

INVESTIGATING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COMMUNITY ARTS
ENGAGEMENTS AND COLLEGE STUDENTS' SENSE OF COMMUNITY

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Amanda Beth Booher

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Amanda Beth Booher

The Supervisory Committee certifies that this *disquisition* complies with North Dakota
State University's regulations and meets the accepted standards for the degree of

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SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE:

Erika Beseler Thompson

Chair

Laura Dahl

Jane Schuh

Approved:

05/08/2020

Date

Chris Ray

Department Chair

ABSTRACT

This study builds upon Astin's (2012) Input-Environment-Output conceptual framework to determine the relationship between college students (inputs), their frequency of participation in arts engagements (environment), and their sense of community (outputs), as measured by McMillan, Peterson, and Speers' (2008) Brief Sense of Community Scale. A survey was administered to 403 college students from one mid-sized public research university in the upper Midwest region in early spring 2020. Results indicated the most frequently attended arts engagements for college students were festivals and concerts, and the least frequently reported were galas or art receptions and creative workshops. Findings also indicated a relationship exists between frequency of arts engagements and sense of community, with higher levels of arts engagements associated with higher levels of sense of community. Implications of these results for universities, community arts partners, and college students are discussed.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

When I began this journey in graduate school I was not convinced I would actually get my master's degree. I had lived in Fargo for two years along with my husband, and we were just beginning to develop our sense of community with this place we now called home. Together we found ways to connect and engage with the community, specifically, through local arts engagements. Our experiences included "Corks and Canvas" where we had the opportunity to view a number of local art galleries and studios, nights enjoying live music at one of the many downtown venues, and volunteering at Unglued events, where we created relationships, participated in various events, and began to foster a sense of community with Fargo.

Having worked in higher education for over five years I am grateful for the connections I have made, the opportunities that exist in Fargo, and for North Dakota State University for allowing me to see the potential of higher education. I could not have done this without the support I have received from my family back home, my husband who encouraged me to continue this journey after the birth of our son, and the faculty in the Educational Leadership department who challenged my way of thinking and who provided meaningful discussions. Thank you to my committee for supporting, challenging, and encouraging me throughout this process. Thank you specifically to my advisor, Erika Beseler-Thompson, for the multiple revisions and reviews of drafts, the many hours spent discussing this with me, and for helping me continually make progress throughout this process. Support local art.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my mom and dad who taught me the importance of working hard, exploring creative outlets, and above all else to be kind.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
DEDICATION.....	v
LIST OF TABLES	viii
LIST OF FIGURES	ix
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Statement of the Problem	3
Purpose of the Study.....	3
Significance of the Study	4
Organization of the Study.....	5
CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW	6
Inputs: College Students.....	7
Environment: Arts Engagements.....	11
Output: Sense of Community	16
Art and Sense of Community: Campus Philly, A Case Study	19
Conclusion.....	22
CHAPTER 3. METHODS.....	25
Research Design	25
Participants	28
Data Collection.....	28
Analysis	28
Delimitations	29
CHAPTER 4. RESULTS	30
Participant Demographics	30

Research Question 1	32
Research Question 2	34
Conclusion.....	36
CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION.....	37
Summary and Discussion of Findings.....	38
Implications	42
Theoretical Implications	42
Practical Implications	44
Limitations and Practical Recommendations for Future Research	47
Conclusion.....	49
REFERENCES	51
APPENDIX. SENSE OF COMMUNITY AND ARTS ENGAGEMENT SURVEY	53

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Participant Demographic Information and Frequency of Arts Engagement Attendance	32
2. Mean Arts Engagement Attendance by Event Category	33

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Box Plot of Brief Sense of Community Scale Scores and Total Arts Events Attended.....	35
2. Scatterplot of Brief Sense of Community Scale Scores and Total Arts Events Attended.....	36

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

College is a unique time in a person's life that allows for exploration of different college courses, cultures, social groups, and extracurricular activities. Student organizations, campus events, math and writing labs, tutoring, and more, all serve as opportunities for college students to engage and make connections on campus. College campuses are designed to meet the needs of a diverse range of students and serve students as a meeting place and a social hub (Gumprecht, 2005). Gumprecht (2005) identified that a college campus is "an island of green, punctuated by monumental buildings, site of a diverse range of cultural and social activities, the campus is in many ways the focus of life in the college town" (p. 73). Needless to say, college campuses provide opportunities for students to feel a connection to their institution and engage with their peers; but, what about beyond campus borders? Connecting with the community beyond campus can lead to multiple benefits for a college student and for the community (Campbell & Duxbury, 2011; Campus Philly, 2010).

There are multiple ways to connect college students to the greater community through various events, activities, social outings, restaurants, and arts engagements. Often times museums, concerts, theatre, and festivals offer discounts or are free for college students, making arts engagements affordable, attractive, and accessible to attend (Campbell & Duxbury, 2011). Not only are arts engagements accessible for college students to attend, they provide an opportunity to build a connection with likeminded people and also provide learning beyond the classroom (Kaufman & Feldman, 2004; Lundberg, 2010).

Participating in art related activities has proven positive cognitive and emotional benefits that can transform thinking, social skills, and character development (National Endowment for the Arts [NEA],2012). Additionally, participation in art engagements off-campus can offer

opportunities for students to engage and feel connection to their greater community which research has shown can enhance personal and social needs (Chavis & McMillan, 1986; NEA, 2012). This relates to elements that shape Chavis and McMillan's (1986) Sense of Community Theory which is experienced through membership, needs fulfilments, influence, and shared emotional connection (Chavis & McMillan, 1986). Art engagements appear to provide opportunities that can foster a sense of community through these four elements. This is especially salient for college students because engaging in art can provide cultural, personal, social, and emotional benefits (Chavis & McMillan, 1986; Kaufman & Feldman, 2004; NEA, 2012).

One community, Philadelphia, has illustrated success connecting college students to the community through various events, including arts engagements. The non-profit leading this success, Campus Philly (2010) has made its mission to fuel "economic growth by encouraging college students to study, explore, live and work in the Greater Philadelphia tri-state region" (p. 2). After creating intentional and purposeful connections with local college institutions and Philadelphia community partners, Campus Philly (2010) has aimed to attract, engage, and retain college students. Campus Philly organizes events that allow college students to engage in art in accessible ways. For example, "CollegeFest" allows college students to attend 15 Philadelphia museums for free and "Open Arts College Night" which allows college students to attend theatre, opera, and festivals for free (Campus Philly, 2018). This type of intentional and accessible arts engagements between college students and the community has supported retention of alumni in the area. Since its inception, Campus Philly has successfully witnessed a 115% retention increase of alumni between the ages of 25-34 (Campus Philly, 2019). There are likely a number of reasons that led to this dramatic increase in retention, however, it seems possible that engagements curated by Campus Philly have successfully fostered a sense of

community for college students which in-turn increased the desire to remain there after graduation.

Statement of the Problem

There is evidence that attending or participating in the arts contributes to personal growth through learning that happens through the engagement and shared experience (NEA, 2012). Literature has further illustrated that some communities with active art scenes provide accessible experiences for college students to engage and connect with the community (Campbell & Duxbury, 2011; Campus Philly, 2018), and this can have multiple learning benefits for students including an increase in appreciation for their community (Campbell & Duxbury, 2011) and retention of students in the community after graduation (Campus Philly, 2010). As such, engaging college students in arts-related events has shown promise as a way to enhance students' experiences, create a sense of community, and ultimately support communities in retaining graduates. However, literature related to frequency of arts engagements among college students is limited. Additionally, while Campus Philly showed great potential for such initiatives, there is not yet enough research with the college student population to understand how exactly arts engagements function to connect students with the broader community, and whether this sort of initiative would work in other contexts.

Purpose of the Study

This study aimed to understand the current involvement in arts engagements of college students in an upper Midwest community and the relationship between frequency of arts engagements and sense of community. To investigate this phenomenon, the following research questions were addressed:

1. What is the frequency of current college student participation in community arts engagements?
2. What is the relationship between the frequency of involvement in community art engagements and college students' sense of community?

Significance of the Study

This study is significant for multiple stakeholders including first and foremost college students, and secondly, educational institutions and art organizers. Additionally, there are further implications that will impact employers and higher education governing bodies and lawmakers. College students will benefit from the results of this study as they navigate their college career, experiences, and extra-curricular activities. Students looking for their place or sense of belonging while attending college will benefit from understanding the value that community arts engagements offer not only through learning opportunities, but through personal growth. Secondly, the results of this study are intended to help illustrate the need for collaboration and the potential opportunities between college institutions and community art organizations. Additionally, this study is significant for art organizations looking to engage more audience members and increase attendance at their events which in-turn increases sales and tax revenue which benefits the community. The results of this study will benefit governing bodies and lawmakers responsible for assisting and supporting community arts organizations. Finally, this study serves to add to the literature regarding the frequency of arts engagements among college students, the application of sense of community theory to the college population, and the potential connection between arts engagements and sense of community among college students.

