

Factors Influencing the Choice of a Career Path in the Arts

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Our research is in line with the past forty years, where sociologists of culture and cultural marketing experts have been trying to explain the adult population's interest in the arts. Much of their research focuses on antecedents to attendance at activities associated with the high arts, a category that includes theatre, classical music and art museums and that is distinguished from popular art forms such as pop music, action movies, genre fiction, etc. Academics are eager to understand why, for example, some adults attend high arts events such as opera while others don't (Lahire, 1998). Demographic studies show that people who attend the high arts are more highly educated than the general population, have higher earnings, tend to be managers or professionals and are women in a higher proportion.

Four main factors have been identified to account for arts attendance: the influence of family, particularly the mother; the influence of school; amateur art practice (to a lesser extent); and childhood exposure to the arts (Colbert *et al.*, 2012; Colbert & St-James, 2014). This being posit, one could ask if these four factors are also similarly present with those who chose an artistic career (creation or performance). Are there other elements or persons that are important in the choice of such a career? Though, our focus will be on career choice using consumption research.

Our research results contributes to marketing knowledge mainly by virtue of the fact that it brings new elements not mentioned by other researchers, including the influence of friends and of people who are admired but not immediate family members, as well as exploring the antecedents that lead young people to pursue studies in the arts, followed by an artistic career. Further research could be done on art lovers to discover if the reality is similar attaching a new piece of knowledge about antecedents to cultural consumption.

Antecedents to consumption

Thanks to the work of pioneering researchers (Andreason & Belk, 1980; DiMaggio *et al.*, 1978), we know that consumers of high art are more highly educated than the average citizen. Subsequent studies by researchers such as Gans (1974) and Bourdieu (1984), among others, demonstrated that a person's social background has a major influence on cultural preferences (Atkinson, 2011; Caldwell & Woodside, 2003; Coulageon, 2015; Gaddis, 2013; Gripsrud *et al.*, 2011; Holbrook & Schindler, 1989; Holt, 1997; Prieur & Savage, 2011; van Hek & Kraaykamp, 2015). A number of researchers have focused more closely on the influence of the family in a broad sense (Willekens & Leven, 2014; Colbert & Courchesne, 2012; van Eijck, 1997), with the role of the mother found to be crucial in the transmission of this value (Gainer, 1997), although in some cases both parents have an influence on the cultural consumption of their sons or daughters (Wollscheid, 2014). Even more specifically, some researchers have sought to answer the question of why more women than men attend the arts in general (Christin, 2011; Donze, 2011; Gainer, 1993), what influence race and ethnicity have (Chong, 2011), and what factors influence the arts participation of adolescents (Willekens & Leven, 2014).

All of these studies suggest that values transmitted by the family play an essential role in the future participation of children in the high arts. This being the case, there is also a great deal of interest in the impact schools can have in reinforcing this value (appreciation of the arts) or even inculcating it in cases where the family does not play this role. Many studies have voiced concern at the increasingly limited space given to arts education in the school system (see, in particular, The Wallace Foundation, 2009). Several researchers have studied the effect of arts education in schools (DiMaggio & Useem, 1980; Krakman, 1996) and of specialized arts programs in high school (Nagel *et al.*, 2010). The results, though mixed, are nonetheless positive, suggesting that schools can play an important role in the transmission of values that lead to participation in the high arts.

Another avenue of research has sought to measure the effect of participation in the high arts at a young age on future consumption (Bamosy, 1982; Gray, 1998). While this effect is positive, the question arises as to a possible correlation between the attitude of the family and that of the school and whether it is parents or teachers who accompany the children to performances or museums.

All of the studies mentioned here explore the role of parents in cultural transmission. Few are interested in influencers outside of the nuclear family such as aunts or uncles, or in people outside the family circuit altogether (friends, outside role models). Similarly, little is known about these antecedents and their impact on the artistic vocation of young people. What is the role of people in contact with a kid and what is the influence of primary and secondary schools that offer specialized arts programs in their future as artists? Those questions merit to be researched.

We therefore propose the following two research questions:

Who are the people in a young person's entourage who influence their choice of an artistic vocation (becoming an artist)?

