on its integration in the community, the EPAI must work harder to draw in a broad and diverse audience.

### Challenges

The programs and initiatives, or lack thereof, at each of these organizations are not without problems and difficulties. Interviewees unanimously reported challenges, or rather organizational and administrative barriers, to developing diversity programming and fostering inclusion in their institutions. Nevertheless, the challenges that each organization notes vary based on level of accessibility. While the highly accessible CPAC notes challenges on a personal level, such as individual preferences, the other two indicate that challenges are more economic and a product of the organization as a business entity.

At the CPAC, all of the interviewees cited factors within the constituency as challenges to audience diversification. One factor discussed was technology and the digital divide.

I think that in general, technology is a blessing and a curse. For us, we've been able to use technology to communicate with our audience much more than we did 5 or 6 years ago through emailing and social media. However, you look at the film industry, I'm sure there's a decline in audiences there as well, as people are using the technology to stay within their home, versus going out to see a film. So at the same time, as we're using technology to reach out, more people are relying on technology for their entertainment.

Combined with the matter of technology was convenience.

It is amazing that you can get people to show up in general, because it's a big effort. Plus, the way people's schedules are—we have our performances usually at 10:30 or 7:30, it is only one or the other. Well I can watch my movie anytime, or record my TV. People do not even watch TV shows live anymore; they watch them on Hulu. It is all based on my schedule...It is the electronic culture that we have.

Schedules are so hectic that Hulu, Netflix, YouTube, and DVRs provide the opportunity for one to be entertained at convenient times. Therefore, technology and the digital divide impact arts participation. However, sometimes it has nothing to do with convenience, but rather competing interests.

There are some people you could not drag in here to save your lives. They will spend \$60 and go to the Phillies game, but they will not come in here. We used to put fliers on cars in the parking lot, and we realized that only 10% of those cars are even interested, we were wasting our paper. We needed to talk to the 10% that is interested because you are never going to convince the other 90% who could not care less.

Audience expansion efforts only work if the target market is receptive. It is possible to pull someone away from their Netflix account if the opportunity is convenient for them, but they might always place more value on other activities on which to spend leisure time and discretionary income.

The RTC also noted challenges in the constituency, but fixated more on the running of the organization like a business, discussing income and funding. Interviewees briefly mentioned competing leisure interests and technological advancement as barriers to diversification, but focused on the conservative nature of its surrounding community. This conservatism is a challenge and keeps the organization from taking risks, as it needs to serve its immediate community before creatively trying to expand outwards.

You have to service your core audience. So, if you are losing that, then your efforts are going towards marketing and attracting your core audience before you can spring beyond that core audience. So, I can see where it is like a slippery slope because as an establishment, you are trying to cater to your bread and butter and you are putting your efforts there as opposed to reaching out to other audiences.

Also due to this conservatism, the RTC cannot produce as many cutting edge or innovative programs. Although such programs may represent a noble effort to shift audience composition, they may alienate subscribers and donors.

We do not have a diverse racial region that we work in. We have a very politically, dominantly conservative group and audience within our direct region and county that if we were in the city we would be able to get away with, but here, it's closer to home, to their home. It becomes even harder to take those risks and step outside and do productions that would be considered non-traditional.

It is a business, and the organization needs to do what it has to do to keep the doors open. Therefore, many administrators noted that in order to sustain an audience, they could not push the boundaries. The work may be high quality, but is generic and safe.

There are many shows that I would love to do, but may be more on the cutting edge on what is pertinent. We need universal themes. At the same time, we have to do quality theater, get the best team, and the best artistic staff—then what comes out of that is something everyone can enjoy just cause it is good theater.

Even if there is a production that the artistic staff might feel is very meaningful or important, they need to keep practicality in mind.

If I opened a season with the musical *Passion*, for three months, we would have no tickets sold. Or if we did *Follies*—who are we going to sell it to? And that is the reality of it. You do what you have to do so you can do what you want to do. If I had my druthers, I would do the things I want to do that I think are meaningful, which would probably close the doors. I would love to do things I love to do, but they are unrealistic because you cannot sell them. Even as a non-profit, you still need to sell it as a for-profit business.

Along those same lines, staff members mentioned funding and available resources, both physical and monetary, as limiting, noting, “one year you get a grant, one year you won't. It's not an endless funding streak.”

The elite/academic institution also noted the lack of available funding and resources, commenting that its biggest foundations and supporters are changing priorities. Grant cycles are shifting and support from the National Endowment for the Arts is declining. It also noted that a challenge lies in how to adapt to changing times. The population is rapidly shifting in the US, and if arts organizations are going to exist, they need to be able to appeal to everyone. In a sense, there needs to be a paradigm shift. Interviewees said that if change is to happen, organizations needed to stop just *catering* to and capitalizing on different cultures, and instead embrace diversity, critically citing the Philadelphia Orchestra's MLK Day Concert as an example of what *not* to do.

There is this fear that they are just being catered to. The orchestra does their MLK concert, and that is the only time they have an African American conductor—I mean that is ridiculous! It is shameful. The only time in the season, even though there are many who are quite wonderful. It is that kind of thing that plays into it. That idea of being catered to and set aside, rather than being embraced holistically.

If there is to be an effective change in the audience demographics, organizations need to appeal to previously underrepresented groups, not by setting these groups aside and giving them special programming, but rather adopting them holistically by integrating diverse programming into normal seasons.

As the CPAC identified challenges as more constituent-based and personal, such as overcoming technological advancements and personal preferences, movement towards the other end of the spectrum showed that the less accessible EPAI focused on challenges within the organization, how to operate like a business with limited resources, and how to adapt to a changing market, with overlap between constituency and business challenges in the RTC.