Organization of the Study

The next chapter presents a conceptual framework guided by Astin's (2012) Input-Environment-Outcome model and built upon Chavis and McMillan's (1986) Sense of Community Theory. Additionally, chapter two details the benefits of engaging in the arts in the community. Chapter three outlines the methodology that was used in this study. Chapter four provides details of the analyzed survey results. Finally, chapter five explains the implications of this study and provides context for future research.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

To set the foundation for this study, relevant literature was reviewed on arts engagements, sense of community, and the characteristics and experiences of college students as they relate to both arts engagements and sense of community. Astin's (2012) Input-Environment-Output (IEO) college impact model was used as the conceptual framework for this study in order to illustrate the theoretical connections among the characteristics of college students, their experiences of arts engagements, and their sense of community. The I-E-O model provides a theoretical link between certain outcome experiences by students and varying student characteristics (inputs) and experiences (environment). Outcomes alone do not tell enough about the impact or effectiveness of an activity being measured and it is important to acknowledge that students have different personal characteristics and experiences that impact them. In support of this framework, this chapter aims to describe the characteristics and experiences of college students as inputs, explain the environment of arts engagement, describe in depth what it means to experience a sense of community as an outcome, and to examine the relationship between these three elements of Astin's model through a case study. The National Endowment for the Arts (2012) *How Art Works* system map serves as a framework for describing arts engagements. Sense of community is defined through Chavis and McMillan's (1986) Sense of Community Theory and also explored through additional literature.

Finally, Campus Philly is reviewed as a case study that illustrated a successful organization that has actively attracted, engaged, and connected with college students in Philadelphia through arts engagements and potentially fostering a sense of community. Furthermore, Campus Philly has established a variety of partners and community stakeholders to support their mission's success. In the case of Campus Philly (2010, 2015), connecting college

students to the community through arts engagements provided multiple benefits for college students and the community including more engagement at art related events, increased sales and tax revenue, social connections and civic engagement, and increased aesthetic and cultural appreciation.

Inputs: College Students

The inputs measured in this study are college students and this study aims to understand how college students experience art and their sense of community. This study acknowledges that every college student is different and therefore has different personal characteristics and life experiences that contribute to their education and emotional connections. People experience art differently. Even though there is not much research detailing how college students in general participate in community arts engagements, there is research that explained how college students from underrepresented demographics experience art (Lundberg, 2010). Camputaro (2017) explained, “background and identity play important roles in developing connection to peers” (p. 5).

One study focused on college students from underrepresented races to identify what type of campus experiences were predictors for learning. Lundberg (2010) drew a sample of 3,332 responses of students of color from the database of the College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ) to examine student experiences as predictors of learning gains in three areas: general education, intellectual skills, and science. Each category was broken up into additional topics that measured frequency of engagement in activities including attendance at fine arts events, reading about art, discussing the arts with other people, and participation in art. Participants self-reported learning gains using a four-point Likert scale ranging from “little” to “very much” and they responded to six areas of learning: fine arts, literature, history, general

education, understanding about the world, and philosophy (Lundberg, 2010). Lundberg (2010) tested the validity of each scale using Cronbach's alphas as a measure with alphas ranging from .79 to .92 for each variable. For general education, Lundberg (2010) reported a Cronbach alpha of .81. Lundberg (2010) identified that this population of students who were engaged in fine arts self-reported that these activities had a negative contribution to their intellectual skill development and a positive contribution to their general education (Lundberg, 2010).

In Lundberg's (2010) study, frequency of involvement in various experiences was measured with 12 composite variables measuring frequency of attendance in seven areas. To measure frequency of involvement in arts, Lundberg (2010) examined three areas of engagement of fine arts including: reading about art, participation, or discussing the arts. The validity of the composite variables was tested and Lundberg (2010) reported a Cronbach's alpha score of .85. Lundberg (2010) noted that academic involvement in activities that involves engaging with people through discussion and that require personal reflection had a positive correlation with student learning. These findings suggest that college students who actively participate in the arts, discuss art, and read about art, are likely to experience positive benefits related to general learning (Lundberg, 2010). Furthermore, the implications of this study suggest that college students who engage in art related activities with their peers experience a positive social connection in a safe and welcoming environment, which is a facet of building a sense of community (Lundberg, 2010).

When college students come to college they already have their own wealth of knowledge, experiences and identities that have shaped them into who they are. These identities and experiences can impact their involvement and interest in campus activities. Therefore, both arts engagements (the environment measured in this study) and sense of community, (the output

measured in this study) are impacted by these personal characteristics. From freshman year to senior year, college students' personal identity's evolve, adapt, and develop in areas of problem solving, critical thinking, and making social connections, to name a few (Kaufman & Feldman, 2004). In their study, Kaufman and Feldman (2004) aimed to understand how individuals construct their identities by interviewing a sample of 82 college seniors who were selected to be broadly representative of the wide population of seniors at this particular university. Kaufman and Feldman (2004) explained that "social interactions play a significant role in a student's identity formation not only from the information that is being exchanged but also through the medium of exchange" (p. 473). Cultural experiences inside and outside of the classroom have contributed to college students sense of identity (Kaufman & Feldman, 2004). While in college, students experience cultural diversity and are exposed to fine and performing arts, both of which can lead to a new understanding and appreciation of aesthetics, sophistication of tastes, and diversity of worldview (Kaufman & Feldman, 2004). The findings in Kaufman and Feldman's (2004) study identified that as college students grew and advanced in their education they felt themselves becoming college-educated and "individuals who are cultured rather than uncultured, cosmopolitan rather than provincial" (p. 484). They noted that fine and performing art presentations, celebrating national and ethnic cultures, and foreign films series broadened their cultural horizons. These findings are significant because they illustrate the personal and educational benefit that is achieved through exposure of the arts. Additionally, Kaufman and Feldman's (2004) findings emphasize that social interaction contributes significantly to college students' sense of identity. This is important because it emphasizes a connection between an activity like an art presentation, with the feeling of belonging and shared emotional connection.

When college students come to college they already have their own wealth of knowledge, experiences, and identities that have shaped them into who they are. These identities and experiences can impact their involvement and interest in campus activities. Therefore, both arts engagements (the environment measured in this study) and sense of community (the output measured in this study) are impacted by these personal characteristics. In one qualitative study, Camputaro (2017) researched the role of the college union in building the sense of community amongst college students with a great sense of community to their institution. Camputaro (2017) conducted interviews and utilized narrative inquiry with eight students who reported a high sense of community to their institution. Camputaro (2017) explained that college students experienced a sense of community through physical and organizational structures. In his study, student unions served as a way to illustrate the connections and experiences that positively contribute to students sense of community through the physical space and organizational interactions that take place there. This study illustrated a key insight that connecting with college students can be done through “intentional physical and organizational environments that help students feel welcome, cared about, and valued as individuals” (Camputaro, 2017, p. 105). Camputaro (2017) emphasized the importance of providing welcoming safe spaces for college students and providing opportunities to join sub-communities to offset the feeling of being overwhelmed, contributing to a students’ overall sense of community. Camputaro’s (2017) research further indicated that students who have a positive social life and feel accepted as part of a community, reported having a greater sense of community. These findings are salient for this study because it offers a way for communities and art partners to collectively examine their environments and structures where interactions take place as potential hosts for art engagements. This type of consideration and potential collaboration with community partners could support meaningful

social interactions with college students which could foster college students' sense of community.

Even though Lundberg's (2010) results identified that fine arts experiences had a negative self-reported gain on intellectual skills for students of underrepresented races, other studies have found the opposite to be true for the broader college student population (Kaufman & Feldman, 2004; National Endowment for the Arts, 2012). This illustrates the point that college students are from diverse backgrounds and therefore experience art differently. College students experience sense of community differently as well. College students who actively participated in campus activities had experienced a greater sense of community (Camputaro, 2017).

Camputaro's (2017) sample of eight college students were chosen based off demographics that were representative of the college students at this particular institution. If he had chosen a different sample it is possible he would have gotten different results. This notion further supports that personal characteristics of college students can shape their experiences, perceptions, and emotional connections which therefore could influence how they experience art and develop sense of community.

Environment: Arts Engagements

What qualifies as an arts engagement? To guide this study, an arts engagement will refer to one of the National Endowment for the Arts (2012) benchmark arts events which include "attendance at jazz, classical music, opera, musical, play, or ballet performances (excluding elementary or high school performances), visits to art museums or galleries" (p. 18) and additionally attendance at festivals. This is not a comprehensive list of all possible art participation; however, this serves as a reference point for this study. Arts engagements, like festivals, or those that yield profit, can support and enhance a community.

Arts engagements serve as the environment of interest for this study in relation to Astin's I-E-O model. National Endowment for the Arts [NEA](2012) conducted extensive research with the goal of understanding how art works in American life and to clearly define the value and impact of the arts. Through group dialogues, workshops, webinars, research, and interviews with industry leaders from a variety of fields the NEA (2012) created the *How Art Works* theory and system map. The NEA (2012) *How Art Works* system map is an abstract representation that identified three quality of life outcomes: "1) direct and indirect economic benefits of art; 2) benefit of art to society and communities; 3) benefit of art to individuals" (p. 11). The National Endowment for the Arts [NEA] (2012) *How Art Works* system map explained in detail that art directly and indirectly benefit the economy through taxes, income, revenue, and job creation. The benefit of art to society and communities is multi-faceted and the *How Art Works* system map detailed the benefit of art through aesthetics, cultural components, social outcomes, and political issues. Lastly, the NEA (2012) identified the benefit of art to individuals is experienced through "the cognitive emotional, behavioral, and physiological effects that arts participation can produce in individuals, including transformations in thinking, social skills, and character development over time" (p. 27). The NEA (2012) *How Art Works* system map is especially salient because the aesthetic, cultural, social, and political categories outline various benefits a community gains through art creation and art participation on an individual and societal level.

