

Instilling innovation: an economic defence of arts and crafts

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This research was conducted by **Rex LaMore and eight others** at **Michigan State University, USA**

Summary

This study examined the artistic experiences of many scientific and technological innovators. Arts education and training can foster one's ability to innovate - which the authors refer to as 'creative capacity' - in an economically significant way. The research found that childhood arts and crafts participation, as well as sustained participation throughout one's life, may help to cultivate one's creative capacity, thereby stimulating economic growth via scientific and technological innovation.

This study examines the impacts of childhood exposure to the arts on eventual professional innovation in the STEM subjects

STEM stands for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. The authors analysed the creative capacities of science and technology graduates from the Michigan State University Honors College between the years of 1990 and 1995, using factors such as number of patents obtained and number of new companies formed as markers of empirical measurement.

Increased arts and crafts engagement leads to increased innovation

Their findings were twofold: first, they determined that both childhood and lifelong arts and crafts exposure correlated with increased levels of scientific or technological innovation; second, they found that STEM professionals participated in arts and crafts much more often than the average American,

and the most entrepreneurial individuals participated at even higher rates than the others.

Investing in the arts will lead to economic growth

Based on this conclusion, the authors recommend that, in order to set the United States back onto a path toward economic resilience, those with STEM proclivities be granted sustained opportunities for exposure to arts and crafts education and training. In a time of restrictive budget cuts, the authors propose that education administrators and government officials make more room for the arts in school curricula and community programming.

This summary is by **Gwendolyn Rugg** and first appeared in **Issue 3 of *The Digest*** from the **Cultural Policy Center** at the University of Chicago

Keywords

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