## Implications and Study Limitations

While the results of these case studies reveal interesting trends among the three organizations and their attitudes towards diversification, programming initiatives, and challenges, some findings were unexpected. The responses regarding attitudes and challenges were consistent with the literature—the arts administration field as a whole recognizes audience expansion as an issue that must be addressed. Also, it is natural for organizations closer to the constituency to perceive challenges on a constituent level, with more dislocated organizations viewing challenges in terms of finance and market issues. Inconsistencies appeared, though, in the responses about available programming.

Literature in the field demonstrates that *elite* organizations typically accommodate less outreach programming—forming a bell curve from low to high levels of accessibility (low in CPAC, high in RTC, and low in EPAI) rather than a direct correlation (low in CPAC, higher in RTC, highest in EPAI). Therefore, additional study is necessary to better understand how organizational accessibility influences audience expansion. To examine this issue further, an extension of this study investigates the broader prevalence of audience diversification initiatives in middle and highbrow performing arts organizations. To achieve this, the study analyzes mission statements and program offerings in a sample of 20 Philadelphia performance organizations, with the hope of understanding how these organizations cultivate diversity in a financially and ideologically feasible manner.

## **Chapter 5**

### **ORGANIZATIONAL CONTENT ANALYSIS**

To further analyze the attitudes and action geared towards audience diversity in performing arts organizations, a content analysis was performed on the literature of a sample of performance organizations in the greater Philadelphia community. Twenty performing arts institutions in the region were examined, including orchestras, theatres, opera companies, dance companies, classical performing arts venues, and educational institutions—ranging from the Academy of Vocal Arts to The Wilma Theatre. The mission statements and programming initiatives at each organization were analyzed, in order to explore the prevalence of audience diversification in the operations and goals of middle and highbrow organizations. Investigating this concept intends to shed light on how these institutions effectively reach out to the community. Also, this study provides insights into what tactics other organizations could adopt to diversify their audiences, while accommodating financial and ideological constraints.

#### **Mission Statements**

A mission statement, aptly named, is an assertion of an organization's purpose, values, and objectives. As mission statements offer a concise summary of what an organization stands for and sets out to do, the statement's phrasing and language reflect how an organization presents itself to the public, and influence how the public receives the organization in return. As seen through the organizational case studies detailed in Chapter Four, arts organizations at different levels of accessibility have



concentration on audiences, the community, and education. How do we indicate which organizations focus on which component?

To examine how mission statements convey an institution’s focus, a coding methodology was created, using two lists of buzzwords, falling under the categories of “Presentation,” a focus on production value, quality, and success, and “Community,” a focus on engagement, outreach, and audience interaction (see Table 7). The inclusion of specific terms in each mission statement indicated whether the organization was

Table 7 Mission Statement “Buzzwords”

<b>PRESENTATION</b>	Present/Presentation, Quality, Professional, Produce, World-Class, Excellence, Operate/Operation, Money/Cost
<b>COMMUNITY</b>	Diverse/Diversity, Outreach, Engage, Audience/s, Develop, Community/Communal, Create, Expand, Dialogue

presentation-oriented, community-oriented, or a balanced mix between the two. The classifications of presentation-oriented, community-oriented, and mixed were based on the amount of words from each category included in the statement, and the context of each word, determining the focus of the statement.<sup>9</sup>

In total, community-oriented terms were used 57 times while presentation-oriented terms were used 43 times—a relatively even split. Similarly, there was varied representation across the twenty-organization sample (see Table 8). 35% (7) were presentation-oriented. For example, the Philadelphia Orchestra’s mission focuses on maintaining high quality and making music.

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<sup>9</sup> The same words in different contexts could connote a presentation OR community orientations: ex. educating professional artists differs from educating the audience.

The Philadelphia Orchestra is focused on inspiring the future while transforming its rich tradition of achievement, and seeks to not simply sustain the highest level of artistic quality, but to challenge—and exceed—that level by creating powerful musical experiences for audiences at home and around the world.

This statement describes the Orchestra’s commitment to high quality performances, high levels of achievement, and creating musical experiences—not necessarily a commitment to the community and educating the public. This example perfectly captures the tension between an arts organization’s aesthetic excellence and democratic expansion goals, where a presentation-orientation may overshadow community needs.

Table 8 Organization Orientation Classifications

Orientation	Organizations
Presentation	Academy of Vocal Arts, Academy of Music, Choral Arts Society of Philadelphia, Curtis Institute of Music, Delaware County Symphony, Delaware Valley Opera Company, Philadelphia Orchestra
Community	Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts, FringeArts, InterAct Theatre Company, The Mann Center
Mixed	The Arden Theatre, Center City Opera Theatre, Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia, Kimmel Center, Opera Philadelphia, Pennsylvania Ballet Association, Philadelphia Theatre Company, Walnut Street Theatre, The Wilma Theatre

20% (4) of the organizations in the sample were community-oriented, such as The Mann Center, which wholly concentrates on its duties to the community and its educational and outreach programs.

The Mann Center—situated in historic Fairmount Park—seeks to advance its position as one of the nation’s leading outdoor summer performing arts festivals by: Creating a broad spectrum of high quality, compelling, accessible and fun, communal entertainment experiences in its acclaimed multi-stage campus. Providing leadership in arts education, through innovative and high impact collaborative

educational activities for young people throughout the Philadelphia region. Being a deeply valued civic asset to everyone in the Philadelphia region and a responsible community stakeholder in West Philadelphia and our immediate neighborhoods.

While The Mann describes its high quality performances, it emphasizes its accessibility, innovation, education, and its identity as a civic asset to West Philadelphia and the region as a whole.

The plurality, though, 45% (9), demonstrated a mix of the presentation and community elements, prominently emphasizing the importance of both aspects. The Kimmel Center establishes a healthy mix of the performance and community aspects in its mission statement.

