

**EVALUATION OF  
THE ALLIANCE FOR CALIFORNIA TRADITIONAL ARTS (ACTA)  
LIVING CULTURES GRANTS PROGRAM**

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# **EVALUATION OF THE ALLIANCE FOR CALIFORNIA TRADITIONAL ARTS (ACTA) LIVING CULTURES GRANTS PROGRAM**

## **Overview**

The Alliance for California Traditional Arts Living Cultures Grants Program evaluation assessed the effectiveness and impact of traditional art programs in California. This was done by assessing the individuals who participated in the various activities conducted by the organizations involved in the Living Cultures Grants Program. The evaluation used qualitative methods, which consisted of in-depth, face-to-face interviews of these participants. This evaluation focused on 23 individuals. Age was obtained from only 18 participants ranging from 10 to 60 years old. This evaluation involved a community-based collaboration among ACTA, the Center for Reducing Health Disparities (CRHD) at the University of California, Davis Health System, and the Asian American Center on Disparities Research (AACDR) at the University of California, Davis.

It was expected that participation in the various projects and activities sponsored by the Living Cultures Grants Program would lead to a number of outcomes, of which many will be related to the enhancement of health and psychological well-being.

## **Description of the Living Cultures Grants Program**

ACTA was founded in 1997 by cultural workers, arts administrators, and traditional artists who were interested in preserving the richness of California's cultural past. ACTA's mission is to provide programs and services to support California's diverse living cultural heritage in hopes of ensuring that the state's future will hold cultural elements from the past. ACTA works to develop an infrastructure to support California's vast, underserved folk and traditional arts field. Through programs and services, such as the Living Cultures Grants Program and the Apprenticeship Program, ACTA hopes to cultivate the growth of traditional arts and culture through nurturing California's unique cultural landscape, services to artists, and connecting people, resources, and information.

ACTA's Living Cultures Grants Program (LCGP) funds the continuation of California's traditional arts and cultures by supporting non-profit and community organizations (if not a 501(c)3, fiscal sponsorship is required) that provide exemplary community-based traditional arts activities. LCGP may grant up to \$7,500 for California-based activities such as: performances, cultural festivals, workshops, documentation and archiving of documentary photographic or audio recordings, and/or materials acquisition. Participants range from informal artist networks to larger institutions, from arts organizations to social service providers.

Applications are solicited on an annual basis, and are competitively reviewed by a panel of California's folk and traditional arts experts and practitioners. Grants are awarded according to the following criteria: (1) artistic quality and traditionality of the artists or tradition bearers involved in the project; (2) cultural significance of the traditions in the context of its community; (3) inclusion of cultural expertise in project planning; (4) viability of the project, as evident in a

realistic work plan, appropriate budget, and qualifications of project personnel; (5) clarity of plans for evaluating impact; (6) evidence of community support and involvement in project planning; and (7) potential for long-term benefit to traditional artists or tradition bearers, target communities, or the applicant organization.

Ineligible applications include: (1) plans for debt reduction, capital campaigns, or endowments (2) projects whose main purpose is fundraising; (3) projects for general operating support; (4) projects limited to an historical emphasis, including events presenting the re-creation of past lifestyles (projects including components of oral history documentation are eligible when combined with activities focusing on living cultural traditions); (5) projects based on the interpretation of a cultural tradition, as opposed to the actual tradition or cultural art form itself; projects based in educational institutions (K-12, private schools, and universities), such as folk arts-in-education projects, university seminars and programs, or curriculum development; (6) projects requiring out-of-state travel; and (7) proposals for multiple components of the same event or activity.

ACTA enters into one-year contracts ranging up to \$7,500 with the selected California –based organizations to implement the proposed set of activities or programs. The funded projects begin as early as January 1 and are completed by December 31 of the same calendar year. ACTA staff work closely with each funded agency to clarify project parameters, monitor progress in implementing the supported work, create final reports on the successes and challenges of each project and, on occasion, conduct site visits to the events or activities. ACTA staff, at times, document projects during site visits through recording and photography. The resulting archival materials become part of ACTA’s permanent archival collections, which may be used publicly for educational purposes.

### **Description of the Sample**

The total number of interviews in this study comprised of 23 participants from six selected LCGP-supported programs. The six organizations or agencies included Au Co Vietnamese Cultural Center, Coyote’s Paw, Filipino American Development Foundation, Haitian Dance and Drum Retreat, City of San Fernando and the Garifuna American Heritage Foundation United. The sample consisted of 12 males and 11 females. Of those participants who reported their ages ( $n = 18$ ), the mean age of the respondents was 26.7 years ( $SD = 15.40$ ; range = 10 – 60). The sample was comprised of 6 (26%) Hispanics/Latinos, 4 (17%) Filipinos, 4 (17%) Garinagu, 4 (17%) Vietnamese, 3 (13%) Native Americans, 1 (4%) White American, and 1 biracial (4%) (Thai/Russian) individual. The program funded various traditional art forms and cultural heritage-based projects including language instruction (16.7%), material cultures (33.3%), music (33.3%), and music and dance (33.3%). The following is a brief description of each program and participants who were interviewed.

#### ***Garifuna American Heritage Foundation United***

The Garifuna American Heritage Foundation United (GAHFU) sponsors the Garifuna Culture and Language School, which emphasizes preserving the Garifuna language and culture. This program is located in Southern California and classes are provided throughout the year for

children and adults. Music, dance, drumming, and language are all taught in different classes. The Garifuna language has been recognized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as one of the world's endangered cultural assets.

#### **GAHFU (1<sup>st</sup> Interview)**

This 10-year-old Garifuna boy began taking Garifuna language lessons when he was eight years old. He hopes this class will enable him to communicate with his grandmother and learn more about his culture.

