1-7-2004

Making the Connection: Art and Community

Daliah Khoury Massehian

University of San Francisco

Follow this and additional works at: https://repository.usfca.edu/thes

Recommended Citation
https://repository.usfca.edu/thes/1102

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses, Dissertations, Capstones and Projects at USF Scholarship: a digital repository @ Gleeson Library | Geschke Center. It has been accepted for inclusion in Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of USF Scholarship: a digital repository @ Gleeson Library | Geschke Center. For more information, please contact repository@usfca.edu.
The author of this thesis has agreed to make available to the University community and the public a copy of this dissertation project.

Unauthorized reproduction of any portion of this dissertation is prohibited.

The quality of this reproduction is contingent upon the quality of the original copy submitted.
Making the Connection: Art and Community

A THESIS SUBMITTED

By

Dalila Khoury Massehian

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

Master of

Nonprofit Administration

The University of San Francisco

January 7, 2004
Making the Connection: Art and Community

This Thesis written by

Daliah Khoury Massehian

This Thesis written under the guidelines of the Faculty Advisory Committee and approved by all its members, has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of:

Master of Nonprofit Administration

at the

University of San Francisco

Research Committee

Research Committee:

Chairperson

Second Reader

Program Director

Dean
Table of Contents

Abstract ............................................................................................................... iv
Vitae Auctoris ...................................................................................................... v
Acknowledgements ........................................................................................... vi
List of Tables ....................................................................................................... vii
List of Appendices ............................................................................................. viii
Introduction ........................................................................................................ 1
Chapter One: Review of Literature and Delineation of Problem ..................... 8
Chapter Two: Methodology ............................................................................... 27
Chapter Three: Results ...................................................................................... 35
Chapter Four: Summary and Conclusions ................................................... 55
References ........................................................................................................... 61
Appendices ......................................................................................................... 65
Abstract

This study examines the role of the community arts in addressing social issues in communities. Using data gathered from community arts organizations in two San Francisco neighborhoods, this study examines the histories, missions, methods for measuring results and ideologies of San Francisco community arts organizations for the purpose of uncovering the development of the community arts movement in San Francisco, prevalent perceptions among practitioners about community art's ability to impact civil society and theories around why the community arts are an effective agent for effecting social change.

This study uncovers that the community arts grew out of a grassroots movement to improve community conditions and bring community members together. Using existing models of community sociology, this study concludes that the community arts have the ability to provide the links between individuals that makes one "identify with, feel a part of, and needed by a community." It further concludes that the reasons for this are that the arts are an inclusive form whose language is nonselective and that the arts have the ability to transform gesellschaft to gemeinschaft.
Vita Auctoris

Name: Daliah Khoury Mashehian

Date of Birth: May 9, 1974

High School: Parkrose High School
Portland, Oregon

Graduated: 1992

Baccalaureate Degree: Bachelor of Arts Degree

College: Lewis & Clark College
Portland, Oregon

Graduated: 1996
Acknowledgements

I’d like to thank my husband, whose patience and love made this work possible.
List of Tables

Table 3.1.1 Histories: Prevalent Responses
Table 3.1.2 Histories: Unique/Noteworthy Responses
Table 3.2.1 Missions: Prevalent Responses
Table 3.2.2 Missions: Unique/Noteworthy Responses
Table 3.3.1 Measuring Results: Prevalent Responses
Table 3.3.2 Measuring Results: Unique/Noteworthy Responses
Table 3.4.1 Ideologies: Prevalent Responses
Table 3.4.2 Ideologies: Unique/Noteworthy Responses
List of Appendices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix A</th>
<th>Organization Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B</td>
<td>Organization Responses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

Throughout the United States communities, rural and urban, large and small, are recognizing and utilizing the arts as a powerful community-building tool. At the federal, state, and neighborhood level, the arts are being used as a catalyst for restoring social well-being. They are felt to be useful agents for communities to redefine themselves in positive ways, to be innovative about problem solving, and to offer youth, elders, and all community members a sense of purpose, worth, and hopefulness. With programming that increases intergenerational and intercultural dialogue, community arts programs are held to promote social interaction and are believed to be a catalyst for the promotion of healthy communities.

Building upon Seana Lowe’s finding that “it is possible to transform a social realm” by utilizing community art programs, this thesis explores the role of the community arts in addressing social issues in two San Francisco neighborhoods by studying the histories, missions, methods for measuring results, and ideologies of San Francisco community arts organizations (358). An examination of organizational histories will inform the current conditions under which community arts organizations operate. As Robert N. Bellah once noted, “communities… are constituted by their past—and for
this reason we can speak of real community as... one that does not forget its past” (153). An examination of community arts organizations’ missions and ideologies will determine if there is a connection in these areas among the field, or if they each operate individually and for a variety of reasons. Exploring community arts organizations’ methods for measuring results will reveal the field’s ultimate ability to determine its success or failure in using the arts to address social issues. Through an understanding of the histories, missions, methods for measuring results, and ideologies, this research will uncover the development of the community arts in San Francisco, prevalent perceptions among practitioners about community art’s ability to impact civil society, and current theories around why the community arts are an effective agent for effecting social change, and how.

In 1977, a National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) chairperson, Nancy Hanks, challenged a group of people to consider how they could help communities by sharing information and working together. Their conclusion was to form a consortium called Partners for Livable Places, later renamed Partners for Livable Communities. In the 1990s, Partners created a program whose chief aim was to foster the arts in the community development setting. Called Culture Builds Communities, this program
addresses how neighborhood-based arts and cultural centers can be valuable resources and agents of change in solving economic and social problems. This program works nationally to disseminate information, help organizations overcome challenges, and provide technical assistance.

Also working on a national level, Americans for the Arts established the Institute for Community Development and the Arts to provide a research-based understanding of how the arts are being used to address social, educational, and economic development issues in communities across the country. Propelled by the belief that the arts “affect multiple areas of participants’ lives, including home, school, housing, health, and nutrition; and strengthen participants’ inner resources, such as self-esteem, confidence, and tolerance,” the Institute works to provide research and publications on topics such as youth at risk, artist training, economic development, arts and civic dialogue, public housing, cultural tourism, and program planning and evaluation (Building America’s Communities II 6).

More regionally focused, the Oregon Arts Commission’s Arts Build Communities program has worked since 1996 to provide a technical assistance team of consultants with experience in the arts and community development to any Oregon community group, organization, or individual.
seeking to align arts resources with community needs, issues, planning initiatives, and opportunities. By supporting projects such as “Baker City: Reclaiming a River and a Sense of Community” and “Woodburn: Nurturing Cultural Roots in a Farming Community,” the Oregon Arts Commission works to strengthen a people’s sense of community, pride in themselves, their cultural heritage, and the communities in which they live.

