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**Public Sentiments Towards the Arts:  
A Critical Reanalysis of 13 Opinion Surveys**

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On July 15, 1997, the House of Representatives voted to eliminate the National Endowment for the Arts, bidding to end a three-decade-long experiment in federal support for culture (*New York Times*, July 16, 1997, p. 1). The willingness of House members, who must stand for re-election every two years, to abolish the NEA suggests that the public no longer supports federal subsidies for the arts. At the same time, however, the Senate prepared to raise the Arts Endowment's appropriation. Does this divergence reflect the capacity of Senators, who must face the voters only once every six years, to defy public opinion? Or do the arts' legislative supporters believe that the public does indeed still favor government assistance to the arts? Or does the degree of legislative disagreement over the federal role in support of culture indicate that voters are simply indifferent, and therefore content to let their elected representatives follow their personal predilections?

Advocates on both sides of the struggle claim to represent the public will. Conservatives argue that voters have said no to big government, and that support for artistic activities that are, at best, luxuries and, at worst, pernicious cannot be justified when fiscal constraints threaten public support for schools, roads, and health care. Progressives, by contrast, argue that the public solidly backs government assistance to cultural organizations and that public opinion polls demonstrate this support.

Ultimately, as we shall see, neither side can claim a clear decision before the court of public opinion. The problem is not lack of data. There have been many studies of public sentiments towards the arts over the past quarter century, and even more polls that have included two or three questions about the arts. But investments in research of this kind have not generated unambiguous knowledge about public opinion for two reasons. First, research spon-

sors and survey organizations have spent far more time and money collecting data than they have analyzing it or thinking about the results. Most studies of attitudes towards the arts have, at best, yielded summary reports consisting of sound-bite-sized factoids lacking context, interpretation, or probing analysis. Second, surveys about the arts -- even those undertaken by the same research organizations -- have squandered the opportunity to generate comparable data that could make it possible to monitor change.

The purpose of this paper is to solve the first problem and to lay the groundwork for addressing the second. We summarize and review studies of public perceptions of and sentiments towards the arts and provide the first critical synthesis of such research based upon original secondary analyses of thirteen of the major data sets collected between 1973 and 1993. In so doing, we report what the surveys tell us about several questions of pressing interest to policy makers and others interested in the role of the arts in American society. To what extent do Americans support government funding of the arts, and from what level of government? To what extent do Americans believe that it is important for children to learn about the arts and that the arts are worthy of inclusion in the school curriculum? To what extent do Americans regard the arts as fundamentally important for the quality of community life, on the one hand, or the domain of a select few, on the other? To what extent do sentiments vary between men and women, African-Americans and Euro-Americans, the highly educated and the less schooled, the old and the young, and the wealthy and the less well off? And finally, what, if anything, can we infer about how these patterns have changed over time?

The paper is divided into seven sections. In the next, we review previous studies of attitudes towards federal support for the arts, attitudes towards the arts and education, and opinions about the arts' importance to community and the good life. In section three we discuss critically the data sources upon which we base our own original analyses, noting problems of comparability posed by differences among studies in sample selection, survey design and sample frame, and question wording and ordering.

Sections four through six report the results of our original data analyses. Section four

summarizes the attitudes of the public as a whole. Section five compares the sentiments and perceptions of segments of the public defined on the basis of gender, age, income, educational attainment, race or ethnicity, or marital status, and explores differences in attitudes between arts attenders and stay-at-homes. Section six reports results of multivariate analyses that permit estimates of differences between groups that persist after one controls statistically for effects of other characteristics, identities or experiences with respect to which groups may vary.

The conclusion summarizes our results and bewails our inability to draw many conclusions about change in attitudes over time. We set out recommendations for a systematic approach to studying public sentiments on the arts that can yield meaningful, systematic, nuanced, rigorous, and comparable generalizations about opinion and opinion change.

### **Public Sentiments towards the Arts: A Review of Previous Work**

*Many Surveys, Few Analyses.* It is instructive to compare research and writing on public attitudes towards the arts to that on public participation. In the latter field, researchers have analyzed a relatively few high-quality studies in great depths producing an extensive scholarly literature (e.g., Aschaffenburg and Maas 1997; Blau and Quets 1987; Blau 1988; DiMaggio and Ostrower 1990; Fitzhugh 1983, Kracman 1996, Rau 1986, West 1987). By contrast, relatively few papers and, to our knowledge, no monograph has been published that analyzes the more than a dozen surveys of public opinion on the arts.

There are no doubt several reasons for this imbalance. The most important reasons is that, whereas the National Endowment for the Arts Research Division has sponsored high-quality, comparable, over-time research on arts participation (the 1982, 1985, 1992 and 1997 Surveys of Public Participation in the Arts [SPPAs]) *and* devoted modest but highly targeted and effective funds to ensuring that those data are used and that the results of research are circulated, no agency has taken a comparable role in research on artistic attitudes.

But how do we explain this omission? Because of the inherently political and contestable nature of attitude research, government (and, especially, the NEA) could not assume this role. (Information about arts participation, by contrast, is important for program design and politically win-win: to the an arts advocate, low levels of participation indicate a need for more support, and high levels can be taken as evidence that existing programs yield wide benefits.) Private agencies that have undertaken research on the arts have usually sought to harness research to advocacy, with the hope of demonstrating that the public shares their views. Although advocates can and should use research findings, failure to build a firewall between the two functions almost invariably has two lamentable results. First, questionnaire designers succumb to the temptation to phrase questions in ways that will elicit the answers they want. Second, once results are culled for a few simple frequencies that appear to demonstrate the public's commitment to the arts and a press conference is held to announce these "findings," sponsors have no interest in encouraging further analysis (which, invariably, serves to qualify rosy conclusions and dampen enthusiasm). To be sure, some research sponsors, notably Harris Associates, deserve praise for making their data easily accessible to researchers for secondary analyses. But none has had reason to engage in the kind of programmatic support of dispassionate secondary analysis that has made the Endowment's SPPA such a valuable resource.

Nonetheless, some researchers *have* studied public opinions about the arts. In this section of the paper we review their work. We focus on three topics: attitudes towards governmental support for the arts, attitudes towards arts for children and arts in schools, and attitudes about the arts generally (including tastes and preferences).

*Attitudes towards federal support of the arts.* Previous research on attitudes towards government support of the arts is thin and largely interesting for what it tells us about the depth and strength of people's opinions. Although many surveys have measured public attitudes towards

federal support of the arts, analyses have been limited largely to newspaper articles and reports by advocacy groups.

Headlines suggest that Americans endorse government funding of the arts, are willing to pay more in taxes to make it possible, and believe that all forms of government (i.e. federal, state, and local) should help fund the arts. For example, a telephone poll commissioned by the civil-liberties advocacy group People of the American Way and conducted by Research and Forecasts Inc. in 1990 found that 68 percent of respondents endorse government funding of the arts, 30 percent are opposed and 2 percent are unsure. A telephone poll conducted by the *Los Angeles Times* in September 1989 also found Americans supporting federal government funding of the arts by a ratio of about 2 to 1 (Parachini, 1990).

Headlines about attitudes towards the arts must be interpreted cautiously. Polls that generate these headlines are rarely analyzed rigorously (i.e. multivariate results are not reported, and survey question wording, if reported, often suggests alternative interpretations). We still lack a clear understanding of public attitudes towards funding of the arts, how such attitudes vary across groups, and how they have changed over time.

What proportion of the public wants to pay more to support the arts and at what cost to other governmentally-assisted programs? Whereas a telephone poll conducted in 1987 by Louis Harris Associates found that 70 percent of Americans would pay an extra \$10 in taxes so that government could target more patronage to the arts (*San Diego Union-Tribune*, March 17, 1988), a telephone survey conducted for *NBC News and The Wall Street Journal* by Hart and Teeter Research Companies found that only 13 percent of Americans think government should spend more to fund the arts (NBC News/Wall Street Journal, 1995).

Such inconsistencies reflect the ways in which question wording, question order, and sample design can yield radically different stories. For example, a poll that begins by asking

respondents if they would be willing to pay \$100 in additional taxes and then works its way down to \$10 through a series of questions in which the criterion tax level is reduced, will yield much higher estimates of willingness to be taxed than a survey that begins the bidding at \$10. The culprit is a universal cognitive process known as *anchoring*, whereby respondents seize on to the first quantitative level suggested (no matter how arbitrary) and use it as a baseline for making subsequent determinations (Tversky and Kahneman 1974). Respondents will also express greater willingness to pay additional taxes if they have first responded positively to other questions about the value of the arts to society than if they are hit with the tax question out of the blue. The culprit here, also familiar to survey researchers, is *opinion constructedness*: the tendency of respondents without strong prior opinions to infer their own attitudes from answers to previous questions (Tourangeau and Rasinski 1988).

Another example of the impact of question wording on reported opinion: The same *Los Angeles Times* poll that announced that two third of Americans support federal arts patronage, also asked respondents "At what level of government do you think funding for the arts ought to be conducted?" Twenty-six percent responded *federal*, 28 percent said *state*, 4 percent chose *county*, 14 percent said *city*, and 13 percent responded *several or all* (*LA Times*, April 20, 1990).

Note that a change in question wording reduces estimate support for federal patronage from two third to about two fifths (the 26 percent that respond "federal" plus the 13 percent that chose "several or all"). What we see here is another oft-observed dynamic: If you give survey respondents more alternatives from which to choose, they will use them.

There are two points to all this. The first, unsettling, conclusion is that knowledgeable survey designers can often elicit large swings of opinion by fiddling in fairly subtle ways with question framing, question sequence, and the number of response alternatives. The second, more cheering, conclusion is that if we can use this very malleability of opinion to learn a lot

about public attitudes towards the arts.

The key point is this: *The kinds cognitive dynamics we have described have much smaller effects on opinions that people hold strongly than upon opinions that are weakly held (or, a fortiori, opinions are manufactured on the spot).* If someone asks you how you feel about cannibalism, for example, your answer will probably be the same whether the question is embedded in a statement that almost all religious and philosophical systems oppose it or, conversely, in a scientific account of the nutritional properties of human flesh. The effects of mechanical details of survey design are strongest when respondents' convictions are weakest. What this means is that even if we cannot draw many conclusions about the *level* of public support for government arts patronage from survey findings, we can conclude from the variability of results that many people's opinions about government assistance to the arts are ill-formed, weakly held, and therefore up for grabs. Given this, it is not surprising that the NEA has become a political football.

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Nor, in light of this, is it surprising that authors who have tried to interpret survey results have come to quite different conclusions. For example, in an essay on the politics of arts patronage, Kitty Carlisle Hart cited findings reported in *Americans and the Arts: Highlights from a 1980 Nationwide Survey of Public Opinion* to suggest that American's attitudes towards the arts had "become increasingly positive during the past decade" (1984:52). Noting that many Americans believed that the nonprofit arts were self-sustaining, she suggested that information about the pluralistic American system of arts support would make attitudes even more positive. By contrast, Edward Keller (1984: 44) used evidence from the same survey to contend that



public support for the arts was vulnerable and that, given perceptions of economic decline, only evidence on the arts' contribution to the economy could preserve public patronage. Neither article contained original analysis of, or critical observations about, the survey (which some methodologists believe overestimates favorable attitudes towards the arts [see Robinson 1989]).

*Previous research on attitudes towards arts for children and in schools.* The merits of arts for children and arts in education are often debated when local school boards and committees make decisions about educational funding and curricula. When budgets are strained, courses and programs in the arts are often the first to be eyed for dismissal. Many opinion polls have asked questions about arts in education and about the importance of the arts for children (Filicko 1996). Yet little literature systematically analyzes such surveys' results.

On the one hand, results reported in the press suggest that Americans do want their children to have access to the arts. The 1987 *Americans and the Arts* study reported that 58 percent of respondents believed their children were being deprived of arts exposure (*San Diego Union-Tribune*, March 17, 1988). Another study found that 67 percent of those polled favored "teaching a broader, more enriched curriculum including more arts and music" (Harris and Associates 1992, cited in Filicko 1996). School boards that used the results from these studies to guide their policy decisions would think twice before eliminating the limited and highly valued exposure to the arts they currently provide.

On the other hand, survey results could be interpreted quite differently. For example, the question asked in the 1992 Harris study treats the arts as an instance of a general principal ("broader, more enriched curriculum") and thus may have elicited the assent of parents who prefer a richer curriculum but are not particularly committed to the arts. (Perhaps respondents wanted a broader, richer curriculum in woodworking, specialized math, science, or literature courses.) A focus group study found that many upper-middle-class parents believed strongly in

the importance of the arts for children (especially for girls), but resisted paying more in taxes to support the arts in the schools: they were willing to buy this "luxury" for their own children, but not for other people's kids (Gainer 1992). Clearly, middle-class North Americans believe that art is good for young people. But we cannot assume that this generalized approval translates into support for school arts programs when resources are scarce.