While research on college student participation in arts engagements is limited, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) has done research on the 18-24 year old population which is reflective of traditional-aged college students. The NEA (2015) annually conducts the *Survey of Public Participation in the Arts* (SPPA) which tracks various art engagements in which American adults have participated over the course of a year. The survey has been administered

since the early 1980s and has been adapted over the years to include different art media, technology, and metrics for how people engage in the arts. The NEA (2015) explained their findings regarding how young adults (18-24) experience art, “For example, they were more likely than adults in general to report having done social dancing (42% versus 32%)” (p. 11). Additionally, their findings explained that young adults were more likely than adults to “create, practice, perform, edit, or remix art (48% versus 43%) and to use electronic media to view, listen to, create, share, or edit art (80 % versus 71%)” (NEA, 2015, p. 11). The NEA (2015) concluded that attending or participating in arts activities contributes to personal growth through the learning that is experienced through the engagement and shared experience. These findings are notable because they make the case for enhancing and increasing art engagements that target young adults in the community. As research has illustrated (NEA, 2015), providing opportunities for young adults to create, practice, perform, edit, or remix art will help community stakeholders tailor events to students’ needs. These types of shared experiences have the potential to enhance the student’s connection and sense of community. Ultimately, this connection to the community may have further implications like potentially influencing students’ decision whether to remain in the community after graduation. While this is a topic beyond the scope of this study, the connection between arts engagements and retention of college graduates has been previously examined.

Communities of all sizes can benefit from enhancing their arts engagements and opportunities to college graduates, however, one study focused on the benefit of expanding arts as a cultural component to grow rural communities. Campbell and Duxbury (2011) explained that “arts, culture, and heritage are viewed not only as amenities to improve the quality of life but as a foundation upon which the future of these rural/small communities rest” (p. 111). As rural

communities are facing declining aging populations and facing the challenge of retaining youth when there are limited social and economic opportunities and declining resources and services available, embracing and connecting with the arts can have a positive impact on community development and retaining youth (Campbell & Duxbury, 2011). Campbell and Duxbury (2011) created four framing questions to better understand how arts and culture can develop and revitalize rural communities. They wanted to identify the opportunities and barriers for sustainable development of creative businesses, common themes needed for the long-term growth, what is considered “good practice”, and what is already working well. Campbell and Duxbury (2011) identified recurring themes organized around the nature of arts and creative activities; capacity and related challenge; community factors and critical ingredients; population-related issues and opportunities; economic issues and opportunities; and governance factors. Of their common themes, they provided an overview of findings related to each theme. A common theme Campbell and Duxbury (2011) outlined was the capacity related challenges that smaller communities face. Art communities often have limited number of resources available and have difficulty finding volunteers. Though their study focuses on small and rural cities, this is often the case for larger cities as well. As communities focus on growth by utilizing the arts, they have the opportunity to champion volunteerism from area colleges not only as a way to support art events and festivals, but also as a way to connect college students to their community through the act of volunteering. There is evidence that illustrates that communities that prioritize arts engagements and the benefit of creating art experiences for residents and visitors are making an investment in their community. Connecting with area colleges serve as a great way to bring in attendees and also serves an opportunity to engage with service organizations for volunteer opportunities.

Most salient for this study was under the community factors and critical ingredients theme. Campbell and Duxbury (2011) explained that communities who foster and support arts will experience “an underlying appreciation and attitude of acceptance toward local culture, history, people and assets, and a community’s “sense of place” (p. 115). One way to foster and support the arts in a community is through festivals. Cultural tourism is experienced through festivals that highlight a unique characteristic of the community. Campbell and Duxbury (2011) explained the success of festivals is experienced because people feel “the need for connection – to others, to markets, to sources of inspiration and trends, to broadcast oneself outward” (p.114). Therefore, creating a vibrant culture around a festival will help attract people to a community which enhances the economy while also attracting and retaining residents looking for a vibrant community to connect with. Additionally, communities and art organizations can utilize college students as a valuable resource by providing service opportunities to them while they are in college.

Art engagements have been explored through the National Endowment for the Arts [NEA](2012) *How Art Works* system map which highlighted the benefits of engaging in arts for the economy, the individual, and the community. On an individual level, college students engage in art through presentations, attending theatre, class discussions, social dancing, remixing art, and benefit through an increased sense of being and appreciation for aesthetics and cultural diversity (Campbell & Duxbury, 2011; Kaufman & Feldman, 2004; Lundberg, 2010; National Endowment for the Arts, 2012). Opportunities like volunteerism and art participation allow community stakeholders to create experiences that engage college students which can potentially influence their cultural awareness and appreciation which can foster their sense of community. Arts engagements offer communities a unique way to redefine themselves, engage their

community members, and contribute to economic growth (Campbell & Duxbury, 2011).

Campbell and Duxbury (2011) explained that communities that support art engagements create a sense of place through an underlying appreciation and acceptance of arts, culture, history, and people. This evidence suggests that engaging college students in arts and cultural events during college may increase students' sense of community. The potential relationship between college students' arts engagement and retention of graduates within those communities' merits further exploration.

Output: Sense of Community

Connecting to Astin's (2012) IEO framework, in this context, the output examined is the students experienced sense of community from connecting to the community beyond campus. Sense of community has been researched in multiple contexts with different populations and amongst college students in higher education settings (Bengfort, 2012; Camputaro, 2017; McMillan, Peterson, & Speer, 2008). To develop their definition and theory of Sense of Community, Chavis and McMillan (1986) analyzed multiple studies and found a recurring emphasis on length of residency, home ownership, and satisfaction with the community. Their definition for sense of community is a shared emotional connection that is "a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together" (Chavis & McMillan, p. 9). Chavis and McMillan's (1986) concept of sense of community (1986) identified four elements that contribute to one's sense of community: 1) membership and the feeling of belonging; 2) influence; 3) integration and needs fulfillment; and 4) shared emotional connection. A strong sense of community is created through established groups or clubs, organizations, religious groups, and neighborhoods, to name a few.

Chavis and McMillan (1986) described that community can be experienced through physical or figurative boundaries and related experiences. Membership to an organization, religious group, or any kind of community is a way to create boundaries that create a space for emotional safety and intimacy to develop. These boundaries create a sense of security and the membership of the group provides a sense of belonging. The second element of the Sense of Community Theory is described through the influence of the group on its members and the understanding that as a member you can have an influence on the group as well. This creates validation amongst members and conformity, however, Chavis and McMillan (1986) acknowledge the need to develop communities that appreciate diversity and individual differences. Next, they explained that sense of community is identified through integration and needs fulfillment and “that members’ needs will be met by the resources received through their membership” (p. 13). It is important for students as residents of a greater community to have their personal and educational needs met. Chavis and McMillan’s (1986) Sense of Community Theory acknowledged that people are often motivated by their personal needs which helps them determine the groups and people they connect with. Being a member of a community enhances a sense of shared values with people that have similar needs, priorities, and goals, thus “fostering the belief that in joining together they might be better able to satisfy these needs and obtain the reinforcement they seek” (p. 13). Lastly, Chavis and McMillan (1986) identified that sense of community is experienced through shared emotional connection and idea that members have similar history, common places, and relatable experiences. These four elements that create the Sense of Community Theory are significant for this study to help identify what influences college students’ connection to a community.

In one study, Bengfort (2012) aimed to determine if Chavis and McMillan's (1986) sense of community, measured by the Sense of Community Index (SCI) influences students' decisions to persist in their academic studies as measured by their intent to return. Bengfort (2012) replicated a previous research study and examined differences in the levels of sense of community among college students who utilized campus resources and those who did not. He utilized the four factors that create Chavis and McMillan's Sense of Community Theory which are membership, influence, needs fulfillment and a shared emotional connection and modified them as subscales. Bengfort (2012) surveyed degree-seeking college freshman, determined by students with less than 30 credit hours, from a four year institution, which resulted in 304 completed survey responses. By examining students overall sense of community and the related subscales, Bengfort's (2012) data analysis indicated that students who were members of "a learning community had a higher overall sense of community score ($M=3.70$)" (p. 87). Additionally, students that were members of a learning community reported a stronger emotional connection ($M=4.03$) and a higher feeling of membership ($M=4.20$) than those that were not members of a learning community ($M=3.70$ and $M=3.53$, respectively). Students who utilized campus services had a higher sense of community ($M=3.66$) than those who did not interact or participate in the campus services or activities ($M=3.33$). Specifically, students who attended speaker events and festivals reported a high sense of community ($M=3.58$) than those who did not participate ($M=3.30$) in those types of campus activities. Interactions with faculty outside of the classroom was reported to increase sense of community for students who interacted with faculty two or more times ($M=3.25$). This study indicated that an overall sense of community is experienced through social interactions, membership, needs fulfillment, and shared emotional connections.

In this conceptual framework, college students (inputs) experience, participate, and benefit from art through a variety of arts engagements (environments). Literature has illustrated that engaging and participating in art can provide educational and social outlets for people of all ages, and specifically, for people 18-24 through social dancing, creating, and remixing art (National Endowment for the Arts, 2015). Research has also indicated that sense of community (outputs) can be fostered through shared experiences and through strategic and intentional efforts (Chavis & McMillan, 1986) and these findings extend to the experiences of college students (Bengfort, 2012). Art engagements are often a shared experience that encourage cultural awareness and critical thinking in a welcoming environment which can foster a sense of community, therefore, a relationship could exist between art engagements and sense of community. This relationship was examined in the case of Campus Philly, as discussed in the next section.