#### **GAHFU (2<sup>nd</sup> Interview)**

This individual, from Honduras, is in his thirties. By attending the language courses, he hopes to become fluent in Garifuna. He has been participating in this program for about three months.

#### **GAHFU (3<sup>rd</sup> Interview)**

This 16-year-old girl was born in the United States. Her family is from Belize. She began attending language and dance classes two years ago and hopes to become fluent in Garifuna.

#### **GAHFU (4<sup>th</sup> Interview)**

This 40-year-old woman is from Belize. She has participated in the language class for about one year, and recently began taking drumming courses. Her interest in learning the Garifuna language increased when she came to the United States.

### ***Haitian Dance and Drum Retreat***

The Haitian Dance and Drum Retreat (HDDR) is comprised of discussion forums, classes, and workshops held by master artists. Participants are involved in the *Veve Project*, a performance that will involve seven master artists from Haiti. A drummer master and Vodou priestess will guide these individuals in their cultural performances.

#### **HDDR (1<sup>st</sup> Interview)**

This 26-year-old female participant has been a member of this program for at least two years. A biracial individual of Thai and Russian-Jewish heritage, she hopes to learn as much as possible about the culture and plans to incorporate what she has learned into her performances.

#### **HDDR (2<sup>nd</sup> Interview)**

This 36-year-old Latina has participated in this Haitian camp for the past five years. An initial Haitian folklore class sparked her interest in other aspects of the program. She has been taking classes in this traditional art form for about 13 years.

#### **HDDR (3<sup>rd</sup> Interview)**

This Caucasian female participant became interested in Afro-Haitian dancing three years ago, when she first attended this Haitian camp. She became immersed in Afro-Haitian dance classes and found this camp to be an opportunity to further enrich her education in the history, culture, and dances.

**HDDR (4<sup>th</sup> Interview)**

This 36-year-old Peruvian American female has been involved in Haitian dancing for the past 20 years, and with this retreat for six years. She identifies herself as a Haitian dance student and considers herself very involved with Afro-Haitian dance lessons.

***City of San Fernando - Mariachi Master-Apprentice Program***

The Mariachi Master Apprentice Program (MMAP), a program of the City of San Fernando, is available every Tuesday and Saturday for youth and young adults. Levels of instrumental instructions range from beginner to advanced. The program's goal is to preserve the tradition of mariachi music by educating the youth with accurate historical and artistic information. The instructors for the classes are members of the Mariachi Los Camperos, a nationally acclaimed group. The interviewed participants are all Mexican or Mexican American.

**MMAP (1<sup>st</sup> Interview)**

This 21-year-old Mexican female has been a program participant for five years. She became involved with mariachi music when she took a guitar elective in high school and continued pursuing her growing interest in mariachi with a friend.

**MMAP (2<sup>nd</sup> Interview)**

This 14-year-old Mexican female joined the program when she was 12. She originally played the violin because of her grandfather but soon became curious about mariachi. Her music teacher referred her to this mariachi program, which she has been attending regularly.

**MMAP (3<sup>rd</sup> Interview)**

This participant is a 21-year-old male college student with a Mexican and Chicano background. His participation in this program began in 2001. His exposure to mariachi as a youth sparked his interest in this area. Participants in this program are instructed by a nationally acclaimed group and he finds MMAP a great opportunity to learn from professionals.

**MMAP (4<sup>th</sup> Interview)**

This 16-year-old Mexican teenager is currently a junior in high school. His interest in mariachi led him to this program around the summer of 2009.

***Filipino American Development Foundation***

The Filipino American Development Foundation (FADF) conducted a lantern-making project that took place from September to December 2009. Workshops are tailored to help participants build a traditional Filipino star lantern (parol). The completion of this folk art project will be presented at the Parol Lantern Festival. This parade will take place at a highly urbanized area of Los Angeles, formerly known as Filipino Town.

**FADF (1<sup>st</sup> Interview)**

This Filipino male participant is a 21-year-old college student majoring in multimedia who became involved in making parol through curiosity. He enjoys teaching others the techniques he

has learned to make parols. He finds this art form challenging and he enjoys the creative expression it allows.

**FADF (2<sup>nd</sup> Interview)**

This 13-year-old Filipino male is a volunteer who teaches this art form to individuals and families. He encourages individuals to construct parols through self-expression. His involvement allows him to feel connected to both the art form and the Philippines. His grandfather founded the community center and his aunt works there.

**FADF (3<sup>rd</sup> Interview)**

This Filipino male participant's love for art led him to participate in this program. His goal in life is to serve others by sharing his talents and teaching people around him. His dedication to this art form involves weekly attendance and participation.

**FADF (4<sup>th</sup> Interview)**

This 60-year-old Filipina woman is widowed, and sees parol making as an enjoyable outlet and regularly attends the workshops. She grew up in the Philippines and moved to the United States in 1996.

***Au Co Vietnamese Cultural Center***

The Au Co Vietnamese Cultural Center (ACVCC) offers a weekend and after-school program. Music lessons are provided for youth 5-12 years of age. The program teaches them Vietnamese folk songs and provides instruction on how to play the *danh tranh* (Vietnamese zither). They plan to perform at the Mid-Autumn Festival and at the Vietnamese American Performing Arts Celebration.

**ACVCC (1<sup>st</sup> Interview)**

This 21-year-old male participant began taking lessons in this traditional art form in 2007, and has been to about 30 sessions over the past two years. He wants to keep in touch with the culture of his Vietnamese heritage. He actively involves himself by dancing and occasionally singing with the group.

**ACVCC (2<sup>nd</sup> Interview)**

This female was born in Vietnam, moving to the United States when she was seven years old. She recalls learning the language during her early years in Vietnam but not much of the culture; therefore, she participates in this program to help bridge that gap. She has been with the group for about two to three years.

