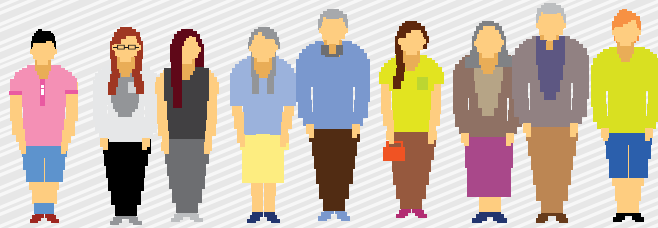


PARENTS

Who We Spoke To?

Respondents in this category consisted of 8 individuals aged 32 to 50, who are either married or single parents. They have at least one child aged 15 months and 20 years old. During the sessions, there were two children aged 16 and 18 years of age.

The children were invited to the session to offer a counter balance to the overall discussion - particularly from a child's point of view.

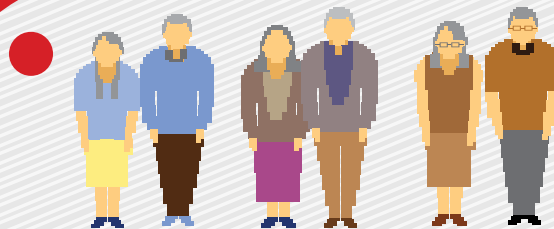


Please refer to Appendix A for a detailed list of respondents in this category.

THEIR PERSPECTIVES ABOUT THE ARTS

PARENTS DEFINE THE ARTS BROADLY

Parents have a broad definition of what the arts is. This ranged from niche, esoteric forms such as abstract art to broader definitions such as architecture and heritage. In addition, they see the arts as intrinsically linked to tradition and culture. Admiring a Peranakan exhibition, watching a lion dance performance or playing a traditional sport can be seen to them as enjoying and appreciating the arts.



“ For me, (the) arts are really very broad. It encompasses things that human do and create. It can be paintings. It can be music. It can be writings or it can be songs. (It's) anything that can be created; a form of creative outlet by humanity. ”

Ben Lai,
Father of 1

“ (The arts) involves a lot of our creative side of mind. It can be provocative so (as to) get people to talk about art and criticise. (The arts) makes you think... so that there is a conversation. ”

Dadina Wong,
Mother of 2

“ Art to me is culture... (It) goes back to culture, and culture goes back to tradition. So once you understand tradition, you will understand art. ”

Muhammad Imran Bin
Mohamed Faid, Father of 2

“ Architecture. The colonial houses and the Peranakan houses. That's art too. ”

Ivan Ying,
Father of 1

THEIR PERSPECTIVES ABOUT THE ARTS

Parents associate a wide range of values with the arts

Parents associate a wide range of values with the Arts – both intrinsic and instrumental. However, as their primary concern lies with the future of their children, the value of the arts is often taken in the context of how it will benefit their children. Pragmatic or economically useful values such as creativity and empathy outweigh the more intrinsic ones such as self-identity and self-expression as these are perceived to be beneficial in the workplace and will aid their children's future. Parents are also particularly interested in how the arts can play a role in defining our culture and national identity.

CREATIVITY

“ I tell parents that you’re going to (be able to) train (your child) in such a way that they (can) do product design similar to products like Apple, and all of them will want to enroll their kids into that course. ”

Dadina Wong,
Mother of 2

“ If you say that creativity is the foundation of the arts and therefore you allow yourself to submerge in the arts more, it expands your creativity and therefore your ability to think outside the box becomes something that is natural for your child. Wouldn’t you want that? Every parent wants the best for their child. ”

Jinella Chua,
Mother of 2

“ If there is freedom for the child to develop themselves if you expose them (to the arts), then you give them a chance to like it and be creative. ”

Caroline Woodford,
Mother of 1

“ Art targets the creativity side of your mind... I think that there is value if you come up with very innovative solutions. ”

Daphne Ong,
Mother of 2

EMPATHY/EMOTIONAL QUOTIENT (EQ)

“ Arts also helps you to work on your EQ. Your EQ... it makes you (who) you are. ”