Art and Sense of Community: Campus Philly, A Case Study

The following case study of Campus Philly demonstrates the relationship between arts engagements and sense of community for college students and recent college graduates. Campus Philly (2010) is an organization in Philadelphia that has implemented strategic efforts to successfully attract, engage, and retain college students residing in Philadelphia. Campus Philly was established as an organization after notable research and reports from local organizations including Philadelphia's Center City District, the Knowledge Industry Partnership, and the Pennsylvania Economy League, recognized what an asset it was having so many college students and future permanent residents, living in Philadelphia. The Knowledge Industry Partnership [KIP] (2004) reported that Philadelphia has 83 colleges and universities hosting 300,000 college students, however despite having a lot of students enrolled at local institutions, Philadelphia's

overall rate of bachelor degree holders was only 29%, 11% lower than the average of major metros. Under the leadership of KIP (2004), Philadelphia worked “collaboratively to address workforce issues through its regional “One Big Campus” initiative” (p. 3) and in 2004 Campus Philly was established. The mission of Campus Philly explained that they are “a nonprofit organization that fuels economic growth by encouraging college students to study, explore, live and work in the Greater Philadelphia tri-state region” (Campus Philly, 2010, p. 2).

Since the inception of Campus Philly in 2004, the organization has thoughtfully approached its mission with three underlying goals which were to attract, engage, and retain college students. To support their first goal of attracting college students Campus Philly explained that they highlighted unique areas of the city because graduates wanted to “live and work in a diverse environment in close proximity to arts, culture, nightlife and cafes, with easy access to parks and recreation” (City Center District, 2003, p. 5). Next, to engage enrolled students they focused on providing “positive first-hand experiences throughout the city and region” (Campus Philly, 2010, p. 2). And lastly, to achieve their goal of retaining college students post-college, Campus Philly (2010) “introduced students to professional opportunities and Greater Philadelphia’s high quality of life” (p. 2).

In order to achieve these three goals, Campus Philly (2010) worked with 43 arts and culture organizations, 31 colleges and 25+ corporate partners to provide engaging off-campus experiences for college students. Prior to this, Campus Philly (2015) identified that, initially, “only 29% of recent college graduates stayed in the region after they graduated” (p. 8). Critical efforts were made to connect with college students in Philadelphia, resulting in a “115% increase in college-educated 25 to 34-year-olds in Philadelphia between 2000 and 2017” (Campus Philly, 2019, p. 8). Campus Philly explained that this growth happened with effort and intention

between a variety of community partners. The organizers further noted that cities can be intentional in attracting, engaging, and retaining college students if they make it a priority.

Prior to the creation of Campus Philly, Philadelphia's Center City District (2003) sought to understand what attracted individuals to their community and demographics of those who were there. To explore this, Center City District surveyed 394 people at nine different locations throughout Philadelphia, and pre-screened respondents who met the following criteria: people who were 22 to 34 years old, college graduates (bachelor's degree or higher), living in Center City or nearby counties, and they visit Center City more than one day each week. Of the 394 interviewed, 32% lived in the region their entire lives, 68% had lived elsewhere, 12% previously lived in New York City after graduating and returned to Philadelphia, 12% previously lived in the Boston/Cambridge area and 12% had lived abroad. Center City District (2003) highlighted that ex-New Yorkers and Bostonians rated Philadelphia as having a better cost of living, ranking higher than New York City in quality of parks, and ranked lower than Boston on nightlife, recreation, and attractiveness of its parks and recreational spaces. This is important because it indicates that communities have to be more than just affordable, they have to be attractive and engaging. Furthermore, Center City District's (2003) study noted that "respondents who have lived elsewhere described Philadelphia's comparative strengths as its unique, historic architecture, its arts and cultural events, its population diversity and quality of nightlife" (p. 3). This means those living in Philadelphia had deliberately made a choice based on the amenities the city had to offer as opposed to existing connections.

The methodology Campus Philly (2010) used to further understand the variables that residents look for when choosing a college or place to live after college was through a student retention survey completed by 4,600 undergraduates, graduates, and alumni. They kept the

survey open for one month and distributed it through their website, emailed it to their subscriber list of 30,000 students and alumni, and partnered with individual schools to send it out to their current students and recent alumni (Campus Philly, 2010). They weighted their responses to accurately reflect the sizes of the schools in their region, however, they did not further explain their methods for weighting the schools. Their survey results included 31 area colleges and the primary respondents were current students resulting in 66% of the responses, 19% were graduate students, and 15% alumni. Campus Philly asked their participants a variety of questions related to how they chose a college, made post-college decisions on where to live, and what activities they engaged in while in college. Campus Philly (2010) found that 90% of students were engaged in at least three off-campus activities at least twice a semester and that 44% of college students visited art museums and historical sites, 42% reported attending concerts and live music, and 21% attended live theatre performances. These types of experiences and opportunities drive a student's interest and connection with their community. Furthermore, Campus Philly (2010) found that 77% of their respondents who were more familiar with the region were more likely to remain there after graduation than the 23% of respondents who did not take the opportunity to engage with the region and therefore were less likely to stay.

The case study on Campus Philly served as a helpful illustration of connection points among arts engagements and sense of community for college students or recent college graduates. However, more work is needed to determine whether this applies in other areas of the country and how this manifests in current college students.

Conclusion

Chapter 2 presented a literature review with Astin's I-E-O framework in mind, incorporating three facets of the model: college students (inputs), arts engagements

(environment) and sense of community (outputs), shown as having a possible relationship through a case study on Campus Philly. College students come from diverse backgrounds and therefore experience art and sense of community differently (Camputaro, 2017; Lundberg, 2010). Literature has revealed that arts engagements can have positive educational and personal benefits on college students and also on the community (Campbell & Duxbury, 2011; Kaufman & Feldman, 2004; NEA, 2012). Connecting through arts engagements encourages social connections which build on the feeling of acceptance, a sense of belonging and can have a positive correlation on student's education (Campbell & Duxbury; Lundberg, 2011). Furthermore, the positive benefits of arts engagements can be illustrated through personal reflection, increased diversity and social awareness (Kaufman & Feldman, 2004; Lundberg, 2010). Art engagements, specifically those that are easily accessible for college students like festivals, allow for communities to celebrate their culture and create experiences that contribute to the local economy (Campbell & Duxbury, 2011). Community art organizations and higher education institutions can work together to foster a sense of community amongst college students by collaborating and providing accessible off-campus experiences. Sense of community is experienced through membership, influence, needs fulfillment, and shared emotional connection (Chavis & McMillan, 1986) and can be examined in a variety of contexts with multiple populations (Bengfort, 2012; Camputaro, 2017; McMillan, et al., 2008). As illustrated through related literature, the relationship between art engagements and sense of community appears to exist. One example of how it does is illustrated through the case study of Campus Philly. Enhancing community traits such as aesthetics, culture, arts, and nightlife makes communities attractive and intentionally engaging college students can result in an increased participation and

appreciation of the arts and therefore, an increased sense of community. The success of Campus Philly in attracting, engaging, and retaining college students inspired the current investigation.

CHAPTER 3. METHODS

This study aimed to understand the current involvement in arts engagements of college students in an upper Midwest community and the relationship between frequency of arts engagements and sense of community. To investigate this phenomenon, the following research questions were addressed:

1. What is the frequency of current college student participation in community arts engagements?
2. What is the relationship between the frequency of involvement in community art engagements and college students' sense of community?

The setting for this study was a land-grant research university with approximately 14,000 students in an upper Midwest metropolitan area comprised of approximately 230,000 residents. The metro area offered various opportunities for arts engagements including multiple community theatre groups, two art museums, gallery and exhibit space in local coffee shops, multiple performance venues, and various festivals and events throughout the year.

Research Design

This chapter describes the research design, methodology, population, and data collection and analysis. A quantitative descriptive and exploratory research design was used to investigate the relationship between college students' participation in community arts engagements and their sense of community. To understand these relationships, data was collected through a short Qualtrics survey administered electronically to college students holding senior status at a mid-sized, research university in the upper Midwest. Surveys provide a way to collect large-scale, statistically manipulable data in order to make generalizations. The survey (available in full in Appendix A) was broken down into four sections. Section A included two questions that

provided information about the frequency of involvement and average hours spent in community arts engagements. Students were asked to indicate the number of times on average they have engaged in eight different types of art-related events in the metropolitan community in the past year. For this survey question the term engaged was defined as attended, participated in, or volunteered at. Secondly, the participants were asked to estimate on average how many hours they spent engaged in each category. The number of engagements indicated the frequency of events, while the number of hours will indicate the length of time engaged.