**ACVCC (3<sup>rd</sup> Interview)**

This participant is a 14-year-old Vietnamese female who has attended the program every week for the past six years. This individual has helped out at both of the music classes this year. She joined these classes in order to learn about and gain pride in the Vietnamese culture and to introduce Vietnamese instruments to other students.

### **ACVCC (4<sup>th</sup> Interview)**

This 14-year-old Vietnamese boy has attended about eight language and two music classes. He is studying the language to better enable him to communicate with his family, whose dominant language is Vietnamese.

### ***Coyote's Paw***

Coyote's Paw (CP) conducts a program led by master artist George Blake. He is of Hupa/Yurok descent and passes on the tradition of constructing sinew-backed bows to men from different Northern California tribes. The sinew-backed bows were originally used for daily hunting missions to help feed families and villages. Currently, the bows are used by the Yurok, Karuk, and Hupa people for ceremonial purposes.

### **CP (1<sup>st</sup> Interview)**

This male participant identifies himself with the Round House People religion. He learns the art of traditional woodwork and then teaches his skills to others. He has been a teacher for two years and he believes that sharing knowledge about spiritual things will benefit the well-being of native people.

### **CP (2<sup>nd</sup> Interview)**

This male participant likes to make realistic paintings, and participate in a variety of other arts related to the culture. As the program's culture resource program manager he helps spread knowledge of his culture to others within his native community. His job is to recruit children (11 to 13 years old) and educate them about their cultural backgrounds beginning with who they are, where they come from, and what the past was like.

### **CP (3<sup>rd</sup> Interview)**

This male participant was drawn to the program through his interest in traditional forms of hunting. He attended all three sessions that were offered this year. He wants to bring back the old ways of making bows and give back to the community by passing on this tradition. He helps facilitate the recruiting process for the program.

## **Sampling Procedures**

Organizations that had been funded by the ACTA LCGP were selected for possible inclusion in the evaluation sample. The evaluation sampled respondents for in-depth interviews based on the judgment of ACTA administrative staff using the initial criteria listed:

- Program activities had to have a cultural transmission focus
- Program was based in Northern California (defined as Central Valley and areas north)
- Activities were conducted during the evaluation study period (June – December 2009)
- Organization or agency had sufficient infrastructure or organizational capacity to effectively implement the proposed activities

Nine organizations were selected based on these criteria: Advocates for Indigenous Language Survival (Vallejo), Au Co Vietnamese Cultural Center (San Francisco), Coyote's Paw (Arcata), Diamano Coura West African Dance Company (Oakland), Filipino American Development

Foundation (San Francisco), Haitian Dance and Drum Retreat (San Francisco), Halau O Kawainuhi (Santa Cruz), Kawaiisu Language and Cultural Center (Bakersfield), and Oakland Asian Cultural Center (Oakland). About half of these agencies (four) were randomly selected for the evaluation. The agencies selected were based in Northern California; however, none of the organizations in the selection sponsored Latino art traditions. Therefore, it was decided to include a sub-sample of agencies from the Southern California region that sponsored Latino-focused art traditions. The four organizations included the Mariachi Master Apprentice Program of the City of San Fernando (San Fernando), Centro de Unidad Popular Benito Juarez (Bakersfield), Garifuna American Heritage Foundation United (Long Beach), and Maya Vision (Los Angeles). Two of the four agencies were randomly selected for inclusion in the evaluation.

As the result of the selection procedures, individuals participating in arts activities from the following six agencies were interviewed for this evaluation: Au Co Vietnamese Cultural Center (San Francisco), Coyote's Paw (Arcata), Filipino American Development Foundation (San Francisco), Haitian Dance and Drum Retreat (San Francisco), Mariachi Master Apprentice Program of the City of San Fernando (San Fernando), and Garifuna American Heritage Foundation United (Long Beach). Administrative staff from each of these agencies nominated individuals who regularly attended and participated in their programs. These individuals were then asked to participate in in-depth interviews resulting in four respondents from each program with exception of one agency in which three respondents were interviewed.

### **Interview Procedures and Protocol**

Separate, semi-structured interviews were completed for each participant. The interviews were conducted by a 30-year-old Mexican American female graduate student. A translator was used for one of the Filipino interviews. The translator is a 54-year-old Filipino, born in the Philippines. The interviewer contacted participants via phone or email, inviting them to set up a face-to-face interview date, time, and location. When the interviewer experienced difficulty contacting a participant, the ACTA staff personally emailed and called the participant.

The interviewer traveled to the interview location specified by the participant. In many cases, the interview was held at the participant's home, however interviews were also held at dance studios, clinics, coffee shops, and the ACTA office in the Presidio in San Francisco. In some cases, the interviewer and participant spoke briefly before beginning the interview. The actual interview began shortly after the participant filled out a Participant Bill of Rights and a Consent Form. Minors (participants under the age of 18) filled out an Assent Form and the interviewer obtained consent from their parent. Culture and age were issues for a small number of the participants. Participants who were minors at the time of the interview often did not want to be interviewed alone. In these instances, a spouse or another relative was present during the interview.

The primary purpose of the participant interviews was to document participant perceptions about how the ACTA-supported program had been implemented. Participants were interviewed to document their ability to retain and internalize the objectives of the program. Topics addressed with the participants included: (1) skill development, (2) critical life experiences, (3) enhancement of community resources, (4) increasing community awareness, (5) strengthening

community relations, (6) increasing community belongingness, and (7) cultural pride. Interviews were conducted individually by one of two trained interviewers.