Kimmel Center Inc.'s mission is to operate a world-class performing arts center that engages and serves a broad audience from throughout the Greater Philadelphia region. The principal means by which The Kimmel Center achieves its mission include: Operating and maintaining world-class performance venues including the Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts and the Academy of Music; Providing state-of-the-art venues and support facilities for its resident companies and a broad range of other regional performance groups at below costs; Presenting artistic programming of the highest quality that serves diverse audiences and brings world-renowned artists to Philadelphia; Providing vital arts education and community programming to serve the interests of a broad and diverse audience.

The Kimmel Center discusses its commitment to operating a venue and providing world-class programming with world-renowned stars. However, it details a concentration on arts education and involving diverse communities in the arts. Center City Opera Theatre also displays this mixed quality through its mission statement.

Center City Opera Theatre strives to: (1) Present opera productions of the highest professional quality, specially conceived for an intimate setting, and featuring newly commissioned works; (2) Recruit new audiences for opera through the immediacy of these intimate performances, as well as through affordable ticket prices; (3) Provide opportunities for emerging opera professionals (singers, directors &

designers) who are becoming known nationally for their excellence; (4) Fill a large and growing void in arts education in the region with comprehensive, onsite educational programs and a wide array of internships.

CCOT demonstrates its commitment to professionalism, special presentations, and excellence in artistry, but it also discusses its goal to be affordable, expand its audiences, and support arts education in the community.

Mission statements can reveal both the attitudes within and priorities of organizations. Organizations with presentation-oriented missions may focus more on pursuing world-class performers and maintaining a reputation of artistic excellence. On the other hand, community-oriented organizations may prioritize community needs, educational initiatives and audience expansion. While these missions can reveal a lot, the question that remains to be asked is whether these organizations provide programs that align with the ideal proposed in their missions. How productive are these organizations, in each of the three orientations, at expanding and diversifying audiences?

### **Programming**

Mission statements from the sample of 20 performing arts institutions reveal organizational goals and values—an ideal. The programming options available at these organizations reveal how these prerogatives are shaped and made actionable through outreach, diversity, community, and educational initiatives, beyond planned seasons of concerts and productions. To evaluate this, the different types of supplemental programming were divided into the categories of education, racial diversity, economic diversity, youth outreach, and general outreach. Examples of each are listed below in Table 9.

Table 9 Types of Programs and Examples

<b>PROGRAM</b>	<b>DEFINITION</b>	<b>EXAMPLE</b>
<b>Education</b>	Organization sponsored residencies, workshops, camps, classes, lessons	The Walnut Street Theatre's <i>Camp Walnut</i> ; The Wilma Theatre's <i>Wilmagination</i>
<b>Diversity (RACE)</b>	Race/Ethnicity based programs	Center City Opera Theatre's <i>Latino Audience Development Initiative</i> ; Philadelphia Orchestra's <i>MLK Tribute Concert</i>
<b>Diversity (INCOME)</b>	Programs allowing for low-income accessibility	Annenberg's rush tickets; The Arden's <i>Arden for All</i>
<b>Youth Outreach</b>	Activities specifically geared towards children	School partnerships; Walnut Street Theatre's <i>Adopt-a-School</i>
<b>General Outreach</b>	Any miscellaneous programming aiming to involve the community	Philadelphia Orchestra's free neighborhood concerts, Opera Philadelphia's <i>Opera on the Mall</i> and <i>Random Acts of Culture</i>

Each organization had a different combination of these types of programs, as well as different programs and initiatives falling under each category. Each institution's specific combination of program choices indicated its level of commitment to outreach and increasing arts exposure in both underserved populations and the general community. In examining these organizations and their programs through the lens of their orientations (presentation/community/mixed), the objective is to determine a correlation between orientation and the type and breadth of outreach programs available at each institution.

Between the seven presentation-oriented organizations, there were only eight programs available (an average of 1.14 programs per performance-oriented organization), with each institution offering 0-3 programs each. In these organizations, two had no outreach initiatives and three only had sparse general outreach programs,

such as The Choral Arts Society of Philadelphia’s choir festivals, Curtis Institute of Music’s family concerts, and the Delaware County Symphony’s public performances at community centers, libraries, and social gatherings. The exceptions were the Academy of Vocal Arts, which offered an Opera Outreach program, to give secondary school students exposure to the art form and the Philadelphia Orchestra, that offered active general outreach initiatives through its community partners programs, free neighborhood concerts, and its MLK Day Tribute Concert, a racial diversity initiative. This program, however, has come under criticism for ‘capitalizing’ on an underrepresented audience, rather than holistically attempting to appeal to a new demographic. While these organizations offer some outreach initiatives, they merely scrape the surface of how to reach out to new and increasingly diverse audiences with relatively passive programming choices.

On the other end of the spectrum, the community-oriented organizations offered programs and initiatives of a more extensive and active nature. Across the four organizations in this designation, there were 12 programs—or an average of three programs per organization—that included and extended past general outreach initiatives. Annenberg offers a children’s festival (youth outreach), a student discovery series and Insights program in conjunction of University of Pennsylvania (education), and a “West Philly Rush” discounted tickets program (economic diversity). The InterAct Theatre Company offers residencies and workshops in topics ranging from the arts to diversity, tolerance, and acceptance (representing both educational and diversity initiatives). Their Arts Alive “InterAct” With Us program is a general outreach initiative to make theater a more interactive and engaging experience. Even greater is The Mann Center with its Access to the Arts program, Community

Engagement works, a Connecting the Arts in Schools initiative, and its young people's concert series. The only 'community-oriented' organization that offered no outreach initiatives was FringeArts. The nature of the Fringe Festival, though, is to present material that engages audiences, supports local communities, draws in diverse audiences, and pushes the limits through interactive dialogues. Therefore, while the Fringe does not have specific programs, the entire institution is a facilitator for diverse engagement and participation in the arts.