What role do elementary school and high school play in the choice of a career in the arts?

The answer to those questions have the potential to improve our knowledge on the many facets that compose the understanding of the behaviour of consumers in the cultural field.

The research

In order to answer these questions, we decided to follow the paths taken by graduates of a mid-sized, specialized arts school located in Eastern Canada. We also sought to study their cultural behaviour several years after graduation in order to gain better insight into factors influencing perseverance. To our knowledge, no other studies have used samples made up of graduates several years after their graduation from a specialized arts program.

The high school chosen for our study is reputed for the high quality of its arts programs. Students within a specialization have classes in their artistic discipline almost every day (eight days out of a nine-day schedule) and participate actively as artists and spectators in several performances and events throughout the year. The programs are structured to include art history, art practice, art criticism and participation in and outings to cultural and artistic activities related to their specialization.

Respondents had to have been enrolled in one of the school's specialized arts programs (Music; Arts and Culture; Art, Communication and Technology) for at least three years of the five-year high school program. They also had to have graduated from their program 10 years or more prior to our study. The study participants were selected randomly from a list of graduate students provided by teachers at this school. The participants were contacted through Facebook and a message was sent providing a brief explanation of the research project and asking them to participate in a semi-structured interview lasting approximately two hours. They were also invited to answer a preliminary questionnaire to allow the researcher to establish their profile prior to the interview. Each interview was recorded. A pre-test was conducted before the interviews. Our study's goal was to identify the persons and the elements that have influenced the young person to choose an artistic career. The researchers stopped interviewing when a theoretical saturation was obtained and that supplementary interviews would not bring new information.

Five men and nine women make up the sample, for a total of 14 respondents. These individuals currently live in different cities, with the farthest located 250 kilometres from the school attended. Seven of the respondents (half of the sample) are in their late twenties, five are in their thirties, and two are in their forties.

Results

Not surprising, the results of our interviews are consistent with findings in the literature about future participation in the arts concerning the role of one or both parents (Gainer, 1997; Wollscheid, 2014), the role of teachers and the fact of having taken arts-related classes during childhood (Krackman, 1996). However, our exploratory qualitative research also led us to identify four additional factors that played a more or less significant role in the artistic vocation of the respondents. We collected and analyzed data on a total of seven factors, as follows: (1) parental influence; (2) classes taken outside of school; (3) primary school; (4) significant events

experienced during childhood or adolescence; (5) influence of friends during childhood and adolescence; (6) influence of other people; and (7) influence of specialized arts programs. At least five of these factors played a role for each respondent. In order to make our study more complete, we also looked at an additional aspect: whether the respondents were still active in their artistic profession more than 10 years after graduation.

We begin by presenting the results for the three first factors that corroborate and complement previous studies, before turning our attention to the four complementary factors we found and, finally, to the last aspect.

Profile of the 14 respondents							
Number	Gender	Age	Graduation year	Still practicing	Nb of factors identified	Artistic discipline at arts school	Current job
1	F	32	1998	Yes	5	Craft	Part Time Craft
2	F	27	2003	Yes	5	Music	Music Teacher
3	F	32	1998	Yes	6	Music	French Language Teacher
4	F	28	2001	Yes	6	Theatre	Props Specialist Film
5	M	26	2003	Yes	5	Music	Musician
6	M	27	2003	Yes	6	Music	Musician
7	F	31	1998	Yes	6	Theatre	Costume Designer Theatre
8	M	26	2004	No	6	Music	Student Business Administration
9	F	32	1998	Yes	6	Music	Teacher and Photographer
10	F	27	2002	Yes	5	Dance	Choreographer
11	F	47	1983	No	6	Photography	Manager Kindergarden
12	M	27	2003	No	5	Music	Doctoral Student Anthropology
13	F	49	1976	Yes	6	Music	Dance Teacher Primary School
14	M	30	2000	Yes	5	Cinematography	Film Director

1. Parental influence

Like Gainer (1997) and Wollscheid (2014), we observed that parents have a decisive influence on the future vocation of their child. Parents play the role of instigators to the extent that they are the ones who decide on the child's primary school, on whether to enrol the child in after-school classes at a young age and on whether to bring the child with them to cultural events. In doing so, parents create opportunities to expose the child to the arts, without necessarily controlling how things develop from there. There is no doubt that parental influence is much more significant during childhood. Afterwards, young people are more likely to make their own decisions, although they may continue to take their parent's opinion into account throughout their life.