The final semi-structured interview protocol, developed by an evaluation team, consisted of a series of questions concerning the various effects of the traditional arts program on the participant, personally and individually, as well as how the program affected participants in terms of their relationship to their local community. The interviewer asked most or all of the following questions:

1. When did the workshops/classes/session/project begin?
2. How frequently are they conducted (i.e. bi-weekly, weekly, or monthly)?
3. Approximately how many workshops/classes/sessions have you attended since they began?
4. What got you interested in these workshops/classes/sessions?
5. When did you first start taking lessons on this traditional art form? Where did you learn it? From whom did you learn this art form?
6. What have you learned from this workshop/class/session, and how has this changed the way you dance/perform/paint/weave, etc.? (How has this workshop affected your practice of this traditional art form?)
7. Are there particular challenges to practicing this art form?
8. How would you describe your relationship with your instructor(s)?
9. What role does this traditional art form play in your life?
10. What personal changes have you experienced as a result of your participation in this workshop/class/session?
11. What additional changes would you like to see happen by participating in this program?
12. How has your participation or practice of this traditional art form changed your involvement in your local community? (Please give examples.)
13. How has your involvement with this traditional art form changed your relationship with others in your community? (Please give examples.)
14. Have people in your community noticed changes in your art or craft during your involvement in this workshop/class/session?
15. Have people in your community noticed changes in you personally as a result of participating in this workshop/class/session?
16. Do you have any plans to further develop your skills in this art form?
17. Do you have any plans to perform or hold more exhibits or projects in your community?
18. Do you plan to attend more workshops/classes/sessions specific to this cultural art form or practice?
19. Do you plan to attend similar workshops/classes/sessions on other cultural art forms?
20. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about how the workshops/classes/sessions have changed you personally?
21. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about how the workshops/classes/sessions have changed your involvement in your community?
22. Do you have any suggestions in terms of how the workshops/classes/sessions can be improved?

## **Data Coding and Analysis**

The interviews were transcribed and analyzed at the Asian American Center on Disparities Research (AACDR) at the University of California, Davis. To organize and segment the results of the 23 interviews, a code template, which followed the interview protocol, was applied to the data (Crabtree & Miller, 1999) before analyzing themes for each line based on grounded theory procedures (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Two evaluators independently read each of the transcribed interviews. They read for overarching themes, which were compared between the two evaluators. Once the six main themes were identified, the evaluators separately examined each transcribed line and coded each line according to the main theme expressed. The two evaluation staff then conferred in instances in which they did not agree on the major theme being expressed. Inter-rater agreement on the major codes was 95%. The remaining 5% of the cases were discussed and re-coded once a consensus was reached.

After the six major themes were finalized and identified in the transcripts, the two research assistants independently read all of the coded interviews and came up with a list of sub-codes under each theme. The sub-codes were also compared between the research assistants and the finalized major and sub-themes were discussed with the principal investigator. Each research assistant read the transcripts again to sub-code each sentence reflecting the specific sub-themes. Together, they agreed on the codes 83.5% of the time. They re-coded the remaining 16.5% of the cases after coming to a consensus on the sub-codes.

## **Results**

The interviews focused on how participants viewed and responded to the program in terms of its effects at personal and community levels. The qualitative analysis identified six major themes or effects: (1) Knowledge and Preservation of Culture and History, (2) Cultural Pride, (3) Artistic Development, (4) Impact on Personal Well-Being, (5) Community Involvement, and (6) Teamwork/Collaboration (collective energy). The analysis also identified certain sub-themes or more specific effects within each major theme. Some participants also identified potential areas of improvement in the program.

### **Knowledge and Preservation of Culture and History**

Many participants reported that what they were learning in the programs assisted in the understanding and preservation of their culture. Many of them gained knowledge about their culture's history and traditions. Out of 23 respondents, 82.6% reported having acquired knowledge and skills that would help them maintain or preserve cultural traditions. Some examples of program content included bow making, dancing, language development, instrumental instruction, and parol making (lantern making). These traditional art forms were taught to youths and passed down from generation to generation.

“You know there are all these things that I don't know that any one of us could be like the carrier of all things of our cultural heritage, but it really illuminates that importance

for us to do whatever we can to hold on to and disseminate that knowledge throughout the people and hope that someone is going to carry something forward and that way in the future we may have the spoon makers, the bow makers, the clap stick makers ...” (Coyote’s Paw participant)

Many individuals participated in the programs because they wanted to learn more about their culture. They saw these programs as opportunities to further immerse themselves in understanding the culture. Many participants benefited from learning and interpreting the culture’s history.

“After immersing in the Afro-Haitian dance classes it’s basically an extension opportunity to enrich even further more of the history, more of the culture, it goes deeper into the significance and meanings of the dances as well as some of the spiritual aspect of some of the dances.” (Haitian Dance and Drum Retreat participant)

### **Cultural Pride**

Approximately 30% of the participants mentioned that they felt more pride in their culture due to their involvement in the programs. Participation in the programs reinforced feelings of connectedness and belongingness to the participants’ ethnic or cultural groups. Participants reported feeling gratified when their culture or program was acknowledged by others in the community. This sense of pride further reinforced their desire to learn about the art form.

“Well it showcases me as being a Garifuna, and I represent my culture.” (Garifuna American Heritage Foundation participant)

“Every time they hear our name they know who we are and it’s nice.” (Mariachi Master Apprentice Program participant)

“Because I am a Vietnamese and I just wanted to learn to be proud and to know my culture and to know how to read and write...” (Au Co Vietnamese Cultural Center participant)

### **Artistic Development**

The third major theme was artistic development. This theme concerned each participant’s reflection on how the particular art form influenced his or her own artistic development. Some of the programs encouraged the incorporation of culture into each individual’s art, emphasized self-expression through the art, and/or challenged individuals to be creative and innovative with their art forms.