While the community-oriented institutions, true to their missions, offer both passive and active programming to engage communities and expand audiences, the mixed orientation shows the greatest number and breadth of audience diversification and community outreach initiatives, with an average of approximately five programs per institution—the most active being the Kimmel Center and the Walnut Street Theatre with nine and ten programs respectively. The program offerings ran the gamut, from free classes and a “Broadway Dreams” teen program at the Kimmel Center and a Theater School at the Walnut Street Theatre, to less traditional programs. The Center City Opera Theatre has a Latino Audience Development Initiative, offers a first timer's guide to opera for newcomers, and hosts an “After Hours Aria” program where audience members can attend, enjoy drinks, and learn famous opera arias in a fun and edgy karaoke-night set up. The Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia offers a “Beyond the Baton” program where attendees learn what goes into a performance and hosts concerts at Lincoln University, a historically African American educational institution. Opera Philadelphia has also revolutionized arts outreach in Philadelphia with its opera broadcasts on Independence Mall, “Random Acts of Culture” opera

flash mobs, and its “Hip H’Opera” program, founded in 2007, combining modern street culture with a historically elite genre.

### **Combining the Elements**

While there are impressive and thoughtful diversity and outreach initiatives occurring at every level of organization and type of mission prerogative, the trend in these findings suggest that the most effective organizations are those with a mixed orientation, that focus on both on the quality of performance and community inclusion. Community-oriented institutions fostered a similar amount of programming to mixed institutions, but presentation-oriented organizations were, by far, the most passive in their outreach programming.

In Chapter Four, the EPAI and RTC represented different levels of accessibility, with the EPAI located at the elite end of the spectrum and the RTC located in the middle. In the sample of 20 organizations, seven had a similar level of accessibility to the RTC. These seven organizations were either theatre companies or drama-centered organizations. Of the seven, three were community-oriented and four were mixed, facilitating active, extensive, and creative programming initiatives. The remaining thirteen fell at the elite end of the spectrum, including organizations such as orchestras, operas, and ballet companies. Seven of the thirteen had a presentation orientation, represented by orchestras and educational institutions. Five were of a mixed orientation, represented by opera and ballet companies. Only one elite organization claimed a community-orientation.

These results indicate that organizations with mixed or community-orientations are most effective in developing diversity and outreach programming. Of these organizations, most are theatres, opera companies, and ballets. Offerings at these

organizations are inherently multi-dimensional, engaging audiences by using sight, sound, and movement in their productions. The elite organizations on the presentation level are typically one-dimensional—orchestras, choral societies, and conservatories. Therefore, it can be inferred that it is easier to build programming and outreach initiatives around multi-dimensional genres, such as theater, opera, and dance, which engage with the audience on a multi-sensory and dynamic level.

This study of missions and programs illustrates that while organizations at the middle level consistently demonstrate a mixed or community orientation, elite organizations fluctuate in their commitments to the community and audience diversification, dependent on their orientation and the type of work they are presenting. While genres like opera, dance, and theater are learning to effectively build diversity and outreach programming into their seasons, orchestras, choral societies, and miscellaneous elite venues need to problem solve to better diversify and expand audiences. They need to do this, though, while understanding and adhering to the financial and ideological challenges and limitations within their organizations.

## **Chapter 6**

### **CONCLUSIONS, SUGGESTIONS, AND THE FUTURE**

A clear variance exists in elite institutions' commitments to audience diversification. While the EPAI facilitates many programs that seek to involve the racially and economically diverse populations of West Philadelphia and beyond, other organizations display inconsistent, if any, commitment to community outreach and audience expansion beyond general and passive programming. A general trend illustrates that institutions centered on multi-dimensional genres, such as theater, opera, and dance, have more active outreach initiatives for underserved and general populations, as these genres are better able to engage with audiences on multiple levels. Conversely, organizations such as orchestras and choirs are more presentation-oriented and focus on the product as opposed to the constituency. Presentation-based organizations need to establish more programs and initiatives to increase diversity in audiences, and even if an organization is community-minded, it needs to continue developing programs to sustain an impact. However, audience expansion and diversification present a challenge, as accessibility oftentimes comes at the expense of artistic excellence, and vice versa.

#### **Conflict: Accessibility vs. Excellence**

In the coordination of concerts, productions, and programs, staff members have different objectives. Financially minded administrators and directors may promote accessible and relatable programming, but often to the dismay of the artists and artistic

leadership who wish to maintain high aesthetic standards. According to a study by the Pew Charitable Trust, “Americanizing the American Orchestra,” orchestras and their programs need to change in order to remain relevant and accessible in musical society. The study states that the music should come first, as the main goal of an orchestra is to provide the community with excellent music and musicians with challenging material. These values, however, are cited alongside fostering flexibility and allowing mass appeal to guide repertoire choice (1993). By citing artistic and economic values side-by-side, this study pins two incongruent value systems against each other, making it difficult for artists and administrators to negotiate between elements of aesthetic excellence and commercial accessibility.

Arts organizations are presently allocating more time and resources to outreach and audience development programming. Organizations are choosing to plan commercial programs, pops concerts, and kid-focused presentations over classical repertoire, as a tactic to boost ticket sales (Kennicott 2013). When arts administrators plan a season, concert, or event, they will often plan programs around an “anchor piece,” or a piece that will spark interest in the public. In this process, masterworks are often forgotten in favor of standards like Beethoven’s 5<sup>th</sup> Symphony or Mozart’s *Eine Kleine Nacht Musik*, which are well known in popular culture (Rudd 2000). From a utilitarian economic perspective, anchor pieces are essential, as they are popular, recognizable, and are better able attract a large audience; administrators swear by them. On an artistic level, while these are classic works, they offer little stimulation to the musicians and audiences high in cultural capital (Kennicott 2013). With the commercialization of concerts and productions and repertoire becoming clichéd through administrative prerogative, the works begin to lack artistic sentiment.