*Other attitudes towards the arts.* Public opinion polls have also canvassed Americans' attitudes towards other aspects of the arts. For example, two polls that Gallup conducted for *Newsweek* in 1989 and 1990 reported that most Americans favored letting experts decide on the allocation of arts grants (Gallup/*Newsweek*). A 1994 *Hartford Courant* poll of Connecticut residents found that nearly 90 percent felt the arts were either somewhat important or very important to their community (*Hartford Courant*, July 10, 1994).

A growing literature analyzes people's cultural attitudes and musical preferences (e.g., DiMaggio and Ostrower 1990; Peterson 1992). Using data from the 1982 and 1992 SPPAs, Peterson and Kern (1996) argued that highbrow taste has shifted from exclusive approval of the art music to an "omniverous" interest in the full range of musical forms. Bryson (1996: 884) used the 1993 General Social Survey to examine the kinds of music Americans *dislike*, concluding that "people use cultural taste to reinforce symbolic boundaries between themselves and categories of people they dislike."

A few studies have asked the very basic question of what 'the arts' mean to people. In an innovative paper, Cooper and Tower (1992) used nonverbal tasks to explore people's perceptions of the arts. Filicko (1996) reports that only two surveys have used open-ended questions to find out how people understand "culture" or the "arts." A

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1973 Harris Associates poll revealed that just 37 percent of respondents spontaneously mention the arts when asked about "culture." A 1990 survey sponsored by People for the American Way asked people "what comes to mind" when "I mention the word arts." Most respondents mentioned the visual arts and live performing arts: despite probes, few respondents mentioned literature, media, or creativity. As Filicko notes, these results suggest that the almost universal failure of surveys to define explicitly "the arts" or "culture" before asking people about them makes it difficult to interpret results. Some people who seem to have different attitudes towards the arts or culture may actually differ in how they interpret the questions to which they respond.

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Despite the interest in public sentiments apparent in both newspaper headlines and academic research, we understand less about Americans' attitudes towards the arts than we should, given the resources devoted to studying them. In the rest of this paper we report on our own re-analyses of thirteen data sets, collected in the United States between 1973 and 1993. Our goal was to see what conclusions existing data warrant *and* to point the way to a more systematic approach to studying the public's attitudes in the future.

*"Some people who appear to have different attitudes towards the arts or, especially, culture, may actually differ in how they interpret the questions to which they respond."*

### **Data and Methods**

The thirteen data sets used in this study come from national, state, and local surveys of public opinion and social conditions. Table 1 lists these thirteen surveys and summarizes differences among them in sample design and survey procedures. The seven national surveys include four *Americans and the Arts* (hereafter A&A) surveys (1973, 1980, 1987, and 1992) conducted by Louis Harris and Associates and three *General Social Surveys* (hereafter GSS) fielded by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) in 1985, 1990, and 1993. Four state surveys

(Kentucky, 1980 and 1989; New Jersey, 1989; and South Carolina, 1991) were undertaken by survey research centers affiliated with state universities. Finally, two sets of local surveys polled residents of Winston-Salem, North Carolina in 1973 (Louis Harris Associates) and residents of 12 United States cities and towns (including Winston-Salem) in 1992 (local Surveys of Public Participation in the Arts [SPPA local surveys], Abt Associates).

As we shall see, the stories that these surveys tell about public attitudes towards the arts are neither uniform nor unambiguous. Before reporting results, it may be useful to begin by explaining why the results of surveys may vary more than the underlying opinions that they are intended to measure. Specifically, four aspects of survey design and procedure may contribute to such differences: sample selection; survey method and sample frame; question ordering and wording; and reporting. (For an excellent review, see Robinson [1989].)

*Survey population.* If the populations from which survey respondents are selected differ, then samples of whom questions are asked also vary. For example, results of surveys in North Carolina and New Jersey can be expected to reflect the full range of characteristics (race and ethnicity, educational attainment, religion, income, and political party affiliation) with respect to which the populations of those states diverge. Other differences are built into survey design: for example, *A&A* (1973 and 1980) include people as young as 16 years old, whereas other surveys only include people 18 years old or older.

*Survey Method and Sample Frame.* Robinson (1989) argues that survey method and sample frame are especially influential in accounting for differences in measures of arts participation in different national surveys (Robinson 1989). The exclusion of people who do not own phones from surveys conducted by telephone is a particularly clear example of such bias, leading to undersampling of low income and less educated persons (the bulk of people without phones). Moreover, telephone surveys are prone to systematic response bias due to refusals, terminations,

unlisted numbers, and persons who are not at home (AMS 1994: 47).

Another source of bias is the refusal of many people to participate in surveys, and the differences between these decliners and their cooperating peers. With sufficient persistence, researchers can gain the cooperation of 75 to 80 percent of the people they contact (the GSS routinely reaches this level). But because persistence costs money, which many survey organizations (or their clients) are unwilling to spend, nonresponse rates vary dramatically from survey to survey. Because nonrespondents often differ systematically from cooperators --- for example, people who refuse to participate in a survey about attitudes towards the arts are likely to be less interested in and committed to the arts than are people who do choose to respond -- such variations can cause big differences in results. Although research canons dictate that survey reports include detailed information on response rates and on results of tests assessing the degree of response bias, such discussions are deplorably rare in the studies we reviewed: Of the sources used here, only the GSS and SPPA local surveys provide full information. As a result, it is difficult to determine the extent to which self-selection is a problem. We suspect that selection bias is a serious difficulty in surveys primarily designed to measure attitudes towards the arts, but may have been less problematic for studies that were introduced to respondents as general public opinion polls covering a range of topics.

Characteristics of the samples of our thirteen surveys are reported in Table 2. Given differences in survey population, sample frame, and respondent selection, sample composition is relatively uniform. Although some differences are large, most do not appear to follow systematically from variation in sampling frame or survey method.

What are the major differences? Some big differences in gender composition are evident (samples range from 42 to 60 percent female), probably related to unreported variation in interview timing and in the intensity of follow-up efforts. Age distributions vary little, with two

exceptions: the 1973 *A&A* survey includes significantly more respondents under age 25 (no doubt because respondents could be as young as 16), and the GSS includes fewer respondents under age 25, probably because its sample frame excludes college students. We converted incomes to 1995 dollars in order to control for inflation. Thus converted, median incomes range from \$26,367 to \$46,932. The pattern is consistent with our expectation that telephone surveys over-represent high income people: respondents to in-person surveys reported the lowest median incomes.<sup>1</sup>

Following contemporaneous population trends, the education level of respondents to national surveys increased between 1973 and 1993: just over 15 percent of respondents to the 1973 *A&A* reported a college education, compared to 23 percent in 1980 and 32 percent in 1992. A similar pattern is visible across the three GSSs. Educational attainment was lower in state and local surveys, except for the SPPA and South Carolina studies, than in the national polls, understandably in Winston-Salem (where the survey was undertaken in 1974) and Kentucky (where the college graduation rate is about two thirds the national norm), but surprisingly in New Jersey. The South Carolina and SPPA local polls probably oversampled well-educated people due to their use of random digit dialing to locate potential respondents and due to low response rates (about 45 percent for the SPPA local studies).

The proportion of respondents classified as "white" in the national samples hovered between 84 percent and 89 percent, representing a modest oversampling. In general, state and local polls (where race/ethnicity was asked) reported more respondents of color, reflecting local circumstances. For example, just under two-thirds of the Winston-Salem sample is white, as are

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<sup>1</sup> This may not be true due to the way in which the median income was estimated for two of the face-to-face surveys. In those cases, over 50 percent of the sample had incomes in the top code, >25,000. Medians are reported (in survey year dollars) as 25,000. This is clearly an underestimate. It is true, however, that the other two in-person surveys have lower incomes than most of the other surveys (with the exception of the 1989 Kentucky Poll which has the second lowest median income, \$26,532).

three quarters of SPPA local respondents, and just over three quarters of the South Carolina sample. For reasons we cannot surmise, *A&A* and GSS samples differed markedly and consistently in the marital status of their respondents, with GSSs including more widowed, divorced and separated respondents than the Harris polls. Figures for the state and local polls fall between the GSS and Harris proportions.

*Question Order and Wording.* As we have noted, relatively small differences in question wording or in the order in which questions are asked can have large impacts on attitudes, when respondents' opinions are weakly held or constructed on the spot to oblige the interviewer. Alas, the surveys are rife with such differences in question ordering, wording, and response options, which essentially render them useless for identifying trends over time or comparing samples drawn from different regional populations. The national Harris studies are particularly lamentable in this regard: numerous question reorderings, small changes in question wording, and changes in response options, taken together, neutralize the advantages that repeated administration by one survey organization should have yielded.

For example, *A&A* 1973 asked about respondents' "support for arts organizations." Later versions asked respondents about their "support for cultural organizations." Questions tapping respondents' support for arts education changed over time. The 1973 survey asked about support for classes in "drawing, painting or sculpture," "dancing", "creative writing or poetry," and "weaving, woodworking, pottery and other crafts." Later surveys changed the choices to classes in "painting, sculpture, and graphics," "modern dancing," "writing stories or poems," "sewing, weaving, or other handiwork," and "woodworking or other crafts." In several instances, response categories were changed or eliminated from one version of the survey to the next. In early years, *A&A* respondents could respond that certain kinds of school arts courses should not be "offered at all." This option was eliminated in later years, forcing respondents to choose

among "offered for credit," "not for credit" or "not sure."

Comparisons between different surveys are also problematic because of subtle differences in question wording and response categories. For example, *A&A* 1973 asked respondents to react to the statement, "unless you understand a great deal about music, there's no point in going to hear a symphony orchestra play," by choosing among *agree strongly*, *agree*, *disagree*, *disagree strongly*, and *not sure*. The 1974 Winston-Salem survey (also by Harris Associates) changed the question to "you have to know a lot about music before you can enjoy a symphony" and the response categories to *agree*, *disagree*, and *not sure*. Several Harris Associates studies asked respondents if federal, state, and/or local government should provide support if "arts organizations ... *need* financial assistance to operate." The 1974 Winston-Salem survey asked a similar question about "cultural organizations" (a significant change, as we have seen), but does not specify that they *need* the funds to operate.

Changes in question wording from year to year also appeared in state surveys. The 1980 Kentucky poll asked respondents if "the state government should increase its financial assistance to the arts?" Over 60 percent responded affirmatively: 11 percent *strongly agree*, 50 percent *agree*, 27 percent *disagree*, and only 3 percent *strongly disagree*. The 1989 Kentucky poll (and similar polls in New Jersey and South Carolina) asked respondents if they "would like to see the ... state government spend more, less or about the same to support the arts?" In all samples, fewer than 40 percent favored more spending, with about 50 percent in each case favoring the current level of spending. When the status quo is offered as an explicit option, respondents usually gravitate towards it.

*Differences in Reporting.* What appear to be drastically different attitudes towards the arts may actually stem from differences in what aspects of the results researchers or reporters choose to emphasize. Consider, for example, the surveys (mentioned earlier) that found nearly



two-thirds of the American public supportive of government funding for the arts (Research and Forecasts 1990, *LA Times* 1989). If we look more closely at the data, we find that support for government arts aid is relatively soft: only 25 percent of the respondents to the 1990 Research and Forecasts survey, for example, described themselves as "*very much*" in favor of federal spending, compared to 44 percent who were "*somewhat*" supportive. Whereas one reporter might choose to emphasize the relatively broad support for a federal role in the arts that this survey reveals, another might focus upon the equivocal quality of that support, and the relatively few Americans who stand steadfastly behind federal assistance.

As we shall see, a review of the results from many different surveys suggests that just under a quarter of Americans are *very* supportive of federal support for the arts, about 15 to 20 percent are *strongly* opposed, and the great majority lie somewhere in the middle. Reports that focus on central tendencies or median responses, therefore, draw rather different conclusions than those that focus upon the extremes. For some purposes (for example, reporting the opinion of the "typical American"), the former emphasis is appropriate. For others (for example, estimating the share of the public available for political mobilization), the latter is far more relevant. In the analyses reported below, we take care to note how differences in reporting may lead one to interpret differently the same survey results.

*Conclusion.* Public opinion is sensitive to subtle changes in sample selection, survey method and sample frame, and question wording, ordering, and response categories. This is especially true when attitudes are incompletely formed or weakly held. As a result, we must be extremely careful when attempting to compare attitudes across different surveys. With these cautions in mind, we turn to our analyses and to the conclusions, often tentative, that we draw from them about Americans' sentiments towards the arts.