I think my parents played a decisive role in the path I chose by wanting me to give an arts-centered primary school a try early on, at the primary level. (Respondent 3)

Several interrelated elements can be observed in the relationship of our respondents with their parents and the latter's attitude toward the arts: artistic practice by one or both parents; the child's admiration for their parent's practice; whether the parents encourage participation in the arts within the family by bringing the child to performances; playing a musical instrument or singing together; and, finally, whether there is respect for the child's personal choices and encouragement to pursue their passions. One particularly notable element that emerged from the interviews is the presence of the father. Indeed, contrary to other studies (Gainer, 1997), nine of the 11 respondents who reported receiving encouragement from their family mentioned that it was their father's influence that was decisive; he was the one who encouraged them. Several respondents also mentioned that their father plays a musical instrument in an amateur capacity or writes poetry.

There's no doubt that I've been surrounded by the arts since I was little – a lot of dance, music as well... My parents influenced me the most. When I was young, my parents would dance; they loved to dance. They were really into social dancing back then... we would put on CDs and they would show me how to do the cha-cha-cha and all those social dances. (Respondent 13)

My father really pushed us when we were young... Everything artistic – music, visual arts, performances, theatre – was really pushed hard and the standards were high. They didn't allow just anything into the house; there were no American films. I was watching Fellini when I was seven. (Respondent 1)

In many cases, the respondents expressed admiration for the parent who introduced them to art.

Yes, my father is the one who got me interested in singing and music. I also discovered Brel thanks to my father. All of the things that influenced me come from my father. (Respondent 3)

The parents of 11 of the 14 respondents encouraged the choices of their child. In fact, they supported their child regardless of the choices they made. This seemed to be a very important aspect for respondents in that it gave them a sense of freedom.

My parents have always supported my appreciation of the arts. No matter what the discipline, the most important thing in my home has always been to do what we love. Even though my father doesn't have any affinity for the arts, contrary to my mother or brother, he always encouraged me in his own way. (Respondent 7)

The extended family also plays a role in a child's enthusiasm for the arts. Family members who are themselves artists, such as a brother or sister, grandparent, uncle or godmother, or even the former spouse of a parent or a family friend, are all capable of exerting an influence.

2. Classes outside of school

Enrolment in classes in an artistic discipline outside of the school is also an important factor, notably in terms of helping children improve their technical mastery of the chosen art and gain self-confidence and various skills. All respondents, without exception, took classes outside of school during their childhood and/or adolescence. Different types of classes were taken across all disciplines, including the visual arts and the performing arts (music, dance). In addition, 10 out of 14 respondents took more than one type of class during these periods. The age at which respondents began taking classes varied from five to 14 years, covering the period from childhood to early adolescence. Thirteen of the 14 respondents took classes lasting at least one year (Respondent 14 was the exception). Seven of the respondents took classes in the same discipline for over nine years, and one respondent even took classes in a single discipline for 21 years.

In terms of the role and contribution of these classes, they undeniably gave the participants a solid technical basis or enriched their technical knowledge of their art, but they also proved to

be valuable tools in terms of validation, motivation, enrichment, progress, stimulation and openness to other forms of art. They also served as therapeutic tools, helping the respondents to overcome their shyness and break free of their personal problems. These classes also helped the participants develop self-discipline and a certain rigour in their practice. In some cases, the classes prepared them for entry into a school offering an arts specialization. Finally, exchanges with a teacher offered the students an opportunity to discuss the life of an artist and life in general, which helped guide their future choices.

I have a lot of memories of that. It had a very therapeutic effect in my life at the time. I've always said that dance saved my life. Because without it, I wouldn't be here. I wouldn't be who I am. For me, it was completely liberating! Dance had a huge, huge impact on my life. In a more concrete sense, the classes taught me rigour. (Respondent 11)

3. Primary school

Most often, it is the parents who decide to enrol their child in a particular school. Primary school plays an important role in the future orientation of children and in the development of an appreciation for the arts, depending on the type of school the child attends. The impact thus varies mainly with the type of school.