*The Nutcracker* and Handel's *Hallelujah Chorus* are both beautiful and defining works, but standards such as these may alienate the artist and the loyal audience member. There are only so many times one can sit through or play Bach's *Canon in D*. Similarly, an organization cannot expect to present a 'pops' concert without disrespecting both the musician and the dedicated constituent. Therefore, the real objective is for organizations to develop programming that is financially feasible and accessible, while still thought provoking and intrinsically fulfilling. Organizations must find a way to be accessible while not compromising artistic integrity or prestige—merging the two value systems together and cultivating one broader audience, rather than further separating the two and creating multiple smaller niche audiences.

### **Proposed Solutions**

From 2012-2013, the Minnesota Symphony Orchestra experienced a lockout wherein performances were cancelled, musician benefits were suspended, and contract negotiations and pay cuts fueled animosity between artists and administrators. During negotiations, it was revealed that administrators were proposing a new business model, shifting the orchestra from classical to commercial programming. Its old community and education focused mission statement was changed to an inherently presentation based orientation.

The Minnesota Orchestral Association inspires, educates, and serves our community through internationally recognized performances of exceptional music delivered within a sustainable financial structure.

Conflict between and clash of ideologies at the Minnesota Symphony Orchestra further increased the tension between the two parties, but also demonstrated how such a change in business model could lead to both an increase in audiences and a decrease

in prestige and ability to attract top talent. Arts organizations, however, do not necessarily need to make these concessions, as they have the potential to increase accessibility to constituents while performing prestigious and intellectually stimulating work at a high level. Solutions include redefining and repositioning the idea of the arts institution, diversifying the board and organizational resources, appealing to the cultural omnivore, utilizing integrated educational initiatives and programming tools, and redefining culture.

### Redefining and Repositioning the “Art Institution”

Fine arts appreciation was once, and is still, a mark of high status, with cultural indicators symbolizing location in a social hierarchy (Peterson 1992; Peterson and Kern 1996). The arts have an exclusive quality, as centers of wealth, intellect, and power. While the fine arts are more available to the public now than they were hundreds of years ago, this tradition has continued, to a degree, with high culture arts organizations making contradictory claims that they are both for the people and above them. In high culture ‘elite’ organizations, there is a harsh negotiation in the identity of the institution as selective and elite versus accessible and engaging. These organizations are still perceived as “treasures,” “jewels,” and “gems,” denoting loftiness and a high status character (McDowell and Tepper 2014). Non-participants still often perceive arts institutions as exclusionary and pretentious. Therefore, organizations need to eliminate this notion that high culture forms should be reserved for the rich and powerful.

Due to structural changes in contemporary society, the population is now more broadly educated, so participation in the arts is no longer a sole marker of knowledge or social position—there are new rules governing symbolic boundaries between

classes. There is a value shift occurring, wherein inclusion in the arts mirrors tolerance and acceptance in society. Also, there is a shift in the art world where high culture is no longer solely determined by wealthy patrons and urban elites, but rather alongside the public (Peterson and Kern 1996). With a more educated and more widely accepted public class of arts patrons, it becomes necessary to define arts organization in terms of that public rather than the elites of centuries ago. Opera for example has long been perceived as an entertainment with special status and political functions (Santoro 2010). In this way, the genre helped construct social boundaries. This is no longer the case.

In order to remove the status driven nature of arts organizations, which symbolically excludes diverse constituencies, these institutions must reposition themselves as organizations of and for the people. This change should not necessarily focus on programming, but rather on marketing, branding, and positioning. Do they want to be branded as elite or family friendly? What is the utilitarian value in pushing a presentation-orientation to a point where community-centric activities are non-existent? Arts organizations need to step back from presentation-driven marketing objectives, and must incorporate the intrinsic benefits of the arts, as opposed to the instrumental benefits, into their public image. As discussed in Chapter One, instrumental benefits are associated with achievement and status. Intrinsic benefits, though, are more personal, such as artistic appreciation, and social and civic consciousness (McCarthy 2004). If organizations focused on the intrinsic benefits of enjoyment, experience, and community over instrumental and extrinsic prestige and pretention, these organizations could overcome the cold, status driven identity it has cultivated over the past few centuries.

## Diversifying the Board and Organizational Resources

The Board of Directors at an arts institution serves a number of critical functions: to advocate for the organization, carry out its mission, oversee its operations, and provide social, political, and financial resources. Much of why board members are selected is due to these social and political criteria, as they have pull with important donors and community members. On the board there is a culture of “give, get, or get off” where if a board member does not give money himself or solicit donations, he is removed (Ostrower 2002; Reiss 1986). A board of directors symbolizes an organization’s willingness to invest time and resources in individuals who have the capability of recruiting and involving individuals exterior to the institution (Mokwa, Dawson and Prieve 1980). Because these people are so central to organizational success, they should represent the organization’s constituency. Unfortunately, this is not always the case.

Most board members are White and of European descent. They are typically wealthy and have social connections, but do not represent a wide cross section of the potential audience base (Ostrower 2002). According to Michael Kaiser, the current President of The Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C., an arts organization needs both a diverse staff and board. The organization wants a diverse audience; therefore, the key organizational players need to reflect that diversity (Kaiser 2010). While board diversification can be perceived as a catering tactic or a superficial act in order to obtain grants and other support, it also is a utilitarian strategy.