Muhammad Imran
Bin Mohamed Faid
Father of 2

“ If you lack EQ, you are not going to get along with people... People who have very low EQ, they really struggle. ”

Daphne Ong,
Mother of 2

“

I think there is some pragmatism which goes with how you plan your child's future... I got to plan her future so that she can survive in this future 6.9 million population. It's going to be very very difficult... so we need to give her the opportunity to have skills. At the same time, also balance it with art. EQ, IQ, artistic art (and) how we do that is to let her be exposed to everything. ”

Ivan Ying,
Father of 1

IDENTITY (NATIONAL)

“ I think it's one of the problems which art can solve... My friend came back from Japan... he was praising Japan: 'so cool you know, souvenir nicely packaged, nice design, food is awesome. When I come back, I'm not so proud of Singapore anymore'. That's sad man. (When) you come back, you should be able to see what's the value we have in our own country. The sad thing is a lot of people don't see the beauty and value of what Singapore has and I think through art, you can kind of do that. I was just chatting to my wife how we're going to teach Renee, our daughter, about cultural identity. ”

Ben Lai,
father of 1

“ We don't teach a lot of local authors. It's very sad because during my time in secondary school, we read books by Catherine Lim. Her entire collection of locally written stories were very good... so locally written books are actually a very good source of information. It also develops self-pride, identity. ”

Jinella Chua,
Mother of 2

EXPRESSION

IDENTITY (SELF)

“ Art is a form of identity. It is the various aspects of creation and I think it is what defines us as human beings. Art excites, it supplements and is an interesting part of life.”

Ben Lai,
father of 1

“ I always tell my kids, as a human-being and as a person, two things – music/art. You have to have either one. Without that, it's such a boring thing. You will have no imagination. It will be so dull. There's no expression whatsoever.”

Tina Ng,
Mother of 2

CHARACTER BUILDING

“ If you're talking about ballerinas, very similar to sportsmen, because they need the same dedication, the same focus, same commitment in terms of time, in terms of effort put in and they have a certain goal in mind, whether they want to be the prima donna, the main dancer.”

Jinella Chua,
Mother of 2

CRITICAL THINKING

“ It starts a dialogue... It gives you (a) position, a basis to think about. If this is right, why? If you can accept this, why can't you accept that?”

Ben Lai,
Father of 1

RELAXATION

“ If you go for a concert, it relaxes you and because your relaxed mind is an avenue to think out of the box... to relax. I mean, that's another value of the arts. It's therapeutic.”

Ivan Ying,
Father of 1

BARRIERS TO THE ARTS

Despite recognising the value that the arts can offer to their family and children, parents identified two main barriers to being more involved in the arts – the pragmatism of Singaporeans and the social conditioning in society.

PRAGMATISM CAUSES RESISTANCE

For this group of parents, they have faced pragmatic pressures and a certain extent of resistance from their own parents back in the day.

“ They (my parents) thought that arts was not the “bring home the money” thing to do. But I think they were quite liberal during our time in the 80s, the streaming of science and the arts, humanities... the direction they were pushing me towards was the science because my dad’s a school teacher, so I ended up in science stream. I think subtly, they were pushing me towards science rather than arts because arts was perceived to be simplistic. ”

Ivan Ying,
Father of 1

Although the parents of today are more liberal with their own children, they remain conflicted by pragmatic reasons and will think twice about letting their children pursue Arts.

“ The difficult part is finding the balance. When to say: yes, pursue this, don’t worry. People say that artists don’t earn much... and then later on, you worry that they have no food to eat. But then if you say no, get your degree first, make sure you get all your papers in place first and then you pursue (the arts). By that time, the interest might have fizzled out or they may have lost that creativity growth period. So, I am trying to find that balance with my kids. It’s very very difficult. ”

Jinella Chua,
Mother of 2

“ Frankly, at the end of the day, it’s the parents because the parents are still insisting on academics. As long as the parents are interfering, the child cannot have the freedom to be creative. So we have to get the parents and open their mind up. The schools as well... ”

Caroline Woodford,
Mother of 1

“ If my kid is going to tell me she’s going to pursue art, I would say yes. Couple it with a marketing course so you know how to sell your art, market your art and how to get into the right network because that’s important... ”

Dadina Wong,
Mother of 2

SOCIAL CONDITIONING IN SOCIETY

Parents felt that there was a lack of understanding about the arts. There was a deep rooted belief that within the education system, the arts stream was seen as a place for those not academically-inclined. People were conditioned to believe that one will not have a future should you pursue the arts. The "safe route" to success will be opting for the science stream.