#### *Incorporation of Culture into Art*

Incorporating cultural knowledge into art was emphasized by 8.7% of the interviewed individuals. This theme was especially evident among individuals who participated in the Haitian and Vietnamese programs. Participating in the art form gave individuals a place to think about the history of that specific culture, and inspired them to display and express these cultural

events and issues through tangible art forms (e.g., dancing). Many participants described their art as an extension or description of the culture, that the art form was a narrative based on the culture and/or history. The art form allowed individuals to effectively express cultural and historical narratives.

“I gained the ability to show my culture through dance.” (Au Co Vietnamese Cultural Center participant)

“I want to know as much as I can about the culture. I do. And I want, yeah, that’s my main goal and then to take that and hopefully be able to translate that into my own dance or choreography or work...” (Haitian Dance and Drum Retreat participant)

### Creativity (innovation)

Creativity was mentioned by 13% of the respondents. This sub-theme was predominantly found in the Filipino program. Participants continually made reference to the fact that the program challenged them to think of new ways to create and transform their art.

“I come up with my own stuff.” (Filipino American Development Foundation participant)

“It’s just different ways of building the parol that I kind of like figuring out.” (Filipino American Development Foundation participant)

## **Impact on Personal Well-Being**

A major impact of the LCGP program appeared to be on personal well-being. LCGP-supported programs and projects affected well-being in the following ways: (1) clarification of future goals, (2) enhancement in physical and/or mental health, (3) positive social characteristics/self-esteem, (4) desire to grow and continue learning, (5) spiritual and emotional connection to art and culture, (6) self-actualization, and (7) enhanced identity. Public performances and in-depth instruction allowed participants to experience culturally specific art forms and traditions in ways that challenged individuals and enhanced their personal well-being.

### Clarification of Future Goals

Participating in the programs made some participants (13% of the sample) realize what they wanted to focus on in the future. Some respondents reported that their involvement with the programs altered the careers or majors they wished to pursue.

“I guess working with the parol help me like figure out like I wanted to go into art. So that’s why I went into multi-media. I guess it help me make a decision to go into that major.” (Filipino American Development Foundation participant)

### Physical and/or Mental Health

Approximately 22% of the participants reported that the program significantly influenced their mental and/or physical health. Most of the programs made an impact on individuals’ mental health (as described below) but one program, in particular, challenged individuals physically –

the Haitian program. A recurring response from participants who attended the Haitian program was how physically demanding Afro-Haitian dance could be.

“So if you imagine dancing across the floor and that’s just the basic part of it, there’s so [much] more going on with the body as it’s traveling and dancing that it’s incredibly difficult and probably the most difficult dance form I’ve ever done and I’ve done a good variety.” (Haitian Dance and Drum Retreat participant)

In terms of mental health impact, some participants felt that the art form was therapeutic and/or healing.

”So we got to make something and it was very healing...” (Coyote’s Paw participant)

“...it is a very therapeutic thing.” (Haitian Dance and Drum Retreat participant)

#### Positive Social Characteristics/Self-esteem

This effect was one of the three most frequently mentioned sub-themes. Participants experienced enhanced self-esteem, confidence, and pride. In addition, some participants reported feeling more concerned for others’ welfare. Some respondents also reported that they were now more open-minded and outgoing as a result of attending the workshops. For example, the Vietnamese program encouraged individuals to develop leadership skills that they previously did not possess.

“So, it’s like performing, going out there. It’s like you are almost talking to the people when you are performing, so you build confidence in yourself and when you are around other people as well.” (Mariachi Master Apprentice Program participant)

“I am so proud to myself.” (Au Co Vietnamese Cultural Center participant)

“I am more comfortable with people that I don’t know or haven’t met before and it’s easy to...it’s just easier for me to have a relationship with that person.” (Au Co Vietnamese Cultural Center participant)

#### Desire to Grow/Continue Learning

Ten participants (43.5% of the sample) reported feeling an increased desire to learn more about the material taught by the programs. It seems that their motivation to continue learning resulted from an overall positive experience.

“They have noticed that I have gotten more dedicated to what I do and that they all know it’s like my passion and I want to keep on doing it.” (Mariachi Master Apprentice Program participant)

“I feel really good about myself and I want to do more now -- it doesn’t stop here. Let’s keep building on this and incorporating these type of things into our life and do something...” (Coyote’s Paw participant)

“I think overall ... there is a general drive that maybe it got you going and into doing other stuff like you have been doing...and I think just being around other artists and other people inspires you just to learn and move on with the things that you are already doing.” (Coyote’s Paw participant)

### *Spiritual and Emotional Connections to Art and Culture*

This was a recurring theme reported by participants who were involved with the Coyote Paw, Haitian, or Filipino programs. They reported having a connection with the art form, which was described as a very emotional and/or spiritual experience. Aside from those who endorsed this spiritual and emotional connection with their art, a number of Coyote Paw participants reported feeling empowered by the art form. This deep connection and enriching experience from the art form led some individuals to further appreciate cultural traditions. This occurred mostly when programs linked historical content with the art form.

“All I can say is that dance, especially Afro-Haitian dance, feeds my spirit and continues to make my warrior spirit shine and whatever I can do to prolong that, which is studying directly with Haitian masters...” (Haitian Dance and Drum Retreat participant)

“...the emotion that goes behind it, you know through taking the class of each rhythm and you know, just the history of it and the emotion that goes behind it, you know, because certain rhythms correlate with like for example, nago goes with you know, the Haitian revolution and it’s a very powerful dance.” (Haitian Dance and Drum Retreat participant)

Participants reported feeling that the art form itself was very spiritual, so by becoming involved with the art form (e.g., dancing), participants felt a profound emotional and spiritual connection to the art and history of the art.