Private foundations, nonprofit organizations, and community groups are spearheading efforts to transform communities through the arts. Launched in 1996, the Arts and Culture Indicators in Community Building Project (ACIP) was initiated in collaboration with the National Neighborhood Indicators Partnership with the financial support of the Rockefeller Foundation. Its purpose is to provide policy-makers with evidence that the arts build healthy communities, indicators to guide community arts projects, and language for creating policies and programs that improve community livability, especially in disadvantaged neighborhoods. Current ACIP affiliates are in Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, Oakland, Philadelphia, Providence, and Washington DC.

A recent issue of the periodical, Shelterforce, featured the use of the arts in the community development setting (January/February 2000). David
C. Kelly’s article, “Arts Build Community,” discusses the evolution of the community development model, which has comprised the four main elements of housing, economic development, technical assistance, and training, to include other methods for revitalizing community — including the arts. Kelly argues that despite the hesitation of bank regulators to allow banks credit for supporting arts-driven community development, “art and cultural activities can be useful tools toward building a community’s identity, meaning, and spirit” (10).

Rural communities have also adopted the use of the community arts to improve community conditions. Starting in Columbia, Montana, the Front Porch Institute is propelled by the notion that “the arts are an invitation” to share, celebrate, and listen. Noting that America’s small and rural communities have undergone an enormous social and economic upheaval during the second half of the last century, the Front Porch Institute utilizes community arts programming to provide a new gathering place, “a cultural and spiritual touchstone that is a source of community revitalization and neighborhood revival. In a way, you could say community arts have become the new front porch of America.” This association between community art and the “front porch of America”
invoke appropriate correlations between community and connection, culture and understanding, people and place (Overton xiii).

While the community arts are utilized throughout the United States and are widely recognized as indispensable components in healthy communities, there is little empirical research to indicate that the arts are successful in effecting social change. Seana Lowe’s research in 2000 was the first to empirically document the probable positive societal effects of the community arts. Using community sociology as a touchstone, this thesis will reinforce Lowe’s findings that “community art is a sociological phenomenon that influences the development of community and ... alter[s] the social realm” (361). Consequently, this research will contribute to the literature on art and community building, inform the advancement of community development initiatives, and document prevalent theories among San Francisco community arts practitioners around why the community arts are an effective agent for promoting social change.

While there is a great deal of existing literature on the social effects of the community arts, I have found no studies that use models of community sociology to frame their discussions, and therefore none can fully illustrate its transformative effects. This thesis will use existing models of community
sociology to illustrate the effectiveness of utilizing the community arts to address social issues and build a sense of community. For the purposes of this research, community art will refer to art that is created in the public interest.

In order to effectively discuss the role and effectiveness of the community arts, I must first clarify my use of the term "community." Defining this term is no simple task. Community sociologists have spent the past 100 years exploring its meanings and implications. Chapter One, The Review of the Literature, will spend some time elaborating on their findings and on theories of the term "community." Throughout this thesis, community will include three main components: geographic area, common ties, and social interaction. This definition of community serves as a framework upon which community-specific needs and conditions can be analyzed.
Chapter One: Review of the Literature

Community

With the arts being used, nationally as well as regionally, publicly and privately, to address social issues in communities, questions have emerged regarding community art's effectiveness in addressing social issues among constituents. While the literature on art and community building is long and illuminating, few authors use existing models of community sociology to document the transformative effects of community arts programs on communities and therefore leave one very pertinent question unanswered: what is meant by the use of the term “community”? Failing this, it becomes impossible to determine what specifically changed in the “community” as a result of the arts programming or how an individual’s or constituency’s relationship to the “community” became deeper or enhanced as a result of their participation. In order to break this cycle and add to our understanding of art’s effectiveness in community building, the primary models of community sociology will be explored, the pertinent developments in the term’s usage will be identified, and its meaning in the context of this research clarified.
To make matters more difficult, the concept of community is complex, its definition elusive. Indeed, there is no single, universally agreed upon definition of the term. Its meaning is subjective in nature and our experience of it can be singular and unique. Sociologist George Hillary was the first to chronicle the 94 existing definitions of community in 1955. While his survey was exhaustive at that time in history, his research yielded only one commonality or "area of agreement": all of the existing definitions dealt with people. While his research shed no great light on the meaning of the term, it set the stage for the emergence of varying schools of thought. In sociology's on-going attempts to study and understand community, several models emerged, from which four primary definitions came to the forefront.

In addition to discovering that all of the existing definitions of community had to do with people, George Hillary also found that a majority of the definitions included three main components: geographic area, common ties, and social interaction. Perhaps the most commonly used definition of community is centered on the notion that community involves clusters of people living within a specific geographic area and sharing one or more additional common ties (Hillery; Tonnies; Warren; Tocqueville; Plant). This common tie can have to do with shared religious or moral
ideals, cultural values, work, family, education, or anything else that might
bind one individual to another. According to this viewpoint, community
exists when there is "a specific population, living within a specific
geographic area, amongst whom there are present shared institutions and
values and significant social interaction" (Warren 2). This "significant
interaction" is based upon the sort of common interests discussed above,
such as shared values and ideals and results in "a sense of belonging"
among the people and place that share those values (Plant 13).

Another prevalent definition of community is primarily concerned
with the human emotions that result from social bonds and interaction
(Bender; Buber; MacIver; Nisbet; Brownell; Bell and Newby). Followers of
this view believe that "a community is people who share, not this or that
particular interest, but a whole set of interests wide enough and complete
enough to include their lives" (MacIver 9-10). In this sense, community may
or may not be defined by a geographic area, but is dependent upon a kind
of network held together by "shared understandings and a sense of
obligation" (Bender 7). Community exists when people share social bonds
classified by emotional cohesion and community members have
emotional if not physical access to one another. This orientation dismisses
the notion that locality has anything material to do with community, but
instead defines the term as a feeling of “we-ness” and mutuality (Bender 7).
In fact, from this viewpoint there are fears that concerns with place confuse
the matter and blur our understanding of a community’s richer dimensions
and nuances.

The third definition of community values geographic territory, but
adds social interaction as an end to be valued. In other words, this
viewpoint perceives that shared location may lead simply to mere co­
existence of people independent of each other (Tonnies 64). In fact, there is
no understanding of we-ness under this viewpoint, but a more
individualistic approach in which all action is taken for the betterment of
the self rather than a greater good. Ferdinand Tonnies, who is considered to
be the founding father of community theory, distinguished between feelings
of unity and commonality with those of individualism and singularity by
calling the former community, or gemeinschaft, and the latter society, or
gesellschaft. With gesellschaft, emotional relationships are not present but
instead people are treated as a means to an end. Even as distantly as the
1830s, Alexis de Tocqueville, the French social philosopher and author of
Democracy in America, recognized a strong sense of individualism in
America, or "a calm and considered feeling which disposes each citizen to isolate himself from the mass of his fellows and withdraw into the circle of family and friends; with this little society formed to his taste, he gladly leaves the greater society to look after itself" (Tocqueville 506).