Just as a diverse representation of culture on stage can help engage and interest underserved populations, so can a diverse staff and board. People buy who they are (or who they strive to be), so if they see that an organization illustrates a greater

representation of people like themselves, they are more likely to gravitate towards that organizational environment. Also, a diverse board can assist in actively fostering relationships with specific community organizations, groups, and leaders (Kaiser 2010). For example, a Latino male on a board may be able to help make a connection with ALMA, the American Latin Musicians Association. A Black board member could help cultivate a relationship with the local “Jack and Jill” chapter. Once relationships are nurtured between diverse board members and community groups, these relationships have the capability to extend the constituency to sectors of the population that the organization may not have had prior access.

#### Nurturing “The Cultural Omnivore”

Sociologist Richard Peterson has developed and disseminated a theory of the cultural omnivore. In this theory, he notes that while elites once participated exclusively in highbrow forms, they now are free to participate and engage in lower brow genres. Peterson described the genres, classifying opera and classical orchestral music as highbrow, separated from more vulgar forms. Middlebrow genres included big band, light classical music, and musical theater, deriving from and sometimes emulating elite forms. Peterson noted that the lowest brow tastes are sensational and traditional, shunning the finer forms. He describes lowbrow forms as those influenced by marginalized race or location groups, and that are inherently traditional and religious, such as gospel or bluegrass (Peterson 1992; Peterson and Kern 1996).

The separation of fine art from lowbrow forms facilitated symbolic markers of status for years. However, this is changing. It has been theorized that elites are becoming cultural omnivores. In contemporary culture, elite status is no longer defined by exposure to fine culture, but rather all creative forms (Peterson 1992). For

example, a wealthy middle-aged woman may enjoy listening to Puccini and Verdi, but may also listen to jazz and top 40 hits on the radio. Top occupational groups tend to enjoy lower brow forms while maintaining an appreciation for high culture (Peterson 1992).

Individuals criticize this theory, calling it one sided. Assertions state that while the elites are becoming omnivores, the mass audience base is maintaining a univore-quality in its cultural consumption. Peterson addressed this, discussing that mass audiences, often including the majority of racially and economically marginalized populations, do not have as much exposure to the arts or discretionary time and income to devote to fine aesthetic tradition (Peterson 1992). The criticism of this theory has expressed that it cannot work the other way, that lowbrow individuals rarely enjoy fine genres or become omnivores. However, an application of this theory could assist in efforts to diversify audiences and expose broader populations to high art by physically mixing “highbrow” forms with “lower brow” content.

In the past, this has been how lowbrow genres have become elevated. For example, Jazz was initially considered a lowbrow African American form. Once George Gershwin composed *Rhapsody in Blue*, combining Jazz forms and blues scales with traditional counterpoint and orchestration, the Jazz genre continued on an upward trajectory and is now accepted as part of elite culture. Over the course of musical history, presumably lowbrow forms have proved to be complex and sophisticated, and have eventually become elevated. Today, rap music is viewed as an uncultured form for the masses. However, rap is complicated and quite similar to opera, with its aria-like melodies in the ‘hook’ and its rhythmically sophisticated recitative-inspired

patterns in the verse. In this way, high and lowbrow forms are not as distant from one another as they are presumed to be.

One example of ‘omnivoric’ programming comes from Opera Philadelphia’s *Hip H’Opera* program, which combines fine operatic practice with street culture and hip-hop influence. Beyond creating and innovating with new content, organizations could even innovate with the presentation of older canonized content. Shakespeare is prime material for such programming. The Royal Shakespeare Company’s production of *Hamlet* in 2010, featuring David Tennant, maintained the exact dialogue, but used a 21<sup>st</sup> century setting to make the environment less foreign, and thereby more accessible. Similarly, opera companies will update operas with timeless themes to engage with younger ‘hip-er’ audiences. For example, Puccini’s *Gianni Schicci* is a comedic story of a greedy family who wants to alter its dead family member’s will in order to inherit more money. The comical greed transcends generational boundaries; therefore, many productions play with the period, updating the setting. In doing so, the highbrow form is humanized and more easily accessed by the mass public.

#### Integrated Educational and Outreach Initiatives

A significant contributing factor towards non-participation among economically and racially diverse groups is both a lack of general education, as well as a lack of education/socialization in the arts. Especially in highbrow genres, a basic knowledge of the art form or an understanding of the piece being performed is necessary for enjoyment. Who could understand John Cage’s *4’33”* without knowing Cage’s intentions for the silence? Shostakovich’s Fifth Symphony is increasingly more enjoyable when it is put into the context of Russian history and the composer’s

relationship with the czarist regime. In order to engage a broader population, arts organizations must offer a context for understanding the material being presented.

Internal educational initiatives typically include playbills, program notes, director's notes, and other organizational literature. To engage with audiences on a deeper level, organizations need to offer active opportunities for discussion, artist dialogue, and audience interaction. These programs can enlighten constituents about what happens 'behind the scenes' in rehearsals and backstage (such as the Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia's *Behind the Baton* program), or even the performer's thought process and experience (the Annenberg's artist talkback sessions). In these programs, organizations are educating the audience about not only the context of the pieces being produced, but about the creative process so as well.

Externally, integrated educational initiatives have the potential to take established knowledge and put it on stage, especially for youth and adolescent populations. Working with school districts by gathering information about state curriculum guidelines or offering curriculum appropriate study guides could easily bridge the gap between the concert hall and the classroom. For example, in a district where it is customary to read a certain book or study a certain historical period, arts organizations can collaborate with school districts to gear specific programs towards certain classes and grades for a synergetic educational and artistic experience. If a theatre is producing *Les Miserables* or *Pygmalion*, its education and group sales departments should research which school districts and grade levels have these books in their curricula as required reading. The same concept can be applied to any genre or subject—for example, an orchestra that has programmed Beethoven's *Eroica Symphony* should reach out to students studying Napoleon and post-revolution France.

