

REPORT

For The Dance Center of Columbia College Chicago
Cross-Ethnic Research & Marketing Initiative



**Literature Review on Cross-Ethnic
Arts Attendance**

A summary of findings and implications

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STRATEGIES

Audience research and planning for the mission-driven world.

June 9, 2008

Prepared by:

Chloe Chittick, Senior Associate

Peter Linett, Partner

The Dance Center's Cross-Ethnic Research & Marketing Initiative is funded, in part, by the Chicago Community Trust, Columbia College Chicago's School of Fine & Performing Arts, and Columbia College Chicago's Office of Marketing & Communications.

RESEARCH REPORT

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4147 N. Ravenswood Ave. #302
Chicago, IL 60613
773.348.9200 phone
hello@sloverlinett.com
www.sloverlinett.com

Preface: Some definitions

In this report, we use several unfamiliar terms. Here are our working definitions, which may change as the Cross-Ethnic Research & Marketing Initiative progresses:

- **“intra-ethnic attendance”**: people of one ethnic background attending an arts performance by people of (or an arts company representing) the same ethnic background; e.g., an African American dance patron attending an African American or African dance company.
- **“cross-ethnic attendance”**: people of one ethnic background attending an arts performance by people of (or an arts company representing) a different ethnic background; e.g., an African American dance patron attending an Asian dance company.
- **“non-ethnically specific”**: used here to describe an arts performance that does not represent a particular ethnic heritage, except perhaps the “mainstream” European tradition. The performers in a “non-ethnically specific” performance may be Caucasian, non-white, or ethnically diverse, but as a whole the presentation is not perceived as, or attempting to be, ethnically specific.

Note that the first two definitions refer to types of *attendance*, while the third refers to a type of *performance*. To complicate matters, in this report we will classify attendance by non-Caucasians at a non-ethnically specific performance as cross-ethnic attendance. This classification is warranted by research indicating that many non-whites feel that they are stepping into another culture’s domain when they attend non-ethnically specific or “mainstream” performing arts.

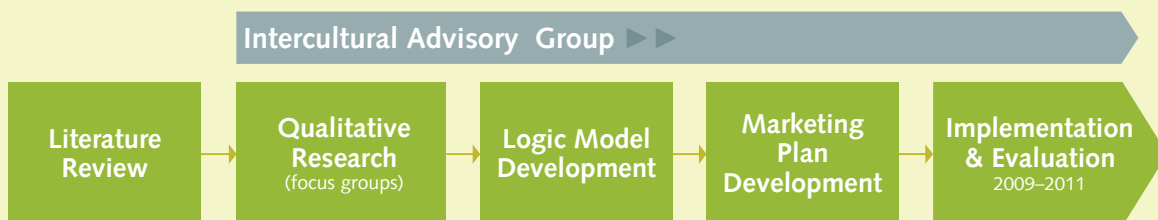
If the reader is not completely comfortable with these three definitions, that’s part of the point of the Cross-Ethnic Research & Marketing Initiative. We are exploring new territory for arts management, and we must begin by working out a new language with which to discuss the relevant issues.

Overview

The Dance Center of Columbia College Chicago has undertaken a research and marketing initiative to explore the possibility of increasing cross-ethnic attendance at dance performances. The term “cross-ethnic,” as defined on page 1, is used in this report to refer to non-Caucasian attendance at a performance representing an ethnic community or tradition other than the attendee’s own—for instance, an Asian audience member attending an African-American dance company, or a Latino audience member attending an Asian dance company. It can also refer to non-Caucasian attendance at a non-ethnically specific (i.e., “mainstream”) performance. (This initiative is not primarily focused on Caucasian attendance at ethnically-specific performances, about which there is already a fair amount of research and which is already occurring at The Dance Center and many other presenters.)

To conduct the research phase of the initiative, The Dance Center has engaged a team of audience researchers led by Slover Linett Strategies Inc., a Chicago-based firm serving the arts and education sectors. The team also includes noted culturally-specific researchers Pepper Miller and Cecilia Garibay, as well as a leading expert on arts audiences, Alan S. Brown, who serves as an advisor to the project.

The main steps in the project are shown in the diagram below. The first



Cross-Ethnic Research & Marketing Initiative
Dance Center of Columbia College Chicago
PROJECT PLAN

step is this **literature review**, which will be followed by **qualitative research** (focus groups and interviews) with African American, Latino, Asian, and Caucasian dance audiences. With those research findings in mind, we will develop a **logic model** for the cross-ethnic marketing initiative. (A logic model is a visual diagram illustrating the intended relationships between a program's activities and outcomes. Logic models are widely used in the social services sector and are becoming a common management and evaluation tool in other nonprofit arenas.) In turn, the logic model will guide the creation of an experimental **marketing plan** to increase cross-ethnic attendance at The Dance Center. Finally, that plan will be **implemented and evaluated** over a three-year period, which will yield new insight about what works and what doesn't in this under-explored area.

To inform and help guide the process, The Dance Center has assembled an **Intercultural Advisory Group** comprised of thought-leaders working in and around the arts, marketing, and market research in Chicago who have abundant experience in multicultural community engagement. The group will meet at key junctures throughout the project and provide input during the design of research protocols and the interpretation of findings. In addition, The Dance Center will seek input from individual advisors as needed throughout the project.