Of the 14 respondents, five were enrolled in a specialized arts school for the duration of their primary education, while eight others attended a regular school and one respondent attended an alternative school. We observed a much stronger impact on our respondents who attended a specialized arts school compared to those who went to a regular school. In the first case, school was a key trigger that placed the child in direct contact with art on a daily basis and cultivated their interest in the arts at an early age. The six years spent in primary school thus played an extremely important role by allowing the children to develop an artistic practice and to integrate it into their daily routine. All of the respondents reported having had a remarkable and stimulating experience that had a strong influence on them. Four main elements were mentioned repeatedly: 1) daily rigorous practice of an art; 2) large-scale shows; 3) competent teachers; and 4) continuation in the same specialization at the high school level. For example, daily artistic practice allowed the children to develop rigour, autonomy and discipline.

(...) because it demands a lot of autonomy and discipline, it really helped me develop as a child and an individual, and I really needed that. (Respondent 3)

We had a very strict schedule. Every day, we had our half hour of piano, our half hour of violin, we had dance, visual arts one or two times a week, and then in grade 6, we had expression, theatre genres... So it was like it was part of our daily life... Every day, we did music, art... We were always on the go. We had singing classes. A large part of our life was dedicated to the arts in general. I can't think of any other school that has had as big of an impact on people as that school. (Respondent 12)

The presentation of large-scale shows was also an important element for the respondents.

The recognition you receive as an accomplished artist on the evening of a show is enormous. The whole family is there to congratulate you; they bring you flowers... (Respondent 12)

Teachers also played a crucial role in their development.

I saw my teachers as being well-meaning and even understanding in the most difficult moments. They were excellent pedagogues who knew how to communicate their passion for the arts. (Respondent 6)

On the other hand, the experience of participants who attended a regular school did not leave as much of a mark, except in cases where a teacher showed a particular interest in the arts.

It was really the teachers who had the greatest impact on me... those who were somewhat more artistically inclined. And if you show a bit of talent, they encourage you and you feel like you're worth something. (Respondent 1)

In grade 6, we did a photography project and that left more of an impression on me. The thing that attracted me to photography was that the medium was so different for children at the time – it was black-and-white photography. We would go to a neighbourhood and walk around with the teacher and he would tell us to choose original angles. So we would explore; we looked at the world differently, so it was a lot of fun. That teacher had an impact on me. And photography did too. (Respondent 11)

In conclusion, according to our respondents, the impact of school on the pursuit of an artistic career varies depending on the school attended. The influence is strong in the case of a specialized arts school or an alternative school where learning is based on artistic projects. For children who attended a regular school, the influence is weak unless the teachers showed an interest in the arts. This last aspect appears significant and raises the question of whether it is the art classes taken at school that influence adult preferences for art or rather the passion shown by the teacher.

4. Key events in childhood or adolescence

Significant events experienced during childhood or adolescence often act as a trigger by giving the young person the impression they are good at something or by confirming their talent (Colbert & Courchesne, 2012). The role played by this factor is one of encouragement, confirmation, motivation and recognition. In addition, when a child experiences an emotionally charged event that makes an impression on them, that event can spark an interest in the child to pursue a related profession or practice an art in that field.

The key events mentioned by our respondents can be divided into six categories: (1) attendance at a specialized arts camp; (2) winning a contest and/or an award; (3) participation in a performance as an amateur artist; (4) attendance at a memorable performance; (5) subscription for a cultural activity; (6) an "others" category that includes a visit to a respondent's art class by their artist father, participation in arts week during primary school and a role as an extra in a movie. Each respondent reported at least one key event that occurred during their childhood or adolescence.

With regard to this factor, it can be observed that emotionally charged events definitely have a much stronger impact than others and therefore play the role of a trigger by making children believe they have talent or by confirming their talent and desire to pursue or continue in the art

in question. This factor thus plays a role of encouragement, confirmation, motivation and recognition.