“...it goes deeper into the significance and meanings of the dances as well as some of the spiritual aspect of some of the dances.” (Haitian Dance and Drum Retreat participant)

### *Self-actualization (self-improvement)*

Self-actualization or self-improvement was another major theme that emerged from the interviews. Through their involvement in the programs, many participants (22% of the sample) felt that they had grown as individuals, striving to meet their potential. This personal growth stemmed from challenges that they faced in the programs, whether pertaining to creativity or physical endurance. Participants reported feeling better about themselves when they learned to overcome the mistakes that they made.

“...having the feeling like I’ve become a new person...” (Garifuna American Heritage Foundation participant)

“It’s helped me a lot because each time you learn something new so you have to improve yourself each class.” (Mariachi Master Apprentice Program participant)

“So it’s helped me focus on continuing to do better and better and if you want to do better you have to see what your mistakes are...” (Coyote’s Paw participant)

### Integral Part of Self

This theme, mentioned by 39% of the sample, involves the relationship of the art form to the individual. Participants reported feeling as if the art form was an integral part of who they were, that essentially, the art form helped to define the individual. This deep connection to the art form grounded individuals and helped form their identity.

“I don’t really see myself like saying ‘oh that’s a part of my life that I could just leave,’ yeah like I think it’s like totally a part of it now and I’m not going to stop...” (Filipino American Development Foundation participant)

“...I learned a tremendous amount just by coming here to the classes...and I think it’s made me....I feel whole as a person.” (Garifuna American Heritage Foundation participant)

### **Community Involvement**

LCGP-supported programs also seemed to generate greater involvement within local communities. This engagement took several forms: (1) teaching and mentoring others as a means of giving back to the community, (2) outreach efforts to get more people involved, (3) increasing culture and program awareness, and (4) establishing a sense of community.

### Teaching and Mentoring

Many individuals were inspired by the programs to give back to the community by mentoring or teaching others. Participants viewed themselves as vehicles to spread, share, and teach their knowledge to future generations.

“I filmed yesterday how to make a parol, cause they asked me how to do something to upload it to YouTube. So people could like just go to YouTube and learn how to do it.” (Filipino American Development Foundation participant)

“The longer you go and the more you watch other people dance there’s a connection whether you know or not there’s a connection. It makes me feel like I want to support and give back to Haiti...so I think to give back to Haiti is something we could all work on and participate in more.” (Haitian Dance and Drum Retreat participant)

### Outreach

Some of the participants actively sought out and encouraged others to become involved. One respondent reported learning a great deal from the Garifuna program and hoped to get her friends and family involved in the program.

“Well we want to like outreach to the community as well as our Vietnamese community as well as the communities out there. And we want to show them our culture as well as

showing the Vietnamese youth out there that they have a place to go to for learning traditions...” (Au Co Vietnamese Cultural Center participant)

“...and I want to get other people involved....I want to get my children involved...” (Garifuna American Heritage Foundation participant)

### Increasing Culture and Program Awareness

Some of the programs provided opportunities for individuals to perform at different locations. From this process, individuals shared information about their culture, and the community also became more aware of what the programs were providing for these individuals. Moreover, these programs provided individuals with an opportunity to learn about other cultures. Respondents believed that this exchange of knowledge might help to dispel cultural stereotypes.

“...I can show them what...like who I am or who the Vietnamese people are.” (Au Co Vietnamese Cultural Center participant)

“...I wanted to perform, to volunteer, to help out because not every community is like fortunate enough to have all these cultural activities, so if possible I would just go to another community and help out there too.” (Au Co Vietnamese Cultural Center participant)

“Well, basically, it just gives me a better understanding but at the same time it’s kind of my way to help others in like our community and other communities like be more aware like ‘oh, this is what the Vietnamese people are all about’ and we’re very diverse and very open and we’re not as some stereotypes like people think.” (Au Co Vietnamese Cultural Center participant)

“...I help them become more aware of our, of my actual culture to hopefully get rid of those stereotypes that are put on us and like I feel that now that they’ve come, they are allowed to understand our culture more, in hope that they understand us more and so like it’s less segregated.” (Au Co Vietnamese Cultural Center participant)

“So we create awareness of the city not only to the community but for the rest of our extended community out there in Arizona, and Northern California, wherever we may go. So I think we do a lot to bring a lot of attention to this city.” (Mariachi Master Apprentice Program participant)

“The community sees how much we’ve progressed from last year to this year. They see how much we’ve evolved in the music and how much we play.” (Mariachi Master Apprentice Program participant)

### Sense of Community/Extended Family

New friendships and acquaintances were established through participants’ involvement in the programs. This seemed to result in a greater sense of community belongingness. The majority of the participants reported having a very good relationship with the instructor. Some of the programs functioned, for some individuals, as an opportunity to form social networks.

“We are like family.” (Mariachi Master Apprentice Program participant)

“I think it creates a sense of community.” (Haitian Dance and Drum Retreat participant)

“...it gave me the ability to go out and meet people (that shares knowledge so that it does not die) to bring these people to our trainings for our tribe here.” (Coyote’s Paw participant)

“It helped bring that together, that relationship with those who really didn’t know us or who didn’t know one another before, now we do and still do.” (Coyote’s Paw participant)

“So there was a brotherhood too that was present with that and it kind of spoke to that need for us to have those places where the men could be together and for the women to be together and separate...” (Coyote’s Paw participant)

### Teamwork/Collaboration

Some respondents referred to their experience as a type of collaborative group effort. A notion of collective energy was derived from some of the statements made by the participants.

“It hits you on different levels: there’s the energy of the people around me and there’s the collective energy.” (Haitian Dance and Drum Retreat participant)

In a specific case, group encouragement helped a participant overcome stage fright.