About this report

This document presents a summary of what we learned in the course of that first step, a review of the literature pertinent to cross-ethnic arts research and marketing. The goal of the literature review was to provide context that will inform our design and interpretation of the focus group research in the following step, and more generally give everyone involved in the project—including the Intercultural Advisory Group—an opportunity to delve into some of the strategic and philosophical questions at the heart of the initiative.

These findings were also summarized in an onscreen presentation for the Intercultural Advisory Group on March 25, 2008 at The Dance Center.

Ethnicity and Dance Center attendance

The Dance Center data shows that its performances by culturally-specific dance companies are successful at attracting patrons who

share the heritage of the performers. Since The Dance Center usually presents many such companies in the course of a season, its cumulative audience is notably diverse. For example, in the 2006/07 season, some 45% of patrons responding to audience surveys were non-Caucasian. This in itself should be viewed as a success; many performing arts organizations in the US struggle to diversify their audiences to levels close to those seen at The Dance Center. In fact, in the researchers' experience, The Dance Center is one of the few organizations in the "traditional" arts (dance, classical music, opera, nonprofit theater, etc.) whose proportion of Caucasian audiences mirrors that of the Chicago-area population (according to the Census department's 2005 American Community Survey, the Chicago metropolitan statistical area's non-Caucasian population of is 43%.)

The enviable diversity of The Dance Center's audience over the course of an entire season, however, belies some *lack* of diversity in audiences at specific, individual performances. As The Dance Center noted in its RFP for the cross-ethnic research: "Data collected between 2000-2007 shows that the ethnic composition of audiences varies widely from event to event and is largely dependent on the works and ethnic background of the artists presented. Our data confirms the anecdotal assumption that culturally-specific performances attract larger percentages of audiences reflective of the tradition or heritage represented in the work performed."

This mixed picture—macro-level diversity but micro-level clustering—is viewed by The Dance Center as an opportunity. Would it be possible to motivate some of the non-Caucasian consumers who attend performances within their own heritage to attend those representing *other* non-white cultures, or, for that matter, non-ethnically specific performances? The question was not how to increase overall attendance at The Dance Center by reaching out to minority communities; the organization was already doing that fairly effectively on a per-program basis. Rather, the question was how to speak to, or program for, The Dance Center's current patrons in ways that would make them want to explore performances that reflect cultures other than their own. The Dance Center knows how to present diverse dance companies to Chicago's arts audiences; it is now looking for the key to convey the meanings and benefits of those performances in words and images that speak *across* ethnic identities and communities.

That goal operates on the implicit assumption that people "should" attend cross-ethnically—that there are benefits associated with cross-

ethnic attendance (such as feeling broadened, connecting with fellow audience members, developing the capacity for empathy, engaging in civic dialogue, and so on) that are not available to the same degree to people attending performances within their own cultural heritage (or those attending non-ethnically specific performances). But is this true? Do cross-ethnic arts experiences yield richer outcomes? Do they even yield *different* outcomes? If so, what keeps people from engaging in cross-ethnic dance attendance? Why do they appear not to seek it out as frequently as they do intra-ethnic attendance? How might arts presenters like The Dance Center make the idea more compelling?

With those questions in mind, The Dance Center team decided to commission this research project to learn more about the benefits of, and barriers to, cross-ethnic dance attendance and determine whether it is feasible—and desirable—to encourage cross-ethnic attendance among The Dance Center’s current audiences.

A longstanding interest—and a new approach

These are not new questions for The Dance Center. In 1996, The Dance Center engaged Doyle Research to conduct qualitative research to uncover motivations for culturally-specific dance attendance and reactions to potential positioning concepts intended to promote cross-ethnic attendance. (We review the key findings from that study later in this report.) And a 2000 report from the Arts & Business Council of Chicago noted that, “Despite its success in drawing Latino audiences to Latino dance performances, African Americans to African dance events, and so on, The Dance Center would like to see these audiences either meld with the mainstream or attend performances that may not specifically reflect their particular culture on a wider, more consistent and stable basis” (“Diversifying Chicago’s Arts Audiences: A Progress Report,” 73).

That report also cites The Dance Center’s former advisory group, called the Community Culture Council (CCC), as an example of a successful approach to diversity. “While the efforts of the CCC to involve ethnic communities can’t be touted enough...the group was also instrumental in *fostering cross-cultural attendance at culturally-specific events*. Because these communities had developed such a solid trust with The Dance Center and the CCC, they were willing to *be open-minded and embrace the common threads of experience and relevance of other cultures*” (70, italics added).

Yet The Dance Center's own recent data indicates that that success may have been short-lived. Despite the fact that The Dance Center has put many of the recommendations from that research into practice in the intervening years, there is clearly still work to be done to find the right cues, language, marketing methods, and programming or presentation strategies to make cross-ethnic attendance more common and more sustainable. So we must be sure to take the current initiative beyond what was done in the 1990s and avoid merely "reinventing" what has already been tried.

One essential difference may be that those earlier efforts seem to have been focused on *communication* about culturally specific dance programming, rather than programming, presentation, artistic partnerships or collaborations, and other aspects of the "product" itself. Certainly promotion is an essential component of any audience development strategy, but the upcoming research may reveal other ways that The Dance Center could increase the appeal of, or lower the perceived barriers to, cross-ethnic dance attendance. So the first implication of this literature review is that **The Dance Center should embrace a broader, more experimental approach this time**, involving both marketing planning and innovative programming efforts to draw and engage cross-ethnic attenders.

A trio of motivations?