### **Americans' Attitudes towards the Arts: What Generalizations Can We Make?**

In this section, we focus on attitudes and perceptions as revealed by the thirteen surveys upon which our analyses are based. We discuss three kinds of attitudes: towards government's role in the arts; towards the arts for children and in the schools; and towards the role of the arts in society and in respondents' own lives. In order to avoid paying undue attention to idiosyncratic results, we ordinarily restrict discussion and analysis to questions that have been asked, albeit usually in different forms, in at least two different surveys. We explore the different stories that one could tell with these results, paying special attention to the effects of question wording and response choices and drawing the firmest conclusions that the triangulation across numerous surveys permit.

*Attitudes Towards Public Support of the Arts.* Questions that ask people to express general attitudes about public arts support ordinarily elicit positive responses, especially do not name a particular level of government, fail to specify that the support in question is financial (e.g., by using the word "spending" rather than "support"), and do not require respondents to make comparative judgments about the appropriate level of support (relative either current levels or, especially, competing needs, including personal consumption). In other words: If you ask most people if they believe that government should support the arts, they are likely to tell you that they do. If you ask them if they would pay more taxes to enable the federal government to spend more money on the arts (as opposed to health care or child welfare), they may respond very differently.

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Attitudes towards federal, state, and local support for the arts are all reasonably positive

and consistent across surveys, with support greatest for local, as opposed to state or federal, subsidies. By contrast, *increasing* funding for the arts, receives decidedly less (and more mixed) support. Table 3a presents responses to five groups of questions about attitudes towards governmental support of the arts: (1) support for federal funding of the arts and/or culture, (2) support for *increases* in federal funding, (3) support for state funding, (4) support for increases in state funding, and (5) support for local funding.

A relatively stable 50 to 60 percent of respondents favored federal funding of the arts and (or) culture in four different surveys by Harris Associates reviewed here. The percentage opposing federal government aid (as opposed to reporting uncertainty or indifference) differed more widely, from 24 to 46 percent, but without any trend. Part of the explanation for this wide range lies in the high proportion of "don't know" responses in the 1974 Winston-Salem survey (27 percent, compared to less than 5 percent in the three *A&A* reports). The difference seems to lie in question wording (Winston-Salem asked about "cultural organizations," not "arts organizations," and did not specify that they "need assistance," as did the *A&A* studies).

The public is much less positive when asked about increasing federal funding for the arts. According to the 1985 and 1990 GSSs, about 15 percent supported more federal funding of the arts and culture, about 40 percent who wanted less spending, and just over 40 percent preferred the status quo or had no opinion. With respect to hard (and therefore potentially mobilizable) opinion, far more respondents wanted "*much* less" than "*much* more" spending on the arts (17.8 percent as compared to 2.5 percent in 1990). In other words, if one probes behind the generally comforting

*" ...if one probes behind the generally comforting aggregate figures, the almost 20 percent of the public strongly committed to a reduced federal role is enough to embolden congressional conservatives, especially in the absence of an equally firm countervailing force of comparable size."*

aggregate figures, the almost one in five Americans strongly committed to a reduced federal role is enough to embolden congressional conservatives, especially absent a countervailing force of comparable size.

The 1980 Kentucky state poll provides some ambiguous but potentially contradictory evidence, in that just under half of the respondents expressed a willingness to "pay more taxes" to support the arts, with a similar proportion opposed. It is possible that Kentuckians are particularly friendly to the arts, or that attitudes towards taxation were less negative in 1980 than in later years (though this seems unlikely, given the political environment in which Ronald Reagan won the presidency). We think it is more likely

that the apparent difference reflects question wording and sequencing. First, respondents could only choose between paying more taxes or not paying more taxes. If, like the GSS, the Kentucky poll had added "pay less taxes and reduce support for the arts" as an option, the results would undoubtedly have been different. Second, although the question did not specify the level of government to which taxes would be paid, the fact that it followed a question about state support for the arts probably suggest to respondents that the question was about state taxes.

In fact, higher proportions of Americans approve of state support for the arts or culture than favor a federal government role: approximately 60 to 70 percent in most surveys, compared

*\*\*\*Most Americans support the principle that government should aid the arts, and there is no evidence that this proportion has declined over time.*

*\*\*\*Many people's attitudes are soft and change in response to question wording and response alternatives.*

*\*\*\*Even people who approve of arts funding in principle do not necessarily want more of it, especially if more would raise their taxes.*

*\*\*\*There is virtually no hard support for increased spending, but about 15 to 20 percent of the public strongly favors cutting federal arts programs.*

*\*\*\*Local government arts patronage is more popular than state support, which is more popular than federal assistance.*

to 50 to 60 percent for the latter (*A&A* 1980, 1987, and 1992, Winston-Salem 1974). As was the case with attitudes towards federal support, the relative shares of respondents who opposed state funding and those who expressed no opinion fluctuated more widely, with the former ranging from 16 to 36 percent. Whereas in the three *A&A* studies (1980, 1987, 1992) only 2 percent to 4 percent of all respondents indicated they (*did*) *not know* how they felt about state support for the arts, in the 1974 Winston-Salem survey nearly one-quarter of all respondents were indecisive (24.7 percent), perhaps because the question asked about "cultural organizations" rather than "arts organizations."

Again, questions about increasing support yielded more equivocal responses than questions about the general principle of government patronage. Four state polls asked how respondents felt about increasing state funds for the arts and culture. Results from three polls -- Kentucky (1989), New Jersey (1989) and South Carolina (1991) -- were virtually identical, with 35 to 38 percent of respondents supporting more state funding, approximately 50 percent supporting the status quo and the rest divided between support for less funding and no opinion.<sup>2</sup> By contrast, over 60 percent of respondents to a 1980 Kentucky poll agreed that the state should increase arts funding. Whether the decline in the proportion of Kentuckians favoring increases between 1980 and 1989 reflects change in the climate of opinion, or simply recognition of the substantial percentage increase in state legislative appropriations for Kentucky's state arts council during the 1980s, is impossible to tell.

Two surveys that asked about local support for the arts and culture both found that more

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<sup>2</sup> The South Carolina (1991) poll asks how the respondent feels about the level of state and local spending together. Despite this question wording difference, the percentages of people favoring increases, decreases, and no change are consistent with the other state polls with similarly worded questions. In Table 3A respondents who indicated they "don't know" or preferred spending to stay the same were included in the same category. We assume that respondents who reply "don't know" clearly don't feel strongly about either increasing or decreasing funding and are probably most like those who prefer the status quo.

respondents favored local funding than approved of either federal or state support. The *A&A* (1980) survey reported that more than 64 percent of respondents endorsed local government support for the arts, 31 percent opposed it, and 5 percent were "not sure." Six years earlier, the Winston-Salem survey found that 63 percent of residents favored local assistance to cultural organizations, 15 percent opposed it, and 22 percent were undecided.

Although Americans express general approval of government funding of the arts, it is not entirely clear what they have in mind. When asked specifically, in the 1973 *A&A* survey, about "federal, state, or local government helping to support" specific classes of arts organizations, respondents were considerably less positive (see Graph 1), with between 11 (ballet, dance, and opera) and 16 percent (symphony orchestras) endorsing government grants to noncommercial performing-arts groups, and 40 percent (art museums) to 56 percent (history museums) favoring grants to museums. (More respondents advocated corporate than federal support for performing-arts organizations, but the reverse was true for museums, suggesting that respondents may have regarded museums as more "public" in some sense than performing-arts groups.) Regrettably, but perhaps understandably given the advocacy agenda of the survey's sponsors, these specific questions were omitted from subsequent administrations of *A&A*. But in 1973, at least, most Americans did not believe that government aid to performing-arts organizations was justified.

What conclusions can we draw from these responses? First, a majority of Americans supports the general principle that government should aid the arts, and there is no evidence that this proportion has declined over time. Second, between one sixth and one third of the public opposes government support for the arts. Third, many people's attitudes are soft, as indicated by the susceptibility of responses to question wording and the menu of response alternatives. Fourth, even those people who approve of government arts assistance in principle do not necessarily want more of it, especially if more would raise their taxes: whereas there is virtually

no hard support for increased spending, about 15 to 20 percent of the public strongly favors cutting federal arts programs. Fifth, it seems likely that approval of government aid to museums is much higher than support for government grants to performing-arts organizations. Sixth, local government arts patronage is more popular than state support, which is more popular than federal assistance.

*Attitudes Towards Arts in Education.* Surveys indicate that Americans believe that exposure to the arts is good for children and support the arts in education (see table 3b). The more general the question, the higher the level of support, but even more specific queries indicate substantial public approval of arts in schools.

When people are asked how important it is to expose children to the arts and given a choice among "very important," "somewhat important," "not very important," or "not at all important," support appears quite strong: 85 to 93 percent favor exposing children to the arts, and nearly two thirds choose the most extreme category, describing exposure as "very important" (A&A 1980, 1987 and 1992). When respondents are given four response options that range from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree," however, only 24 percent choose the extreme category ("strongly agree"), whereas 61 percent opt for the more measured "agree" (Kentucky 1980). Thus although there is overwhelming support for the arts for children, the strength of that support is very responsive to question wording and response options.

*...most Americans approve of exposing young people to the arts, believe that the arts belong in the public schools, and say they are willing to pay taxes to that end."*

*Surveys indicate that Americans believe that exposure to the arts is good for children and support the arts in education in principle. But the vulnerability of results to changes in question wording and response options suggests that this support is not as deep as it is broad."*

Between 60 percent and 95 percent of respondents to four surveys express support for the arts in schools (*A&A* 1987, 1992 , SPPA local 1992, and South Carolina 1991). Again, much of this variation appears to reflect differences in question wording. When asked a general question, "how important is art in schools?," 70 percent of SPPA local respondents chose "very important" and 25 percent selected "somewhat important." A similar question in South Carolina received a similarly enthusiastic response. Because the latter questions are highly general, because their wording implies that the arts are at least somewhat important, and because respondents can choose from more positive than negative options, the positive tenor of the responses is predictable, but not very revealing.

More specific questions elicit more measured but still considerable support for arts in education. When the 1987 *A&A* asked if the arts were as important to a well-rounded education as conventional subjects (response options were *important to learn about arts, do not feel that way*, and *not sure*) about two in three respondents assented. And 60 percent agreed that students should have to complete at least one year of arts classes to graduate (options included *should be required, do not feel that way* and *not sure*) (1992 *A&A*).

Questions about specific school classes also demonstrate public support for the arts' place in the curriculum. Consistent majorities of respondents to the Harris Associates surveys responded that schools should offer for-credit courses in the visual arts, musical performance, music and art appreciation, creative writing, and art history, with no observable trend over time. Indeed, even allusions to taxation do not extinguish the public's support: two surveys that asked respondents if they would pay more in taxes so that school children could "be able to learn about the arts" (*A&A* 1987 and South Carolina) reported that almost three quarters said they would.

To be sure, most of the questions we have examined are embedded in contexts that emphasize the arts' value, and some are worded to elicit positive responses. Responses to more



specific, neutrally worded questions -- for example, asking parents to choose which school activities should be eliminated if public school budgets are cut -- might tell a different story. Nonetheless, it is clear that most Americans approve of exposing young people to the arts, believe that the arts belong in schools, and say they are willing to pay taxes to that end.

*Other Attitudes Towards the Arts.* Surveys have tapped many other types of attitudes towards the arts, ranging from general estimates of the arts' importance to a community to evaluations of specific musical genres. We focus here on the relatively few topics that have been addressed in two or more studies.

As we have seen, generally phrased questions tend to elicit more positive attitudes towards the arts than do more specific inquiries. Thus, when respondents are asked if the arts are important to communities, they invariably agree that they are. Nonetheless, responses vary considerably depending on how the questions are worded. When asked if the arts and culture are as important to the community as parks and recreation, between 71 percent and 88 percent of respondents to three surveys agreed (A&A 1980, Winston-Salem 1974, Kentucky 1980). The strength of agreement varied markedly among the surveys, however, with "agree strongly" responses ranging from a mere 23 percent in Kentucky and 49 percent in Winston-Salem to 64 percent in the national survey. The Kentucky result doubtless reflects the addition of libraries and schools to "parks and recreation" in that survey.

More specific questions about the importance of theaters, concert halls and museums elicit less enthusiastic

*"Generally phrased questions tend to elicit more positive attitudes towards the arts than do more specific inquiries. When respondents are asked if the arts are important to communities, they invariably agree that they are. More specific questions about the importance of theaters, concert halls and museums elicit less enthusiastic and more varied responses."*

and more varied responses. Between 40 and 60 percent of respondents to three surveys reported that it was "very" or "somewhat" important to have an accessible theater (*A&A* 1973, Winston-Salem 1974, and Kentucky 1989). Between 35 and 55 percent (in the same surveys) said the same about a concert hall; and from 42 percent to 67 endorsed the importance of museums. (Respondents to the 1974 Winston-Salem survey were at the low end on each question and also were considerably more likely than the national samples to report that such facilities were unimportant, no doubt reflecting the demographic composition of the Winston-Salem population in that year.)

