

ON
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ARTS
FOR
EVERY
BODY

One Nation/One Project
RESEARCH BRIEF #1

FEBRUARY 2024

One Nation/One Project + Arts for EveryBody

Arts for EveryBody is a national arts and health campaign, led by One Nation/One Project (ONOP), a national initiative designed to engage the arts to strengthen the social fabric of communities in the United States on the heels of the COVID-19 pandemic.



The ONOP initiative leverages collaborations between the arts, public health, and municipal sectors to build health, health equity, and wellbeing, and the campaign is designed to communicate the relationship between the arts and health to the general public.

In 2022, One Nation/One Project launched a study to create a new definition for arts participation to guide its research on outcomes and impacts of arts participation in 18 American cities. This study sought to establish a more inclusive definition for arts participation as a foundation for One Nation/One Project’s research as well as for advancing community-based public health research on the health benefits of arts participation for individuals and communities.

Why is this definition needed?

Increasing attention is being given to the ways in which arts participation enhances individual and collective health and health equity.^{1,2}

For example, many studies have found that arts participation can help improve mental health, can help people to have better health as they get older, and can improve wellbeing.^{3,4}

As a result, arts participation is increasingly being recognized as an important health behavior.

As relationships between arts participation and health are being studied more, researchers need a definition for what arts participation is. This definition needs to include the full range of artistic and creative practices – including indigenous, spiritual, cultural, and social practices - that exist across communities and groups, instead of the more Euro-centric notions of art that exclude many of these practices. This is especially important because many of these practices are already deeply linked to health, wellbeing, social cohesion, and social change.^{2,5,6} Previous work to define arts participation has been done in the arts sector by groups like the National Endowment for the Arts, and by individual researchers in public health.^{7,8}

A New Definition for “Arts Participation”

How was this definition developed?

We conducted a study that included both qualitative and quantitative (mixed) methods. We started by studying all of the definitions that had previously been published. Then, we drafted a starting definition based on previous ones. We then administered surveys to collect people’s thoughts about the definition. After surveying, we analyzed all the perspectives and revised the definition. We did this three times - until the people surveyed were satisfied with the definition. Between each survey, we also collected the perspectives of the One Nation/One Project team and partners and included those perspectives in our revisions.



You can read the full details of the study, including the research methods and results, in the article published in the journal, *Health Promotion Practice* [here](#).

Who participated in the study?

Four groups of people were involved in the study:

- 1) Field experts from the Arts, Public Health, and Community Development sectors
- 2) ONOP Project Leaders and Partners
- 3) The General public
- 4) The Research team.

Study participants included 48 field experts, 12 One Nation/One Project team members and partners, and 267 members of the general public who agreed to participate in the study through the *ResearchMatch* platform.



The Definition

The definition includes two sections. The first section defines modes, or ways, in which people engage with the arts. It includes participation by makers, collaborators, audiences, observers, and others. The second section includes various art forms intended to frame the arts broadly and inclusively. These modes and forms span a spectrum of participation from creating to actively experiencing to observing the arts. The examples provided suggest a broad range and are not intended to denote every possible mode or form of participation.

Arts Participation | Full Definition

MODES (ways in which people engage, including informal, formal, live, virtual, individual and group participation)

- Attending live arts and cultural events and activities
- Creating, practicing, performing, and sharing art
- Participating in social, civic, spiritual, and cultural arts practices
- Consuming arts via electronic, digital, or print media
- Learning in, through, and about the arts



FORMS (art forms or disciplines with which people engage; the examples provided are intended to suggest a broad range and are not intended to note every possible art form)

Dance/Movement: Aerial, Ballet, Ballroom, Ceremonial, Contemporary, Cultural, Hip-Hop, Jazz, Step, Or Tap

Literary Arts: Storytelling, Fiction, Nonfiction, Short Stories, Memoir, Screenwriting, Poetry, Childrens Literature, Graphic Novels

Media: Film, Animation, Work at the Intersection of Technology, Aesthetics, Storytelling, Digital Cultures

Music: Rap, Choral, Contemporary, Experimental, Gospel, Instrumental, Hip Hop, Classical, Chanting, Rock, Electronic, Drumming, Pop, World, Jazz

Theatre/Performance: (such as theatre, musical theatre, devised theatre, puppetry, performance art, ritual, opera, spoken word, stage design, circus arts, comedy)

Visual Arts, Craft, and Design: Illustration, Painting, Drawing, Collage, Printmaking, Installation, Photography, Gardening, Sculpture, Video Art, Street Art, Pottery, Glass, Jewelry, Metalworking, Textiles, Fashion, Culinary Arts, Graphic, Floral, Architectural, Environmental, Industrial Design

Arts Participation | Short Definition

To be inclusive, this definition includes examples of different arts activities. However, as we recognize that it is very long, below we offer a shorter version of the definition that does not include these examples.

Arts participation includes difference **MODES**, or ways, in which people engage in the arts, including informal, formal, live, virtual, individual and group participation.

These modes include:

- Attending live arts and cultural events and activities
- Creating, practicing, performing, and sharing art
- Participating in social, civic, spiritual, and cultural arts practices
- Consuming arts via electronic, digital, or print media
- Learning in, through, and about the arts



Arts participation also includes different art **FORMS** or disciplines with which people engage, including dance/movement, literary arts, media, music, theatre/performance, and visual arts, craft, and design.

A New Definition for “Arts Participation”

How can this definition be used and why is it important?

To be inclusive, this definition includes examples of different arts activities. However, as we recognize that it is very long, below we offer a shorter version of the definition that does not include these examples.

This work provides a foundation for defining the concept of arts participation in public health practice, research, and policy. It can be used by researchers as well as by people offering arts programming they wish to evaluate. It can also be used to develop survey questions and instruments, evaluations, and studies that measure the benefits of the arts to individual and public health. The definition can help advance the quality and precision of research and can help guide the development of more inclusive search strategies for literature reviews and evidence synthesis in this rapidly growing arena.

This definition may also be important in advancing policy and funding for arts programs that support health. **In 2022, US President Biden released an executive order on promoting the arts, humanities, museum, and library services in America, citing them as “essential to the well-being, health, vitality, and democracy of our Nation.”** He said:

*“Under my Administration, the arts, the humanities, and museum and library services will be integrated into strategies, policies, and programs that advance the economic development, well-being, and resilience of all communities, especially those that have historically been underserved. [They] will be promoted and expanded to strengthen public, physical, and mental health; wellness; and healing, including within military and veteran communities”.*⁹



With such determination at the national level to advance utilization of the arts for health, wellbeing, and health equity, increased activity in related practice, policy, and research is likely, making this definition a timely contribution to the public health field.

Citing the definition

When using this definition, please include the following citation: Sonke, J., Rodriguez, A. K., Colverson, A., Akram, S., Morgan, N., Hancox, D., Wagner-Jacobson, C., & Pesata, V. (2023). Defining “Arts Participation” for Public Health Research. *Health Promotion Practice*, 15248399231183388.

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