Based on the broader literature on arts audiences and our own previous research in dance and other performing arts sectors, we can articulate a working hypothesis about the motivations for culturally-specific and cross-ethnic arts attendance. There seem to be at least three relevant motivations at play here, and these would occur at different strengths in different arts consumers and different situations.

The first is an *identity motivation*, by which we mean the constellation of desired benefits that some ethnic-minority attenders seek having to do with exploring and understanding their own cultural heritage, feeling a sense of pride, being connected to others with whom they share a heritage, and so on. Consumers motivated in this way seem to attend primarily because the dance or other performance represents or celebrates a community with which they feel personally affiliated—or sometimes would like to feel more affiliated. We presume, therefore, that those motivated primarily by identity are likely to be disproportionately members of distinct cultural subgroups rather than the dominant white culture.

The second is an *aesthetic motivation*, which refers to the familiar category of patrons who attend in order to have a particular, enjoyable artistic experience. They may like contemporary dance, for example, and choose a certain performance because they think the quality will be high. That performance may or may not be culturally specific, but for someone motivated in this way, it doesn't necessarily matter; what counts is the artistic impact of the dances performed. Such patrons attend culturally-specific dance—from inside or outside of their own cultural heritage—for the same reasons they might attend *non-culturally specific* performances: because they enjoy this art form (or the arts more broadly) and obtain a range of personal and social benefits from experiencing it, and perhaps because they like to explore a range of styles, genres, or venues within that art form. Since this probably describes the majority of frequent arts attenders, and since the majority of arts audiences are Caucasian, we would assume that Caucasian patrons are likely to be motivated primarily on aesthetic grounds.

The third hypothesized motivation might be called *world-citizen*: someone of any racial, ethnic, or national background who values diversity and feels it is important to understand the world, and who uses the arts as one way of gaining that understanding. A patron motivated primarily in this way would presumably be as willing to see culturally-specific dance as a non-ethnically specific performance, or even prefer it, although she might find a culturally *mixed*—"post-racial," globalized—dance company the best choice of all. There is some evidence that the younger generation of Americans, and particularly urban residents, are more likely to fall into this category than older audiences.

Of course, these motivations probably coexist in any given individual, and certainly within the audience on any given evening. But if the three categories of motivation are supported by our upcoming research for The Dance Center, the three-way framework could become a useful way of thinking about the barriers and benefits of cross-ethnic attendance. Which motivation predominates in audiences who buy tickets to ethnically-specific dance performances at The Dance Center? Does motivation vary by ethnicity? Are the identity and world-citizen motivations best thought of as *means* to more aesthetically-oriented engagement or as legitimate ends in themselves? Or, in the other direction, does encouraging cross-ethnic attendance require shifting aesthetically motivated consumers toward the world-citizen side of the triangle?

Recap of the literature

Process

Our process for this literature review involved searching our library of arts-related studies published in the last five to ten years, acquiring new ideas and directions from colleagues and thought-leaders in the field, and conducting a broad-based, “snowball” Internet search. A partial list of the publications and resources we consulted appears in the Bibliography at the end of this document.

Unfortunately, we found little that was directly relevant to the challenge at hand (aside from The Dance Center’s own research mentioned above). This is because most of the literature on ethnicity or cultural heritage and arts attendance is concerned with how to get underserved communities to attend non-ethnically specific (traditionally white) organizations in the first place, not how to get them to attend the arts of other cultures. (As we noted on page 2, this can also be considered a form of cross-cultural participation, but it’s not our primary focus in this initiative.) Some of the literature even uses the term “cross-ethnic” to refer to non-ethnically specific institutions attracting pockets of non-Caucasians to diversify their audience. In fact, the prevailing view in the literature—including several case studies touted as success stories—seems to be that, since different ethnic groups have different motivations for attending, diversity-building efforts don’t allow for multiple ethnicities to interact at or even attend a single event. In other words, that Latino efforts must aim to bring in more Latinos, and other groups only incidentally. The emphasis is on uniqueness rather than what is or could be shared; ethnic groups are treated as distinct target audiences with distinct needs, requiring distinct arts experiences to become engaged. So the recommended strategies conceptually isolate ethnic audience components rather than bring them together. Our point isn’t that this logic is flawed or that the institutions’ intentions are misguided; indeed, that view was probably a necessary corrective to decades of thinking monolithically about audience makeup. But seen through the lens of the present initiative, it means that the notion of “cross-ethnic” experiences as The Dance Center conceives them is rare and unexamined in the arts landscape.

What's known about ethnicity and attendance

Given the lack of data on cross-ethnic participation, we had to be content with a review of what is known about ethnic audiences and the arts. It has been well-documented that a key motivation for non-Caucasians to attend the arts is a desire for positive and meaningful connection with their own heritage. As noted in the Arts & Business Council's 1999 "Barriers and Motivations to Increased Arts Usage Among Medium and Light Users" (and echoed in other reports), Latinos and African Americans "are more strongly motivated to attend dance performances that offer a direct cultural connection to their own personal background" (93). This has been substantiated in The Dance Center's own research with current and potential patrons.

While this is not a revelation for the research team, it does raise an interesting question for this research, since a key goal of the initiative is to find ways to motivate people to attend performances that *don't* aim to achieve this widely-desired goal—that aim instead to offer a cultural connection to *someone else's* background. It will be important for us to explore these dynamics in the upcoming qualitative research. Is an exploration of their own cultural heritage a "must have" for many minority audiences, or only in certain circumstances? In addition, we will continue to think about this as we develop the logic model. Is there a sequential nature to cross-ethnic arts attendance, in which intra-ethnic attendance is the "entryway" and cross-ethnic attendance occurs further down the chain of arts activity? If so, how can The Dance Center move people successfully along that path?