In this way, classical material is being presented in a way that is more interactive and accessible, with a context for comprehension and enjoyment.

### Redefining “Culture”

Culture is thought of in a number of ways. It could be a body of artistic or intellectual work. It could be the way of life of society as a whole. It could be the way of life of an individual society. Anthropologist Clifford Geertz combines these ways in one succinct definition.

A historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions, expressed in symbolic form by means of which men communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and attitudes towards life.

This definition encompasses both the behavioral and symbolic artistic aspects of what culture is determined to be. In the American arts organization, there is an inherently Eurocentric view of culture. Even though the U.S. claims to be a melting pot, it is rooted in an Anglo-Saxon tradition, to which many other ethnic groups have conformed (Pankratz 1993). In examining the standard canon, what we consider artistic genius and worthy of performance comes generally from that part of the world—typically Western Europe and occasionally Russia and the United States itself.

This assumed assimilation to Western European culture in classical canon has excluded forms from other geographic areas, and, over time, has excluded certain demographics from engaging with the arts. Traditional canon may often be presented as culturally irrelevant to diverse constituencies. Therefore, organizations need to be more culturally pluralistic in choosing seasonal repertoire to attract a more diverse audience base.

While canon has been defined in a Eurocentric manner, what makes a symphony from Germany more artistically valid than drumming traditions from North Africa or traditional music from China or Japan? It is time for arts organizations to embrace world culture holistically, rather than simply capitalizing on an event by catering to specific ethnic groups (Pankratz1993). The relationship between culture and art is causative, meaning that aesthetic ideas are based on history and beliefs. Therefore, by incorporating culturally pluralistic programming beyond standard German, Italian, French, and English romantic and classical works into seasons, more culturally diverse audiences bases will be drawn to the institution.

The notion of redefining culture does not refer exclusively to thinking about the arts and culture globally, but rather considers extending the arts beyond the limitations of the standard canon. As discussed, arts organizations can engage underserved populations by redefining the role of the arts institution in society, providing engaging educational opportunities to cultivate a context for understanding classical works, and innovating with the programs and genres being presented. However, the goal is not to provide token points of interest to these underrepresented individuals, but rather expand audiences as a whole, cultivating a larger audience for the season rather than a larger audience for individual performances. Organizations should attempt to reach out to new audiences, but also create something new, exciting, and interesting for the existing audience base. Performance institutions can achieve this and move beyond the traditional idea of culture by experimenting with new genres, mixing different forms together through innovative composition styles, and innovating through new methods of presentation. In doing so, arts organizations will

be able to produce programming that is multi-dimensional and dynamic, actively engaging audiences on multiple levels.

Arts organizations could accomplish this by pushing the boundaries of traditional benchmark genres and developing new and creative ways to present works. In expanding the limitations of high culture forms and presenting established content in less traditional ways, performance institutions have the capability to satisfy established audiences while simultaneously engaging new constituencies. One successful example of this was the MET's 2011 production of *The Enchanted Island*. This new work set a pastiche of arias and recitatives by baroque composers (i.e. Handel, Vivaldi, Rameau) to a Shakespearean plot (utilizing *The Tempest* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as inspiration) in traditional operatic form. In incorporating established musical and dramatic material and using an innovative presentation style, *The Enchanted Island* was able to maintain the spirit of these centuries-old works while exposing audiences to this material in a way that had never been done before. Similarly, an experimental project out of Emerson College, entitled the *Shakespearean Jazz Show*, combines jazz music with Shakespeare's most famous sonnets, monologues, and soliloquies. In combining the energy of a jazz ensemble with performers singing Shakespearean source material, two audiences are being engaged simultaneously. Through this avenue, traditional theater audiences are being exposed to jazz music and typical jazz audiences are being immersed in Shakespearean drama, bringing multiple audiences together and challenging them in new and interesting ways. Projects like these demonstrate that genres and content do not have to be separated and have the ability to flourish when combined.

Arts organizations may also investigate and experiment with new methods of presentation. In 2007, children's author and illustrator Maurice Sendak helped develop the artistic direction of the MET's production of Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel*, giving it a surrealist, fairytale-like, and caricature-esque tone. As a well-known fairy tale, *Hansel and Gretel*, itself, has the potential to engage audiences across all age and racial designations. Combined with Sendak's artistic vision, the production transcended the traditional nature of the opera, engaging audiences on a visual level and enthralling audiences with an exaggerated fairy tale environment, beyond the typical imagery associated with the story. Performance organizations have also attempted to do this by moving performances from the concert hall and into the community, such as with *Shakespeare in the Park* or Opera Philadelphia's *Opera on the Mall*, where individuals can watch a simulcast an opera from Independence Mall. By redefining what we determine as culture, how we consume it, and where we enjoy it, arts organizations have the potential step into the future, and expand and sustain audiences in new and innovative ways.

### **Conclusion**

These broad categories of positioning, outreach, and programming strategies are a significant start towards increasing and diversifying arts attendance. Over the next few decades, arts organizations need to think on their feet and evolve to create new and innovative programming to spark interest in a field where there is consistently decreasing interest. The problem becomes, how do organizations become more attractive, engaging, and accessible while maintaining integrity, and not 'selling out' by switching to exclusively commercial or pops programming.

The goal is to not emphasize accessibility over artistic excellence, but rather to find a middle ground of financially feasible tactics to increase community accessibility that still maintain high quality. As demonstrated through the case studies and content analyses of arts institutions in the Philadelphia region, the most successful organizations were those that had mid-to-high level reputations, but still maintained close ties with the community through active outreach. The organizations with the greatest breadth and availability of outreach programming were those of a mixed orientation—placing value on both the community and presentation aspects of the institution. These results illustrate that compromise is necessary to successfully cultivate and expand performing arts audiences. Therefore, a compromise between instrumentally and value rational perspectives could allow for audience expansion solutions that increase accessibility while maintaining artistic integrity.

