

UNDERSTANDING COLORADANS' SUPPORT FOR PUBLIC ARTS FUNDING

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Abstract

What do Coloradans think the role of government should be in funding the arts? Public support for the arts, and disagreements surrounding it, have received less attention in recent years. However, this remains an issue that touches on larger questions regarding the role and size of government. The purpose of this paper is to understand the amount of support Coloradans feel towards arts funding at the local, state, and national levels, and what is behind those opinions. Using an original, representative survey of 800 Coloradans, I look at how public opinion towards arts funding relates to several factors, including partisanship, ideology, trust in government, religion, and demographics. I find that overall, Coloradans are supportive of public arts funding. Rather in line with expectations, ideology, partisanship, and trust in government are significant predictors of support for public arts funding, though the size of their effects varies depending on the level of government. My analysis allows us to better understand an understudied topic in public opinion in an important time of polarization and identity politics

The NEA or National Endowment for the Arts was not the first government organization dedicated to funding and promoting the arts. However, it remains the main source of national arts funding since its inception in 1965 when it was created by Congress and President Lyndon B. Johnson (Bauerlein 1). The Culture Wars of the late 1980s and early 1990s are often what many Americans associate this and other arts organizations with; battles over religion, cultural values, and the proper role of government funding of the arts took center stage when considering increases in funding or changing policies regarding the arts.

Although many members of the public are familiar with the culture clashes over arts displays and funding – many of which cross with religious disputes – less is known about what the public thinks about arts funding, and further, what drives these opinions. As Colorado has been home to a number of prominent cases involving how religion can (and should) intersect with government action and civil liberties (i.e. refusing to make a wedding cake for a gay couple¹), it provides a useful context for studying public opinion on funding for the arts. In this project I examine the factors that may contribute to how public opinion is formed regarding public arts funding. Specifically, I concern myself with understanding whether or not Coloradans support funding for the arts at the local, state, and national levels of government. My approach and analysis is based on a theoretical framework that has looked at national data

¹ The case known as “Masterpiece Cake Shop v. the Colorado Civil Rights Commission,” when a baker refused to make a wedding cake for a gay couple due to religious opposition of same-sex marriage (Strasser 965). The case was originally decided in favor of the plaintiffs in 2015, and then appealed by Masterpiece Cake Shop to the Colorado Court of appeals in 2017, and the Supreme Court in 2018. The Supreme Court ultimately ruled to reverse the original decision.

collected on support for the arts and arts funding; this work finds that the American public generally has a positive outlook on the arts, but mixed reactions when considering larger economic factors. Partisanship and ideology are important factors in understanding government support for the arts, as well as other key demographic variables such as income, education, and location. I posit that ideology and trust in government are the most influential markers when considering someone's support for public arts funding. I hypothesize that the more liberal a respondent is, the greater their support for arts funding will be; more conservative individuals will be less likely to support the arts. I expect religious importance to also contribute to support for arts funding – the more important religion is to an individual the less they will support public arts funding. Additionally, the more one trusts the government, the more likely they will be to support government funding of the arts, whereas, those who do not trust the government will also not trust the government to allocate funding towards the arts. I also consider demographic factors like income and education; I hypothesize that as income and education increase support for public arts funding will also increase.

Background

The NEA and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) under the National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities (NFAH), were created in conjunction under Johnson's "Great Society" (Shockley 270). The arts, in this case, include the visual, performing, literary, and musical arts. That said, the NEA only accounts for about 1.2% of public arts funding, providing roughly 47 cents per capita. States provide about 2.2% of funding that museums and other arts organizations use; the local level has the highest rate of contribution at 3.3%. The NEA is required to allocate 40% of its revenue to state arts agencies and regional arts organizations that then distribute their share to local art institutions (Knight 342). The rest of the funding

comes from corporations, individuals, personal earnings, and endowments. Private sectors contributions make up most of the funding used by art institutions. However, since private donations to the arts are tax deductible they can be seen as indirect government funding as well (Harsell 77). Funding in the form of forgone taxes is a large contributing factor in keeping many art agencies alive (Lewis, McKay 299). For the purposes of this project I will focus on the state, local, and federal levels as those are direct forms of government funding.