Another common point in the literature is that partnerships can be an effective tool for diversifying audiences. Existing—and authentic—culturally-specific organizations in the community are seen to be the key for mainstream organizations hoping to reach and learn about target ethnic segments. The smaller cultural organizations have the patron access and knowledge of cultural sensitivities that "outsiders" do not. There are numerous examples in the literature in which successful audience diversification efforts were made possible by strategic partnerships. (For a vivid case in point, see the Appendix to this document, which discusses the success of the Chicago Children's Museum in cross-cultural programming.) One caveat noted by Francie Ostrower in "Cultural Collaborations: Building Partnerships for Arts Participation" is that many community partnerships in the arts are short-lived. Unless the lessons from the collaboration are truly

institutionalized, the success of diversifying the audience will last only as long as that partnership remains in place.

Insights on African American arts attendance

The following insights were contributed by **Pepper Miller**, our team member for this project. Pepper has an award-winning national practice conducting research among African Americans and is the author of *What's Black About It? Insights to Increase Your Share of a Changing African American Market* (2005).

There are several layers, mindsets and segments that affect whether African Americans will be motivated to attend cultural performing arts events. Key factors include:

- Cultural or ethnic relevance. Many African Americans believe cultural performing arts must meet the “FUBU test” – “for us by us.” Some of the cues that spark African Americans’ interest in cultural events include:
 - Black directors, performers
 - Black themes, topics, stories
 - Seeing “people like me” in the lobby, in the seats, etc.
- A “comfortable” experience, from beginning to end of the performance: being invited in the first place, welcomed once there, and made to feel at ease during the rest of the experience.
- Targeted marketing and advertising, which covers two equally-important dimensions:
 - Advertise in targeted ways to the African-American community so that they will know they are welcome (i.e. extend an invitation)
 - Convey that the performance is written by, directed by, features, or is about African Americans (since they want to support African-American performing artists).
- Affordability matters; some infrequent arts attenders may not be used to typical ticket prices in the performing arts. (It’s worth noting that The Dance Center’s ticket prices are lower than those of most professional dance venues in Chicago, and its audience survey data indicates that the tickets are perceived as affordable.)

Insights on Latino arts attendance

Cecilia Garibay, our team member offering expertise on the Latino market, is a widely-published audience researcher and evaluator in the museum sector and an expert on the needs and behaviors of Latino audiences. She shared some key insights on Latino audiences as a foundation for our upcoming research.

- Latino audiences are far from homogeneous. This is the biggest mistake organizations make in marketing to Latino audiences. There is great diversity among Latino populations in the US and it's important to understand exactly whom you are targeting, beyond a broad idea of "Latinos." Effective marketers must parse out the Latino segment by a variety of factors, including nationality, language preference, generation, and acculturation levels, in addition to standard demographic variables such as age, income, and so forth.
- There are significant generational differences, which span perceptions and values. For instance, second-generation Latinos are typically more highly educated than first-generation Latinos (i.e., immigrants); bilingual or English-dominant; and bicultural. Third-generation Latinos are typically considered more acculturated to mainstream American culture. It's important to note, however, that acculturation (as opposed to assimilation, which is a term that no longer holds water) is a dynamic and complicated process.
- Latinos skew young, making it a prime market for many organizations and brands. The median age for Latinos is approximately 27 years old, compared to 36 for the general U.S. population. So they are used to being targeted by consumer brands and are savvy about marketing methods and messages.
- It's not just about language – it's about culture. In targeting Latinos, we often make the mistake of assuming we need to reach out to them in Spanish. Language is indeed very important in reaching first-generation Latinos because they are primarily Spanish dominant. However, once you move to other generations that are bilingual or English dominant, this is no longer an issue. Instead, it's about marketing strategies that appropriately speak to culture and context, not language.

Insights on Asian-American arts attendance

We are grateful for the assistance of a national expert on Asian American consumers, **Bill Imada**, Chairman and CEO of the IW Group, a Los Angeles-based communications firm that specializes in

multicultural markets. Bill generously agreed to be interviewed by The Dance Center project team and provided an overview of relevant trends and issues about Asian Americans, with an emphasis on their cultural participation and relationship to the arts.

There is enormous diversity in the Asian American population. Asians in the U.S. represent 28 distinct ethnic groups and speak more than 100 different languages and dialects. From the largest Asian communities in this country—Chinese, South Asian, Filipino, Vietnamese, Korean and Japanese—to the smallest, the Asian population is characterized by a wide mix of language capabilities, customs, beliefs, and traditions.

There is also a wide range of acculturation levels. Fully 70% of Asians and Asian Americans in the U.S. are foreign born, compared to only 40% of Latinos. These immigrants have different experiences, behavior patterns, and perceptions of civic and cultural institutions—including arts organizations—than third, fourth, or fifth-generation Asian Americans, not to mention different educational and income levels. (In the aggregate, Asian Americans have the highest household incomes and educational levels of any major ethnic group in the U.S. Yet there are elderly Asians and immigrants from developing countries who live below the poverty line.)

With all this diversity, it's difficult to frame Asian Americans as a unified category for marketing purposes. The most effective marketers recognize that they must decide which segment of the Asian population they hope to reach and develop a strong cultural understanding of those consumers. Most focus on one or two Asian-American communities first, then build from there.