What this study has found is that larger, more elite, venues and institutions tend to facilitate more active community engagement initiatives. Of these organizations, those whose artistic offerings are multi-dimensional and dynamic, such as theatre or opera companies, are the most successful in developing outreach programs and engaging underrepresented communities. Nevertheless, all organizations face different challenges in implementing expansion programming, dependant on the organization's level of accessibility to the community; for example, while the CPAC identified constituent-centric challenges such as leisure interests and technology, the EPAI was more concerned with funding and developing a sustainable business model. No matter what challenges an organization faces, all organizations recognize the disparities in arts participation and the need to address them. However, there is no 'one size fits all' solution, as each organization has a unique mission, identity,

constituency, donor base, and set of challenges.<sup>10</sup> Each organization must find the right way to approach and address its individual issues and challenges in order to effectively expand its audience, overcome barriers, and remain sustainable forces in artistic society.

Each particular organization can create unique solutions through combing any number of tactics. On a broad level, redefining the arts organization calls for a repositioning of the arts, shifting an organization's image from elite and pretentious to intrinsically valuable and enjoyable. Diversifying board and organizational resources allows the organization to use stakeholders to access untapped constituencies and forge bonds with community partners. Combining high and low genres and appealing to the cultural omnivore makes fine art accessible, while acting as a gateway to traditionally elite and classical forms. Integrated educational programming engages young people in the arts beyond classes and camps by placing performances in a familiar context. Redefining culture allows arts institutions to break from traditional canon, explore new global genres to present, and experiment with new innovative content and collaborations. These proposed solutions allow organizations to sustain their prestigious reputations and high quality production values while adding accessible elements into performances, or through supplemental programming. These compromises between the instrumentally and value rational, the presentation and community, and the prestigious and accessible are how arts organizations are going to effectively build, nurture, and sustain audiences into the future.

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<sup>10</sup> Katya Johanson, Hilary Glow, and Anne Kershaw discuss this 'one size does not fit all' notion further in the context of state funding for arts organizations. Each organization is unique and cannot be expected to conform to the same model.

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**Appendix A**

**ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE WORKSHEET**

ORGANIZATION PROFILE #\_\_:

NAME:

LOCATION:

CLASSIFICATION AND PROXIMITY TO COMMUNITY:

COMMUNITY DEMOGRAPHICS AND *CLARITAS* CLASSIFICATIONS

PERFORMANCE PROGRAMMING (2012-2013):

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING:

OUTREACH/SCHOLARSHIPS/GRANTS:

MISSION STATEMENT:

OTHER:

CONTACT:

STAFF TO BE INTERVIEWED:

BOARD MEMBERS TO BE INTERVIEWED:

**Appendix B**

**PERFORMING ARTS ORGANIZATION INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

**BACKGROUND:**

**Organization** 1      2      3

**BOARD**      or      **STAFF**

**Role/Title (if applicable)**

**Gender**      M      or      F

**Age (optional)** \_\_\_\_\_ years old

**Race/Ethnicity** White      African American      Hispanic      Asian      Other

**Approximately how far do you live from your affiliated organization?**

**How would you describe your neighborhood?**

Primarily White      Primarily Black      Primarily Hispanic      Well Integrated      Other

**Which of the following describes your own socioeconomic background?**

Upper      Upper Middle      Middle      Working      Other

**Outside of your work in the arts, how often do you interact with individuals of a different race?**

**How did you first get involved in theatre/the arts/music? [What was/were your gateway experience(s)? What types of performance art are of interest to you?]**

**EXPERIENCE:**

**How did you first get involved with this organization? [What drew you to commit to a leadership position?]**

**Why did you decide to work in arts management?/What made you decide to actively support this organization? [Why are the arts important to you?]**

## **TRENDS IN SURVEY OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN THE ARTS DATA**

**According to a 2008 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts, adult arts attendance in the United States fell 20% from 2002 to 2008. As an administrator/board member, have you observed a decline in audiences? [What sorts of trends or changes have you noticed in who comes to your organization's events and performances? Age, race, families, etc.?)**

**Reports based on the 2008 SPPA have noted that racial minorities are significantly underrepresented in performing arts audiences. Why do you think this is? [Why do you think there is a disparity?]**

**Additionally, the 2008 SPPA notes that low-income individuals are significantly underrepresented in performing arts audiences. Why do you think this is? [What barriers to attendance can you identify?]**

## **IMPORTANCE OF AUDIENCE DIVERSIFICATION**

**What does audience diversification mean to you? Do you think it is important to address? [Discuss on a broad level AND in relation to your organization. What do you think the consequences will be, if any, if the problem is not addressed?]**

**Is audience diversification a priority for your organization? [What sort of commitment level is there?]**

**If so, what steps are you taking? Does your organization have any programs in place to help diversify your audience and make your organization more accessible to underrepresented populations? [What are the programs you have implemented/plan to implement? What barriers are you attempting to hurdle?]**

*{Studies have shown that minority audiences have a higher attendance rate when the performance features a) content or genres with a connection to their cultural heritage; b) performers of their own race/ethnicity; c) content by writers/composers/artists/etc. of their own race/ethnicity.}*

**Does your organization keep diversity in mind while making programming and artistic decisions (production choices, casting choices, composer choices)?**

**As previously mentioned, arts attendance is down across the board, not just in minority and low-income populations. How does this fact influence your organization's ability to implement diversity initiatives, when organizations everywhere are struggling to keep people in the seats? [Other Challenges?]**

**Do you have any other comments, questions, or concerns?**