The next section of the survey, Section B, included a slightly modified version of McMillan, Peterson, and Speers' (2008) *Brief Sense of Community Scale (BSCS)* as a way to collect data about each student's sense of community. The BSCS included eight statements for the participants to rate on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1). The BSCS utilized the word neighborhood as the descriptor for participants to rate. For this study, the word "neighborhood" was changed to "community" in order to ensure the students were thinking beyond the neighborhood in which their college resides. As noted in the survey instructions, the community in this study referred to the local metropolitan area in which the university is located. The BSCS was designed to be consistent with Chavis and McMillan's Sense of Community (SOC) theory (McMillan, et al., 2008). McMillan et al. (2008) have noted that the *Brief Sense of Community Scale* needs to be "tested with new populations and settings to assure generalizability of both the measure and the theory" (p. 70). The BSCS was previously found to have good internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha for the overall scale reported at .92 (McMillan et al., 2008). The BSCS was previously tested using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) of data gathered from a random sample of Midwestern community residents. Results from their study confirmed the first-order and second-order factor structure of the BSCS (McMillan et

al., 2008). Additionally, McMillan et al. (2008) indicated that “further analysis showed evidence of the measure’s construct validity. The overall BSCS scale and its subscale were found to be correlated as expected with community participation” (p. 70).

Section C of the survey included questions about post graduate influences and intentions. The first survey question asked what respondents plan on doing after college (i.e., attend graduate school, seek or start a job, move back home, etc.) with a follow up question asking where they plan to pursue their post-graduation plans. The next three questions focused on the importance of various experiences, characteristics, and factors that influenced decision-making after graduation with response options ranging from *did not even consider* to *very important*. Experiences included were volunteering, internships in the area, holding a job in the area, and church or faith community. The characteristics included quality of housing opportunities; quality of neighborhoods; art and cultural offerings; outdoor activities; and restaurants, nightlife, and entertainment. The factors included were cost of living, job opportunities, unemployment rates, the community’s image, the community’s size, and living near family.

Lastly, Section D of the survey included student demographic details including gender, sexual orientation, racial identity, and religious viewpoint. Additionally, survey respondents were asked which disciplinary area their primary major was in. These demographic details provided valuable insights for this study. Additionally, this section included questions related to specific art venues and art-related events in the local area. The options listed a diverse range of art galleries and concert venues that are accessible to college students, however it was not a comprehensive list. These additional two questions indicated student’s familiarity with arts engagements and activities in the community which provided valuable information for this study and community stakeholders.

Participants

Potential participants in this study included all undergraduate students at one mid-size, research university in the upper Midwest who held senior status, as determined by completed credits, and who were enrolled in the Spring 2020 semester. The total population was approximately 3,900 students. College seniors were selected due to the likelihood they are at least 21 which removes age restrictions to some events, due to the increased likelihood that they have access to transportation or are familiar with local transportation options, and due to the increased likelihood of being aware of local arts engagements, venues, and activities that may have occurred throughout their college career.

Data Collection

An electronic Qualtrics survey was administered via the official university email address of the potential participants. These email addresses were provided via an institutional records request following Institutional Review Board approval of the study. The survey was administered for a two-week period in the spring 2020 semester. An initial email was sent the first week to all of the potential participants explaining the purpose of the survey and inviting them to participate. A follow up email was sent out to non-respondents at five and ten-day intervals with a reminder to participate in the survey.

Analysis

There are two variables being measured which are: college students' participation in community arts engagements and college students' sense of community. In order to answer the research questions, statistical analysis was performed using SPSS v.26. The first research question aimed to identify the frequency of current college student participation in community

arts engagements. To analyze the data, descriptive statistics were used to report the mean and standard deviation for the number of events attended.

The second research question examined the relationship between the frequency of involvement of each type of community arts engagements (as determined in research question one) and college students' sense of community. To understand the students' sense of community, McMillan et al.'s (2008) *Brief Sense of Community Scale (BSCS)* was used in the survey. Initially, the reliability of the scale was checked to determine its suitability for use in further analysis. Upon determination of acceptable internal consistency, a summative subscale score of participants' sense of community was generated based on participant responses to the eight scale items. To determine if there was a relationship between the frequency of involvement in community arts engagements and the students' sense of community the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was used to analyze the data.

Delimitations

A delimitation to this study is that the researcher was relying on students' recollection of their experiences attending arts engagements for their survey responses which may not entirely be accurate. To help offset concerns about reporting accuracy, lists of specific event types were provided to help spur participants' recollection of attending events. Secondly, the setting of this study took place at one Midwest institution which is one of five local area colleges. Sampling students from other area institutions would allow the results of this study to be generalized for the senior college student population of the local community.

CHAPTER 4. RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to understand the current involvement in arts engagements of college students in an upper Midwest community and the relationship between frequency of arts engagements and sense of community. To investigate this phenomenon, the following research questions were addressed:

1. What is the frequency of current college student participation in community arts engagements?
2. What is the relationship between the frequency of involvement in community arts engagements and college students' sense of community?

This chapter presents the statistical analyses and results of the study. The first section provides a profile of survey participants. The second section provides findings of the frequency of arts engagements and respondents overall sense of community. The final section provides a review of the relationship between the frequency of arts engagements and sense of community.

The study was conducted in spring 2020 at a mid-sized public research university in the upper Midwest region. A survey was administered through Qualtrics to students who met senior status by total accumulated credit hours which was approximately 3,964 students. A total of 453 students completed the survey. Of those 28 were omitted because the survey had only been opened and was not started, while another 22 additional cases were removed because respondents only answered a limited portion of questions. From this, 403 responses provided usable data for analysis, resulting in 10.2% response rate.

Participant Demographics

Participants were asked demographic questions including gender identity, sexual orientation, race, and religious identity. Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the

respondents. Students were asked to check all that applied to all identity-focused questions. For gender identity, participants could select from six possible choices including: genderqueer/nonbinary, transwoman, transman, woman, man, and I prefer not to disclose. The majority of respondents, 64% identified as female and 33% identified as male. For this study, the underrepresented gender categories made up 3% of responses and therefore were grouped together for analysis purposes. For sexual orientation, participants could select from six possible options including: asexual, bisexual, gay, lesbian, straight/heterosexual, and I prefer not to disclose. Regarding sexual orientation, the majority of students identified as heterosexual (87%). The other sexual identities and those who did not want to disclose made up the minority (13%) and therefore were grouped together as the LGBTQ+ category for analysis purposes. Students were asked to identify their racial identity from six possible options including: Asian, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Black or African American, Hawaiian Native or Pacific Islander, White, and I prefer not to disclose. The majority, 92%, of student respondents identified as white and the minority races, 8%, were grouped together to create the another race variable. Seven possible religious affiliations were listed for students to choose from including: Atheism, Agnosticism, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and I prefer not to disclose. In this study, 70% of students identified as Christian, which makes up the religious majority, and 5% of students identified as one of four other major religions (Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism) which were grouped together to create the religious minority. Additionally, 17% of students identified as non-religious and 8% identified that they practice another religion not listed.

Table 1

Participant Demographic Information and Frequency of Arts Engagement Attendance

Characteristic	N	%	Arts Engagement Frequency			
			M	SD	Min.	Max.
Gender Identity						
Woman	244	63.6	7.02	6.50	0	38
Man	135	33.4	5.31	5.83	0	35
Another Gender	12	3.0	10.17	13.80	2	53
Sexual Orientation						
LGBTQ+	51	13.1	8.45	9.87	0	53
Heterosexual	340	86.9	6.24	6.01	0	35
Racial Identity						
Another Race	32	8.4	8.16	9.61	0	53
White	370	91.6	6.38	6.34	0	38
Religious Viewpoint						
Religious majority	272	69.6	6.21	5.97	0	38
Religious minority	19	4.7	6.21	6.39	0	23
Non-religious	69	17.8	7.59	6.99	0	27
Another religious viewpoint	31	7.9	7.19	10.76	0	53

Research Question 1

The first research question aimed to identify the frequency of current college student participation in community arts engagements. Respondents were asked to indicate the number of times (between 0 and 10+) they engaged in community art related events in the past year for each type of arts engagement including: concerts, theatre, dance, visited an art museum or gallery,

festivals or markets, creative workshops, gala or art reception, and other. The average participant attendance at various arts engagements in the community can be viewed in Table 2. SPSS data analysis software was used to run descriptive statistics to report the mean and standard deviation for each type of arts engagements and for the overall total of arts engagements for the full respondent population. On average, a mean of 6.53 events with a standard deviation of 6.67 was reported for total community arts engagements for study participants. The most frequent type of arts engagement attended was reported to be “festivals and markets” with a mean response of 2.48 events per participant and standard deviation of 2.40. The second most frequented arts engagements was reported to be “concerts” with a mean of 1.20 and standard deviation of 2.29.

Table 2

Mean Arts Engagement Attendance by Event Category

Event Category	Arts Engagement Frequency			
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Min.	Max.
Concerts	1.20	2.30	0	10
Theatre	.75	1.58	0	10
Dance	.61	1.67	0	10
Art museum or gallery	.92	1.54	0	10
Festivals/Markets	2.48	2.40	0	10
Creative workshops	.37	.89	0	7
Gala or reception	.25	.76	0	9
Total events	6.53	6.67	0	53

Table 1 breaks down the frequency of college student arts engagements by demographic detail as well as the minimum and maximum scores per demographic detail. Students who reported another gender other than man or woman, reported having attended more arts

engagements (M=10.17, SD=13.80) than women (M=7.02, SD=6.50) and men (M=5.31, SD=5.83). LGBTQ+ students reported to have attended more total arts engagements (M=8.45, SD=9.87) than heterosexual students (M=6.24, SD=6.01). Students who identified as a race other than white reported having attended more events (M=8.16, SD=9.61) than white students (M=6.38, SD=6.34). Lastly, those who identified as non-religious reported more frequent arts engagements (M=7.59, SD=6.99) than Christians (M=6.20, SD=5.97).

