CultureCase

Arts engagement of graduates is shaped by childhood exposure

This research was conducted by **Susan A. Dumais** at **City University of New York, USA**

Summary

This paper looked to understand two factors that are known to increase the likelihood of increased arts engagement: childhood exposure to the arts and gaining a bachelor's degree. It found that people who were the first in their families to go to college were less likely than the children of college graduates to have had childhood exposure to the arts. College graduates who have experienced the arts as children 'also pass this cultural exposure down to their own children'. It seems that the crucial factor for acquiring the cultural capital to become an arts engager in later life is not so much the bachelor's degree as the childhood exposure.

There were some general findings that relate to childhood and later-in-life arts engagement

One such finding was that 'childhood arts education, whether taking music lessons outside of school, visiting a museum, or attending a concert, is significantly related to engaging in the arts as an adult, and to involving one's own children in the arts'. Another was that 'parents with higher education are more likely to expose their children to the arts'.

There were a couple of limitations with this particular study

It was based on the 2012 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (a data set that is drawn from a nationally representative sample of adults in the United States). The data set only says whether or not someone has a bachelor's

degree, it does not say anything more about the subject studied or the status of the college they attended. The survey also did not tell us much about childhood experiences which will have shaped the lives of respondents as college students and potential arts engagers.

Keywords

survey **children** **USA** **college** **education**

Title	The cultural practices of first-generation college graduates: The role of childhood cultural exposure
Author(s)	Susan A. Dumais
Publication date	2019
Source	Poetics, Vol. 77, 101378
Link	**https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0304422X18301372**
Author email	**Susan.Dumais@lehman.cuny.edu**

By **Culture.Case** | 2 February 2021 | **Developing new audiences in arts and culture** |

King's Culture
© Copyright 2026
Designed, developed and maintained by **King's Digital Lab**
Originally built by **weheartdigital Ltd**
Accessibility Statement