A recent study conducted by Imada's firm (in collaboration with other companies) found that Asian American young adults regularly seek out ways to remain connected to their culture and their communities. Even the most acculturated Asian Americans indicated that remaining connected to their cultural heritage is important to them.

Not surprisingly, some of that connection to heritage comes through cultural activities and the arts, both of which are an important part of how Asians and Asian Americans define themselves. Each year around the U.S., thousands attend Asian cultural events, which often include traditional—and sometimes also contemporary—dance. These events have contributed to what Imada sees as growing pride in Asian-American communities throughout the country. Signs indicate that a

pan-Asian identity is starting to take shape, in part as a result of the growing number of national and regional Asian-American community organizations and in part due to the growing popularity of Asian, Asian-American, and Asian-inspired films, documentaries, and festivals and the increasing prominence of Asian faces in the performing arts (e.g., classical piano phenomenon Lang Lang). As a consequence, individuals are less hesitant to express their Asian-ness in public.

This growing sense of ethnic identification makes Asian American arts consumers similar to African Americans in at least one respect: they want to see people who look like them when they go to the theater, concert hall, or dance space – both onstage and in the audience. And like African American arts attenders living in or near a large city, many Asian Americans can find an Asian-run, Asian-themed theater, dance group, or art museum to attend rather than (or in addition to) a mainstream cultural organization. In southern California, for example, East West Players—a nonprofit theater serving the Asian American community—recently celebrated its fortieth anniversary.

Imada believes that most major arts organizations in the U.S. recognize that Asian Americans represent an important opportunity to build the audience base. Yet despite this recognition, few have marketed strategically to Asians, and the attendance record of Asians remains inconsistent. Like their corporate cousins, arts organizations need to develop an integrated marketing plan that includes advertising, marketing, public relations, media relations, community relations, promotions and other culturally relevant and appropriate efforts to reach the targeted Asian segments.

Regarding the Cross-Ethnic Research and Marketing Initiative, Imada speculated that one of the challenges will be overcoming a tendency toward clannishness that sometimes characterizes Asian communities in the U.S. That tendency is reflected in tight-knit communities living in close proximity, speaking their original language, and participating in social and cultural activities largely within the community. Imada recommends that the cross-ethnic marketing strategies aim to increase the perceived relevance and comfort of attending ethnically unfamiliar performances, and consider working with community organizations rather than focusing on individual attenders. He also emphasized that the messaging must be compelling on an emotional level. A cerebral approach won't work; the initiative will have to tap into deep feelings

of identity, possibly using humor to lower defenses and forge connections.

What does it all mean for cross-ethnic attendance?

All this is an important foundation of knowledge for us to keep in mind throughout the initiative, because it reinforces what cross-ethnic efforts have to contend with: the fact that a dominant motivation for many non-Caucasians is that **the art experience will speak to and reinforce their own cultural heritage**. The received wisdom on ethnic marketing tells us to create opportunities for non-Caucasians to see and celebrate their own culture. If you need to know that there will be “people who look like me” at the performance—both in the audience and on the stage—then what will it mean to attend a performance from outside your own cultural heritage, in which you’re likely to see many people who look different from you? This question is not yet easily answered and is a theme we will be revisiting throughout the process.

The Dance Center’s Previous Research

The Dance Center’s own previous research (the Doyle reports from 1996–97, mentioned above) came closer to anything else we found to addressing the concept of cross-ethnic attendance, as we define it here. Those focus groups, which explored positioning strategies to encourage ethnic and cross-ethnic attendance, were a good beginning. But we must now build on those insights to uncover new knowledge, and furthermore translate the gathered insights into an action-oriented plan that can be implemented and measured. Part of that building process will be to investigate not only potential positioning messages, but programming, packaging, formats, partnerships, marketing tactics, and other aspects of the experience offered by The Dance Center.

Some key findings from that 1997 focus group report follow:

Both African Americans and Latinos were enthusiastic about the idea of forging a stronger connection to, and understanding of, their own culture; exploring other cultures was interesting but distinctly secondary. Both of these ethnic groups – as is supported in other research on arts motivations – showed strong response to the notion of the arts as a way for them to connect to their own heritage and understand themselves better. They see the arts as a forum for positive depictions of their heritage, and thus a source of pride. Understanding

and exploring other cultures also struck chords for these two segments, but primarily in the context of ultimately understanding *oneself* better through this cross-cultural experience. The terms “roots” and “heritage” were immediate cues of relevance for these respondents, particularly for African Americans. For Latinos, music is a key cultural format; as such, live music was seen as an important and appealing element of the experience, when applicable.

The notion of cultural exploration – of either their own culture or other cultures – did not resonate strongly with Caucasians as a motivator to attend dance. According to this report, they do not share the sense of self-definition and pride that African Americans and Latinos feel is defined by their culture and heritage. As such, positioning messages that communicated about self-exploration through other cultures was seen as confusing and irrelevant to many Caucasian respondents. What they did respond to in The Dance Center’s positioning was the sense that these performances would be aesthetically stimulating and high-quality. This isn’t to say that Caucasian respondents were uninterested in seeing or learning something new, but referring to making connections between their own culture and others isn’t a tactic that resonated strongly.