Responses to this kind of question are vulnerable to wording changes. Bundling all such facilities into a single question and making it clear that the question applies to the community "whether or not you are personally interested," raises the proportion of respondents who declare cultural facilities important to between 87 to 93 percent. And a strongly worded item stating that "museums are an important resource for the whole community, because they tell us so much about the art and history of different cultures or about science and our environment" elicited agreement from approximately 95 percent of respondents to the two surveys that asked it (*A&A* 1980, 1987).

In general, respondents confronted with leading questions permit themselves to be led. Large majorities assent to the propositions that being in the audience at a live performance is better than watching it on television, that most people enjoy arts events, that the arts are "a positive experience in a troubled world," and that "the arts give you pure pleasure to experience or participate in" [*sic*] (*A&A* 1980, 1987, and 1992). Indeed, given the unremarkable character of these assertions, it is surprising that between one fifth and one sixth of respondents disagree with

*"In general, respondents confronted with leading questions permit themselves to be led. "*

each.

Several surveys tapped the extent to which respondents perceive the arts as exclusive. Given a choice among agree, disagree, or "not sure," 30 percent of respondents to the 1973 *A&A* survey agreed that "unless you know a lot about art or history you don't get much from visiting museums," and 33 percent ratified the view that much background is required to appreciate orchestra concerts. Adding response options appears to increase the proportion of respondents who report that qualifications are required: offered five response options, 57 percent of respondents to the 1974 Winston-Salem survey "agreed strongly" or "agreed slightly" that you have to "understand a lot about music" to enjoy hearing an orchestra play. Almost half of respondents to the 1993 GSS, which contained a similar menu of options, endorsed the view that "only a few people have the knowledge and ability to judge excellence in the arts," although fewer than 6 percent chose "agree strongly." The relatively even splits and the influence of the response options on results suggest that Americans are of two minds, perceiving the arts at once as democratically accessible and socially off limits.

*" The relatively even split, and the variability of results with the number of response options, suggest that Americans are of two minds about the arts, perceiving them at once as democratically accessible and socially or intellectually off limits."*

### **How do Attitudes towards the Arts Vary among Social Groups?**

So far we have been describing attitudes towards the arts wholesale, in broad generalities. Although we have written about how "Americans" view the arts, we are well aware that our society is "not a unity, but a multiple," as Henry Adams observed. In this section we ask how sentiments vary among different portions of the public: groups defined on the basis of gender, age, income, educational attainment, race or ethnicity, and marital status. We also ask how the sentiments of people who visit museums and attend performing arts events differ from the views

of people who do not.

Exploring the ways in which opinions vary among different groups of interest for several reasons. First, it is intrinsically important to understand the social composition of the arts' constituency. What groups within our society are strongly committed to the arts? What groups are disproportionately unsympathetic to, or untouched by, the arts? What can this tell us about the social role of the arts, or about the challenges to programs of public support and private philanthropy aimed at expanding the reach of nonprofit arts institutions? Second, information about variation in sentiments among groups may be useful to arts advocates in formulating and targeting appeals or forming coalitions. Third, information about between-group differences can play a technical role in helping us assess the influence of response bias or differences in sample frames on the results of different surveys.

Consistent with our study's exploratory aim, we focus in this section on simple comparisons between the percentage of persons in different groups expressing particular attitudes. We also indicate whether the differences we find are statistically significant -- that is, whether they are so large that they are unlikely to result from the luck of the draw when the survey sample was selected. Comparisons are useful for describing the world in which we live, but not for explaining why it is so. In this section of the paper, our goal is to present an accurate description, reserving explanation to the section that follows.

*Gender.* Women consistently have significantly more favorable attitudes towards the arts

than do men.<sup>3</sup> For example, women are more likely to favor federal, state, and local support for the arts than are men (see graphs 1.1- 1.3). Women are also slightly more likely (in three out of four surveys) to support arts in education than men, and more likely than men to emphasize the importance of theaters, concert halls and (in four out of five surveys) museums.

Why women are more likely to have favorable attitudes towards the arts than men isn't entirely clear, but it is not unexpected given that previous studies have found women participating at higher levels in arts audiences (DiMaggio and Useem 1978) and, as high school students, much more interested in the arts than their male counterparts (DiMaggio 1982). In the next section, we shall see if women's attitudes reflect higher levels of adult arts participation, or whether women are more favorably oriented toward the arts even after taking account of their attendance at arts events.

*Age.* In general, the older people are, the less favorable are their attitudes towards the arts -- for example, the less likely they are to report favoring federal, state, and local arts funding (Graphs 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3). Whereas respondents younger than 25 favor federal support by a ratio of 3 to 1, among older Americans opinion is evenly split. The pattern is similar for state and local funding, although the differences are not as marked. Similar patterns are observable for support for increased state funding, belief in the importance of the arts for children, and support for arts in education.

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<sup>3</sup>Our criterion for statistical significance is a Chi-square test in which  $p <$  in question is of a magnitude that one would find by chance less than one

*express more favorable attitudes towards the*

*Women consistently express more favorable attitudes towards the arts than men.*

The relationship between age and estimation of the importance of theaters, concert halls, and museums is somewhat different, remaining stable among respondents through early middle age and then declining precipitously. By contrast, attitudes towards the exclusivity of the arts -- responses to questions about the background needed to enjoy arts events, or the number of people capable of recognizing good art -- plateau after age 30, with younger respondents more inclined to view the arts as requiring no special expertise.

The relationship between attitude and age is particularly important because more positive attitudes among the young may presage a gradual improvement in the political environment for the arts -- *if* younger cohorts retain their attitudes as

they replace older ones (and if the trend towards more positive attitudes among younger cohorts continues).

Alternatively, it is possible that as today's young people age they will grow into their elders' more negative views. Unfortunately, without questions asked in the same way in different years, we cannot tell whether the differences reported here reflect a greater interest in the arts during youth or, conversely, durable cohort effects that will transform America's cultural politics.

*Income.* The relationship of income to sentiments about the arts is less definite than that of either gender or age. Gains in income are associated with slight

improvements in attitudes towards state and local but not federal support for the arts, and rather dramatic increases in assessments of the value of artistic experience for children and of the importance of theaters and concert halls. Respondents who earn higher incomes are also

*Increasing income has two somewhat contradictory effects: it increases the value that people place on the arts, but militates against support for public expenditures.*

*If the positive sentiments of younger people persist as they change, the arts could face a kinder and gentler political environment in years to come.*

somewhat more likely to view enjoyment of the arts as limited to the happy few. Taking these together, we may infer that increasing income has two somewhat contradictory effects: it increases the extent to which the arts are part of people's lives, and therefore the value that they place on the arts; but income is also associated with economic conservatism, which militates against support for public expenditures.

These generalizations must be qualified, however, by two observations. First, the generally positive effect of income on attitudes, especially attitude towards government support, appears to be reversed for the highest income categories. Second, survey data sets include few people who are very wealthy or very poor, so that estimates are not available for the full range of relevant variation.

*Education.* The number of years that a person has gone to school is by far the best predictor of her or his attendance at arts events (Robinson et al. 1982; Bourdieu 1984), so it is no surprise that increases in education are also associated with increases in levels of support for federal, state, and local funding. Indeed, the associations are surprisingly weak, suggesting that many educated people's attitudes towards public funding are driven more by general attitudes towards public spending than by specific views of the arts. The relationship is stronger between educational attainment and attitudes towards *increasing* levels of state and, especially, federal funding (which, as we have seen, is a far less popular proposition) (see Graphs 3.1 and 3.2). In Kentucky (1980), for example, respondents with at least a college degree were more than twice as likely as those with less than a high school education to support increases in federal arts support. The more educated also evaluate childhood exposure to the arts as more important, are stronger supporters of arts in schools, are more likely than others to say that the arts are as important to a community as parks and recreation, and more likely to describe theaters, concert halls, and museums as very important.

*Race/Ethnicity.* Nonwhite respondents -- in most surveys, predominantly African-Americans, though including some Asian-Americans, Americans of Hispanic descent, and Native Americans as well -- express more favorable attitudes about the arts than do white respondents, and the differences are statistically significant (see Graphs 4.1 - 4.3).<sup>4</sup> The differences are greatest on public policy issues: in all surveys, non-whites are more likely than whites to favor federal, state and local support for the arts, to express support for increases in state funding, to express support for the arts in education, and to describe as very important the presence of accessible theaters, concert halls, and (in four of five surveys) museums. At the same time (see Graph 4.4), nonwhites are more likely than whites to perceive the arts as exclusive: i.e., to believe that one must know a lot about art to enjoy going to a museum, that one must have a strong musical background to enjoy a symphony concert, and that only a few people have the ability to judge artistic excellence.

*The number of years a person has spent in school is a significant predictor of nearly every kind of positive attitude toward the arts -- especially support for increased levels of federal subsidy.*

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<sup>4</sup>Twelve of thirteen surveys asked respondents about their race, but the GSSs and the 1989 Kentucky survey categorize respondents as white, black, or other (though the GSS asks separately about ethnic background. The 1989 New Jersey and 1991 South Carolina study combined race and ethnicity into a single variable with categories White, Black, Hispanic, and other. The Americans and the Arts surveys coded race as white, black, Hispanic, Native American, and Asian-American. Combining race and ethnicity into a single variable with a "Hispanic" category tends to reduce the proportion of respondents classified as Black or, especially, White.

*Nonwhite respondents express more positive attitudes than whites almost across the board, despite the fact that they also perceive the arts as more exclusive.*



Nonwhites' consistently favorable attitudes towards the arts were unexpected. Greater support for public subsidy is consistent with evidence that African-Americans, at least, favor an active role for government in addressing the nation's problems (Page and Shapiro 1992: 298-300). But nonwhites have positive attitudes that are not linked to general public-policy positions, and these are more surprising, given the fact that nonwhites tend to participate less than whites in the arts (primarily because on average they have less education and lower incomes) (DiMaggio and Ostrower 1990). The findings are even more surprising because nonwhites are more likely than whites to view the arts as exclusive, which one might expect to reduce their enthusiasm.

*Nonwhite respondents express more positive attitudes towards the arts than do people who are divorced, and separated*

*positive sentiments towards the arts than do people who are married or widowed.*

*Marital Status.* The relationship between marital status and attitudes towards government assistance to the arts forms a striking pattern: single, divorced, and separated people express more approval of federal, state, and local programs than do married and widowed respondents. They also express stronger support for the arts and education and regard theaters, concert halls and museums as more important than do their married or widowed peers.

It is possible that these differences reflect real differences in lifestyle. Many never-married people have the leisure and discretionary income to consume the arts (and other leisure activities) at high levels. Divorced or separated people may find that resuming aspects of the single lifestyle brings them into contact with museums and performing-arts organizations; and some may look to the arts for guidance or inspiration as they fashion new ways of life. It is also possible that married and widowed people differ from the never-married, divorced and separated with respect to other characteristics that shape attitudes towards the arts. For example, the

relatively negative sentiments of the widowed probably due to their relatively high ages and low levels of education rather than anything about having lost a spouse.

*Political party affiliation.* Several studies that collected data on party affiliation asked respondents whether they favored increasing federal and state funding of the arts (but not whether they supported the principle of government support in general). In all but one of these studies, Democrats were slightly more likely than Republicans to favor increases, but, with the exception of a 1991 survey in South Carolina, the differences were very modest.

*How do the sentiments of arts attenders differ from the attitudes of those who do not participate in the arts?* Up to now, we have asked about how attitudes differ among groups defined on the basis of identity or life experience. Where we have found differences, we have in some cases attributed them to different patterns of

participation in the arts, assuming that people who visit more museums and galleries or attend more concerts and plays will value the arts more highly in other ways, as well. In this section, we test that assumption.

As expected, participation in the arts, however it is measured, is consistently related to positive sentiments towards the arts on every dimension and every survey we have inspected. For present purposes, we define "participation" as attendance at the theater, ballet or other dance concerts, opera, classical music or jazz concert, and for some surveys even pop concerts. Regardless of the specific indicators or metrics (which ranges from whether the respondent has ever attended an arts event to the number times he or she attended during the 12 months prior to

*No matter how you measure participation, participants have more favorable attitudes -- by every criterion on every survey -- than nonattenders. Nonetheless, many nonparticipants express favorable attitudes towards the arts and sizable minorities of arts attenders oppose a government role.*

the survey), participation is related to more favorable attitudes. For example, respondents who report ever going to the theater are more likely than those who have never attended the theater to favor federal, state, and local support for the arts, to advocate increasing federal and state funding for the arts, to believe that the arts are important for children, to support arts in education, to indicate that accessible theaters, concert halls and museums are important, to believe that the arts are as important as parks and recreation, and to report that they do not believe that any special training or skills are necessary to enjoy or evaluate the arts. The same is true for every measure of arts participation we have been able to test.