When I won the mascot contest, it had a stronger impact on me because it was covered by the media. My parents couldn't deny that I had had my first success in that area. So that made a big impression on me..., also because I had won silver. (Respondent 14)

When I would go back to school (after music camp), I realized that I had made progress in relation to my peers... We would come back and we would feel very grounded, even if we didn't rehearse a lot individually, we had played all summer, we had learned a lot, we were arriving with knowledge to pass on and share... it was very enriching. (Respondent 8)

5. Influence of friends during childhood and adolescence

The influence of friends is an important reinforcement factor that is independent of parental influence (Caru & Cova, 2011; Petr, 2010) to the extent that choosing one's friends is a personal decision. Friends in childhood and adolescence appear to have an impact on two main elements: the choice of a secondary school and the encouragement they offer with regard to the practice of an art. Indeed, every respondent except one reported having been influenced by at least one of these elements and several were influenced by both elements. For 10 of the 14 respondents, the influence of friends was mainly felt in their choice of a high school offering a specialized arts program. This phenomenon was particularly noticeable among the respondents who attended a music school at the primary level, since most of them continued in music in high school. They follow each other in a logical continuation. It should be noted that this phenomenon was also observed, albeit less systematically, among those who attended a regular primary school.

There was actually a big group of us who were moving on. My friends were going there, so it was only natural for me to go there too... For sure, it was like a mass movement of people. At the end of school, continuing in music is an obvious choice for most people. (Respondent 6)

We observed that, in seven cases out of 14, friends also played a role through their encouragement of the respondents to continue in the arts and through mutual encouragement in their artistic practice. Some respondents had a very talented close friend who they admired and this inspired them to continue to hone their artistic skills, but also to surpass themselves and to carry on in their chosen discipline. Friends were thus a motivating factor and a source of stimulation for several of the young people in our study.

He really was a huge inspiration for me and it's partly because of him that I decided to do this. It's as if he passed me the torch, if you like – he passed me his torch and I went "wow, that's impressive..." Honestly, that guy made a really big impression on me and definitely inspired me. (Respondent 8)

6. Influence of other people

Other people who are neither family members nor friends serve mainly as a source of encouragement and inspiration to either go into or continue in the arts field (Bawa, 2010; Hausman, 2012). This factor does not necessarily trigger an interest in the arts, but rather reinforces an appreciation of the arts and encourages the individual to consider pursuing their interest in the arts.

The most frequently mentioned sources of influence, as we saw earlier, were teachers in the youth's artistic discipline, mostly at the high school level and in after-school classes, but also in primary school in some cases. A guest visiting a school, a director and well-known musicians also served as figures of influence or artistic models for our young respondents. In the majority of cases where the figures of influence were not family members, the encounter with them took place during adolescence. Moreover, for 12 out of 14 respondents, several sources of influence marked them at different points in their life. It's important to note that the majority of participants had a great deal of admiration for these figures, who they considered role models and sources of inspiration and who therefore served as triggers in their decision to pursue an artistic path.

And it's after seeing that guy that I made my final decision and said to myself, "Ok, I want to play that instrument, and he comes (from such and such a school), so I'm going there, I want to play like him." It really made a big impression on me. I was probably in grade 5 or 6. (Respondent 8)

These influential people played multiple roles and made a valuable contribution to the respondents, notably through their encouragement, guidance, support and motivation to push their boundaries.

It was the teacher I had, and he called my mother after class and said "it's as if he's been playing [the instrument] for months... the way he picked it up – the position was great. He's very instinctive." He had called my mother to encourage her and to encourage me, basically. That made a huge impression on me. (Respondent 8)

The impact on me was even bigger because it was the first time I had ever met an adult who earned their living that way and who had encouraged me, implicitly or explicitly, to do so as well, that's for sure. (Respondent 14)

Over and above the encouragement they offered, these figures of influence inspired some of the respondents to push their boundaries by recognizing their talent. This was the case for Respondent 2, who spoke of the influence of his private music teacher in high school. These people often played a guiding and supporting role for the young respondents.

