

COMMUNITY AND CULTURAL ARTS

“Over the last three decades involvement in civic associations, participation in public affairs, membership in churches and social clubs and unions, time spent with family and friends and neighbors, philanthropic giving, (and) even simple trust in other people...all have fallen by 25 to 30 percent” (Putnam, 2003, p. 4). The loss of social connectedness has been shown to have measurable effects on our society. Robert Putnam (n.d.) developed measures of social capital based on the premise that how people interact with their community (attend meetings, volunteer, serve on committees, vote, have friends over to their home, belong to a church, etc.) has demonstrable effects on other social and economic outcomes. Strong evidence exists that where social capital is high, educational performance, child welfare, even general health, are also high. Conversely, violent crime is low.

The mission of community and cultural arts centers is to build, serve, and sustain all types and sizes of communities by providing opportunities for people to share experiences, traditions, and identity. One way to build social capital is through membership and participation in community groups like these.

Cultural Arts Organizations

Based on data from the National Center for Charitable Statistics, there were 2,664 non-profit cultural arts organizations in the United States during the 2001 tax year, which represented 9% of all arts, culture, and humanities nonprofits (Rosenstein, 2006). These cultural arts organizations (referred to as cultural heritage organizations by Rosenstein) were classified into three broad groups:

- *1,628 organizations (61%)* organizations increasing cultural, ethnic, and folk understanding using a variety of expressive forms
- *661 organizations (25%)* organizations producing culturally based fairs, festivals, parades, and other celebrations
- *375 organizations (14%)* centers presenting, promoting, and training communities using primarily artistic cultural activities

In Rosenstein’s study (2006), specific ethnic and cultural affiliation was related to the types of cultural activities (arts, festivals, languages, multiple activities, other) offered:

- Arts activities were predominant at organizations affiliated with African-American (41% of all activities), Hispanic (36%), and multi-ethnic (45%) cultures.
- Cultural organizations based on European heritage produced festivals (28%) more often than the other activities examined.
- Centers affiliated with those of Asian/Pacific Islander descent offered language programs (33%) more often than any other type of activity.
- Multiple or other types of activities, such as historical or religious activities, occurred most often in organizations focused on Middle Eastern (31%) and Native American (33%) culture.

From a financial perspective, the cultural arts organizations included in Rosenstein’s study (2006) typically received less revenue than other arts organizations; an average of \$525,000 per year for cultural arts as compared to an average

of \$842,000 per year for other arts. In addition, approximately 60% of the organizations operated on a budget of less than \$100,000, while only 4% maintained budgets of more than two (2) million dollars.

In Texas there are currently 66,106 registered nonprofit public charities (see Table 1 at end of brief). Of those, 5,776 list their major purpose as Arts/Culture/Humanities. 13% of organizations in that category are considered cultural organizations. Bexar County has a slightly higher percentage with 17% and Comal and Kendall counties come in at 5% and 7% respectively. Bandera County has none. Compared to the National figure of 12% for nonprofit public charity cultural organizations, the San Antonio area appears robust, however, when compared to other major metropolitan areas around the country, San Antonio ranked 49th for “most Arts nonprofit organizations” (NCCS, 2009; Jackson, Kabwasa-Green, & Herranz, 2006).

Strengths of Community/Cultural Arts Programs

Both cultural arts and community organizations have the ability to positively affect the cultural vitality of neighborhoods and communities. In 2006, Jackson, Kabwasa-Green, and Herranz ranked 63 metropolitan areas with populations over one million for seven (7) indicators of cultural vitality. Table 2 (at end of brief) provides those rankings for San Antonio, with comparisons using metropolitan Texas cities and the cities who received the highest ranking of one (1).

Cultural arts and community centers also have the ability to build social capital, the supply of combined social networks used to solve common challenges. Depending on the level of reciprocity, trust, and cooperation within the social network, social capital creates “the possibility of both virtuous and vicious cycles that manifest themselves in highly civic and uncivic communities” (Sirianni & Friedland, n.d.). Community and cultural arts centers that utilize social capital for beneficial purposes thrive and become focal points of the community.

Two approaches exist to positively implement social capital. Bridging merges people from varying positions and backgrounds and may also provide external information and resources to disadvantaged communities. On the other hand, bonding strengthens the existing community identity. It seeks to uplift those in underprivileged neighborhoods from the challenges of day to day living (Jack, 2005).