“ I was thinking of choosing design and technology. My dad was like: "Oh no, you shouldn't choose that. If you choose that path means you are quite condemned already... So I ended up choosing science because that is the safe route where you can branch out to many other things. ”

Ben Lai,
Father of 1

One parent also commented that nation building was the priority for the government back in the 80s and that has resulted in a generation of people who has a lack of appreciation in the Arts.

“ When I go to school, it was the 80s so I think everyone was busy with nation-building. Even the government. So there was not so much resources channelled through to that aspect of society and that's why... there's no stuff like even (the) simplest form of art history. ”

Dadina Wong,
Mother of 2

Parents believed in the image that Singapore art and artists were discriminated against by fellow Singaporeans, which added up to the reluctance of letting their children pursue the arts.

“ I think the foreign one would get better pay and opportunities than the local ones. Why do you think my brother went overseas? One of our Singapore artist Ming Wong, he resides in Berlin. He comes back whenever he has a show. He participated in LA. Being in Berlin, we would go: "wow, he dances so well. ”

Dadina Wong,
Mother of 2

“ Most of our singers... get their exposure overseas. The record labels goes: "oh yeah that's not too bad. OK I'll send you to Taiwan, I'll send you to China." That's when they boom and they come back, like whoa this guy's really good. ”

Jinella Chua,
Mother of 2

A MORE OPTIMISTIC FUTURE

The good news is despite the pragmatism and social conditioning in society, the current generation of parents is more supportive of the arts than their own parents, and see the arts as a good form of exposure for their children. We see this coming through via stories from the children present at the groups.

“ My mum cares about my happiness more...she trusts me a lot in the sense that I will choose something that will help me in the future... They have exposed me to art. I have seen so many concerts, so many musicals, so many people performing, sometimes almost every weekend, they will take me out to go somewhere to see some kind of art. I feel that my mum is kind of living vicariously through me. ”

Rachel Woodford,
16 year old youth

“ People become more open to these kind of things so in the future, they probably will be (even) more open to these things as well and people will start looking at art as not just a hobby or a fun activity you can just do at your free time but more of a business or a job. ”

Eli Mathews
Scheerder,
18 year old youth

HOW DO WE MAKE ARTS MORE RELEVANT IN THEIR LIVES?

Parents associate the values of the arts with how it could help their children, whether through teaching them soft skills or providing them with a wider exposure. Amongst all the values that were mentioned by the respondents, creativity stood out in terms of its close link with the future success of their children. In order to reach a wider crowd of parents, we need to make the arts relevant by adopting an instrumental approach and establishing a connection between the value of the arts and their children's future.

What we could tell the parents:

The arts is at the center of creativity, which will give your child a competitive edge.

This will help to negate some of the pragmatism parents have when encouraging their children to participate more in the arts.

HOW TO REACH THEM?

Parents get their news and information from a mix of media sources, predominantly newspapers, television programmes and online sources (a mix of news sites and social media sites). However, more than half of the parents in the group indicated preference for online sources as compared to traditional media such as newspapers and television.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ARTS?

There was a mix of views from the respondents. Some believe that they should be responsible for the arts themselves, while others believed that it's a shared responsibility between the government and business organisations.

“ It is actually ourselves. Say for example, we know that we are good, but the reason we stop there (is) because we don't believe in ourselves. Because you have this mindset that arts in Singapore is not picking up so what's the point of going further? So you just stop there. So when you stop there, why must I, the government support you when you do not support yourself? ”

Muhammad Imran
Bin Mohamed Faid,
Father of 2

“ I think it's a shared responsibility between the government and the organisations in Singapore to bring the level of arts up. Because you need the budget, you need the locations, opportunities given to the artists to showcase their talents before the arts scene can flourish. ”

Ivan Ying,
Father of 1