I was the pupil who practised the most and who made the most progress so I was kind of the teacher's pet. I had a lot of potential and I enjoyed [music], so she pushed me so hard and I even believe that it's thanks to her that I thought about continuing in music. (Respondent 2)

He's probably the person in the music field who influenced me the most in my practice, in my life in general and even at a personal level, in terms of the mental blockages I was

dealing with and the questions I was asking myself. He supported me at every level.
(Respondent 8)

These individuals also played a role by instilling confidence in the respondents, motivating them, recognizing them as artists, stimulating and nurturing them, encouraging them to think, guiding them in their career choices, influencing them and, finally, validating them. Several of them thus made a life-long impression on the respondents and favoured numerous aspects of their development by sharing their passion for their art, encouraging the respondents to practise an art and to continue in a given discipline, encouraging them to push their boundaries, and guiding and supporting them.

It really all goes back to my big brother. He was three years older, and every year, in grades 4 and 5, we would go and see the end-of-year performances. I caught the bug... I remember thinking "that's what I want to do, I want to perform." (Respondent 5)

7. *Influence of specialized arts programs in high school*

Arts programs offered at the high school level had a major impact on several aspects and were life-changing for a number of respondents. Contrary to primary school, once they reach high school, the desire and decision to enrol in an arts-centered program is most often the child's.

My parents have always liked [the arts]. They steered me in that direction in primary school and then I made the choice in high school because I realized that I enjoyed it.
(Respondent 13)

All of the participants reported that the time spent in an arts-centered school had an average to strong influence in their life, and 11 out of 15 respondents found that it had a strong influence. Specialized programs had an impact on the young person in four main areas: 1) development of critical thinking skills; 2) development of technical skills; 3) personal development; and 4) professional development.

First, specialized programs help develop critical thinking by allowing the young person to acquire or build upon their general culture and to develop a visual arts language that will serve them well later in their analysis of works or understanding of the arts milieu. This in turn helps them appreciate the importance of the arts in society and develop a greater awareness of the different art forms. These programs also give young people a broader perspective on the world and stimulate their curiosity towards the arts.

I think that my sensitivity [to the arts] comes to a large extent from that program, in the sense that by being immersed in it for so long, it definitely developed my curiosity and my desire to pursue my interest in it today. And I think that it shaped me academically, at the level of my knowledge. I think that the fact of being familiar with and immersed in the arts milieu changes how you participate in those events, because although the pleasure and the desire to participate in the arts may have come from my parents, from my childhood, because I was in [that milieu], the knowledge aspect was acquired through high school. The knowledge aspect is also useful when I participate in certain cultural activities, because I'm not just an observer – I enjoy them... (Respondent 3)

Actually, I do believe it played a role, because I know more than I would have known and that knowledge encourages us to explore a lot of other composers, instruments, etc. that I would otherwise have little knowledge of and no interest in discovering. I have the feeling that's where it comes from. And when it comes to classical music performances, if I know the composer, I'm more interested in going and seeing them and that's when I start to become familiar with them and to play their works. And that's where my classical music culture was shaped, so in that respect, it did play a role. (Respondent 12)

Second, specialized arts programs play a role in the youth's technical development. In addition to allowing them to hone their technique and their skills and knowledge at the technical level, these programs also build or reinforce discipline and rigour through daily practice and creation.

I already had [a love of music] before, but it deepened it and gave me the tools to improve and grow as a musician... and the opportunity to improve myself, to become a better musician. We had classes every day. It's really extraordinary, because not everyone is lucky enough to have that, and I also had a private teacher... Going to a specialized school gave me the tools to develop musically. (Respondent 2)

I think that the most significant event was that creation was an integral part of my daily life. It wasn't a special activity, it wasn't an occasional activity – it was every day... I can create on demand at any time, you know, because I was trained to do so on a daily basis, and creation is essentially a muscle. I did it a lot at the time, both intensively and academically. (Respondent 14)

Third, specialized arts programs play a role in the personal development of the individual by building their self-confidence and fostering the development of autonomy and leadership. In some cases, specialized programs also played a role in encouraging and motivating young people not to drop out of school.