After exploring the relationships of attitudes to forms of participation singly, we constructed a composite measure of performing-arts participation, based on the number of kinds of arts events (theater, musical performance, dance) that the respondent reported attending.<sup>5</sup> Graphs 6.1-6.3 depict the relationship between this measure and support for federal, state and local government financial support for the arts. Two things about these graphs are worth noting. First, the relationship between attendance and sentiments is monotonic: the more types of art event a respondent attends, the more likely she or he is to favor government assistance for the arts. Second, the differences between attenders and nonattenders, while notable and statistically significant, are not enormous. For example, in *A&A 1992*, approval of federal support for the arts ranged from just over 50 percent for nonattenders to approximately 65 percent for respondents who attended theater, musical performances and dance concerts. In other words,

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<sup>5</sup> The composite measure, which is used in the multivariate analyses below, ranges from 0 to 1. Substitutions are made in surveys where any one of these questions was not asked. The highest number of questions included in the arts participation scale was 3 and the fewest was 1. A scale was constructed that measured how many of the up to three activities the respondent attended. For example, if the respondent indicated that s/he went to all three events s/he received a score of 3/3 or 1. If the respondent indicated that s/he went to only one event, s/he received a score of 1/3 or 0.33. This scale is admittedly crude. However, all analyses indicate that the relationship between arts participation and attitudes towards the arts is robust to subtle (or even dramatic) changes in measurement of participation.

there is a lot of support for the principle of public patronage among nonattenders, and a sizable minority of active attenders who oppose a government role.

### **Multivariate Analysis of Attitudes Towards the Arts**

To identify intergroup differences in attitudes towards the arts is not to explain those differences.

Not all characteristics that are associated with people's attitudes towards the arts actively shape those attitudes: Some piggy-back on other characteristics that are directly responsible. Something about spending time in school, for example, really does seem to cultivate a more positive disposition towards the arts. As a result, other things that are associated with getting lots of schooling (for example, driving late-model cars) will be correlated with cultural attitudes as well.

The way to separate the wheat from the chaff -- the factors that shape people's attitudes from the characteristics that just come along for the ride -- is to conduct multivariate analyses that permit us to look at the effects on attitudes of particular variables while controlling statistically for the effects of many others.

In this section we undertake such multivariate analysis to assess the influence on attitudes of each of the personal characteristics or group identities we have discussed once one controls for the effects of all the other variables. We focus in this section on only a few surveys, so that we can pay special attention to differences between groups rather than differences between surveys, and on three kinds of attitudes: about federal support for the arts; about the arts in education; and about whether one needs special training or skill to enjoy a museum or concert or to judge excellence in the arts.

For each kind of attitude, different surveys, undertaken at different times, yield relatively consistent stories. People who are younger, nonwhite, and attend arts events are more likely than others to express support for federal assistance to the arts and for arts in education. Older, less educated nonattenders are more likely than others to believe that one needs special training or

skill to appreciate or evaluate the arts. Similarities in results from surveys conducted at different times suggest that the underlying structure of attitudes towards the arts has not changed much, if at all, during the past twenty years. Differences among particular groups in the population, on the other hand, are robustly significant.

*Attitudes Towards Federal Support of the Arts.* It is necessary to begin with some technical details. (Readers who are uninterested in these matters may wish to skim this section for the results.) Table 4A reports

*"Similarities in results from surveys conducted at different times suggest that the underlying structure of attitudes towards the arts has not changed much, if at all, during the past twenty years."*

results of four separate logistic regression analyses predicting favorable attitudes towards federal support for the arts. For each data set we present results of two logistic regression models. The first model includes all predictors except attendance at art events. The second model adds arts attendance. In each cell of the table we find the odds ratio<sup>6</sup> for each group. For example, the upper left hand cell (1.310) indicates that in the 1980 *A&A* survey, women were 131 percent as likely, or 1.31 times more likely, than men to report that they favored federal support for the arts. The asterisk indicates that this finding is significant at the  $p < .05$  level (a traditional cut-off that demarcates a robust finding). The upper right hand cell (0.934) indicates that women in Winston-Salem were 93.4 percent as likely as men to report that they favored federal support for the arts.<sup>7</sup> The absence of an asterisk indicates that this difference is not significant and that we

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<sup>6</sup> Odds ratios indicate the increase in odds that respondents with the characteristic listed are likely to experience the outcome when compared with the reference category (for categorical variables), or the increase in odds per unit increase in the characteristic listed (for continuous variables). For example, results from the first column for AA 1980 show that women are 1.31 times more likely than the reference group, men, to favor federal support for the arts given they are equal on all other measures included. Please note that the coefficients of variables that are ordinal rather than categorical (e.g., income or age) cannot be interpreted in this fashion.

<sup>7</sup> For continuous variables the odds ratios represent the predicted odds of the outcome given a one unit increase in the independent variable. For example, the coefficients for age represent the change in odds

therefore cannot be confident that a different sample would yield the same result.

Table 4A shows the results of logistic regression predicting endorsement for federal support for the arts using data from four different surveys. Three surveys (*A&A* 1980, 1987, 1992) asked if respondents feel that the federal government should provide support for arts organizations to operate. The fourth survey (*W-S* 1974) asked a similar question about "cultural organizations" and specified that organizations *need* financial assistance to operate. Both types of questions offered 3 response options: *yes*, *no*, and *don't know*. For the analysis, "no" and "don't know" are combined into one category.

Women are more likely than men who are comparable with respect to age, income, educational attainment, marital status and religion to favor federal support for the arts in all three national samples (but not in Winston-Salem 1974). Even after controlling for other ways that men and women are different, women are still about 25-30 percent more likely than comparable men to support federal funding in all three national studies. Introducing arts participation into the model indicates that about 20 percent of the net difference between men and women reflects the greater rate at which women attend arts events. Nonetheless, even among men and women whose arts participation is comparable a notable (and in one study statistically significant) difference remains.

*"...even among men and women whose arts participation is comparable a notable (and in one study statistically significant) difference remains."*

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for every one year increase in age. Therefore, results in the first column of table 4A show that we expect (all other things equal) that a 19 year old would be 0.967 times as likely as an 18 year old to favor federal support for the arts. However, a 20 year old is predicted to endorse federal support for the arts 0.967<sup>2</sup>, or 0.935 times as likely as an 18 year old to endorse federal support for the arts.

Even when we control for educational attainment and other variables, we find that older people are significantly less likely than younger to favor federal support for the arts in all three of the national surveys (the Winston-Salem study again being the exception). The persistence of age differences after introducing statistical controls rules out one explanation for the differences we observed earlier: they do not simply reflect generational differences in educational attainment or differences in marital status associated with age. Moreover, given the fact that between 1980 and 1992 the New Deal generation began to pass from the scene, the 1960s generation aged, and the generation that became politically aware during the Reagan presidency came of age, the stability of the age effect between 1980 and 1992 suggests that the results do not simply reflect a consistent relationship between age and broad political philosophy. Our best guess is that the age effects tap a genuine acceptance of the principle of federal arts support among people politically socialized after that principle had been institutionalized in the National Endowment for the Arts.

One implication of this finding is that, if the NEA survives its current test, it may face a somewhat friendlier environment in the future, due to generational succession. Another implication is that if the NEA *is* abolished, age-related differences in attitudes may be reversed in years to come.

We use the logarithmic form to measure income, a practice that reflects the common observation that an extra dollar of income has a greater marginal impact on someone with a low income than on someone whose income is high. Except in Winston-Salem, where high income people were

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*Our best guess is that the age effects tap an acceptance in principle of federal arts support among people politically socialized after that principle had been institutionalized in the National Endowment for the Arts. One implication of this finding is that, if the NEA survives its current test, it may face a somewhat friendlier environment in the future... Another is that if the NEA is abolished, age-related differences in attitudes may be reversed in years to come.*

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more likely than otherwise similar low-income respondents to support federal arts funding, income was not significantly related to policy preferences.<sup>8</sup>

The most surprising finding, although one that is consistent with the bivariate analyses reported earlier, is that formal education has no effect on support for federal arts funding after controlling for gender, age, income, religion, and other factors. Indeed, in the 1980 *A&A*, once controls for arts participation were included, education was actually associated with weaker support for federal funding for the arts.<sup>9</sup> We draw four tentative conclusions from these analyses. First, although highly educated people are disproportionately likely to be found among the relatively few Americans who favor increasing federal support for the arts, they are no more likely than the less educated to be found among the many Americans who support the general principle of public support for the arts. Second, many educated people who favor public support for the arts do so because they are younger and more likely to participate in the arts than are the less educated, not because of education *per se*. Third, attitudes towards federal support for the arts may be influenced more by one's views of government's appropriate role than by one's

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<sup>8</sup>At first we included both the logarithm of income and the square of the logarithm of income in the model. This is a way of expressing mathematically the tendency (observed earlier) for support for the arts to rise with income and then reverse direction near the top of the income distribution. Both terms were significant (indicating that the curvilinear relation between income and support for federal arts support persists even after controlling for other influences on attitudes towards the arts) for the 1980 and 1992 *A&As*. Including the squared term, however, reduced the statistical stability of the model's estimates, so we do omitted it in the models reported upon here.

<sup>9</sup> Because higher education is associated with favorable attitudes towards the arts (including support for *increasing* arts subsidies), we tested for the possibility that these results were statistical artifacts; but they were robust across many different specifications of education and of the model as a whole.

*The most surprising finding is the lack of an association between educational attainment and support for the principle of federal assistance to the arts.*



feelings about the arts. Fourth, the relationship between education and attitudes towards public subsidy is probably different for different portions of the population.

*The most surprising finding is the lack of an association between educational attainment and support for the principle of federal assistance to the arts.*

Nonwhites in every survey are significantly more likely than otherwise similar whites to favor federal support for the arts. This result may reflect a philosophical difference between nonwhites and whites in attitudes towards governmental activism.

We find no significant relationship between marital status and endorsement of federal support for the arts. This means that the more positive views of never married, divorced, and separated people are a function not of marital status *per se*, but of differences in such factors as age or education that are associated with marital status.

*All four surveys agree: Arts attenders are twice as likely as otherwise similar nonattenders to favor federal support for the arts.*

In two national studies in which respondents were asked about their religion, Jewish respondents were significantly more likely than others to favor federal support. Adding arts participation does little to dampen this notable difference. Catholics also favored federal arts funding by a significantly higher margin than otherwise similar Protestants.

*"...nonwhites in every survey are significantly more likely than otherwise similar whites to favor federal support for the arts."*

All four surveys reveal that people who attend arts events are about twice as likely as comparable nonattenders to favor federal assistance to the arts. This is not surprising, given the fact that attenders stand to benefit from federal aid (which

augments the supply of arts events) and place a higher value on the arts as a public good, as well.

*Attitudes Towards the Arts in Education.* Does support for the arts in education derive from the same wellsprings as approval of federal aid to the arts? There is some reason to believe that it might. Both positions are likely to be a function of the extent to which people value the arts, and both are likely to be embraced by individuals who believe in investment in public goods. On the other hand, attitudes towards federal arts assistance are shaped, in part, by broader political philosophy, whereas traditional conservatives have no philosophical objection to programs in locally controlled public schools. At the same time, there may be people who love the arts enough to have their federal taxes spent upon them but resist arts in education on pedagogical grounds.

Results of analyses of attitudes towards the arts in education from four surveys largely converge with what we learned about the predictors of approval of federal arts funding (see Table 4b). Table 4B shows the results, using data from four surveys, of logistic regression predicting support for arts in education. One survey (*A&A* 1987) asked if students ought to be exposed to the arts as part of a well-rounded education. Response categories include "important to learn about arts," "don't feel that way," and "not sure." For the analysis, the latter two categories are combined into one. Another survey asked if the completion of at least a year of classes in arts should be required (*A&A* 1992). Response categories included "should be required," "don't feel that way," and "not sure." For the analysis, the latter two categories are combined into one. The SPPA (1992) local survey asked respondents "How important is art in schools?" Response categories include "very important," "somewhat important," "not at all important," and "don't know." For the analysis, the first two categories are combined and the last two categories are combined. Finally South Carolina residents (South Carolina 1991) were asked about the importance of arts education. Response categories include "extremely

important," "very important," "somewhat important," "not too important," "not at all important," and "don't know." For the analysis, the first three categories are combined and the remaining categories form the comparison group.

Women are more likely to support arts in education than men in all four surveys. The differences are significant in the 1987 *A&A* and the 1992 SPPA local surveys, and very great indeed in the latter. Increases in age are associated with less favorable attitudes about arts in education in all four surveys, significantly so for the 1992 *A&A* and the 1992 SPPA. High-income respondents are significantly more supportive of arts education in the 1992 SPPA local surveys, but not in the other surveys. The former also becomes statistically insignificant once we control for participation.