“Well before, dancing, learning how to dance in this group, I am very shy so stage fright and all that, but my other core members, and the rest of the group they encouraged me and they said, oh it’s okay, we are all in this together.’ So they help me overcome my stage fright. ...I learned more about team work...” (Au Co Vietnamese Cultural Center participant)

### **Areas of Improvement for Specific Projects**

Respondents were asked if they had suggestions for improvements to the workshops or classes. While overall satisfaction was high, 10 participants (43.7% of the 23 participants) suggested specific ways to improve the various LCGP-supported projects. They believed that these improvements would result in more extensive and structured programming, which, in turn, would enhance the overall benefit to individuals in the community.

Haitian Dance and Drum Retreat. One participant suggested there should be more teachers from Haiti to teach the workshops. Two individuals indicated how more financial support would aid in providing more structure to the workshops and enable them to pay the musicians who accompany the dancers. Another respondent suggested that the workshops occur more often.

“I don’t know how much it would cost, but it would be awesome if there would be more teachers from Haiti to come and teach dance...”

“...if there was more funding and financial support then we can have real groups or we can perform on a regular basis where we have costumes, where we could pay our musicians who play for us.”

“I think if they could happen more often...So, maybe if they could have on a smaller scale more frequently or if they could happen on a bigger scale more intensively. And there are also the constraints whereby finding the right venue for the ceremony is really difficult.”

Filipino American Development Foundation. One respondent wanted the workshops to be better publicized. The amount of room available also was another concern. It was suggested that with more publicity and space, more members would participate.

“Certainly if we get more people to know about it...I think they could have it on a bigger scale, get more room too and get more space to do these workshops...It’s a big room and it still gets crowded...So if there was more space...more people would go then...”

Mariachi Master Apprentice Program of the City of San Fernando. One participant hoped to involve more children from the community. She also suggested expanding the workshops by increasing the number of classes offered every week.

“More kids from the community...I would really like for them to like at least come and try it out, to see what they are going to gain out of it.”

“I think my only suggestion would be having more classes the whole week... Not just two days out of the week, maybe the whole week or three days out of the week.”

Au Co Vietnamese Cultural Center. Two respondents noticed that the number of students attending the musical workshops was low. They suggested recruiting more members. One individual attributed this problem to the workshop’s limited operating budget.

“I wish there would be more children because these instructors are like great but there are not enough children...”

“...they don’t need to be improved, but I wish there would be more children, more students to like watch it so more people can learn.”

“But if money was not like a problem...we should create bigger events, which will help in like recruiting new members...”

Garifuna American Heritage Foundation United. Three respondents would like to see more students attending the classes, and one individual attributed this problem to the lack of program awareness by community members. One participant suggested the need for a more formalized

curriculum and lesson plan. Relocating the project to a larger facility also should attract more individuals and increase attendance.

“I would like to see a formalized curriculum something...that could be published so that it could be shared not just in this vicinity...but that it could be disseminated, you know, worldwide...I would like to see more Garifuna cultural language in print.”

“I think the teachers are great but...they don't really have any formalized curriculum...I know that it is a big task...I would like to even maybe have tapes. We could have tapes so that we could practice...we can become much better and we could learn to speak the language more fluently if we had some CDs we could listen to...”

“The Garifuna community is large in Los Angeles and I think that we could definitely have more people involved perhaps get a bigger place...I've come here sometimes and it's really crowded and then there is nowhere to sit...a lot of people drop in from time to time...”

“I think they are doing a good job. The word just needs to get out.”

### **Discussion**

Overall, the most frequent themes endorsed by participants reflect strong program impact at both the personal and community levels. It was clear that participation in the Living Cultures programs had an effect on individuals' personal well-being in a number of ways. Signs of personal improvement were salient across the majority of the respondents. Feeling a sense of cultural pride, stronger social connectedness, and community belongingness also were often reported. These responses may have implications for better life functioning. Ferguson (1976) indicated that cultural identification involves cultural stake – when individuals invest in certain aspects of a society or culture in anticipation of personal or social rewards from the invested time and/or skill. Furthermore, increasing levels of cultural identification often are associated with greater personal competency (Oetting & Beavuais, 1990). In other words, as individuals immerse themselves in the culture, they expect and receive certain social, psychological, and economic benefits and resources, which tend to result in better functioning and enhanced personal well-being.

More than a third of the respondents felt that cultural art form/s became a part of them and helped define who they are. Becoming better integrated and personally tied to one's culture seemed to create a greater sense of wholeness. In addition, culturally embedded individuals may also have a stronger social support system, which can enhance psychological functioning. Individuals reported that the LCGP-supported program activities provided them with opportunities to develop a stronger sense of community belongingness and relationship with others. Moreover, they believed they would not have had these experiences if it were not for these programs. An increased sense of community belongingness can serve as a significant protective factor against poor quality of life and feelings of alienation (Sonn & Fisher, 1998). A person's social and psychological development is greatly affected by how an individual perceives his/her membership within the community (Cox, 1989). Overall, these responses

strongly suggest that LCGP was able to enhance an individual's personal competency and social functioning to varying degrees.

Participants in the LCGP also appeared to have made some other major psychological gains. Mastery experiences, success experiences directly attributable to one's efforts, have been associated with better self-efficacy (Bandura, 1994). The programs offered participants opportunities to develop skills specific to traditional art forms. In the process of developing these skills, participants reported changes in their perspectives on life and enhanced personal capacities. They reported feeling more open-minded and viewed the world from a different perspective. They also tended to become more motivated to achieve certain life or career aspirations. Some individuals found that their participation helped clarify their future goals. Participants seemed to experience major increases in confidence and leadership skills as a direct result of their involvement in the programs. Based on these experiences, some individuals reported feeling a greater sense of empowerment. Feelings of empowerment have been associated with greater life satisfaction and better psychosocial functioning. Bandura (1986, 1989) has indicated that empowerment is associated with personal self-efficacy, which often can positively affect psychosocial functioning. Empowerment refers to the ability to gain greater control of one's life by the means of having more resources and strategies to help achieve goals (Lawson & Garrod, 2001; Lyons et al., 2001; Simon, 1994; Solomon, 1976; Sommerville, 1998; Weissberg, 1999). Along the same lines, empowerment involves the occurrence of changes in one's personal qualities, which are perspectives on life, emotional coping strategies, and knowledge about society (Cheung, Mok, & Cheung, 2005).