The fourth and final prevalent definition rests on the necessity for some combination of the above three definitions. "The meaning of community is not just a place, not just a social system, not just a way of life that is shared by a number of people that identify themselves with a sense of we-ness" (French 5). Instead, it is thought to be an intricate web of both "the larger society and an entity unto itself" (French 4). According to this viewpoint, the complexity of the concept must be retained in our consideration of community; the definition must contain that sense of complexity.

All of the four definitions explored above provide a framework from which exploration and research about the role of community arts in addressing social issues are possible. For the purposes of this research, "community" will be used according to the first elaboration of the term as discussed above, referring to "a social group inhabiting a common territory and having one or more additional common ties" (Hillery 31). Common
territory will refer to the literal geographic boundaries that demarcate
neighborhoods, towns, or cities.

**Art and Community Building**

Although there are several studies on community art's effectiveness
in building community, few used any of the existing models of community
sociology as explored above. Nevertheless, these studies documented
marked positive changes as a result of arts programming and served as
advocates for its effectiveness in addressing social issues. Andrea Zemel
(1999) discussed public art's ability to engage community involvement and
"improve the human condition." Through the University of Pennsylvania's
curriculum for Community, Collaborative and Public Art, Zemel worked
with undergraduate students to engage in "meaningful cultural exchange"
by planning, fabricating, and installing works of art in public places. Moira
Brennan documented grassroots theater's history of effecting social change
through the theater arts. With the objective of "liberat[ing] the socially and
economically oppressed by way of creative expression," the Grassroots
Theater Movement (also called the Community Cultural Development
Movement) sought to diversify its audience beyond the traditional high-
income, white demographic. The goal, they said, was "social transformation
and personal liberation.” Mat Schwarzman, Amy Mullin, and Nina Felshin elaborated on art’s ability to mobilize groups around social and political issues. Ruth Torkelson Lynch and Deanne Chosa together examined the use of art in rehabilitation settings. Their findings revealed statistically significant relationships between frequency of participation and perceived change in a measure of social interactions. While these studies have documented varying and numerous associations between art and social change, none provided empirical research from which we can make generalizations or inferences on community art’s ability to address social issues and its effectiveness in connecting people to place.

**Sense of Community**

What then is meant when we talk about connecting people to place? This notion has been called community building, place attachment, and the psychological sense of community and has been a concept of interest in a number of varying fields including sociology, environmental psychology, anthropology, architecture, folklore, landscape architecture, community psychology, urban planning, and others (Altman and Lowe 1). Community psychologist Seymour Bernard Sarason referred to this concept as the “psychological sense of community” and defined the concept as
the sense that one is part of a readily available, mutually supportive network of relationships upon which one could depend and as a result of which one does not experience sustained feelings of loneliness that impel one to actions or to adopting a style of living masking anxiety and setting the stage for later and more destructive anguish. It is not merely a matter of how many people one knows, or how many close friends one has, or even the number of loved ones — if they are scattered all over the country or world, if they are not part of the structure of one’s everyday living, and if they are not available to one in a “give and get” way, they can have little affect on one’s immediate or daily sense of community. (1-2)

In Sarason’s concept of the psychological sense of community he adopted the prevalent conceptualization of community as defined by a geographic area, but elucidated the notion of “significant interaction” by laying out a series of requirements. Firstly, the relationships that existed within the community must be “readily available” and “part of the structure of one’s everyday living.” Individuals must not be separated by a geographic distance, according to this framework. Relationships must be “dependable” and “mutually supportive.” Equally important, these
relationships must be meaningful enough and dependable enough that the individuals involved do "not experience sustained feelings of loneliness" that may result in "destructive anguish." In other words, while this psychological sense of community provided individuals with feelings of belonging and support, it was also successful in deterring unhealthy behaviors that may later result in societal problems or epidemics that could be devastating to both the individual and the larger community. "If we do not feel needed in our community... we rarely if ever seriously think about how we can contribute to the solution of its problems" (Sarason 1-2).

Irwin Altman and Setha M. Low referred to the concept of connecting people to place as "place attachment" and drew together scholars from a variety of disciplines to examine its varying aspects. Altman and Low defined place attachment as "the bonding of people to places" whereby "affect, emotion and feeling are central to the concept" (2, 4). There was also a prevailing feeling of rootedness, or "a strong, local sense of home and... [an] emotional attach[ment] to their local area" (263).

The term place attachment implies that the primary target of affective bonding of people is to environmental settings themselves. Thus many authors refer to places as satisfying because they permit control,
creativity, and mastery, and they provide opportunities for privacy, personal displays, security, and serenity. Places are, therefore, repositories and contexts within which interpersonal, community, and cultural relationships occur, and it is to those social relationships, not just to place qua place, to which people are attached. (Altman and Low 6-7)

Again we see that a sense of community necessarily involves a specific geographic area. It is the place itself that provides the individual with a kind of sentimental repository. However, the sentiment is also dependent upon “interpersonal, community, and cultural relationships” whereby one may feel part of a larger, supportive network.

Implicit in much of the discussion to this point is the idea that place attachment serves a number of functions for individuals, groups, and cultures. Place attachment may provide a sense of daily and ongoing security and stimulation, with places and objects offering predictable facilities, opportunities to relax from formal roles, the chance to be creative and to control aspects of one’s life. At another level, place attachment may link people with friends, partners, children, and kin in an overt and visible fashion. It may bond people to others
symbolically, providing reminders of childhood or earlier life, parents, friends, ancestors, and others. Furthermore, place attachment may link people to religion, nation, or culture by means of abstract symbols associated with places, values, and beliefs... The place may, therefore, be a medium or milieu which embeds and is a repository of a variety of life experiences, is central to those experiences, and is inseparable from them. (Altman and Low 10)

Thus, the concept of place attachment embodies the emotions or sentiments that places provide. This is due, in part, to the familiar associations we impart to physical places, but also to the opportunity places afford for social interaction with friends and family as well as the societal or religious values that places represent. “One’s understanding of place and one’s feelings about place become fused in the context of environmental meaning” (Altman and Low 262). Whether the sentiment of belonging to a community or place takes form in present or past interpersonal relationships or a connection to a culture, religion or nation, people infuse places with meaning that, in turn, affects our relationship to physical places. For the purposes of this paper, the concept of connecting people to place will be called a sense of community and will refer to the “feeling that one
has a dependable, available and supportive network of relationships that leads one to strongly identify with, feel a part of, and needed by a community” (Sarason).

Civil Society/Social Capital

Social scholars assert that when individuals feel connected to their communities, they are more likely to take the initiative to work to solve its problems (Putnum, Making Democracy Work, Bowling Alone; Encarnacion; Whittington; Dionne; Sarason ). The term “civil society” refers to peoples’ initiative to work with other individuals, nonprofit organizations, and/or government agencies to affect social change. When these “social ties” work to improve our lives and make them more productive, it is referred to as social capital (Putnam).