Educational attainment is positively related to support for the arts in education in all four surveys, but the relationships are significant only in the 1992 *A&A* and, especially, in the SPPA local surveys. About 20 to 30 percent of the effect of schooling on attitudes towards arts education is due to the fact that well educated people attend more arts events. When we add controls for participation, the effect of education remains statistically significant only in the SPPA local surveys.

*In general, support for arts education is greater among women, well-educated people, nonwhites and Catholics than among comparable men, whites, Protestants and the less well-educated.*

Nonwhites are somewhat more supportive of arts education than similar whites in three of the four studies, but the relationship is only significant in the 1987 *A&A*. That study also finds Catholics significantly more supportive of arts education than members of Protestant faiths. Marital status and political party identification (where measured) have no consistent relationship with support for arts in education.

All the effects on attitudes towards arts education that we have described are dwarfed by the influence of arts participation. People who have attended arts events are more likely than people who have not attended art events to support the arts in education in all four surveys, and the effects are statistically significant in all but the South Carolina study. People who have attended art events are between two and five times more likely than nonattenders to support arts in education than people who have not attended the arts, even after controlling for age, income, race, and, in some studies, religion and party affiliations. Clearly people who value the arts in their own lives also value their contribution to the education of children.

*The best predictor, by far, of support for arts in education is whether or not people attend arts events themselves.*

*Attitudes About the Skills required to Appreciate or Judge the Arts.* Table 4C presents results of logistic regressions predicting attitudes towards the exclusivity of the arts. Table 4C includes results from 3 different surveys. We include results from two questions asked in the 1973 *A&A*. One question on the survey asked "unless you know a lot about art or art history, you don't get much from visiting museums?" A similar question focused on symphonies. Response categories for each included "yes," "no," and "don't know," the latter two of which are combined for these analyses. The Winston-Salem (1974) survey asked if "you have to know a lot about music before you can enjoy symphony?" Response categories include "strongly agree," "agree," "disagree," "strongly disagree," and "don't know." For the analysis the first two categories, combined to represent an affirmative response, are compared to the other three categories. The third survey employed here (GSS 1993) asked whether "only a few people have the knowledge and ability to judge excellence in the arts?" Response categories include "strongly agree," "agree," "disagree," "strongly disagree," and "don't know." Again the first two

categories are combined for comparison with the other three responses.

Note that these dependent variables are attitudes that many contemporary Americans would regard as "unfavorable" towards the arts. (Perhaps fifty years ago, the notion that appreciating the arts requires special skill or discernment would have been viewed as neutral towards or even flattering to the arts, but that is no longer the case, among most arts advocates at least.) For that reason, attributes of persons that are

associated with positive effects in Tables 4A and 4B, have negative effects upon the dependent variables in these analyses. For example, women are less likely than men to agree that arts

appreciation requires special training or talents possessed by the few in all four surveys, though the effect is significant only for art museums in the 1973

A&A. Similarly, older people are more likely to view the arts as exclusive, with the effects of age significant in Winston-Salem (1974) and in the 1993 GSS.

The most striking finding is the strong negative effect of education on the perception that only a few people can appreciate the arts. The effect of educational attainment is significant in all four surveys, and is moderated only slightly when we control for arts participation. Respondents with college degrees are between one quarter and one half as likely to agree that art or music appreciation requires special training or talent than are people whose formal education concluded with high-school graduation or earlier. Ironically, those who possess the most training in consuming the arts are most likely to deny that such training is necessary.

White respondents are somewhat less likely than non-whites to perceive the arts as exclusive, but the difference is only significant in the 1993 GSS. The effects of marital status and

*Other things equal, women, Democrats, and, especially, arts attenders and people with lots of education are more likely to perceive the arts as accessible and less likely to see them as requiring special training or discernment than are men, strong Republicans, non-attenders, and the less educated.*

religion vary from survey to survey and are rarely significant. Income is associated significantly with viewing the arts as accessible in *A&A 1973*, but not in 1993. It is unclear whether the difference reflects historical change or different survey methodologies. The same is true of income. Curiously, Republicans, and especially respondents who describe themselves as "strong" Republicans, are more likely than others (about 60 percent more than strong Democrats) to believe that "only a few people have the knowledge and ability to judge excellence in the arts." Controlling for arts participation does nothing to reduce these associations.

Finally, respondents who have attended arts events are less likely, significantly so in three out of four surveys, to perceive the arts as exclusive than respondents who have not attended arts events. Indeed, they are less than half as likely to do so. Once again, participation in the arts shapes attitudes more strongly than any other factor.

### **Conclusions: An Agenda for Research**

In this paper, we have attempted to summarize the major findings of thirteen surveys that have asked Americans about their attitudes towards the arts over a period of two decades. Our approach has been to cut a wide path through a great expanse of forest as expeditiously as possible. Thorough analysis of the structure of opinion on any of the issues described here would require a paper in itself. We hope that some readers may be inspired by questions left unanswered to undertake such research themselves.

Nonetheless, we hope and believe that this brief tour of public sentiments towards the arts has been illuminating. Certainly it casts light on the question with which we opened the paper: that of the climate of opinion conducive to the legislative struggles over the Arts Endowment. To summarize briefly, we found that support for federal funding of the arts is a yard wide and an inch deep. Most Americans approve of the federal role (though fewer than advocate state or local arts assistance), but very few wish strongly to expand it --- whereas almost a fifth of the

electorate believes strongly that support should be cut or eliminated. When a well-disposed majority for whom an issue is not very salient confronts a mobilized minority with strong convictions, the latter is likely to get its way. That is why conservative House members can vote to abolish the NEA without jeopardizing themselves politically.

We have learned a great many other things as well, but in this conclusion, rather than rehearse our findings, we would like to talk about some of the problems we encountered in using the data and about how some of these problems could be solved by more systematic and organized consultation and planning among researchers and research sponsors.

The most serious impediments to understanding opinions and opinion change lie in the failure of researchers to ask the same questions in the same way repeatedly. As survey experts say, "if you want to answer questions about change, don't change the questions." Studies of attitudes towards the arts constantly change the questions, in ways that makes comparison between studies virtually impossible.

Different surveys often yield different results for reasons that may be unrelated to underlying differences in the opinions of the populations from whom samples were drawn. Apparent differences sometimes reflect the way in which samples were identified and contacted and in the way in which questions have been designed and in the type and number of response options from which respondents have been asked to choose. Amidst the din of heterogeneity in methodology and question design, we have seen that some generalizations -- about public attitudes in general, and about group differences in particular -- stand out. But many other potential lessons undoubtedly have been lost.

*Our assumption in the recommendations that follow is that the purpose of research on public attitudes towards the arts is to understand those attitudes as clearly and thoroughly as possible. We recognize that this assumption may be controversial. Most studies of public atti-*

tudes towards the arts are undertaken for purposes of advocacy. The problem in making inferences from such studies is not a lack of investment: a small proportion of the funds spent on the studies we reviewed could have produced reliable, comparable data suitable for making confident generalizations and monitoring opinion change over time. Nor is the problem incompetence. In general, the studies we reviewed were conducted as well as was necessary to produce the information that arts advocates wanted. As advocacy purposes have been understood in the arts, it is less important to understand the public's "real" opinions, than to produce *useable* opinions --- opinions that can decorate newspaper editorials and public addresses -- through the interaction of interviewer and respondent. Much of the research we reviewed produced useable opinions in just this way, getting answers pleasing to arts advocates by avoiding questions that would enable one to understand the ambivalence, multiple perspectives, and indifference that much of the public feels when (and if) they think about the arts.

This is not to say that high-quality, well-designed studies are not useful for purposes of advocacy. The American public clearly has a broadly positive orientation to the arts: well designed studies will document this and advocates can use the results. But well-designed studies aimed at understanding, rather than producing, opinions will also yield results with which some advocates may be less comfortable.

We suspect that sophisticated arts advocates will recognize that this is all to the good. The reason is that if one wants to shape public opinion, one has to understand it first. People in the opinion-making business -- political consultants or product marketers -- would never settle for surveys designed merely to make their candidate or product look good. The purpose of research in such circles is *to inform the design of strategies of persuasion*. One of the most striking findings of our study is the large proportion of the public whose self-reported "attitudes" towards the arts can be influenced by details of question wording or response categories. Such



people pose a superficial problem for researchers, but an opportunity for advocates: The fact that their opinions are so malleable indicates that those opinions are up for grabs. Given the political threats that the arts now face, advocates can no longer afford the luxury of using opinion surveys as a kind of cheering section, a symbolic choral accompaniment to statements of political faith. Today, advocacy requires information that will enable the arts' supporters to develop persuasive messages that will reinforce positive elements and deaccentuate negative components of the public's view of the arts, and guide arts advocates in targeting those messages most efficiently.

If we can agree on this assumption, then our goals should be twofold. First, we need to develop a concentrated survey effort that will recruit the most sophisticated research experts to design a regularly administered survey (perhaps undertaken in short form every two or three years, and more comprehensively each decade) that, by asking the same questions to a well-designed sample of Americans, will make it possible to detect and explain trends in the public's sentiments towards the arts.

Second, some resources should be allocated to probing analyses of existing data and of new small-scale experimental surveys in order to go beyond superficial findings to make inferences about the structure of beliefs that underlie the attitudes that people report to researchers.

*Monitoring trends.* The first priority is to invest in a medium for monitoring trends in a few key attitudes as reliably as possible. The most cost-efficient way to do this is to buy time on a reliable, professionally administered national survey like the General Social Survey or National Election

*"Given the political threats the arts face, advocates can no longer afford the luxury of using opinion surveys as a kind of symbolic choral accompaniment to statements of political faith. Today, advocacy requires information that will enable the arts' supporters to develop persuasive messages that will reinforce positive elements and deaccentuate negative components of the public's view of the arts, and guide arts advocates in targeting those messages efficiently."*

Survey that is implemented at regular intervals using consistent methods.

For roughly \$50,000 to \$60,000, research sponsors can purchase eight to ten minutes of interview time on a survey effectively reaching 1500 or so respondents representative of the U.S. public. The results would be included on a widely circulated data set used in teaching and research by thousands of social scientists and students, guaranteeing analysis of the data at little additional cost. If such an effort was repeated every two or three years, the annual investment would be minimal. In addition to this, a more comprehensive and wide-ranging survey of public sentiments towards the arts might be undertaken at ten-year intervals, providing an opportunity to understand more about the structure of opinion towards the arts and how it is changing.

*Ensuring utilization.* Perhaps the greatest source of waste in survey research is the frequent imbalance between investment in data collection and investment in data analysis. The NEA Research Division has developed an exemplary means of ensuring that the Surveys of Public Participation in the Arts in which it invests so much yield the payoffs intended. The Research Division has three times sent out a dozen or so competitive RFPs for small grants to researchers to address particular questions for which the SPPA data are well suited. The size of each grant is small (in the neighborhood of \$10,000), but it is more than sufficient incentive to attract talented researchers who are interested in the problem already (and, incidentally, not large enough to attract researchers who are only in it for the money). Identifying two or three key questions for intensive analysis and circulating an RFP for small-scale studies of this kind would ensure that data collected were analyzed thoroughly, yielding the greatest bang for the data-collection buck.

*Harnessing expertise.* In developing a project of this kind, one must endeavor to avoid three other pitfalls that make many surveys far less useful than they otherwise could be. The first has to do with research implementation. Inexperienced purchasers of research services are

often unaware of the extent to which survey quality depends on details of administration, including sampling method, interview method, selection and training of interviewers, intensity of efforts to interview respondents who are difficult to find, and so on. Yielding to the temptation to go with a low-cost provider, or to compromise quality to minimize price, is usually the wrong choice. It's better to have a less ambitious but reliable survey than a more ambitious study the results of which cannot be trusted.

The second has to do with comparability in research design over time. There is more than one right way to draw a sample, identify respondents, and field a survey, but if you are interested in monitoring change, you must be sure that such procedures are consistent from year to year (and that research on the effects of necessary changes is built into the design). The third has to do with question design. Designing survey questions seems easy and anyone can do it. But it is a craft that few people have mastered. Particularly if one wants to study change, which requires asking the same questions repeatedly, it is important to get the questions right the first time.

Although many issues of survey implementation can be resolved by working with a high-quality survey-research provider, an ongoing study of attitudes towards the arts would benefit greatly if it were advised by a *survey workshop* -- a set of scholars including specialists on survey design, cognitive psychology, and attitudes towards the arts that would meet once or twice a year to advise the study's sponsors and to generate ideas that would make the research effort more effective. The role of this workshop would be to counsel research sponsors on decisions about survey methods (reviewing proposed specifications from potential contractors, for example), draft and revise questions for inclusion in the survey to meet the most rigorous standards of quality, advise sponsors in developing RFPs for survey analysis, and develop inexpensive, experimental studies to inform survey design or address questions that come out of

the larger effort.