All groups want concrete descriptions of what they can expect from an experience. This is particularly true when trying to communicate about concepts such as making connections between one’s own heritage and other cultures. For this to be a powerfully motivating statement, it must be accompanied by visual imagery and examples of how performances can incorporate this type of concept. In some of the communication concepts, descriptions of performance elements (costumes, sets, music, etc.) seemed to convey this successfully. Being specific also applies to referencing the cultures and ethnicities featured in performances – in other words, not dances “from around the world,” but dances from Japan, Brazil, etc. Generating their interest will come from sparking interest in something that they can actively envision – who the performers are, what the music will sound like, existing cultural references they can start from, etc.

African Americans and Latinos articulated that art acts as a vehicle for teaching their children about their heritage. Seeing visual representations of their cultures in a positive light is very important to both of these segments because it instills pride in them. As such, art can be a powerful teaching tool, and one that they see as valuable to expose their children to.

Dance performances must be made to seem accessible and easy to understand. Particularly with contemporary dance, there is a fear that the messages and descriptions that seem interesting on paper will not come across on the stage. This finding should be coupled with the point above—that concrete visual imagery and descriptive language will help ease the mystery and confusion over how those messages and promises will be realized onstage.

The Dance Center should make connections for African Americans and Latinos separately. Because the research recommends that the links between ones own culture and another culture be made explicit, it strongly advised that “separate advertising/promotional campaigns specifically targeting each cultural group be developed so that an explicit link between the performance and the cultural group being targeted can be made” (42).

A special data analysis

Because Alan S. Brown is a special advisor to the research team for The Dance Center project, he generously allowed us access to datasets from recent studies his firm WolfBrown conducted on behalf of a consortium of 14 major university arts presenters (MUP). The **Values and Impact Study** is a two-year undertaking to understand the values and motivations driving performing arts attendance and donation. While the Values and Impact Study reports already contain much that will be of interest to The Dance Center, we were able to conduct a custom analysis of the data for the cross-ethnic initiative. (That analysis was performed by Sarah Lee, a PhD student at the Harris School of Public Policy Studies at the University of Chicago and a Research Associate at Slover Linett Strategies.) We were hoping that the analysis would shed light on how the audience’s ethnicity interacts with the ethnic or cultural background of the performers to influence motivations and outcomes. What we uncovered adds real insight to the cross-ethnic research, and is summarized below. However, our conclusions here should be treated as directional rather than definitive due to small sample sizes among non-Caucasian respondents and the subjective nature of our performance categorization.

To uncover these patterns, we created four analytic groupings:

- Caucasian attendees at non-ethnically specific performances
- Non-Caucasian attendees at non-ethnically specific performances

- Intra-ethnic attendees (non-Caucasians attending a performance from their own ethnic heritage)
- Cross-ethnic attendees (those attending a performance featuring an ethnicity or cultural background other than their own, including Caucasians)

It is important to note that the large number of Caucasians in the cross-ethnic grouping—whites attending culturally-specific performances— influences our findings here. But the data set from the Values and Impact Study contained too few non-Caucasian respondents to analyze cross-ethnic attendance solely among non-Caucasians. So for the purposes of this analysis only, we included white arts-goers at culturally-specific performances as cross-ethnic attenders.

With that caveat in mind, we did find cross-ethnic attendees to be distinctive in a few important ways. We focus here on the factors that set cross-ethnic attendees apart from others, particularly from intra-ethnic attendees. We will draw on these findings again when we create the Logic Model in Phase III of this project, specifically those insights that could help us understand how to shift intra-ethnic attendees toward cross-ethnic attendance.

In general, patrons *may* have a richer experience attending an intra-ethnic performing arts performance than they do at a cross-ethnic performance. Intra-ethnic attendees scored their experience on many of the study's impact indices higher than cross-ethnic attendees did, including the Captivation Index (which is highly related to overall satisfaction), Intellectual Stimulation, Emotional Resonance, and Spiritual Value. Additionally, cross-ethnic attendees reported lower Aesthetic Growth and Social Bonding impacts than intra-ethnic respondents did; compared to intra-ethnic attendees, cross-ethnic respondents felt less connected with the rest of the audience and less likely to leave the performance with a new perspective.

The study found the highest impact levels among audiences attending ethnically-focused performances – regardless of the audience member's own ethnicity. Caucasian attendees at non-ethnically specific performances exhibited even lower levels of engagement on the indices than cross-ethnic attendees did. Ethnic audiences at a non-ethnically specific performance exhibited more varied reactions and in a few cases were very similar in their responses to cross-ethnic attendees. We do not know why this is or what this means in the greater context, but it does bear further exploration and

consideration in our qualitative research.

Cross-ethnic attendees' trust in the presenting organization trumps their familiarity with the performers themselves. This group has been attending performances at a particular presenting organization for longer than any other audience. Having a history with the organization seems to translate into trust and willingness to explore new experiences. This is manifest in that, prior to the performance, cross-ethnic attendees are less familiar with the performers they are about to see than are intra-ethnic attendees, and less familiar with the specific genre or style of art they are about to see than all three other groups.

Barriers are still present for cross-ethnic attendees, even after they take their seats for the performance. They are less likely than most others to say that the performance they're attending is within their cultural "comfort zone." Prior to the performance, they are also less energetic, less excited for the performance, and less confident that they will enjoy the performance than intra-ethnic arts attendees. (However, in all of these respects, non-Caucasians attending a non-ethnically specific performance exhibit similar qualities.)

Compared to intra-ethnic attendees, cross-ethnic attendees are more motivated to attend a performance by being "culturally broadened," "intellectually stimulated," and "emotionally moved." Cross-ethnic attendees are, unsurprisingly, less motivated by a desire to observe or celebrate their own cultural heritage than intra-ethnic attendees are. Overall, cross-ethnic attendees showed the highest sense that the performance exposed them to cultures outside of their own life, but the lowest than all others that the performance celebrated their own cultural heritage.