The NEA has oftentimes been controversial especially when it comes to censorship and questions of content. The 1980s and 90s marked a time of tension for the arts and for public funding of the arts. Under President Reagan cuts were introduced, reducing the budget from \$160 million in 1981 to \$143.5 million in 1982 (Bauerlein 71). The President saw the agency as important, but acknowledged that it only accounted for about 10 percent of arts funding. The culture wars that put the NEA under national scrutiny were linked back to two controversial pieces that received federal grants; Robert Mapplethorpe's *The Perfect Moment* exhibition (featuring homosexual S&M photographs), and Andres Serrano's *Piss Christ* (which depicted a crucifix immersed in the artist's urine), were the pieces that sparked the most controversy. Robert Mapplethorpe's travelling exhibition received \$30,000 in grants from the NEA and Andres Serrano received \$15,000 for his *Piss Christ* (Lewis G. 132). The NEA and who it supported became a morality issue – a part of the field of the “culture wars” (Lewis G. 133). This was the first and largest period of instability for the agency and caused many to question its importance and purpose and more broadly, the purpose and importance of arts funding as a whole.

The Christian Right were the main proponents of changing or disbanding the NEA, but controversies prompted Americans more broadly to think about where they stood on public arts

funding (Shockley 274). In the 1990s anti-arts legislation was introduced (like the Crane Amendments from 1990-1994) that called for the complete elimination of the agency (Shockley 274). NEA appropriations dropped by nearly \$50 million between the years 1995-1996 (Shockley 274). After 1996, the NEA moved away from directly funding artistic disciplines to funding institutions and other cultural authorities (Shockley 279).² By reframing the issue of arts funding around morality, public opinion shifted away from general support and towards a questioning attitude during this time period (Lewis G. 131).

Because much of the funding for the arts comes from levels below the federal government, it is important to look beyond just federal debates and controversies. That is, local governments, state governments, and the federal government operate in a decentralized network that is mainly based on competitive grants (Harsell 76). Grants are also given by private donors and organizations; oftentimes these organizations award grants based on support expressed through NEA government grants that solidify legitimacy for artists, institutions, or projects (Harsell 77). The decentralization of arts funding allows for states and cities to create their own

² After the culture wars the NEA and applications of free speech and expression in arts funding came into question. The NEA v. Finley went to the Supreme Court after the 1990 amendment to the NEA. The amendment stated that the NEA must take into consideration decency and respect of the diverse values of the American people when considering grants and funding. Ultimately the Supreme Court found that the amendment did not have any language that forced strict adherence and therefore was not violating freedom of speech (Mahaffey 1). However, after this period the NEA's budget was cut in half and their reach was limited to funding organizations rather than individual artists (Kidd 12).

policy regarding how they fund cultural institutions. Each state differs in the manner in which they distribute federal funding. This decentralized structure makes understanding public opinion towards arts funding – and state and local public opinion in particular – an important task.

Public Opinion Towards the Arts

Survey data analyzed by Petit and DiMaggio in 1999 showed that without bringing money into the equation, Americans say they value and support the arts (33). Americans want their children to be exposed to art education and see communal value in the arts. However, when it comes to government funding for the arts people tend to be more ambivalent (DiMaggio and Petit 33). Looking at 25 years of surveys these authors found that two-thirds of Americans have expressed support for government funding for the arts, and that 50-60% favor federal government aid (DiMaggio and Petit 33). Most Americans believe that the government should be funding the arts and that the arts are an important part of society. According to the Americans for the Arts, 64% of Americans support NEA funding for the arts, 58% support state funding, and 60% support local funding (11). As my analysis will demonstrate, sizable majorities of Coloradans support arts funding from these levels of government.

Arguments that Officials Make in Favor of Arts Funding

One of the arguments supporting arts funding is that it has a “bequest” value, meaning it adds value to society today as people know it will add value to the society experienced by future generations (Arthur 275). Americans feel that art should be funded and preserved so that future generations will have the opportunity to enjoy said arts. The value added by art to society can take a number of forms: education; economic value added to a tertiary economy; the value of having the option to become interested in the arts at some point (and therefore want to preserve them); the value derived from simply knowing such arts exist; and finally the value added by

prestige gained from having art in one's region (Arthur 276) (Feder 2). Societal benefits are harder to define than personal benefits when it comes to the arts which makes it difficult to measure the value of the arts on society.