We have heard the virtues of social capital touted by scholars and politicians—both Democratic and Republican—to support positions that are both liberal and conservative in nature. From Hillary Rodham Clinton’s assertion that “it takes a village” to Ronald Reagan’s values of “family, work, and neighborhood,” the concept of social capital is not a new one (Dionne 1997). Some scholars argue that social capital has been steadily on the decline in American communities in recent years; others deny it.
Regardless, many of those who have elaborated on social capital's qualities claim that it can be a powerful force for affecting social change in communities.

High levels of trust and citizen participation operate through a variety of mechanisms to produce socially desirable outcomes. Social capital has many features that help people translate aspirations into realities. First, social capital allows citizens to resolve collective problems more easily. Second, social capital greases the wheels that allow communities to advance smoothly. Where people are trusting and trustworthy, and where they are subject to repeated interactions with fellow citizens, everyday business and social transactions are less costly. There is no need to spend time and money making sure that others will uphold their end of the arrangement or penalizing them if they don't. A third way in which social capital improves our lot is by widening our awareness of the many ways in which our fates are linked. People who have active and trusting connections to others... develop or maintain character traits that are good for the rest of society. [People with connections to others] become more tolerant,
less cynical, and more empathetic to the misfortunes of others.

(Putnam 288)

Social capital results in an array of practical benefits to individuals and to communities. Because our awareness is more in tune with the fortunes and misfortunes of those around us, individuals become more tolerant, accepting, and willing to compromise. Social capital also allows individuals to be more empathetic and compassionate to others; this in turn produces higher degrees of understanding and trust. “Frequent interaction among diverse sets of people tends to produce a norm of... mutual obligation and responsibility for action (Putnam 25). These qualities “refer to features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions” (Putnam 167). Scottish philosopher David Hume offered this illustrative parable:

Your corn is ripe today; mine will be so tomorrow. 'Tis profitable for us both, that I should labour with you today, and that you should aid me tomorrow. I have no kindness for you, and know you have as little for me. I will not, therefore, take any pains upon your account; and should I labour with you upon my own account, in expectation of
a return, I know I should be disappointed, and that I should in vain depend upon your gratitude. Here then I leave you to labour alone; you treat me in the same manner. The seasons change; and both of us lose our harvests for want of mutual confidence and security. (Hume Book 3, Part 2, Section 5)

Where we have a civil society, we have a populace that is not content to leave the solution of problems to others, but has the impetus to collaborate for a greater good.

The Practice of Community Arts

A publication of the national arts organization, Americans for the Arts, recently observed that art was a "powerful force for illuminating civic experience" through its ability "to create indelible images, to express difficult ideas through metaphor, and to communicate beyond the limits of language" (Bacon, Yuen, and Korza). While the impact of the arts on school performance and economic development has been well documented, there has been "very little empirical research that clearly links forms of cultural participation with other specific desirable social outcomes, particularly at the neighborhood level" (Jackson, Report ii). Yet, while the correlation between the community arts and social change is unsubstantiated, nonprofit
organizations that utilize the community arts to address social issues and connect people to place nevertheless observe its positive effects and continue to utilize and develop community arts programs for these purposes.

Seana S. Lowe, a community sociologist, was the first to empirically study the effectiveness of the community arts on social issues and found that "community art is a sociological phenomenon that influences the development of community and... alter[s] the social realm" (361). Using case studies from two Denver community art projects, Lowe's research examined the relationship between community art and social change and concluded that "it is possible to generate gemeinschaft in settings where gesellschaft prevails by using community art as a tool for transforming a social realm" (358). Lowe offers empirical evidence that the collective activity of community-art projects can transform gesellschaft to gemeinschaft. Community art provides a ritual framework for social interaction by bringing individuals together, providing a shared goal, and setting a common mood for the process of designing a community symbol (Durkheim [1912] 1954; Collins 1988). By coming together in the esthetic
experience of community art, individuals discover and produce collective meanings that are symbolized by the art itself. The nature of the creative process is a form of ritual interaction that results in the production of a community symbol that in Durkheimian terms, is sacred. Thus, community art serves as a catalyst for developing community because it is both the setting for group solidarity building and the symbol of group identity... This study suggests that the development of community represented by the sentiments of solidarity and identity could be a basis for neighborhood residents to organize and to act to address social problems. (381, 382)

Lowe's research conclusively established a correlation between community art and community vitality and suggests that this sentiment increases the likelihood that community residents will “organize and act to address social problems.”

The Urban Institute’s research (1997) echoed Lowe’s conclusions and found that “people’s motivations for participation in arts and culture suggest strong links with other aspects of community life” (Walker, Scott-Melnyk, Sherwood 7-8).
Frequent participants in arts and culture... tend to be very active in civic, religious, and political activities....The motives of active arts and cultural participants differ from those of the people who attend fewer arts and cultural events, and encompass both civic goals and goals for their arts and cultural experiences. Specifically, frequent participants say they want to support important community organizations and events through their participation in arts and culture, and they also want to learn more about other cultures and experience high-quality art. These activities represent a bridge between the world of arts and culture and community-building efforts, and they are a potential resource for community building. (24)

So while we see a strong predisposition between the arts and other aspects of community life, we also see that participation in the arts has the potential to create the impetus to become otherwise civically involved. The Urban Institute's research suggested that this was because "these activities represent a bridge between the world of arts and culture and community-
building efforts.” The arts provided a segue to other aspects of civic engagement.

While Lowe’s research was successful in establishing a clear correlation between the arts and community vitality, additional empirical research in alternate settings would further strengthen her findings. Although Lowe’s research amounted to more than can be reported here, the present research seeks to draw a probable correlation between the community arts and the solution of social issues. In the chapters that follow, this research examines the histories, missions, measures, and ideologies of San Francisco-based community arts organizations whose missions are to affect social change through the arts.
Chapter Two: Methodology

This chapter presents a description of the various elements and methodological procedures used in this research. Included is a description of the research design, subjects used in the study, the process by which information was gathered from subjects, a discussion of the procedures used for collecting data and those used to analyze the data, and the anticipated limitations of the research.

**Design**

The choice of methodology selected was depth-interviewing. Approached as a cross-sectional study utilizing retrospective accounts from community arts practitioners, this research analyzed the histories, missions, practices, and ideologies of practitioners and uncovered the development of the community arts movement in San Francisco, prevalent perceptions among practitioners about community art’s ability to impact civil society, and theories advanced to explain why the community arts were an affective agent for effecting social change. Discussed in greater detail in the pages that follow, depth interviewing allowed the researcher to qualitatively quantify prevalent perceptions among community arts practitioners toward the subjects set out above.
Subjects

The subjects selected for this study were community arts practitioners in San Francisco’s Mission District or South of Market neighborhoods. Data were also gathered from two individuals not associated with a particular organization, but with a historical perspective valuable to this research. At the organizational level, data were gathered from the Executive Director and other key staff members that were involved in the design or implementation of community arts programs. An organization was selected based on the following set of criteria:

1) It defined “community arts” as it is discussed in this research – as art that is created in the public interest.