When you have problems at school, it's really easy for some people to drop out more quickly, but when you have access to several classes in a field you're passionate about, that makes you want to stay and it's certainly more motivating... I also believe that it made me appreciate my years at high school more. (Respondent 4)

If I hadn't had that in my life, I don't know what I would have done. So, strictly in terms of dropping out of school, it actually made me want to stay. It allowed me to continue my studies in a field related to the arts. It also gave me a lot of self-confidence. (Respondent 11)

Fourth, arts programs had an impact on the respondents' professional development at the level of networking, but also of their career choice. Indeed, the strong cohesion and ties between students in this type of program fosters the establishment of a network made up of the students themselves as well as their teachers, which can help them gain a foothold in their chosen field.

My experience in the schools I attended gave me access to good private teachers and professionals. It also brought me into contact with peers, forming something of a network. Because that's what happens – you meet lots of other musicians and, later, you work with them. That's what I got out of it. (Respondent 5)

In addition, specialized programs can lead respondents to choose a job that is in some way related to their discipline:

Yes, the specialized program had an impact, because that's what led me to become a musician. (Respondent 2)

The fifth way in which specialized programs play a role is by entrenching and consolidating the knowledge and skills learned in cases where the child was enrolled in a specialized arts program in primary school.

It was rooted, integrated... it had become a part of my life. My education made the arts an integral part of my everyday life. (Respondent 9)

Primary school and secondary school are linked, but there's no question that if I had stopped after primary school, things would not have been the same. Just the fact of continuing on that path and integrating the basics learned at the primary level and honing my musical skills... all that was consolidated, I believe. (Respondent 12)

It is also interesting to note that, while the arts classes themselves play a key role, everything related to the specialized programs can also have an impact, including the performances put on by the children, the private classes taken as part of the program, the influence of friends, as well as the dedicated, passionate teachers who encourage them within their discipline. All of these aspects work to reinforce the impact of these specialized programs.

Artistic practice and cultural consumption

Only three of our 14 respondents are not involved in artistic practice professionally because they were unable to earn a living from it. However, two of these three respondents (respondents 8 and 11) worked in the arts sector for several years in the past. The desire for job stability was the main reason behind their decision to change fields. Thus, only one respondent (Respondent 12) has never had a job related to the arts and cultural sector.

However, all of the respondents consume cultural products on a regular basis, with the exception of Respondent 4, whose cultural consumption is weak.

Another noteworthy fact is that the respondents' consumption and practice of the arts tend to diminish at certain points in their life, such as the birth of a child or the experience of a dramatic life change (in line with previous research, cf Colbert et al, 2012). In all cases, however, the respondents expressed certainty that they will eventually come back to the arts.

Family life led me to cut back on my cultural participation by about three-quarters I'd say. We also moved out to the country, at the end of a rural road. So, it was definitely isolated... Yes, I think it'll come back... at any rate, I really hope so. That's what I want, but I have the feeling that it's already started. Things are starting to open up. I think I was in survival mode with the family, with work, with the reconstituted family, so I made human choices based on family logistics. But now I'm starting to put the pieces in place to get back into my old habits. (Respondent 11)

I definitely believe that it's going to increase and that, eventually, with the children, it will hit a peak at some point... a performance, an event... I want to show them lots of things, so it's clear that it will increase at that level... because one of the reasons we don't go out that often is a lack of resources, so once we start to have a bit more money, our own means of transportation, we'll be more tempted to go out. (Respondent 8)

Conclusions and discussion

Our study contributes to the advancement of knowledge on cultural transmission by highlighting the impact of specialized arts schools on the future artistic careers of our respondents.

We were able to identify seven main factors that influence the decision of young people to pursue a career in the arts: (1) parental influence; (2) classes taken outside of school; (3) regular practice of an art in primary school; (4) significant events experienced during childhood or adolescence; (5) the influence of friends during childhood and adolescence; (6) the influence of other people; and (7) the influence of specialized arts programs. At least five of these seven factors played a role in the future orientation of each respondent.