Research Question 2

The second research question examined the relationship between the frequency of arts engagements and college students' sense of community. To understand college students' sense of community, McMillan, et al.'s (2008) eight item *Brief Sense of Community Scale* (BSCS) was used to measure the students sense of community. The items comprising the scale were scored on a five-point Likert-type scale labeled *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5). For this study, the word "neighborhood" was changed to "community" to direct students thinking beyond their campus boundaries. The BSCS has previously been shown to have good internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the overall scale reported at .92 (McMillan et al., 2008). In this current study, the Cronbach's alpha was .876. The minimum possible score for the BSCS subscale was 8 to a maximum score of 40, with higher scores indicating greater feeling of sense of community. Of the student participants, 1.5% scored between 8-15, indicating they experienced a very low sense of community; 18.5% scored between 16-24, indicating they experienced a moderately low sense of community; the majority (63%) scored between 25-32, indicating they experienced a moderately high sense of community; and 11.2% scored between 33-40, indicating they experienced a very high sense of community.

The relationship between the frequency of involvement in arts engagements and sense of community (as measured by the *Brief Sense of Community Scale*) was investigated using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. Preliminary analyses were performed to ensure no violation of the assumption of normality through a visual examination of a box plot (see Figure 1), and no violation of the assumptions of linearity and homoscedasticity through a visual examination of a scatterplot (see Figure 2). There was a weak, positive correlation between the two variables ($r=.193$, $n=388$, $p < .001$), with higher levels of arts engagements associated with higher levels of sense of community. This indicates a relationship does exist between arts engagements and sense of community.

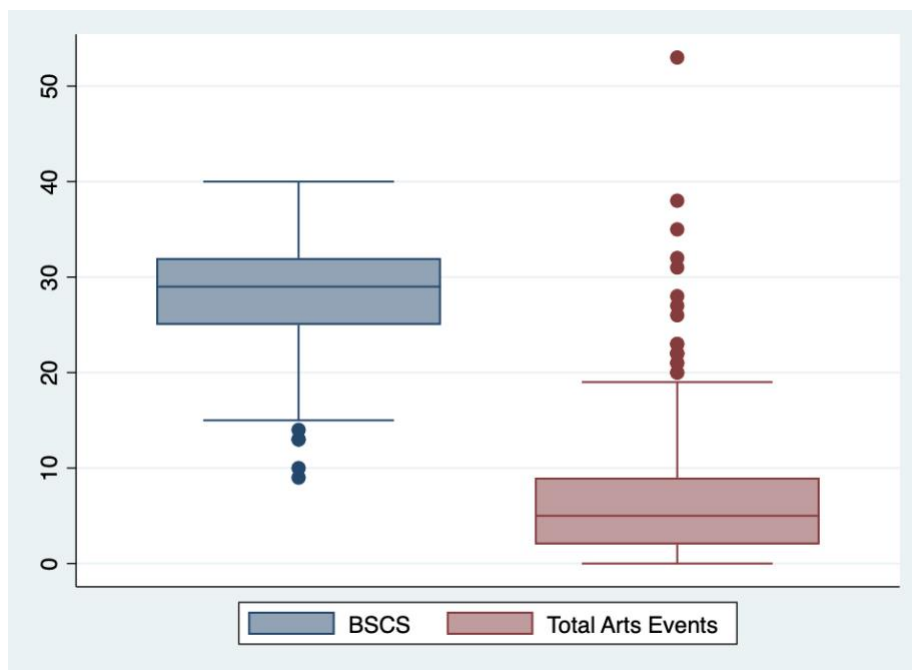


Figure 1. Box Plot of Brief Sense of Community Scale Scores and Total Arts Events Attended.

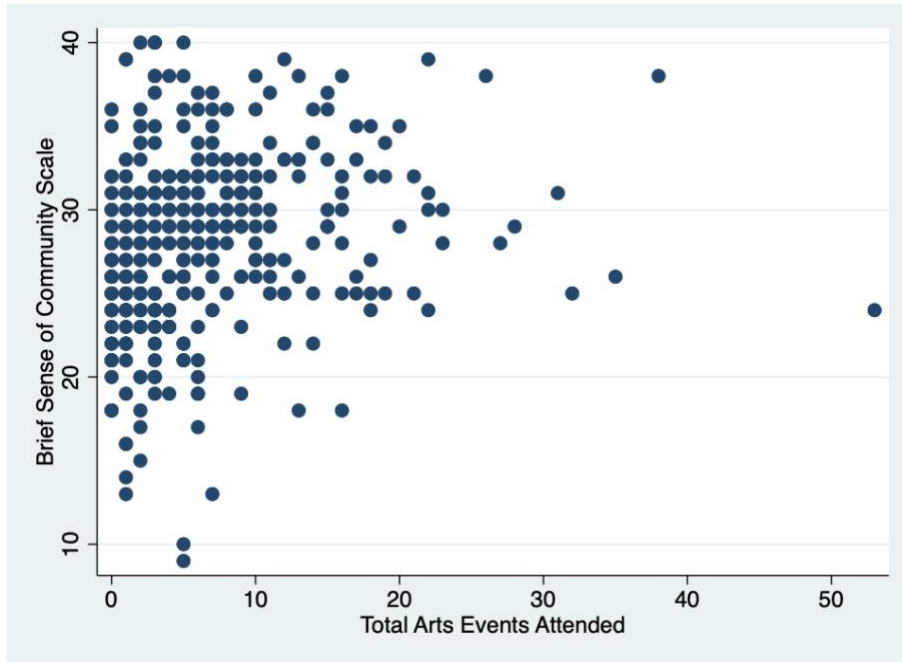


Figure 2. Scatterplot of Brief Sense of Community Scale Scores and Total Arts Events Attended.

Conclusion

Chapter four provided an explanation of the statistical analyses performed and reported findings aimed at answering each of the research questions. Chapter five offers a discussion of the findings and limitations of the study, along with implications for theory and practice, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION

Community arts engagements provide students with the opportunity to connect and engage with like-minded individuals through a shared experience and shared emotional connections (Bengfort, 2012; Kaufman & Feldman, 2004; National Endowment for the Arts [NEA], 2012). There is evidence that a relationship exists between college student arts engagements and sense of community, as viewed through the case study of Campus Philly presented in Chapter 2. Campus Philly (2010) has intentionally developed relationships with campus and community partners to provide attractive and accessible arts engagements for college students in Philadelphia with the hopes of retaining them there after college. Through strategic efforts targeting the college population in Philadelphia, engaging them in the arts at minimal or no costs, Campus Philly was able to successfully increase college students' interest and appreciation of Philadelphia, and therefore increase the retention of local college graduates by 115% (Campus Philly, 2019). The results of this particular case show promise as a way to enhance student's experiences, creates a sense of community, and ultimately support communities in retaining graduates. However, literature related to frequency of community arts engagements among college students is limited. Additionally, while Campus Philly showed great potential for such initiatives, there is not yet enough research with the college student population to understand how exactly arts engagements function to connect students with the broader community, and whether this sort of initiative would work in other contexts.

The purpose of this study was to understand the current involvement in arts engagements of college students in an upper Midwest community and the relationship between the frequency of arts engagements and sense of community. To investigate this phenomenon, the following research questions were addressed:

1. What is the frequency of current college students' engagements in the arts?
2. What is the relationship between the frequency of college students' involvement in arts engagements and their sense of community?

This chapter provides a summary and discussion of the study findings, practical and theoretical implications, limitations, and directions for future research.

Summary and Discussion of Findings

For this study, a brief Qualtrics survey was administered electronically to 3,964 college seniors in an upper Midwest research university in the spring of 2020. Of the potential participants, 403 responded, for a response rate of 10.2%. Participant data were analyzed using descriptive frequencies, as well as correlational analysis. This study aimed to answer two research questions to aid in understanding the relationship between arts engagements and sense of community experienced by college students.

Research question one aimed to identify the frequency of current college students' engagement in the arts. To answer research question one, participants were asked to identify the number of times between 0 and 10+, they engaged in community art related events from seven possible categories in the past year. The mean and standard deviation was reported for each category, indicating that on average, college students participated in 6.5 events ($SD=6.67$) in the arts community in the past year. This provides baseline frequency of community arts engagements among college students that has not previously been provided in literature. In relationship to Astin's (2012) Input-Environment-Output framework, the inputs in this study were college student characteristics. As one might expect the results of this study indicate a substantial difference in engagement based off of student characteristics. For example, students who identified as a gender other than man or woman reported to have participated in more arts

engagements ($M=10.17$, $SD=13.80$) than women ($M=7.02$, $SD=6.50$) and men ($M=5.31$, $SD=5.83$). LGBTQ+ students reported to have attended more total arts engagements ($M=8.45$, $SD=9.87$) than heterosexual students ($M=6.24$, $SD=6.01$). Students who identified as a race other than white reported having attended more events ($M=8.16$, $SD=9.61$) than white students ($M=6.38$, $SD=6.34$). This implies that students of minority represented groups from diverse backgrounds are more likely to be seeking out opportunities to engage in arts-related events than their majority-group peers.