2) It resided or operated in San Francisco’s Mission District or South of Market neighborhoods.

3) Its mission to affect social change through community arts programming was explicit and clearly demonstrated an intention to address social issues through the arts.

Consequently, the organization’s literature and/or website featured terms that indicated its overt intentions such as “social transformation,” “civic engagement,” “community building,”
"place attachment," "social capital," "community responsiveness," and/or "community engagement."

The subjects with historical expertise were selected based upon their past or present involvement in the community arts field. Community arts experts were selected based upon research and organizational references.

Organizational subjects provided this research with an understanding of the histories, missions, methods for measuring results, and ideologies regarding their own community arts organization. Organizational subjects included those members of the staff involved in the design or implementation of community arts projects, most frequently including the executive director of the organization. Historical experts provided this research with a historical perspective on the development of the community arts movement in San Francisco. The researcher engaged in interviews with ten organizational subjects and two historical experts for approximately 60 minutes each.

Operationalization of concepts

As discussed above, depth-interviewing was the primary method utilized for acquiring data. The organizational subjects participated in an interview with the researcher to answer questions about the development of
their organization and the goals of their work. Topics included the following:

1) The history of their organization.

2) The specific constituency served, both when the organization was started and currently.

3) The organization’s mission statement.

4) The organization’s goals and objectives.

5) Programs or services offered to accomplish its goals.

6) Thoughts related to why the arts were an effective “tool” by which organizations could effect social change in communities.

7) Professional experiences that had demonstrated the effectiveness of the arts in addressing social issues or connecting people to place.

8) Procedures for measuring the impact or effectiveness of their organization’s work.

Interviews with historical experts revealed background information on the historical development of the community arts movement in San Francisco. A complete list of questions posed to organizational subjects is included in Appendix A.
Procedures

The first phase of this research involved identifying and recruiting San Francisco community arts organizations to participate in this study. The organizations were recruited through the following series of procedures:

1) Researcher reviewed the annual reports of leading Bay Area foundations whose arts programming guidelines included the community arts.

2) Researcher reviewed the list of grantees that received community arts funding in San Francisco’s Mission District or South of Market neighborhoods.

3) By telephone and/or email, researcher contacted the executive director to discuss the research and determine the organization’s interest or appropriateness as a participant in this study.

4) In some cases, talking with one organization led to recommendations to talk with others. As those organizations fit within the criteria of this thesis, the researcher contacted the recommended organizations.

The second phase involved scheduling the interviews with organizational subjects and historical experts. Researcher engaged in interviews with ten staff members and two historical experts for
approximately 60 minutes each. Interviews were recorded using a micro-
cassette transcribing system.

Treatment of data

Transcriptions were utilized to compile all interviews. Once
transcribed, the interviews were analyzed and coded. The coding system
was based upon the topics discussed above and the literature reviewed in
this thesis and included the following components:

1) Varying understandings of the term “community,” which might
include, in broad terms, the following, prevalent definitions:

a. Geographic area, common ties, and social interaction.

b. Network of social bonds, not necessarily tied to a specific
geographic area.

c. Dependence upon a specific geographic area, but not
necessarily a sense of connectedness to others in their
community.

d. Not just a place, not just a social system, not just a way of life
shared by a number of people that identify themselves with a
sense of “we-ness,” but a combination of all those things.
2) Place attachment/community building: an organization's attempts to build community or establish a sense of place among constituents.

3) Civil society: an organization's attempts to improve society by utilizing the community arts.

4) An organization's history.

5) The specific constituency served, both when the organization was started and currently.

6) An organization's mission statement.

7) Its goals and objectives.

8) Programs or services offered to accomplish its goals.

9) Thoughts related to why the arts were an effective "tool" by which the organization could effect social change in communities.

10) Professional experiences that had demonstrated the effectiveness of the arts in addressing social issues or connecting people to place.

11) Procedures for measuring the impact or effectiveness of their organization's work

Limitations

As with any research, there were limitations to what could be accomplished. In this case, where individual perceptions and qualitative
analyses were the basis for determining outcomes, it must be considered that organizational subjects may be unable to fully understand and/or articulate their thoughts or reflections. Organizational subjects and historical experts may feel an undue need to exaggerate accomplishments or abilities. This research was asking for individual perspectives that may be unarticulated, unknown, or otherwise influenced by outside variables.

Additionally, the research focused on two geographic areas. Some of the findings discussed were place- and/or neighborhood-specific. Other findings were extrapolated onto the community art field as a whole. Certainly, further research could expand these findings by studying other cities, towns or neighborhoods.
Chapter Three: Results

This chapter presents results of data analysis conducted in two San Francisco neighborhoods, the Mission District and South of Market. Both neighborhoods contained diverse demographic make-ups as well as unique histories. Since the 1950s, the Mission District's dominant culture had been Hispanic, comprising 51.9% of the neighborhood's population. The neighborhood had served as a crossroads for many immigrant populations, making it the center of San Francisco's most vibrant street life. For the 60,000 living within its borders, the main commercial hub served as a primary shopping destination for everything from fruits and vegetables to clothing and shoes. By night, the neighborhood attracted a younger, twenty-something population in search of some of the most popular pubs and restaurants in San Francisco. Despite its popularity, the neighborhood had a higher concentration of low-income households than the greater city of San Francisco, with 36% of the population having annual household incomes of less than $25,000. (Demographic information in this and the following paragraph extracted from Via Magazine online, http://www.viamagazine.com, and the San Francisco Planning Department's website, http://www.ci.sf.ca.us/planning.htm).
Since the turn of the twentieth century, the South of Market (SoMa) neighborhood has boasted an eclectic mix of commerce, entertainment and living space. SoMa has always been a uniquely mixed-use area in San Francisco. The hard-working merchant marines and day laborers who first made their home in SoMa spent the bulk of their days working and their nights sharing small, single-room apartments. Early zoning regulations in San Francisco put much of the city's industrial activity in SoMa. In response, worker housing was built for factory and warehouse workers close to their places of employment. New immigrants to the city were drawn to the low rents typical of SoMa and to the proximity to jobs. Successive waves of ethnic groups called SoMa home. When various immigrant groups such as the Germans, Mexicans, Ukrainians, and Irish moved out of the area, their churches and community centers have remained and preserved their relationship to this area (cited from www.ci.sf.us/planning.htm).

The community arts organizations studied for this research were located in the Mission District and South of Market neighborhoods. Executive Directors and other key staff members were interviewed from community arts organizations in each of these neighborhoods. The intention was to explore the four major research questions posed in the introduction.
to this thesis, taking into consideration (a) histories, (b) missions, (c) methods for measuring results, and (d) ideologies of San Francisco community arts organizations. Historical experts also provided the researcher with information on the development of the community arts movement in San Francisco. Each of these sections concludes with a summary that provides a brief narrative response to each research question.

