

Arts and Culture

Child's play: The links between childhood encouragement to participate in and attend cultural activities and corresponding adult participation and attendance in arts and culture.

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This analysis was undertaken in-house within the Scottish Government by using large scale data from the 2007/8 Scottish Household Survey Culture (and Sport) Module. It explores the role of childhood encouragement to participate in and attend cultural activities in promoting cultural participation and attendance in adult life.

Main Findings

- There is consistent evidence that people who were encouraged to attend and take part in cultural activities as a child are more likely to participate in and attend cultural activities in adulthood, compared with those who were not encouraged to do so.
- This evidence remains true even when other factors such as education, gender, age, income, deprivation and rurality of an area are accounted for.
- The effect of childhood encouragement is stronger where the cultural activity involves active participation, rather than just attendance.
- This research highlights the importance of policies promoting cultural activities for children, and Curriculum for Excellence, which will help to mainstream culture into the educational system and expose young people to arts and culture at an early age.
- Future research is needed to explore the role of socio-demographic variables in respondents' childhood. Longitudinal research might be required to explore the impact of these variables over time.
- Further research is also needed to determine the role of encouragement to attend and take part in cultural activities, both in and out of school settings.

Background

Attendance and participation in cultural activities have long been understood to have beneficial effects on a broad range of outcomes encompassing areas as diverse as personal and community development, social justice, health and education. We also know there are both direct and indirect economic impacts of cultural industries on local areas and beyond. Adult attendance and participation in culture play a key role in supporting those industries and this research demonstrates how childhood encouragement to attend and participate in cultural activities plays an important part in promoting adult engagement.

This analysis builds upon previous research carried out both in Scotland and England. What makes it different is that for the first time in Scotland we were able to look at the predictors of adult cultural participation and attendance using large scale and robust data offered by the 2007/8 SHS Culture (and Sport) Module. Through the use of statistical techniques to analyse the SHS data available to us, we were able to assess the relative influence of different variables that affect access and participation in childhood and adulthood.

This work will help us understand whether there is a case for investing in more active encouragement of childhood exposure to culture and what types of exposure and encouragement are most effective in promoting adult cultural participation.

Methodology

The approach we have taken to analysing the SHS Culture (and Sport) Module 2007/8, is known as logistic regression modelling. Using this technique allowed us to look not just for the relationship between childhood encouragement¹ and adult participation taken in isolation, but also to account for variation in other variables that might be useful in explaining the reasons behind different levels of cultural participation and attendance among adults.

We have identified five relatively common cultural activities carefully selected to provide a combination of passive engagement and more active participation. These activities were then included in the models linking participation/ attendance in childhood with corresponding participation/ attendance levels in adult life.

¹ By childhood encouragement we specifically mean encouragement in a family setting. The SHS Culture (and Sport) module did not ask about encouragement in other settings such as school.

The models we created were as follows:

- 1) The relationship between being **taken to the theatre** when growing up and **adult theatre attendance** in the last 12 months.
- 2) The relationship between being encouraged to **read in childhood** and **reading for pleasure as an adult** in the last 12 months.
- 3) The relationship between being **taken to museums and galleries in childhood**, and **adult attendance at museums and galleries** in the last 12 months.
- 4) The relationship between being **encouraged to perform² in childhood**, and **performing as an adult** in the last 12 months.
- 5) The relationship between being **encouraged to perform in childhood** and **undertaking creative activities³ as an adult** in the last 12 months.

Our Findings

We have found a statistically significant and strong relationship between childhood encouragement to take part in cultural activities and cultural participation levels in adulthood. This relationship remains true when we consider other factors such as age, sex, education, income, level of deprivation and rurality of the area that we hypothesised to be closely related to adult participation.

Looking at five types of cultural activities selected for the purpose of this research, we have found the following with regards to the relationship between childhood encouragement and adult participation:

Those who were taken to the theatre as a child were **45% more likely** (odds ratio 1.45) to have attended a theatre performance as an adult in the last 12 months, compared with those who were not encouraged.

- Those who were taken to museums and galleries in childhood were **69% more likely** (odds ratio 1.69) as an adult to have visited museums and galleries in the last 12 months, compared with those who were not encouraged.

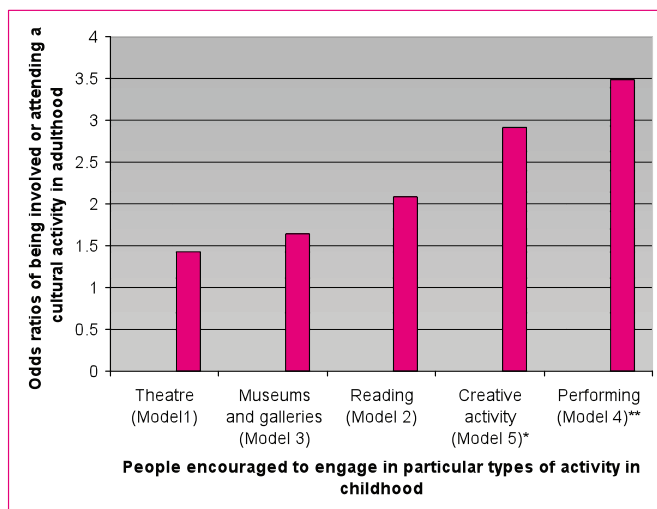
² **Performing** includes: playing a musical instrument; acting; dancing or singing.

³ **Creative activities** include: painting; drawing; printmaking or sculpture; writing stories, plays or books; writing poetry; writing music.

- Those who were encouraged to read for pleasure in childhood were **over twice more likely** (odds ratio 2.28) to have read for pleasure as an adult in the last 12 months, compared with those who were not encouraged.
- Those who were encouraged to perform in childhood were almost **three times more likely** (odds ratio 2.91) to have engaged as an adult in a creative activity in the last 12 months, compared with those who were not encouraged.
- Those who were encouraged to perform in childhood were just under **three and a half times more likely** (odds ratio 3.47) to have performed as an adult in the last 12 months, compared with those who were not encouraged.

Furthermore, as we can see from Table 1 below, the cultural activities requiring participation such as reading for pleasure, creative activity and performing arts and culture were even more strongly associated with childhood encouragement than those activities which were based around attendance such as going to the theatre and visiting museums and galleries.

Table 1: The odds ratios of being involved in or attending a cultural activity in adulthood when compared with those who were not encouraged to participate in similar activities in childhood.



Policy Implications

These findings are significant from the point of view of cultural policy development in Scotland. While the importance of cultural participation and attendance for a range of areas such as personal and community development; social justice; health or education has long been understood⁴, we finally have **evidence** that will support the rationale for encouraging cultural attendance and participation in childhood.

We have now demonstrated that it is important to encourage children to participate in cultural activities and to attend cultural events. The evidence from this analysis does show that there is a clear link between exposure to culture as a child and subsequent adult participation.

We also have a clear indication that being encouraged to participate in cultural activities as a child will have a stronger effect on adult participation than that of attendance in childhood on adult attendance, evidence which supports Curriculum for Excellence which will help mainstream culture into the educational system and expose young people to arts and culture from an early age.

⁴ A Literature Review of the Evidence Base for Culture, The Arts and Sport Policy. Scottish Government, 2004. <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2004/08/19784/41533>

This document, along with full research report of the project, and further information about social and policy research commissioned and published on behalf of the Scottish Government, can be viewed on the Internet at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/socialresearch>. If you have any further queries about social research, please contact us at socialresearch@scotland.gsi.gov.uk or on 0131-244 7560.



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