College students reported they most frequently attended festivals and markets ($M=2.48$, $SD=2.40$), along with concerts ($M=1.20$, $SD=2.29$) in the community. The least frequented arts engagements that college students reported in this study were gala or art receptions ($M=.25$, $SD=.76$), creative workshops ($M=.37$, $SD=.89$), and dance ($M=.61$, $SD=1.67$). The high attendance at festivals and markets observed in this study confirms Campbell and Duxbury's (2011) findings that festivals provide attractive ways for people to easily connect with a community through shared cultural experiences and underlying appreciation toward local culture. The events that are low in attendance could be due to the accessibility of the event. It is possible that there is a correlation between how frequently events are attended with how frequently they are offered and that events like social dancing and craft workshops are not frequently attended because there are limited opportunities. Additionally, galas often are expensive to attend which make them less approachable for college students. Contradictory to the NEA (2012) findings that young adults (18-24) were more likely to participate in social dancing, this study found that dancing was something this population of students did not report to frequently engage in.

Research question two examined the relationship between the frequency of college students' involvement in arts engagements and their sense of community. To answer research question two, participants were asked to rate their agreement of statements on a five point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1) regarding statements from McMillan, et al.'s (2008) eight item *Brief Sense of Community Scale (BSCS)*. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was used to analyze the data and determine if there was a relationship between the frequency of involvement in community arts engagements and students' sense of community. The results of the data analysis identified that there was a weak, positive correlation between the two variables ($r=.193$, $n=388$, $p < .001$), with higher levels of arts engagements associated with higher levels of sense of community, meaning a relationship does exist. The findings in this study indicate that college students who more frequently attended arts engagements in the community had a higher sense of community than those who attended less frequently. This findings, coupled with the differences in frequency of attendance at arts engagements among students with varying characteristics, indicates that the different inputs (college students characteristics) appeared to interact with their environments differently, ultimately leading to varying outputs as reflected in differences in reported sense of community. Consistent with previous empirical work, students of underrepresented races who actively participate in the arts have a positive sense of community. For example, in Lundberg's (2010) study, students of underrepresented races reported a positive correlation with student learning through participation in art discussions with their peers. Additionally, he found that this population of students who engaged in fine arts self-reported that these activities had a positive contribution to their general education (Lundberg, 2010). The implications of this study suggest that college students from diverse backgrounds who engage in art related activities with their

peers experience a positive social and emotional connection in a safe and welcoming environment, which is a facet of building a sense of community, a concept discussed further in the next section.

Chavis and McMillan's (1986) Sense of Community Theory indicated that sense of community is experienced through membership, influence, needs fulfillment, and shared emotional connections and being a member of a community enhances a sense of shared values with people of similar needs, priorities, and goals. Bengfort's (2012) study examined freshman college students overall sense of community based off various subscales including learning communities, participation in campus services and activities, and attending speaker events and festivals. His findings noted that students who actively participated in events and festivals reported a high sense of community. The results of this study complement Bengfort's (2012) study, as current findings indicate that attending arts engagements, of which festivals were the most commonly attended, is associated with higher levels of sense of community experienced by college students. Camputaro (2017) found that college students who participated in campus activities had experienced a greater sense of community; the results of this study found the same was true of college students participation community arts events – those that had greater participation also had greater sense of community. Additionally, Camputaro (2017) noted that students who have a positive social life and feeling of acceptance reported a greater sense of community than those who had a negative social life. Physical structures like a student union or art venues can provide safe and welcoming spaces for students to socially connect which can impact their social life and therefore impact their sense of community. In this study, students of minority groups reported to more frequently engage in community arts which implies that art venues provide safe and welcoming physical spaces for these students to socially connect. This

confirms Camputaro's (2017) findings that physical and organizational structures can foster a sense of community with college students. As theory would suggest, opportunities to attend art events, create art, and discuss art organizations fosters a sense of community amongst college students (Campbell & Duxbury, 2011; Lundberg, 2010; NEA, 2012). This implies that arts engagements influence a college students' sense of community.

Implications

The results of this study have both theoretical and practical implications related to arts engagements and sense of community among college students.

Theoretical Implications

Astin's (2012) Input-Environment-Outcome college impact model was used as the conceptual framework for this study in order to illustrate the theoretical connections among the characteristics of college students, their involvement in arts engagements, and their sense of community. The I-E-O model provides a theoretical link between certain outcome experiences by students and varying student characteristics (inputs) and experiences (environment). In this conceptual framework, college students (inputs) experience, participate, and benefit from art through a variety of arts engagements (environments). Literature has illustrated that engaging and participating in art can provide educational and social outlets for people of all ages, and specifically, for people 18-24 through social dancing, creating, and remixing art (National Endowment for the Arts, 2015). Research has also indicated that sense of community (outputs) can be fostered through shared experiences and through strategic and intentional efforts (Chavis & McMillan, 1986) and these findings extend to the experiences of college students (Bengfort, 2012). Arts engagements are often a shared experience that encourage cultural awareness and critical thinking in a welcoming environment which can foster a sense of community. This

theoretical connection between arts engagements and sense of community was investigated for this study.

The results of this study affirmed that this theoretical connection did, indeed, exist among the college student population. The results of this study revealed that arts engagements were actively sought out in particular by certain groups of college students. Those students who attended arts engagements more frequently experienced a greater sense of community. In their Sense of Community Theory, Chavis and McMillan (1986) posited that people experience a feeling “of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members’ needs will be met through their commitment to be together” (Chavis & McMillan, p. 9). Chavis and McMillan’s (1986) noted that sense of community is experienced through four factors: membership, needs fulfilments, influence, and shared emotional connection (Chavis & McMillan, 1986). The connection found in this study between college students (inputs), their involvement in arts engagements (environment), and their reported sense of community (outcomes), likely emerged due to the fact that arts engagements support Chavis and McMillan’s (1986) four factors that shape their Sense of Community Theory. For example, arts engagements support the feeling of membership because arts engagements of all kinds bring likeminded audiences together. Specifically, in this study, college students reported to frequently attend concerts, which fosters the feeling of membership through a shared interest in a musical artist or genre of music. Secondly, arts engagements fulfill personal and social needs through the various interactions that take place during the experience. Festivals were reported to be the most popular arts engagement amongst college students and have proven to support social interactions which is a facet of ones’ personal needs (Campbell & Duxbury, 2011). Third, arts engagements influence people through the exposure of information depicted in the art. For example, as

illustrated in this study festivals are reported to be the most popular arts engagement for college students. Festivals often depict or highlight different cultures which impacts one's awareness and which can influence their understanding of certain subjects or culture. Lastly, arts engagements support a shared emotional connection for participants. Chavis and McMillan's (1986) Sense of Community Theory posits that shared emotional connections is experienced through the notion that members are of similar history, common places, and relatable experiences. In this study, college students of minority groups sought out participation in arts engagements more than the majority groups. This implied that students of minority groups were interested in finding people of a similar history, common place, through relatable experiences which can happen through participation of arts engagements. This study extended the application of Chavis and McMillan's (1986) Sense of Community Theory to link it meaningfully to arts engagements, and specifically to the college student population. Furthermore, the findings in this study confirmed the reliability of McMillan et al.'s (2008) *Brief Sense of Community Scale* among the college student population as a measurement of sense of community. The practical implications of this study are the focus of the next section.

Practical Implications

The practical implications of this study can provide universities and community art partners with valuable insights on engaging college students with the arts community. The results of this study indicate that strategic efforts, collaboration, and intentional curation of arts engagements for college students should be a priority for communities looking to increase engagement of college students. Universities and community art partners would benefit by curating attractive and accessible arts engagements specifically designed with college students in mind. For example, college students in this study reported to most frequently engage in festivals,

markets, and concerts, all of which are social settings. Curating a festival with low cost or free admission to college students would offer a social setting for college students to connect with peers and also community partners in a designated “market” area. Additionally, offering a concert experience during the festival would further engage this population who have reported to frequently attend concerts. For events with low engagement in this study, like social dancing, art receptions, or craft workshops it is likely that they are too expensive, too formal, or not known to college students. Furthermore, offering more opportunities for college students to engage in these types of events would also likely increase their participation. Community art groups and universities would benefit from collaborating to establish strategic marketing efforts of these types of social activities that research has illustrated to be appreciated by young adults.

Further, community art partners, universities, and college students would benefit by nurturing the relationship with students from minority groups, while also figuring out ways to build relationships with students that make up the majority. For example, this study takes place in a small community in the upper Midwest in a predominately conservative state where the majority of student respondents reported to be white. These students reported to attend arts engagements less frequently than students of another race. Additionally, the majority of students identified to be Christian and heterosexual. As seen through literature, festivals provide a way for different cultures to be celebrated. Exposing college students to different cultures through festivals can assist in appreciation and understanding of people from different backgrounds in an approachable and welcoming setting and is vital for cultural acceptance.

As seen with Campus Philly’s (2018) through intentional efforts and collaboration between campus and community partners they created “Open Arts College Night” which allowed college students to attend theatre, opera, and festivals for free. For events like social dancing,

dance event hosts would benefit from hosting “Free College Night” in order to attract and engage college students by providing a popular activity at no cost. For special art receptions or galas that charge admission event hosts would benefit from having “Open Arts College Hour” where the last hour of the event was free for college students to attend. This would give the students a chance to experience a special event in an accessible way and would be beneficial for art events that last multiple hours to encourage a continued audience. Lastly, to engage college students in creative workshops, community art partners could offer discounts to student organizations on campus to easily connect with groups of students that already spend time together and share common interests. This applies to the students’ sense of community through the membership that exists within the student organization, the needs fulfillment they get from that group, the influence the group has on their own participation, and the shared emotional connection that participants can experience through a creative workshop.