Many cultural and community centers provide opportunities for both bridging and bonding.

Examples of Bridging

- Maintaining and revitalizing neighborhoods (when utilizing people both within and outside of the community)
- Building on the common ties, interests, and experiences of people
- Raising awareness about social, political, and economic issues
- Connecting with outside artists and allowing them to develop, teach, share, and receive compensation for their craft
- Primarily serving the disenfranchised (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2003)

Examples of Bonding

- Strengthening connections among residents
- Combating stress and trauma of everyday experience
- Strengthening mutual support, care, and responsibility
- Empowering people in their daily lives (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2003)

Community Development Corporations

Community development corporations (CDC's) recently evolved as a unique way to improve urban communities by using multiple arenas. “These groups are nonprofit, community-controlled real estate development organizations dedicated to the revitalization of poor neighborhoods. They undertake physical revitalization as well as economic development, social services, and organizing and advocacy activities” (Walker, 2002b, p1). The National Community Development Initiative conducted 10 years of research on CDCs in 23 American cities, including San Antonio. It concluded that

the CDCs influenced neighborhood markets (by increasing residential property values), responded to neighborhood problems, and began to develop comprehensive approaches to improving the community during the 1990's (Walker, 2002b).

The RAND Corporation (2007), in a recent study of 10 major cities, cites three major conditions that appear to “foster high levels of cultural support” including:

- Organizational support – either one large, multi-functional agency providing a range of services or a combination of public and private agencies
- Integration of the Arts with economic development – may include tourism, community revitalization, film production
- Collaborative relationships among Arts organizations – may include joint marketing, fundraising efforts, controlling production costs

Cultural and Community Arts in the San Antonio Region

A partial listing of current community cultural arts organizations in San Antonio and its surrounding counties includes:

- Artpace, Inc.
- Barshop Jewish Community Center
- Ella Austin Community Center
- Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center
- Carver Cultural Community Center
- Centro Cultural Aztlan
- Mexican American Cultural Center
- San Anto Cultural Arts
- Say Si
- Southwest School of Art and Craft
- Urban 15

Benefits of Cultural and Community Arts

- Including culturally-relevant programs can be a means for an organization to gain support and appeal from groups that typically underutilize its programs (Walker, 2002a).
- Participating in cultural and community arts programs often translates to increased participation in other art forms (Walker, 2002a).

- Participating in neighborhood community arts programs correlates with a higher sense of civic responsibility and greater sense of community (Walker, Fleming, & Sherwood, 2003) and potentially increases involvement in other civic activities (Stern, 2004).
- Community arts programs in low-income neighborhoods are associated with lower delinquency and truancy than poor neighborhoods without programs (Stern, 2004).
- Cultural and community arts organizations can help create diverse, healthy communities and impact areas unassociated with the arts, by creating social relationships, providing resources, and facilitating relationships (Borup, 2003).
- Cultural arts programs often serve to teach, helping youth expand horizons (Adams & Goldbard, 2001).

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Table 1 Registered Nonprofit Organizations as of March 2009						
	US	TX	Bexar	Bandera	Comal	Kendall
Total Nonprofit Public Charities (PC)	974,626	66,106	3,574	92	351	156
Arts/Culture/Humanities PC	97,911	5,776	327	8	43	15
Arts, Cultural Orgs – Multipurpose	3,650	192	14	-	-	-
Cultural, Ethnic Awareness	8,310	545	43	-	2	1

(NCCS, 2009)

Table 2 U.S. Metropolitan Area Rankings on Cultural Vitality Indicators									
	San Antonio	Other Texas Cities				Cities with #1 Rankings			
		Austin	Dallas	Ft. Worth	Houston	Columbus	Los Angeles	San Francisco	Wash. D.C.
Most Arts Establishments	57	13	45	56	58	48	1	3	15
Highest Employment in Arts Establishments	36	17	28	44	24	39	6	1	7
Most Arts Non-Profit Organizations	49	13	41	52	48	25	33	1	3
Most Non-Profit festivals, fairs, parades, community celebrations	31	2	47	36	20	1	53	23	14
Most Non-Profit Art expenses	49	40	38	37	17	15	20	2	1
Most Non-Profit Arts Contributions	47	51	30	43	28	21	10	2	1
Most artist jobs	34	11	14	57	42	31	3	1	10

(Jackson, Kabwasa-Green, & Herranz, 2006)