Our first research question concerned the influence of the young person's entourage on their choice of a career in the arts. Like others before us (Gainer, 1997; Wollscheid, 2014), we found that a family member often acts as a trigger and exerts a major influence on the young person's future path. However, in the case of our respondents and contrary to Gainer (1993) findings, the mother was not the only significant figure; indeed, the father exerted a major influence on a number of respondents. We also identified other individuals who play a role in the equation as well. For example, our respondents mentioned their close and extended family (father, mother, uncle, aunt, former spouse), similar to the findings of Colbert & Courchesne (2011) or Willekens & Leven (2014), and close friends, but they also made specific mention of persons of influence or persons they perceived as being influential (ex., a visiting artist at school, another young person, a teacher). As such, the influences to which young people are exposed can perhaps be likened to a series of concentric circles, with the first circle being composed of the immediate family (father, mother, brothers, sisters), followed by the extended family (uncles, aunts, former spouse), then people outside the family unit (teachers, friends), and, finally, complete strangers who exert significant influence.

We thus observed that multiple individuals can impact arts practice in adulthood. The presence of the mother and father was very strong in our study, leading us to wonder whether this situation is specific to people who embark on an artistic career or whether an appreciation of the high arts can be transmitted by several different actors both inside and outside the extended family.

Our second research question looked at the role of primary and high school in the decision to pursue an artistic career. Unsurprisingly, and consistently with previous research (DiMaggio & Useem, 1980; Krakman, 1996), an appreciation of the arts is reinforced by after-school classes and, for the majority of our respondents, by enrolment in a primary school where art is an integral part of the educational project. For respondents who did not attend a school with an art-centered project, the key influencer appeared to be a teacher.

What is unique about our respondents is that, besides developing their taste for the arts, school was a crucial factor in their choice of a career in the arts. By the end of primary school, but especially by the end of high school, they were already firmly engaged in arts practice. They had discovered that they wanted to pursue a career in their artistic discipline as an adult. While young, they can be seen to be shaped by a series of events that guide them toward an artistic vocation through a sort of tunnel (family, entourage, primary school, specialized arts high school, career).

In conclusion, the seven factors that we identified are mutually reinforcing. It is not always easy to single out one factor as being more significant than the others. In our sample, each respondent mentioned at least five of the seven factors, suggesting to us that, on the one hand, several forces come into play in the decision to pursue an arts path and career, and, on the other hand, that the absence of one factor is not catastrophic because it is offset by others. Thus, our research complements that of our colleagues by emphasizing the multi-dimensional aspect of the factors influencing cultural transmission and, in the case of our research more specifically, the impact of arts practice at the professional level. In terms of insight into consumer behaviour, our research suggests that it could be relevant to develop strategies such as inviting artists to visit schools, based on their potential impact as dominant and respected figures, and, more generally, to develop productions aimed at youth in all cultural sectors.

Limitations and future research

Our research is, of course, exploratory and our findings cannot be extrapolated to the general population. This is its main limitation.

There is a need to expand upon certain elements of the equation. For example, what are the deeper motivations behind parents' choice of an arts-centered primary school for their children? One could also take a closer look at the role of other actors in the extended family, including siblings, grandparents, aunts and uncles.

The role of the father is interesting. Is the father's presence related in some way to the fact that our respondents went on to become professional artists? It would be interesting to further explore the role of the father among professional artists. One thing that is certain is that, contrary to what some other studies imply (Christin, 2012), the father does not seem to be completely missing from the equation.

An important nuance should perhaps be made between the fact of having taken arts-related classes at school with a teacher who is not passionate about the material versus arts-related classes with a teacher who displays a keen interest in the discipline taught. In the latter case, it is not so much the fact of offering arts classes at school that has a significant impact (DiMaggio & Useem, 1980) as having teachers who are passionate about the arts.

Another noteworthy but relatively unexplored aspect is the influence of friends on the path chosen by the young person. It would be interesting to delve deeper into the role of friends in encouraging or discouraging an interest in an art career as well as for the arts. Does a friend (or perhaps another influential person outside the extended family circle) exert an influence in the majority of cases? What role does the specific relationship and the frequency of the presence of a friend play in encouraging a young person to pursue an artistic path?

Our study focused on people who chose a career in the arts following their graduation from a school offering a specialized arts program. It would be useful to compare our findings with a second group of respondents who did not choose a career in the arts after following the same educational path in order to determine how the seven influencing factors may or may not play a role. It would also be interesting to explore whether the young adults in a second group who followed the same path maintain an interest in the arts and if their arts attendance is significant.

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