Within each research question, results are reported by presenting the two most prevalent responses as well as any unique or unusual results. Two tables are presented within each research question. The first table reports the two most prevalent responses noted. Information within each table is organized as follows: the two most common concepts are noted under column heading *Response*, the frequency with which it was noted under column heading *Frequency*, and the organizations that expressed the concept under column heading *Respondents*. In some cases, respondents may have noted the concept in more than one instance. The second table reports any unique or noteworthy responses in the same categories as in the first table. To protect the identity of respondents, participating organizations were assigned a letter and are identified by that letter.
throughout this thesis. Appendix B provides a detailed survey of all responses.

Table 3.1.1

Histories: Prevalent Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community struggles or poor conditions initiated the development of community arts organizations</td>
<td>VIII</td>
<td>A, B, B, D, H, H, I, J,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1.2

Histories: Unique/Noteworthy Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam, other war experiences, and the civil rights movement were a prevalent cause of community struggles. These struggles lead to the development of culturally-based community arts organizations.</td>
<td>VI</td>
<td>A, A, B, H, I, I</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Histories: Narrative

There was a strong sense among a number of respondents that San Francisco was unique in the sense that it had a history of valuing cultural activities and cultural diversity. Respondent A noted that

There was a Chinatown. Right next to that there was North Beach...

There was a Russian neighborhood, there was a Spanish neighborhood, and all these neighborhoods were conjoined where it was very common to pass through any number of them from anywhere to anywhere else ... What that meant was that people who grew up here became familiar with more than just one cultural framework,

Respondent A believed that this familiarity with various cultural frameworks produced a broad awareness of diverse cultural traditions at the same time that it produced curiosity and a desire among San Franciscans to learn more about other cultures. In turn, this curiosity led “to an integration process, one that [wasn’t] about conflict, but about sharing and about satisfying curiosity,” said Respondent A.

In the early sixties, large populations of San Franciscans were becoming “very upset about [America’s] political involvement in Vietnam.
There was also the civil rights movement which made people start looking at injustice in our society and sort of opened up the way people look at different races,” said Respondent A. Outrage about the war combined with the civil rights movement mobilized San Francisco’s diverse communities to action and produced a community-based movement that resulted in the development of many of the community arts organizations studied in this thesis. The community arts organizations that were beginning to spring up during this time sought to alleviate community struggles and address the hardships that existed in San Francisco neighborhoods due to political and social injustices. “So it was a bunch of artists who decided to use art for building community whereas others [lawyers, for example] would use their lawyer skills,” said Respondent H.

Many of the community arts organizations that developed as a result of a war experience or civil rights movement were culturally specific and sought to address the poor conditions that some ethnically based neighborhoods experienced. For example, the Vietnam War caused some San Franciscans to question what [the United States] was doing there and what was happening in our own local neighborhoods [as a result of the war].

40
Without that, [this organization] couldn't have sprung up by itself. The three individuals who started this organization had a very conscious way of describing what they were doing... they wanted something different, wanted their art to improve conditions for the community. (Respondent H)

This background on the historical motivators of community arts organizations pointed to a movement that was very place-specific. So while community art organizations had been developing throughout the United States and in both urban and rural settings, the San Francisco movement had grown out of community-specific needs and conditions. In Chapter 1, the Review of the Literature, I discussed the concept of community as “a social group inhabiting a common territory and having one or more additional common ties” (Hillery 31). The community arts organizations studied for this research identified their target-communities as within the confines of a specific geographic boundary — sometimes a discrete neighborhood, sometimes encompassing the city as a whole — and possessing another common quality. Among those noted by respondents were cultural background, neighborhood of residence, a familiarity with diverse cultures, curiosity about diverse cultures, public outrage around
political issues such as America's involvement in the Vietnam War, civil rights issues, poverty, immigration or assimilation issues, drug abuse or recovery, and an interest in community vitality. These responses and others were noted as motivators to action or rationales for the creation of community arts organizations. All of the organizations researched in this study indicated that they came into existence out of necessity rather than desire. They each sought to address a social issue through the use of arts programs.

Table 3.2.1
Missions: Prevalent Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To change community conditions</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>A, A, B, G, H, H, I, J, J</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2.2
Missions: Unique/Noteworthy Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Art and community are essential to one another</td>
<td>II</td>
<td>J, I</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Missions: Narrative

As discussed above, the need to improve community conditions led to the development of community arts organizations, especially in the 1960s and 70s. Not surprisingly, this motivation became the driving force, or the mission, of these same organizations. All representatives of the community arts organizations researched in this study spoke of the objective of effecting social change and improving community conditions through their work. "It's kind of at the heart of community arts organizations that we were all connected to a neighborhood at one time, connected to our history, curious about our ancestors and what they went through and motivated by a desire to better the conditions that we saw our community going through," said Respondent H. Community arts programs "created an intangible yet very tangible feeling of strength and empowerment and that's the thing that keeps community arts organizations going – that need to change."

Respondent J reiterated this notion that change was an essential motivator of the community arts:

the big, broad goal is to democratize art in a way that then those artists can go back into the world and make change. I think that it starts here in a little building with 70 or 80 seats and change sort of
ripples through a room and if you keep on doing it and keep on doing it, then you can begin to feel that effect throughout the world. I think it's a forever goal.

These concepts of community change as being "intangible" and a "forever goal" will have an important impact later in this discussion, under the header Measuring Results.

The other commonly noted mission of community arts organizations was the objective of bringing the community together. "We nurture art forms... and underlying everything that we do is the desire to draw the community together," said Respondent H. A sense of community among constituents was cited for its ability to produce the socially desirable results of tolerance, compassion, and understanding. This concept was articulated by a number of respondents.

Community centers like this are of great importance because... they provide the opportunity for all people to come together and find out what is happening in other cultures. They can come and participate and see directly with their own eyes. There comes a transformation in the way people see things, think, the way they absorb what is around
them. Our greatest advantage is that we can develop the potential of
the thinking. (Respondent C)

This was reiterated by Respondent H: "in its heart, [this organization] has
always had this mission that art is critical to the community [because it]
gathers everybody and forms a consciousness among people." In this way,
it was noted by some that art and community were essential to one another
because of the community art's unique ability to affect a wide range of
individuals and broaden their understanding of diverse peoples.

These desires to change community conditions and bring the
community together reflect Ferdinand Tonnies' theory of unity and
commonality, or gemeinschaft. As noted by Respondent H, community arts
organizations were "connected to a neighborhood... connected to our
history... [and were] motivated by a desire to better the conditions that we
saw our community going through." Community arts organizations were
strongly motivated by community issues or needs that they strongly
identified with. They perceived those issues as their own, not somebody
else's. Latent in the quote above are correlations between her community's
history and her own history, her neighborhood's issues and her issues, and
the sense that the community she sought to improve was her own community.