*Probing Deeper: Small-Scale Experimental Research.* One of the limitations of survey research is that it is sometimes difficult to know what respondents really have in mind when they choose one or another option on a questionnaire. This is particularly the case when the issue about which respondents are being asked is not very salient to them. There are several ways to get behind the brute data that surveys generate and explore the meanings and subtle understandings that lay behind people's responses. Here we mention just a few such approaches, with the thought that a systematic program of research on attitudes towards the arts would sponsor a limited number of relatively inexpensive studies of this kind (advised of the research workshop mentioned above) to complement the regular survey effort.

One important issue in interpreting people's responses to questions about the arts and culture is whether they understand "arts" and "culture" in the same way as the people who write the questions (Filicko 1996). A series of in-depth interviews with people about their understanding of these terms could inform the construction of items for inclusion on the regular survey. Exploring the relationship between people's understanding of what "art" and "culture" *are* and the attitudes towards the arts and culture they express would illuminate greatly the premises that lie behind divergent responses on attitude surveys.

There are a many ways in which small, inexpensive, experimental telephone surveys can inform the production of an ongoing survey. Such surveys are dedicated to the limited goal of testing the effect of question design or wording on people's responses. They ordinarily draw a cheap telephone sample, divide it into two portions, and ask a different version of a question or questions to each. Such research can be valuable as a way to refine questions for inclusion on a national survey: for example, helping us understand whether it is important to specify "financial support" in questions about "government support for the arts."

Small-scale experiments can also help us understand the cognitive structures that underlie the sentiments people espouse about the arts. The very malleability of attitudes towards the arts suggests that many people may entertain several competing sets of opinions about the arts, several partially contradictory images or understandings of what art is and does. Recognizing and taking advantage of this malleability may require rethinking what surveys tell us.

Traditionally, researchers assumed that it was meaningful to talk about a respondent's "real underlying beliefs," and that surveys should be written to reveal those "true" beliefs as accurately as possible. Many contemporary researchers, influenced by new work in cognitive psychology, question whether people have "real underlying beliefs" on many, even most, issues. In some cases, respondents who have never thought seriously about a problem will construct an "opinion" on the spot (just as they might in a social conversation). More often, perhaps, respondents draw not on firm and well-reasoned opinions, but on diverse images that the question, and other recent experiences, call to mind. These images, or *schemata*, may lead in quite different directions, or even be mutually contradictory, so that the opinion expressed may vary dramatically with the wording of the question used to evoke it (just as the same person's view on a political issue might be influenced by the wording of an advertising appeal to which he or she was exposed). When this is the case, people's ambivalence can be evoked by studies that vary the lead-in or "framing" to an attitude question.

An example of this from research on race relations: researchers asked a standard set of questions aimed at detecting prejudice to two white samples, one of which was first asked about its attitudes towards affirmative action and the other of which was first asked questions about topics unrelated to race. The former expressed significantly more prejudiced attitudes, leading researchers to infer that at least some white respondents possessed alternative racial attitudes connected to alternative schemas, stereotypes or narratives (Sniderman and Piazza 1993).

Similar methods could be used to detect the effects of particular controversies on people's views of the arts: for example, examining the effect on the proportion of respondents expressing support for federal assistance to the arts of a lead-in question dealing with the latest censorship controversy, as opposed to a lead-in asking about the arts in education.

Perhaps the moral of this is that traditional opinion surveys represent only one way to understand people's attitudes towards the arts. They probably remain the most valuable way, because they are the only means that permit one to generalize confidently about the views of entire populations. But the traditional survey can be complemented, informed, and rendered more efficient by the judicious use of other techniques ranging from interviews and focus groups to small-scale telephone-interview experiments. Such techniques, which help us to see attitudes not simply as unrelated data points but instead as constituting networks of beliefs that together form a set of interlocking narratives, are particularly valuable in helping us understand the ambivalence, uncertainty, and complexity of the beliefs and opinions that drive people's political behavior.

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Table 1. Differences in Basic Survey Sampling and Procedures

Data Set Name	Year	Data Collection Agency	Sample Size	Survey Dates	Survey Method	Sample Frame (response rate)	Sample Population
Americans and the Arts	1973	Louis Harris	3005	January, 1973	Face to Face	Random multi-stage cluster sampling (unknown)	US, over 16
Americans and the Arts	1980	Louis Harris	1501	July, 1980	Phone	Stratified Random Digit Dialing (unknown)	US, phone owners, no AK or HI, >16
Americans and the Arts	1987	Louis Harris	1501	March, 1983	Phone	Stratified Random Digit Dialing (unknown)	US, phone owners, no AK or HI, >18
Americans and the Arts	1992	Louis Harris	1500	February, 1992	Phone	Stratified Random Digit Dialing (unknown)	US, phone owners, no AK or HI, >18
Winston-Salem Arts and Culture Survey	1974	Louis Harris	753	April, 1974	Face to Face	Random sampling (unknown)	Winston-Salem residents, >18
General Social Survey	1985	NORC	1534	February – April	Face to Face	Full Probability Sample (75%)	US, English speakers, >18
	1990		1372			(74%)	
	1993		1606			(82%)	
SPPA Local Polls	1992	Abt Associates	5040	February – May, 1992	Phone	List assisted Random Digit Dialing (Approx. 45%)	Varies, Area Codes or Exchanges
Kentucky Poll	1980	Survey Research Center, University of Kentucky	671	March – April, 1980	Phone	Random Digit Dialing (unknown)	Kentucky residents, > 18 , Households With Phones
Kentucky Poll	1989	Survey Research Center, University of Kentucky	705	April – May, 1989	Phone	Random Digit Dialing (unknown)	Kentucky residents, > 18, Households with Phones
Eagleton Poll (New Jersey)	1989	Eagleton Institute at Rutgers University	798	March, 1989	Phone	Random Digit Dialing (unknown)	New Jersey residents
South Carolina State Omnibus Survey	1991	Survey Research Laboratory, University of South Carolina	843	April, 1991	Phone	Random Digit Dialing (unknown)	South Carolina residents

Table 2. Differences in Samples

Data Set Name	Americans and the Arts	Americans and the Arts	Americans and the Arts	Americans and the Arts	Winston-Salem Arts and Culture	General Social Survey	General Social Survey	General Social Survey	SPPA Local Polls	Kentucky Poll	Kentucky Poll	Eagleton Poll (New Jersey)	South Carolina Omnibus Survey
Year	1973	1980	1987	1992	1974	1985	1990	1993	1992	1980	1989	1989	1991
Sample Size	3005	1501	1501	1500	753	677	1217	1606	5040	671	705	798	843
Percent Female	50.70%	51.03%	50.50%	54.73%	49.00%	41.95%	55.96%	57.35%	59.72%	54.38%	51.35%	52.76%	57.73%
Age													
Under 25	22.08%	15.60%	14.66%	6.87%	10.68%	6.67%	11.01%	8.56%	14.02%	16.25%	8.93%	15.54%	11.21%
25-29	11.26%	14.47%	13.19%	11.40%	10.95%	12.44%	10.35%	10.24%	11.97%	12.38%	8.36%	10.76%	10.10%
30-34	9.42%	13.53%	12.52%	12.67%	8.68%	11.26%	12.65%	10.56%	14.62%	9.44%	12.25%	9.30%	12.32%
35-39	6.91%	11.00%	12.99%	13.13%	10.01%	11.41%	11.67%	13.24%	12.51%	6.97%	10.09%	9.69%	12.81%
40-49	14.70%	15.13%	16.39%	20.00%	15.75%	16.30%	18.82%	20.67%	19.36%	17.03%	18.73%	17.00%	17.00%
50-64	20.31%	19.87%	18.25%	18.93%	23.23%	22.37%	15.94%	17.86%	16.47%	21.83%	19.74%	24.00%	19.60%
65+	15.33%	9.87%	10.99%	16.13%	20.69%	19.56%	19.56%	18.86%	11.05%	15.79%	21.90%	13.60%	17.00%
Median Income	10118	18887	35002	27109	8872	21611	25000 <sup>10</sup>	25000 <sup>11</sup>	35352	<sup>12</sup>	21582	33059	28340
Adjusted Income (1995 Dollars)	34726.9	34956.8	46932.7	29438.5	27430.3	30623.5	29153.6	26367.4	38389.9		26532.6	40642.2	31711.4
Education													
< HS	34.27%	18.93%	11.63%	11.01%	47.40%	27.03%	21.32%	19.98%	6.66%	33.85%	28.94%	25.06%	20.30%
HS	30.46%	34.87%	34.89%	31.78%	25.17%	33.23%	31.36%	29.78%	28.37%	36.65%	38.68%	37.03%	30.14%
Some College	19.81%	23.20%	26.67%	24.83%	14.78%	19.50%	24.53%	25.34%	29.80%	16.30%	16.76%	19.14%	26.08%
College or More	15.46%	23.00%	26.80%	32.38%	12.65%	20.24%	22.80%	24.91%	35.17%	13.20%	15.62%	18.77%	23.49%
Percent White	86.73%	85.12%	88.55%	88.67%	66.44%	88.92%	83.89%	83.87%	75.76%	*	93.25%	*	78.40%
Marital Status													
Single	18.36%	19.64%	20.96%	11.73%	12.70%	15.36%	19.72%	18.69%	24.33%	13.40%	*	22.67%	*
Married	68.62%	65.00%	63.42%	62.20%	66.44%	56.43%	53.16%	53.52%	55.15%	68.07%		57.56%	
Widowed	8.48%	6.48%	6.28%	10.46%	14.17%	10.49%	11.50%	10.72%	6.09%	12.15%		9.95%	
Divorced	3.10%	6.01%	7.08%	12.87%	4.01%	13.88%	12.82%	14.33%	11.61%	4.83%		6.42%	
Separated	1.44%	2.87%	1.80%	2.75%	2.67%	3.84%	2.79%	2.74%	2.83%	1.56%		3.40%	

<sup>10</sup> Over 50% of the sample had incomes in the top code, >25,000. Here I report the median as 25,000 although this is clearly an underestimate.

<sup>11</sup> Over 50% of the sample had incomes in the top code, >25,000. Here I report the median as 25,000 although this is clearly an underestimate.

<sup>12</sup> Income was only divided into two categories, < 15,000 and > 15,000. I was unable to construct a median measure.

\* Data not available

Table 3A. Comparisons of Attitudes Towards Governmental Support

Data Set Name	Americans and the Arts	Americans and the Arts	Americans and the Arts	Americans and the Arts	Winston-Salem Arts and Culture	General Social Survey	General Social Survey	General Social Survey	SPPA Local Polls	Kentucky Poll	Kentucky Poll	Eagleton Poll (New Jersey)	South Carolina Omnibus Survey
Year	1973	1980	1987	1992	1974	1985	1990	1993	1992	1980	1989	1989	1991
Sample Size	3005	1501	1501	1500	753	677	1217	1606	5040	671	705	798	843
Endorse Federal Support of the Arts													
Yes		51.1	59.3	57.9	49.4								
No		45.8	36.4	39.5	23.5								
Don't Know		3.1	4.3	2.7	27.1								
Increase Federal Funding of the Arts													
Yes						15.3	13.9			47.1 <sup>13</sup>			
No						42.8	40.7			48.2			
Don't Know or Prefers Same						41.9	45.4			4.7			
Endorse State Support of the Arts													
Yes		60.6	67.5	61.5	56.0								
No		36.2	28.8	36.2	16.2								
Don't Know		3.2	3.7	2.3	24.7								
Increase State Funding of the Arts													
Yes										61.5 <sup>14</sup>	38.2	34.6	34.1
No										29.5	5.3	14.3	10.9
Don't Know										9.0	56.6	51.1	55.1
Endorse Local Support of the Arts													
Yes		64.3			63.2 <sup>15</sup>								
No		31.1			15.7								
Don't Know		4.6			21.0								

<sup>13</sup> The question asks if the respondent is willing to "pay more taxes" to support arts and culture. The question does not indicate specifically if the respondent favors increases in federal, state, or local taxes. Question wording and response categories do not allow us to identify if respondents just don't want to pay more taxes for the arts, or if they would also want to pay less. In addition, the question follows a question about the respondents willingness to increase funding for the arts and culture at the state level.

<sup>14</sup> Despite this question wording difference, the percentages of people favoring increases, decreases, and no change are consistent with the other state polls with similarly worded questions. The 1980 Kentucky poll asked the respondent if s/he feels "the state government should increase its financial assistance to the arts?" Kentucky respondents in 1989, New Jersey respondents, and South Carolina respondents are asked if s/he "would like to see the ... state government spend more, less or about the same to support the arts?" In all samples we find under 40 percent in favor of more spending. Clearly, there is a preference for the status quo when the question wording changes to offer that as an option. The South Carolina (1991) poll asks how the respondent feels about the level of state and local spending together.