There are intriguing similarities between cross-ethnic attenders and non-Caucasian patrons attending non-ethnically specific ("mainstream") performances. This could indicate that ethnic audiences attending any performance *other* than one representing their own heritage do not perceive as great a distinction between the two as we may be assuming. At least on some dimensions, a non-culturally-oriented performance is equal in their minds to one focused on another culture, at least on the dimensions studied here. Perhaps only when people are enveloped by their own heritage and are motivated by celebrating their culture do they consider a performance to be unique; everything else lies in another category. For example, cross-ethnic and ethnic-at-mainstream attendees attached the same importance to

“broadening myself culturally” as a motivation for attending a performance. For non-Caucasians, cultural expansion can also come from within non-ethnically specific performances from the white, European cultural tradition.

Asian Americans *may* be less inclined to focus their attendance on their own heritage. This is merely a directional hypothesis at this point, since these sample sizes are so small. But it is interesting to note that Asian Americans made up a disproportionately small fraction of those who attended intra-ethnic performances. They were also most likely to “seek out performances that will expose me to a broad range of world cultures” —significantly more than Caucasians.

Implications

This literature review has been a valuable opportunity to begin framing a coherent set of hypotheses and questions that we will bring into the rest of the initiative. It has also helped everyone involved develop a vocabulary for thinking and talking about these issues—a vital first step in any new endeavor of this kind. The findings from the literature, and particularly from the 1997 Doyle focus group study for The Dance Center and our new analysis of Alan Brown’s Values and Impact Study data, will help us design effective research protocols and interpret what we hear from audiences ourselves.

It will also influence the shape of the logic model we construct in the subsequent phase. The purpose of the logic model is to diagram the relationships between the resources and activities of the cross-ethnic marketing project, on the one hand, and its intended outcomes and impact, on the other. In turn, having a well-considered logic model in place will help us in “translating” The Dance Center’s findings to other performing arts settings and organizations around the field. While certain issues and tactics may be particular to Chicago and to The Dance Center, the big-picture relationships among the program’s components should be readily applicable to other contexts.

The literature review leaves us with several questions that we will have to grapple with in the months to come. They include:

- 1. What are the unique benefits of cross-ethnic arts attendance?**
What does cross-ethnic attendance give people that they can’t get (at least, not as powerfully) by other means? This is a central research question, and should be amenable to empirical study.

Certainly it relates to the following question...

2. **What if our research reveals that intra-ethnic arts attendance yields stronger, more powerful experiences than cross-ethnic attendance?** It seems clear that intra-ethnic cultural experiences offer benefits that are quite valuable and powerful for many arts patrons, and encouraging those connections has already had—and will continue to have—a positive impact on audience diversity in the performing arts. The Dance Center wouldn't want to limit those types of experiences in any way. But it does assume that focusing on cross-ethnic experiences will yield *other* or *additional* benefits for patrons (and for social groups, communities, etc.), and that those benefits are worth the effort that will be required. So it will be crucial for the researchers to illuminate both gains and trade-offs in the areas of motivations, outcomes, and overall satisfaction.
3. **Is there a pathway along which patrons progress toward cross-ethnic arts attendance?** We will need to understand the full engagement chain and any causal dynamics among non-ethnically specific, intra-ethnic, and cross-ethnic cultural attendance. For instance, it could be that attending intra-ethnically leads some patrons to greater comfort with the idea of experiencing and exploring *other* cultures through the arts.

Dissemination

The Dance Center of Columbia College Chicago has been clear that it intends this research to be disseminated throughout the arts community so that the field as a whole can benefit from—and perhaps be inspired by—what we learn here about encouraging cross-ethnic attendance. This will take place through publication of the reports (including this preliminary study), conference presentations, and other channels. But the communication will not be unidirectional; The Dance Center and the research team will need help from colleagues around the country who have experimented with ways audiences can benefit from starting new cultural dialogues with each other through the arts.

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Appendix

Chicago Children's Museum Cultural Programming

In the course of our literature review, we were referred to the Chicago Children's Museum as an example of active, successful cross-cultural programming in Chicago. Three staff members from the museum (Jennifer Farrington, President and Chief Operating Officer; Nancy Plaskett, Associate Vice President of Community Connections, and Jenna Beletic) generously agreed to be interviewed for this project and spent an hour discussing CCM's cultural outreach efforts with us. Those efforts have been highly successful, and the museum's experiences illustrate a wealth of best practices and sound strategies that could be helpful to any diversity-building initiative in the nonprofit sector. However, there will need to be some translation in order to bring those ideas to bear on The Dance Center's initiative, for two reasons.

First, CCM's approach has aimed to bring diverse cultural communities and underserved families into the museum, many for the first time. These audiences tend to include a high proportion of people who don't often attend mainstream cultural institutions. So the museum's strategies broadly resemble those of other audience diversification and targeting initiatives in the nonprofit cultural sector (for instance, the outstanding *Not for the Likes of You* reports from the UK: [Morton, M. et al. 2004]). By contrast, The Dance Center isn't trying to bring in newcomers with this initiative, at least not primarily; rather, it's hoping to broaden attendance patterns among people who are already attending at The Dance Center. So some of the ideas here that have to do with lowering cultural and personal barriers to attendance may not be directly applicable.