The findings of this study are salient for universities, college students, community art partners, and legislators or anyone who helps determine funding for the arts, an area often overlooked. For universities, the findings of this study illustrate the benefit of learning that happens from engaging in community art activities and highlights the desire students have to connect with an attractive and engaging community. For college students, these findings encourage students to participate in the arts in the community to experience a shared emotional connection which can in turn have positive benefits on their overall sense of connection to a community. For anyone funding the arts including legislators, these findings suggest the benefit of financially supporting the arts because of the benefit experienced by a community. As seen with Campus Philly collaboration between various partners proved to be a key component to their success. Intentional effort to engage college students through strategic marketing can

increase their awareness and potential involvement in art engagements. It is possible that the college students in this study simply are not aware of galas, art receptions, creative workshops, or dancing opportunities that go on. This highlights a need for community and campus partners to collaborate and find ways to intentionally engage college students. Campus partners already have access to communication channels with their students. Community partners can provide the physical venues and offer special nights or curated events with college students in mind. Together, this type of collaboration can make a difference in engaging college students with the arts, and ultimately connecting them to the broader community. As illustrated through Campbell and Duxbury's (2011) study and Campus Philly (2015), art engagements can increase sales and tax revenue, civic engagement, and cultural acceptance. Supporting and enhancing arts engagements specifically designed with college students in mind can increase college students' participation, which can foster their sense of community, which greatly benefits the student and the community.

Limitations and Practical Recommendations for Future Research

A limitation of this study is a lack of accurate data reported for the hours of engagement in art events. To get a clear picture of the frequency of involvement in arts engagements this study aimed to understand how often college students engaged in arts events in the community through two possible measurements, how many times students engaged in arts events, and the number of hours they typically spend engaged at each event. Participants were asked to report the number of hours engaged in each art related category in the past year, however, the results indicated that there were misinterpretations for that question. Some students clearly added up all of the hours for the past year and some students indicated the average hours they spent at a single event, giving a range of hours that did not accurately represent the question. Future research

looking to understand the depth of involvement in arts engagements would benefit from clearer wording of this question. Only seniors were surveyed in this study, another limitation. Surveying college students of other classifications would also provide valuable information to various stakeholders. For example, younger students could have a very different level of engagement in the arts community and therefore, a different experienced sense of community. Future research could focus on younger college students to identify their level of engagement in the arts community and also what events they are engaging in. It is possible that sophomores and juniors often stayed on campus the previous year and did not venture out much in the arts community. Or it is possible that sophomores and juniors frequented more community arts engagements than seniors did due to the fact that they are often free and you do not always have to be 21 years old to attend.

Another limitation of this study is that it took place in the upper Midwest, in a community that is predominantly white and lacking a greater metropolitan area. These findings suggest that engaging college students in the community through arts increase their sense of community in the upper Midwest, however, more research needs to be done to identify if this is true for other larger cities or geographic regions with more diversity. In terms of demographics, the total sample included a vast majority of students identifying as white (91.6%) and heterosexual (86.9%). Additionally, the majority of students identified as Christian (69.6%). Furthermore, it is important to investigate whether participation in arts engagements would foster a sense of community amongst students from underrepresented groups including students from the minority races, gender identity, sexual identity, and religious viewpoints.

As seen with Campus Philly, the efforts of attracting, engaging, and retaining college students can increase the likelihood of college students staying in the community and joining the

workforce after graduation. An additional area for future research is to investigate whether the connection with the community that is fostered by arts engagements ultimately influences college students' plans to remain there after graduation.

Conclusion

With the growing list of opportunities that engage college students, it is clear that arts engagements offer a multitude of benefits for college students and the community. Literature has demonstrated that arts engagements provide enhanced learning, cultural appreciation, social awareness, civic engagement, and social and emotional benefits that foster a sense of community (Bengfort, 2012; Campbell & Duxbury, 2011; Chavis & McMillan, 1986; Kaufman & Feldman, 2004; NEA, 2012). This study illustrated that there is a direct relationship between arts engagements and sense of community among college students. As seen with Campus Philly, communities can benefit from targeting college students and providing experiences to connect with the arts in the community. The benefits are seen through increased participation in arts events, increased sales and tax revenue, civic engagement, and increased aesthetic and cultural appreciation (Campbell & Duxbury, 2011; Campus Philly, 2010; Campus Philly, 2015). This study found that there is an increased sense of community experienced by college students who frequent arts engagements. College students on average attended 6.5 arts engagements in the community in a given year without community or university intervention. Curating free or discounted college nights and special events geared toward attracting and encouraging college students has potential to further increase their frequency of attendance. Lastly, this study illustrates that collaboration among community and campus partners is essential for intentional curation of arts events geared and marketed toward college students. Supporting and funding the

arts in the community is vital for cultural acceptance, civic engagement, and can support connecting college students to the broader community.

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APPENDIX. SENSE OF COMMUNITY AND ARTS ENGAGEMENT SURVEY

Section A: Frequency of Arts Engagements

1. Please indicate the number of times on average that you have engaged in the following art-related events in the local community in the past year: (by engaged we mean attended, participated in, volunteered at, etc.) [drop down response ranging from 0 - 10+]

- a. Concerts (Jazz, orchestra, band, choir, etc.)
- b. Theatre (Musical, non-musical, Opera)
- c. Dance
- d. Visited an art museum or art gallery
- e. Festivals/Markets
- f. Creative Workshops
- g. Gala or art-related reception
- h. Other

2. For this next section, we would like to know how many hours, on average, you spent engaged in the following types of events in the local area: [drop down response ranging from 0 - 20+]

- a. Concerts (Jazz, orchestra, band, choir, etc.)
- b. Theatre (Musical, non-musical, Opera)
- c. Dance
- d. Visited an art museum or art gallery
- e. Festivals/Markets
- f. Creative Workshops
- g. Gala or art-related reception
- h. Other

Section B: Sense of Community.

1. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

Note: "community" refers to the local area in the following questions:

5 point Likert scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

- a. I can get what I need in this community.
- b. This community helps fulfill my needs.
- c. I feel like a member of this community.
- d. I belong in this community.
- e. I have a say about what goes on in my community.
- f. People in this community are good at influencing each other.
- g. I feel connected to this community
- h. I have a good bond with others in this community.

Section C: Post-graduation influences and intentions

1. What do you plan on doing once you graduate?

- a. Graduate School
- b. I have a job offer
- c. Continue at my current job
- d. Look for a job
- e. Start my own business
- f. Military Service
- g. Volunteering
- h. I am not sure yet

2. Where do you wish to pursue your plans after graduation?

- a. Local area
- b. Outside of the local area
- c. I am not sure yet

Section D: Impact of experiences

1. To what extent do the following **experiences** influence your decision on where to live after graduation? *4-point Likert scale from didn't even consider (1) to very important (4)*

- a. Volunteering Experience
- b. Internship
- c. Held a job in the area during college
- d. Church or faith community in the area
- e. Community organization(s)

2. To what extent do the following **characteristics** influence your decision on where to live after graduation? *4-point Likert scale from didn't even consider (1) to very important (4)*

- a. Quality of housing opportunities
- b. Quality of neighborhoods
- c. Art and cultural offerings
- d. Outdoor activities
- e. Restaurants, nightlife, entertainment

3. To what extent do the following **factors** influence your decision on where to live after graduation? *4-point Likert scale from didn't even consider (1) to very important (4)*

- a. Cost of living
- b. Post-graduate job opportunities
- c. Unemployment rate
- d. The community's image
- e. The community's size
- f. Staying close to family

Section E: Demographic Information

1. Please select the option(s) that best describes your gender:

- a. Genderqueer/Non-binary
- b. Transwoman
- c. Transman
- d. Woman
- e. Man
- f. I prefer not to disclose.

2. Please select the option(s) that best describes your sexual orientation:

- a. Asexual
- b. Bisexual
- c. Gay
- d. Lesbian
- e. Straight/Heterosexual
- f. I prefer not to disclose.

3. What is your racial identity? Please select all that apply.

- a. Asian
- b. American Indian or Alaskan Native
- c. Black or African American
- d. Hawaiian Native or Pacific Islander
- e. White
- f. I prefer not to disclose.

4. Regarding your current religious viewpoint, with which of the following do you most closely identify (choose all that apply)?

- a. Atheism
- b. Agnosticism

- c. Buddhism
 - d. Christianity
 - e. Hinduism
 - f. Islam
 - g. Judaism
 - h. I prefer not to disclose.
5. In which of the following disciplinary areas is your **primary** major:
- a. Arts (visual art, art education, theatre arts, or music)
 - b. Humanities & Social Sciences
 - c. Business
 - d. Education and Public & Human Services
 - e. Food & Agricultural and Environmental & Natural Resources
 - f. Life Sciences and Health Professions
 - g. Science, Technology, Engineering, or Mathematics
 - h. Other: _____
6. Where are you from?
- a. The local area
 - b. Same state – outside of the local area
 - c. Neighboring state – outside of the local area
 - d. Another state in the US
 - e. Outside of the US
7. Select which of these art venues you have visited in the past year (select all that apply)
- a. Variety of local art venues provided as options
8. Which of the following local art-related events are you familiar with? (select all that apply)
- a. Variety of local art-related events provided as options