<sup>15</sup> The Winston-Salem survey asks about local support for cultural instead of arts organizations and the Winston-Salem survey doesn't specify that organizations *need* assistance.

Table 3B. Comparisons of Attitudes Towards Arts for Children and Arts in Schools

Data Set Name	Americans and the Arts	Americans and the Arts	Americans and the Arts	Americans and the Arts	Winston-Salem Arts and Culture	General Social Survey	General Social Survey	General Social Survey	SPPA Local Polls	Kentucky Poll	Kentucky Poll	Eagleton Poll (New Jersey)	South Carolina Omnibus Survey
Year	1973	1980	1987	1992	1974	1985	1990	1993	1992	1980	1989	1989	1991
Sample Size	3005	1501	1501	1500	753	677	1217	1606	5040	671	705	798	843
Arts important for children													
Yes		92.6	91.7	92.3						85.2			
No		6.9	8.0	6.9						11.1			
Not Sure		0.5	0.3	0.9						3.7			
Arts in Education Important <sup>16</sup>													
Yes			67.2	59.6					94.3				93.4
No			31.0	38.7					0.6				6.2
Not Sure			1.7	1.7					5.1				0.4

<sup>16</sup> In the 1987 Americans and the Arts survey, respondents are asked if in order to have a well-rounded education students ought to be exposed to the arts. Response categories included *important to learn about arts, don't feel that way, and not sure*. In the 1992 Americans and the Arts survey, respondents are asked if the completion of at least a year of classes in arts should be required. Response categories include *should be required, don't feel that way, and not sure*. In the SPPA local survey, respondents are asked "How important is art in schools?" Response categories include *very important, somewhat important, not at all important, and don't know*. For the table the first two categories are coded as *Yes* and the third category is coded as *No*. Finally, South Carolina residents are asked the importance of education in the arts with response categories including *extremely important, very important, somewhat important, not too important, not at all important and don't know*. For the table, the first three categories are coded as *Yes*, and the fourth and fifth categories make up the *No* group.

Table 3C. Comparisons of Other Attitudes About the Arts

Data Set Name	Americans and the Arts	Americans and the Arts	Americans and the Arts	Americans and the Arts	Winston-Salem Arts and Culture	General Social Survey	General Social Survey	General Social Survey	SPPA Local Polls	Kentucky Poll	Kentucky Poll	Eagleton Poll (New Jersey)	South Carolina Omnibus Survey
Year	1973	1980	1987	1992	1974	1985	1990	1993	1992	1980	1989	1989	1991
Sample Size	3005	1501	1501	1500	753	677	1217	1606	5040	671	705	798	843
Accessible theater important <sup>17</sup>													
Yes	59.6				41.8						48.6		
No	39.4				54.9						46.2		
Don't Know	1.1				3.4						8.8		
Accessible concert hall important <sup>18</sup>													
Yes	54.7				38.5						36.3		
No	44.3				57.7						57.4		
Don't Know	1.0				3.8						6.3		
Accessible museums important <sup>19</sup>													

<sup>17</sup> In the 1973 Americans and the Arts and 1974 Winston-Salem surveys, respondents are asked how important theater is to the community. Responses include *very important*, *somewhat important*, *not too important*, *not at all important*, and *not sure*. For the table, the first two categories are combined for *Yes* and the second two categories are combined for *No*. The 1989 Kentucky survey asks how important community supported theater is to the community. Responses include *very important*, *somewhat important*, *not too important*, *not important at all* and *don't know*. The same coding scheme is used.

<sup>18</sup> See footnote 8 for details on the 1973 Americans and the Arts question. Kentucky survey asks importance of symphony orchestras.

<sup>19</sup> See footnote 8 for details on 1973 Americans and the Arts question. The 1980 and 1987 surveys ask if museums are important to residents. Responses include *agree strongly*, *agree slightly*, *disagree slightly*, *disagree strongly* and *not sure*. For the table the first two categories are combined for *Yes* and the second two categories are combined for *No*.

Yes	66.6	94.8	94.7	42.0	67.0
No	32.3	4.1	4.7	52.9	28.0
Don't Know	1.1	1.1	0.6	5.0	5.0
Arts and Culture as Important as Parks and Recreation <sup>20</sup>					
Yes		87.8		71.2	75.2
No		11.1		20.5	22.3
Don't Know		1.1		8.3	2.5
Few people can judge excellence in arts <sup>21</sup>					
Yes	29.7			57.0	45.9
No	63.1			39.0	47.4
Don't Know	7.2			4.0	6.7

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<sup>20</sup> The 1980 Americans and the Arts and the 1974 Winston-Salem surveys ask if the arts are as important to a community as parks and recreation. Responses include *agree strongly*, *agree slightly*, *disagree slightly*, *disagree strongly*, and *not sure*. For the table the first two categories are coded as *Yes* and the second two categories are coded as *No*. The 1980 Kentucky poll asked if arts and cultural activities were as important as parks, recreation, libraries and schools. Response categories are *strongly agree*, *agree*, *disagree*, *strongly disagree* and *don't know*. The same simplification scheme is employed.

<sup>21</sup> The 1993 General Social Survey question asks "Only a few people have the knowledge and ability to judge excellence in the arts." Response categories include *strongly agree*, *agree*, *disagree*, *strongly disagree*, and *don't know*. For the table, categories one and two are combined for *Yes*, and three and four are combined for *No*. 1973 Americans and the Arts survey asks "Unless you know a lot about art or art history, you don't get much from visiting museums" – the same question is asked about symphonies with similar response rates. In the 1974 Winston-Salem survey both question wording and categories changed. Question asks, "You have to know a lot about music before you can enjoy symphony?" Response categories collapsed from 5 to 3.

Table 4A  
Multivariate Analysis  
Results from Logistic Regression predicting Endorsement of Federal Support for the Arts  
(Odds Ratios are Shown)

Variable	Survey							
	AA 1980		AA 1987		AA 1992		W-S 1974	
N	1393	1393	1360	1360	1348	1348	722	722
Female	1.334*	1.290*	1.281*	1.232	1.280	1.227	0.968	0.939
Age (in years)	0.968*	0.968*	0.974*	0.973*	0.968*	0.966*	0.991	0.994
Log Income (in that years dollars -- logged)	27.844	44.593*	11.943	14.856	0.826	0.971	9.549	18.722
Log Income -- Squared	0.839	0.817*	0.878	0.866	1.011	1.000	0.891	0.855
Education (compare with < High School)								
High School	0.495*	0.475*	0.133	0.705	1.409	1.389	1.184	1.116
Some College	0.531*	0.460*	0.378	0.615*	1.412	1.257	1.244	1.025
At least College Degree	0.611*	0.489*	0.962	0.823	1.310	1.091	1.202	0.868
White (compare with all non-whites)	0.674*	0.708*	0.491*	0.500*	0.413*	0.417*	0.491*	0.478*
Marital Status (compare with Separated)								
Single	0.826	0.784	0.787	0.776	1.553	1.461	1.146	1.229
Married	0.546	0.531	0.593	0.618	0.975	1.002	0.808	0.937
Widowed	0.760	0.745	0.644	0.668	1.542	1.577	1.144	1.245
Divorced	0.931	0.872	0.805	0.811	1.513	1.427	2.174	2.430
Religion (compare with No religion)								
Protestant	0.761	0.806	0.641	0.968				
Catholic	1.309	1.372	1.440	1.417				
Jewish	5.138*	4.982*	3.460*	3.291*				
Other Religion	0.921	0.944	0.846	0.806				
Political Party Identification (compare with Strong Democrats)								
Democrat								
Weak Democrat								
Independent								
Weak Republican								
Republican								
Strong Republican								
Other Party								
Arts Participation		2.042*		1.727*		2.116*		2.232*
-2 log likelihood	1770.837	1755.468	1728.309	1719.267	1722.803	1706.740	963.278	955.521
Improvement in -2 log likelihood		15.369*		9.041*		16.09*		7.757*

\* statistically significant at p < .05



Table 4B  
Multivariate Analysis  
Results from Logistic Regression predicting Support for Arts in Education  
(Odds Ratios are Shown)

Variable	Survey							
	AA 1987		AA 1992		SPPA 1992		SC 1991	
N	1360	1360	1348	1348	4039	4039	634	633
Female	1.912*	1.800*	1.077	1.007	2.624*	2.505*	1.509	1.360
Age (in years)	0.997	0.995	0.986*	0.984*	0.972*	0.971*	0.986	0.989
Log Income (in that years dollars -- logged)	0.588	0.825	5.656	7.496	5.308	7.324	0.390	0.483
Log Income -- Squared	1.025	1.002	0.918	0.902	0.930	0.913	1.033	1.019
Education (compare with < High School)								
High School	0.777	0.733	1.127	1.098	1.016	1.002	0.993	0.982
Some College	0.874	0.745	1.425	1.193	1.821*	1.679	2.574	2.316
At least College Degree	1.022	0.777	1.841*	1.410	2.823*	2.368*	2.095	1.713
White (compare with all non-whites)	0.475*	0.495*	0.910	0.927	1.322	1.313	0.387	0.385
Marital Status (compare with Separated)								
Single	1.501	1.480	0.775	0.702	1.041	0.986		
Married	1.046	1.143	0.713	0.846	1.038	1.059		
Widowed	0.869	0.931	0.954	0.981	1.020	1.022		
Divorced	1.304	1.346	1.058	0.969	1.583	1.550		
Religion (compare with No religion)								
Protestant	0.803	0.807						
Catholic	1.139	1.098						
Jewish	0.964	0.853						
Other Religion	0.880	0.799						
Political Party Identification (compare with Strong Democrats)								
Democrat							1.000	1.088
Weak Democrat							0.552	0.523
Independent							0.702	0.759
Weak Republican							1.255	1.195
Republican							0.477	0.501
Strong Republican							0.765	0.731
Other Party							0.612	0.693
Arts Participation		2.751*		3.102*		4.855*		1.933
-2 log likelihood	1660.020	1631.447	1778.236	1741.130	1465.619	1450.581	280.743	277.398
Improvement in -2 log likelihood		28.573*		37.106*		15.038*		3.345*

\* statistically significant at p < .05

Table 4C  
Multivariate Analysis  
Results from Logistic Regression predicting Attitudes toward Exclusion  
(Few People are Able to Judge the Arts)  
(Odds Ratios are Shown)

Variable	Survey							
	AA 1973 (art)		AA 1973 (music)		W-S 1974		GSS 1993	
N	2824	2824	2835	2835	721	721	1458	1455
Female	0.777*	0.792*	0.859	0.885	0.754	0.777	0.850	0.878
Age (in years)	1.006	1.005	1.006	1.004	1.018*	1.015*	1.010*	1.010*
Log Income (in that years dollars -- logged)	4.590	3.146	6.730	3.596	1.498	0.742	1.741	1.446
Log Income -- Squared	0.911	0.933	0.885	0.921	0.971	1.014	0.977	0.989
Education (compare with < High School)								
High School	0.622*	0.641*	0.632*	0.664*	1.071	1.142	0.761	0.763
Some College	0.365*	0.408*	0.361*	0.432*	0.440*	0.536*	0.649*	0.683*
At least College Degree	0.322*	0.386*	0.163*	0.215*	0.269*	0.377*	0.403*	0.450*
White (compare with all non-whites)	0.927	0.901	0.894	0.852	0.870	0.891	0.686*	0.695*
Marital Status (compare with Separated)								
Single	1.377	1.457	0.740	0.807	2.710*	2.568	1.735	1.779
Married	1.138	1.121	0.608	0.585	1.880	1.612	1.569	1.584
Widowed	1.130	1.108	0.533	0.509	1.810	1.679	1.787	1.823
Divorced	0.775	0.781	0.621	0.620	3.946	3.616*	1.787	1.843
Religion (compare with No religion)								
Protestant	1.368	1.315	2.020*	1.906*			1.292	1.264
Catholic	1.228	1.215	1.674*	1.655			1.323	1.324
Jewish	1.619	1.756	1.581	1.821			1.393	1.406
Other Religion	1.624	1.609	1.885	1.869*			0.991	1.011
Political Party Identification (compare with Strong Democrats)								
Democrat							1.277	1.275
Weak Democrat							1.303	1.324
Independent							1.134	1.135
Weak Republican							1.349	1.362
Republican							1.502*	1.507*
Strong Republican							1.614*	1.647*
Other Party							0.972	0.975
Arts Participation		0.487*		0.291*		0.419*		0.722
-2 log likelihood	3281.244	3263.564	3302.236	3253.167	906.047	897.365	1946.534	1939.641
Improvement in -2 log likelihood		17.68*		49.069*		8.682*		6.893*

\* statistically significant at  $p < .05$