Second, in CCM's case the cultural product itself is "curated" by the community rather than by the institution: local, usually non-professional cultural groups provide the dancing, singing, drumming, cooking, etc., which together comprise the arts and culture components

of the event. This is intentional and a vital engagement strategy (see below). The Dance Center presents professional dance companies from the elsewhere in the US and abroad, and those performances are not community-generated in the same sense that CCM's are. So the participatory role of the local cultural community is necessarily different.

Despite these differences, we feel that CCM's cultural programming is exemplary and sheds important light on the current initiative. In these next few paragraphs, we briefly discuss the practices and ideas that seem most relevant to The Dance Center's goals, rather than providing a complete case study of CCM's cultural programming approaches and outcomes. It should be noted that it is the researchers, not CCM staff, who have taken the step of extrapolating from the museum's experiences to the ten general principles given below; any oversimplification or selective interpretation is our own responsibility.

1. **Partner prolifically.** CCM's Community Connections staff have been working for more than a decade to cultivate relationships with community groups small and large throughout Chicago's national and cultural populations. They have even turned to individual "mavens" within certain communities—people who may not have a formal role or organizational affiliation but are respected and influential in the target communities. They work with these organizations and people to assemble program committees which then develop their own programs for particular events and festivals at the museum.
2. **Strive for multiplicity.** Make sure that program development process is going on among many different committees around the city and the suburbs at once, all heading toward the same event at the museum. *That's* where the cross-cultural magic comes from. The CCM staff never thinks monolithically about a given cultural heritage: it's not just "Latino," it's Puerto Rican, Mexican, etc. And within each of those national cultures, there are many Chicago organizations representing nuanced and varied sub-constituencies. The museum works with two or three different South Asian organizations at the same time. The staff is always asking, "Who else should be at the table? Who else represents the Puerto Rican community?" and so on.
3. **Combine cultures under one roof.** Some of the organizations CCM works with don't know each other before the collaboration begins; they come together because of the museum. CCM uses heritage-based arts and combines them in both inter- and intra-community ways. Many events are festival-like, featuring a wide variety of performing arts and scheduled activities in addition to ongoing

exhibits. This means plenty of opportunities for joint or nearby performances by different groups and communities, resulting in a rich tapestry of cultures at a single event. And instead of thinking in terms of specific holidays on the calendar, which might “belong” more to one culture or constituency than another, the staff thinks in terms of themes (a festival of light; passport to the world). They also integrate cultural programs into existing programming, so there can be an array of cultural connections around an exhibit or program. It all stems from *a conscious decision to bring together different backgrounds in a shared program*.

4. **Facilitate the pride in sharing.** The people who lead community cultural organizations are motivated by a powerful desire to share their cultural heritage. This is the emotional energy that powers partnerships with CCM. So it’s important that CCM is a place where diverse ethnicities, locals and tourists, come together; there will be people at the program or event who are part of “our” community, but also many people from *other* backgrounds with whom we can proudly share our heritage.
5. **Become a tool.** Once the programming committees are formed, CCM’s Community Connections staff give them the power to make the program truly community driven and community owned—a “first person” voice. The museum becomes a venue and a resource rather than the producer or owner of the programming. “You have to give up some control,” one CCM staffer told us. “The institution takes itself out of the equation somewhat.” The museum gives the community program committee a budget to work with, then steps back to play a facilitator role. “We help them put together something that’s right for them.” The community members are the experts about their culture, while the museum staff are the experts at fitting cultural experiences to the audiences and environments of the museum.
6. **Collaborate on promotion.** CCM supports the program with its own marketing expertise and budgets. But it also empowers—and relies on—the communities’ own marketing abilities and connections (“They know how to reach their constituencies”). Of course, the museum also wants brand consistency, and this can require some negotiating with the program committee.
7. **Make an institutional commitment.** CCM’s cultural programming had been going on piecemeal for years, but really came together when the director of the museum “put it down on one piece of paper.” The board got behind it and made the commitment part of the institution’s DNA. CCM now tracks its progress in diversifying the board, staff, and volunteer pool, and they make sure that budget allocations reflect the commitment. Financially, the biggest commitment is staff: six full-time positions are devoted to

community connections, out of a staff of 57. But cultural diversity is seen as *everyone's* job.

8. **Stay the course.** It takes time to build the critical mass of community relationships, programming successes, return visitation, and so on. CCM is in its tenth year of this kind of programming, which now operates under several different program umbrellas (Passport to the World, Community Resource Fairs, etc.).
9. **Let attendees decide how much cultural exploring they're willing to do.** CCM structures its cultural programs on a "town square" model, with many things going on at once and visitors happening upon a variety of experiences, some culturally familiar and others unfamiliar. They can stay and watch/participate or move on, as they wish. This is an important feature, since it keeps the visitor feeling autonomous. "We let them self-regulate how much novelty they can handle." The idea is to bring people from different backgrounds together and offer them something new along with something familiar. "They find their own balance."
10. **Consider diversity training.** CCM has tried several different diversity training approaches over the years, with varying degrees of usefulness. The best methods, the staff believes, are those most closely aligned with the day-to-day work of the organization. For example, the Erikson Institute, a graduate school in child development, led a training program about child-rearing attitudes in different cultures. CCM's front-line staff learned valuable ways of understanding and handling unfamiliar parenting styles in the museum.

The CCM senior staff with whom we spoke were kind enough to make themselves available to The Dance Center team for further questions. Their insights have already provided rich food for thought as we plan the cross-ethnic research and marketing initiative.