Some of the LCGP-supported projects or programs might have at least temporarily relieved individuals from life stressors, providing some participants with a respite from stressful life routines and jobs. A few individuals described their workshop experiences as therapeutic and/or healing. Moreover, individuals were appreciative in learning about their culture under non-stressful conditions. In this way, LCGP provided some participants with some time to regenerate and reinvigorate themselves to better tolerate and cope with the daily stressors in their lives.

In addition to personal changes, the program also seemed to affect the participants' relationships and attitudes toward their local communities. Most participants reported that the programs focused on preserving cultural traditions and on educating them about cultural customs and art forms. A reciprocity effect seemed to occur among participants. They reported gains in personal values and character development and acquired insight and knowledge from their cultures and communities. Consequently, they often were inspired to give back to their communities by sharing their knowledge and passing on skills that they had learned from the program. Nagel (1994) emphasized that cultural groups often are focused on retaining cultural values, so not unexpectedly, the most frequent theme endorsed by LCGP participants was acquiring *knowledge and the preservation of culture and history*. An additional effect seemed to be occurring at the community level. It appeared that those outside the local communities were learning more about the specific cultural traditions emphasized by LCGP. This occurred because as some participants reached out into their communities to actively recruit or teach others or traveled to other locations to perform, others outside of these local communities became more aware, educated, and interested in the cultural traditions embedded or manifested by the cultural art form and its related activities.

In conclusion, the Living Cultures Grants Program not only provided participants with frequent and varied opportunities to learn about art forms specific to an ethnic culture, but there was also strong evidence that programs it supported had made a positive impact on the personal identity and psychological well-being of participants. The programs also provided individuals with a greater sense of community belongingness and connectedness. In this way, the program seemed to have a positive effect at the community level by creating greater interest and commitment among participants to become more involved and make more substantial contributions to their local communities. Mays (1986) has noted that individuals in cohesive communities often benefit from these communal ties by developing skills to cope with external stressors. Thus, program participants also may have derived such benefits as well.

The qualitative analysis was derived from interview narratives from participants who were previously involved with at least one arts activity sponsored by the LCGP program. There are several limitations to the evaluation. First, all of the respondents were selected by the agencies which LCGP directly supported. Because the agencies selected the respondents, there is a possibility that the people selected were more favorable towards the program than those resulting from a random selection. Second, most of the participants were primarily consumers but two respondents indicated that they currently were mentors or instructors in a particular activity or project. They responded to the interview questions by recalling their past experiences as participants, but their current role as a mentor/instructor might have influenced their responses in undetermined ways, possibly favoring the project reflective of their current degree of investment in it. Finally, as with most qualitative studies, the sample size ( $n = 23$ ) is relatively small given that six programs were evaluated; therefore, it might be difficult to generalize these findings to other participants.

The findings also have some implications for future programming in the LCGP. The program effects often were profound and personally substantial, but they varied greatly across individuals and across workshops/classes. Clearly, the effects varied depending on the art forms offered. For example, some workshops were performance-oriented and these activities tended to foster more self-confidence and greater self-esteem among participants. In contrast, some workshops focused on self-expression, which tended to encourage participants to become more creative. So certain LCGP-supported workshops or activities can be used as exemplars depending on the type of effect the program has targeted as its primary goal or objective. In other words, this qualitative evaluation was able to identify the rich and diverse effects that can occur among the various LCGP projects, a diversity which LCGP is designed to promote. Discrete and more focused programming may be needed to generate more uniform effects of a particular nature (e.g., enhanced self-efficacy, as opposed to enhanced cultural identification, as opposed to enhanced community activism) for future projects. Once this is done, a summative evaluation study would be informative to determine the sustainable and consistent effects of a particular program or demonstration project.

Table 1

Themes Cited by Participants (n=23)

| Effect Mentioned   | Frequency of Participants Reporting Effect | Percentage of Participants Reporting Effect |
|--|--|---|
| <i>Knowledge and Preservation of Culture and History</i> | 54   | 82.6%                                       |
| <i>Cultural Pride (represent culture)</i>                | 20   | 30.4%                                       |
| <i>Artistic Development</i>                              |  |   |
| Incorporating culture into art                           | 2  | 8.7%  |
| Creativity   | 8  | 13%   |
| <i>Impact on personal Well-Being</i>                     |  |   |
| Clarification for future goals                           | 4  | 13%   |
| Physical and/or mental health                            | 12   | 21.7%                                       |
| Positive social characteristics/self-esteem              | 50   | 78.3%                                       |
| Desire to grow/continue learning                         | 16   | 43.5%                                       |
| Spiritual and emotional connection to art and culture    | 24   | 39%   |
| Self-actualization (self-improvement)                    | 8  | 22%   |
| Integral part of self (grounds the individual)           | 16   | 39%   |
| <i>Community Involvement</i>                             |  |   |
| Teaching and mentoring, giving back to the community     | 34   | 78.3%                                       |
| Outreach (get more people involved)                      | 9  | 26.1%                                       |
| Increasing culture and program awareness                 | 31   | 60.9%                                       |
| Sense of community/extended family (meeting people)      | 49   | 65.2%                                       |
| <i>Teamwork/collaboration (collective energy)</i>        | 9  | 30%   |