In Chapter 1, I discussed the concept of a sense of community as the “feeling that one has a dependable, available and supportive network of relationships that leads one to strongly identify with, feel a part of, and needed by a community” (Sarason). We can see from the discussion above that Respondent H felt a part of the community she sought to improve and believed other community arts practitioners operated with the same sense of unity or commonality. This sense of community motivated Respondent H to consider what she could do to improve her community’s conditions. Respondent H also noted that, “underlying everything that we do is the desire to draw the community together,” suggesting that this sense of community is something community arts practitioners seek to impart to their constituents. Respondent C added that the value of community arts organizations is that “they provide the opportunity for all people to come together.” As we saw in Chapter 1, Sarason noted that in order to experience a sense of community as discussed above, one’s mutually supportive network must be a part of “the structure of one everyday living” (2). Community arts organizations seem to be intentionally providing the
links between individuals that makes one “identify with, feel a part of, and needed by a community.”

Table 3.3.1

Measuring Results: Prevalent Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intuition</td>
<td>III</td>
<td>G, H, I, J</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.3.2

Measuring Results: Unique/Noteworthy Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Numbers Served</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Measuring Results: Narrative

As noted above, all of the community arts organizations researched in this study operated with the objective of effecting community change. The need to improve community conditions due to poverty, immigration or assimilation issues, misunderstandings around race or ethnicity, etc., was the underlying motivator historically as well as practically not just for some, but for all of the community arts organizations studied. The objectives of providing strength and empowerment to those populations or
"democratizing art" became, as some respondents noted, "intangible" or "forever goals." How then did these organizations measure their impact on the communities they served? The majority of respondents asserted that they had no set methodology or quantitative measures for evaluating the impact of their work. Rather, given the intimacy of the relationship between community and community arts practitioner, respondents widely believed that they knew intuitively whether their work was producing the desired results. "I've been doing this long enough to know when my work is working... I know my work works," said Respondent I. Respondent J reinforced this confidence: "We know anecdotally because we're here."

Respondent H shared the following antidote to illustrate her ability to determine the impact of her organization's work:

We currently have a lot of cross-generational interaction, but in the 1970s when we first started our work, there was a desire to leave a legacy for future generations and in that way, past generations could see that we honored them and they would come around and they would feel safe to tell their own stories. At first, it was mostly the older men would come around. Before long we got the whole community talking about their history and we would take those
stories and make artwork out of them and they would see themselves reflected back. It just kind of snowballed that way. It created an intangible yet very tangible feeling of strength and empowerment in the whole community.

Respondent I offered a similar story about how she knows anecdotally knew that her work is effective:

We did a lot of performances around the injustices being committed against the Palestinian people. And it always caused a lot of controversy. Some people boycotted our shows, others praised us. It was nice to feel like we were part of a movement and that we got people talking about something. You know, that's not a little thing.

As can be seen from the tables above, only one prevalent response was noted in this section. This was because no other response was reiterated by a second respondent. Indeed, a quantitative measure, such as the number of people served, was the exception rather than the rule. Intuition was the overwhelming favorite among respondents. As discussed above, the goals of improving community conditions and bringing the community together were thought to be too intangible a goal to be evaluated by any traditional quantitative measure. Intuition, or better, statements based on
the knowledge, expertise, and experience of community arts practitioners, may at present be the only viable option for articulating results.

Table 3.4.1

Ideologies: Prevalent Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The arts are an inclusive form, its language is non-selective</td>
<td>VII</td>
<td>A, A, B, B, C, E, J</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The arts are transformative</td>
<td>VII</td>
<td>A, D, G, G, H, J, J</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.4.2

Ideologies: Unique/Noteworthy Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trickle effect</td>
<td>II</td>
<td>G, J</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ideologies: Narrative

Respondents spoke at great length and with some degree of variety about why the arts were powerful media for addressing social issues in communities. From their responses, two prevalent theories emerged. One dealt with the notion that the arts were an inclusive form whose language
was non-selective. In other words, the arts had the unique ability to convey a coherent message to a diverse audience. Regardless of age, gender, race, ethnicity, language skills, etc., the arts in their various forms could stir the mind and communicate an idea. “The arts are widely understandable and encapsulate peoples’ consciousness,” noted Respondent E.

The other prevalently noted ideology was that the arts were transformative: they had the ability to make a dramatic and significant impact upon the organization’s constituency. Community arts programs were most effective when designed with a particular audience and a particular need in mind. “It’s a hard thing to define. You know if they’re hungry you give food to the people, but the tangible quality of this work is that we feed people’s spirits through art. Somehow our audience can identify with what’s presented there and once that connection is made between the art and the audience, then you’ve uplifted the whole spirit of the community,” said Respondent H. Furthermore, it was noted that the impact may extend beyond the organization’s target audience and could have a further-reaching effect: “it might not only happen in the [arts] center, but it could trickle out into the world and create something that will move people to think differently,” said Respondent G. Indeed, the concept that
the community arts had a “trickle” effect beyond the full comprehension of practitioners was a response that again pointed to the difficulty of quantifying results.

The idea that the arts are transformative is a sentiment that we’ve heard before. Seana Lowe’s research (2000) yielded a similar finding: “community art projects can transform gesellschaft to gemeinschaft” (361). Or, more simply put, “community art is a sociological phenomenon that influences the development of community and... alter[s] the social realm” (361). When Respondent H spoke of “feed[ing] peoples’ spirits” and “uplift[ing] the whole community,” there was a direct correlation between these remarks and Lowe’s. Indeed, community arts organizations’ objectives of bringing the community together and improving community conditions are intended to “alter the social realm.” As was noted, the very reason for the existence of community arts organizations is to build social ties and improve conditions in communities.

As was noted in Chapter 1, when social ties work to improve our lives and make them more productive, it is referred to as social capital. Putnam asserted that social capital “widens our awareness of others” and “allows citizens to resolve collective problems more easily,” (288). The
community arts have the demonstrated ability to produce these same outcomes. According to respondents, they broaden our awareness of other peoples, improve community conditions, and bring the community together. Robert Putnam noted the similar finding that “frequent interaction among diverse sets of people tends to produce a norm of... mutual obligation and responsibility for action (25). These qualities “refer to features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions” (Putnam 167). If the community arts do, in fact, have the ability to broaden our awareness of other peoples, improve community conditions, and bring the community together, they must inherently have the ability to produce social capital.

Other Findings

Conversations regarding community arts organizations’ mission statements invariably lead to an exchange over what programs or services these organizations provided in order to accomplish their goals. My expectation was that a single discipline or medium might present itself as the most effective method for addressing social issues in communities. However, I found that community arts practitioners utilized a variety of
disciplines and mediums to accomplish their goals. Again, the important factor was that programs and services were developed for a particular audience and with a particular need in mind. There was no cookie-cutter approach that worked consistently for any age range, any ethnicity, and in response to any social issue. Indeed, the key was that community arts practitioners were constantly changing and adjusting to meet the needs of a changing environment.
Chapter Four: Summary and Conclusions

Review of the Problem

Communities throughout the United States utilize the arts to address social issues in communities. As we saw in the Introduction to this thesis, social applications of the arts can be found in rural communities and large urban metropolises, crossing geographic boundaries and political lines. While we know that a diverse range of communities utilize the arts to address social issues, we know less about why the arts have been widely applied for this purpose or why they seem to be an effective tool in these arenas. Literature on art and community building is long and illuminating; however there is very little empirical research on the subject. This thesis explores the role of the community arts in addressing social issues. By studying the histories, missions, methods for measuring results, and ideologies of San Francisco community arts organizations, this research uncovered the development of the community arts in San Francisco, prevalent perceptions among practitioners about community art’s ability to impact civil society, and theories held to explain why the community arts are an effective agent for effecting social change.
Discussion of Findings

Executive directors and other key staff members were interviewed from community arts organizations in San Francisco's Mission District and South of Market neighborhoods with the intention of answering the four major research questions posed in the introduction to this thesis. Results considered (a) histories, (b) missions, (c) methods for measuring results, and (d) ideologies of San Francisco community arts organizations. Experts in the field were also interviewed in order to acquire an historical perspective on the field's local development. A summary of key findings follows.

Histories

- San Francisco's history of valuing cultural diversity fostered the development of community arts organizations;
- Community struggles or poor conditions initiated the development of community arts organizations.

It was commonly held that San Francisco's community arts organizations developed out of community-specific needs and conditions. All of the organizations canvassed indicated that they came into existence out of necessity rather than desire. They each sought to address a social issue —
many of them culturally specific — through the use of community arts programs.

Missions

- To change community conditions

Community arts organizations were motivated by community issues or needs that they strongly identified with. Community arts practitioners perceived those issues as their own, not somebody else's.

- To bring the community together

There was a common goal among community arts organizations of bringing a critical mass of individuals together in order to improve community life. Community arts organizations seemed to be intentionally providing the links between individuals that make communities healthy, safe and productive.

Methods for measuring results:

- Intuition.

It was commonly held that community arts practitioners had the knowledge and expertise necessary to determine whether or not their community arts programs produced the desired results. Given the intangible quality of the
goals discussed above, it was widely believed that intuition may be the only viable option for measuring outcomes.

Ideologies

- The arts were inclusive forms, their language non-selective;
- The arts were transformative.

The community arts were widely believed to have the unique ability to convey a coherent message to a diverse audience. Regardless of age, gender, race, ethnicity, language, etc., the arts in their various forms were believed to stir the mind and communicate an idea. It was also found that the community arts had the ability to make a dramatic and significant impact upon the organization's constituency. Community arts organizations' objectives of bringing the community together and improving community conditions were believed to be capable of "alter[ing] the social realm" (Lowe 361).

The Implications for the Literature

The findings of this research are significant because they document the development of the community arts in San Francisco, present prevalent perceptions among practitioners about community art's ability to impact civil society, and enhance our understanding of why the community arts are
an effective agent for social change. This research also reinforces Seana Lowe's finding that "community art is a sociological phenomenon that influences the development of community and... alter[s] the social realm" (361). Lastly, this research builds the empirical research on art and community building and strengthens the argument that the arts are critical to healthy communities.

Practice Implications

From the findings of this research, two practice implications emerge. The first is that community arts practitioners utilize a variety of disciplines or media with equal effectiveness to accomplish their goals. Theater, dance, exhibitions, graffiti art, writing, murals — any range of art forms were applied in a variety of settings. There is no "community art form" as distinguished from other art forms, but rather an orientation around the application of art and the involvement of individuals that produces the field now recognized as community art.

The second practice implication has to do with the difficulty of measuring the results of community art programs. In recent years, foundations, corporations, and government funding agencies have come to expect and require that quantifiable outcomes be provided by grantees. This
produces an inherent problem when it is considered that the goals of community arts organizations are more often than not “intangible.” How then can community arts organizations compete for increasingly scarce arts funding?

**Recommendations for Further Research**

Further research could expand these findings by studying other cities, towns or neighborhoods. It would also be beneficial to study community arts organizations’ ability to deal with specific social issues such as senior services, political dissent, youth issues, etc. Additional research could also consider how other related fields, community health, for example, measure results.
References


Appendix A: Organization Questions

1. What is the history of your organization? (Was it started out of a grassroots movement or a reaction to a social or community issue? Was it neighborhood based or city-wide?)

2. What specific constituency base was it originally designed to serve?

3. Does your organization retain its original constituency base or has it changed?

4. What is your organization’s current mission statement?

5. What are your organization’s goals and objectives?

6. What programs or services do you offer to accomplish those goals and objectives?

7. Why do you feel that arts are an effective “tool” by which you can fulfill your organization’s goals and objectives?

8. Can you share some of your professional experiences that have demonstrated the effectiveness of the arts in addressing social issues or connecting people to place?

9. How do you measure the impact or effectiveness of your work?

10. Is there anything else you’d like to share with me? Other organizations I should speak with?
Appendix B: Organization Responses

Histories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The movement</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issues around Vietnam / war experience</td>
<td>VI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forming consciousness</td>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use art to build community / address an issue</td>
<td>III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do best to help</td>
<td>III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gathering everybody / community organizing</td>
<td>IIIII</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An alternative</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community struggles / conditions</td>
<td>VIII</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connected</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-establishment</td>
<td>III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questioning</td>
<td>III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unique time in history / unique place</td>
<td>IIIII</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Francisco’s cultural background / value cultural diversity</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beat movement</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil rights movement</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political</td>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminist</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third-world politics</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Missions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Celebrate community values</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honor something past</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leave a legacy</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get stories out</td>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need to change community conditions</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bring community together</td>
<td>XIII</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil rights</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower income</td>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrich</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empower</td>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Define community</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenge preconceptions</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-war</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific politically/specific message</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take a stand</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s liberation</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get people talking about something</td>
<td>III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working people have right to art</td>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art and community are essential to one another</td>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art space belongs to community</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intolerance</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspire people to create art</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recovery</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homelessness</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrant</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celebrate community values</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Measuring Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No methodology</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsolicited feedback</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Database</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numbers served</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intuition</td>
<td>III</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ideologies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tangible quality</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feed peoples’ spirits</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength and empowerment</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration process</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing</td>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfying curiosity about different cultures</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pathways for multi-culturalism</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts are an inclusive art form, its language is non-selective</td>
<td>VII</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The arts are transformative</td>
<td>VII</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be ourselves</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Express ourselves</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand ourselves/others</td>
<td>III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compassity</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stimulate critical thinking</td>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community vitality</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encapsulates peoples’ consciousness</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trickle effect</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social content</td>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Move people</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change lives</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intervention</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can motivate social change/get involved</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unity</td>
<td>III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternate points of view</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It educates</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>