John O'Hagan argues that there are three main societal benefits, in which there is some overlap with Arthur and Feder. O'Hagan cites identity and regional cohesion, innovation and experimentation, and economic spillover as the main societal benefits achieved through funding the arts (251-253). Identity as a societal benefit is defined by O'Hagan as arts creating a cohesive regional identity that people can take pride in (251). This is similar to Arthur's proposed benefit of prestige; a region can be united over a shared identity and take pride in said identity as related to some form of art whether it be an opera, ballet, or a museum. In terms of innovation and experimentation, funding for the arts creates opportunities for creatives to create and further our society through cultural advancement (O'Hagan 252-253). Lastly, funding the arts can lead to economic spillover by creating jobs and boosting tourism (253).

As a state, Colorado has valued the arts since the early 1900s. In 1899 Denver Mayor Robert Speer voiced support for publicly funded cultural institutions saying, "a municipality should provide amusement for its citizens as well as sweep their streets" (Gillette 29). Colorado's first iteration of a unified voice around cultural policy was established by the passage of Senate Bill No. 140 in 1967 (30). This bill created the Colorado Council on the Arts and Humanities which encouraged state involvement in the arts and humanities. The main argument behind Colorado's cultural policy is an increased quality of personal and communal life (31).

What Explains Support for the Arts

Arguments supporting government funding for the arts can be reduced to two main ones: normative theoretical reasoning, regarding societal benefits, and economic justifications.

Normative reasons such as identity and prestige justify arts funding based on the added cultural benefits to communities. Economic justifications are more concerned with efficiency. Funding the arts is not inherently efficient as the consumption of the arts and the production of the arts do not come to “an equilibrium” (Feder 2). There is a market desire for art to continue to be produced – as it is consumed there is an expectation for more; however, the market does not always allow for this to happen as there is not enough funding (Feder 2). The arts make up for this through an economic “spillover” effect in which the arts benefit other areas indirectly (Glaeser et. al. 1127). That is, the arts influence tourism, education, and other areas that lead to positive developments within cities (Glaeser et. al. 1127). The spillover effect links the economic and normative justifications of arts funding and argues that the two are actually linked.

Another facet of arts funding comes in the ideas behind cultural policy and what public culture consists of. There are two main ways to go about handling public culture: one is a completely free market approach, and the other is more hands on. The United States has generally taken more of a free market approach when it comes to the arts (Lewis J. 42). This free market approach came out of the Regan era with the attitude that the government does not need to play a part in cultural policy or funding; people will get what they want and the market will regulate itself. The argument made on behalf of government cultural policy is that without government help, a completely free market system would result in homogeneity of content and would inhibit growth and experimentation (Lewis J. 46). Thus, having government have a role in cultural policy facilitates social connection and allows for people to move past conventional barriers (Kidd 13); “cultural policy” consists of regulation and subsidies by the government (Lewis J. 47). Of course, an argument against government involvement in cultural policy is that while it ensures the longevity and stability of cultural institutions, it potentially threatens artistic

freedom – increased government involvement can result in arguments over morality and censorship, as seen with the NEA during the cultural wars. We might see these ideas about more versus less government involvement playing into traditional partisan ideological debates about the proper role and size of government in society. Democrats tend to be more in favor of social spending, and Republicans less in favor of social spending (Bianco and Cannon 2019).

Connecting with Public Opinion

How do these things play into public opinion? We might think that the public's support for the arts is based on partisan, ideological, religious, and demographic factors, and that these things might work differently at the state and local level (because of a distrust in the federal government (Hetherington 315). Generally, Americans are more supportive of public funding for the arts at the state and local levels because of a distrust in the federal government. And, despite seemingly strong support, most Americans do not support increasing funding to the arts (Petit and DiMaggio 34).

Petit and DiMaggio's findings about public support for the arts fall into three main categories – they discuss; support for the arts as being influenced by ideological, economic, and demographic factors. Among demographics, for example, economic factors such as income and education levels seem to have a direct effect on levels of support: wealthier, more educated individuals tend to have higher attendance at cultural institutions and therefore stronger levels of support (35). ³These findings are consistent with other political science work on demographics and political behavior. For example, a 1995 study done by Brady, Verba, and Scholzman – found

³ They also note that women are far more likely to support the arts, as are African Americans as compared to their white or male counterparts (33).

that there is a strong relationship between education and family income (274), a significant link between family income and political interest, and a link between years of formal education and political interest (280). The article also discusses the connection between income and education and political participation, as well as how political interest informs political participation (285).

Petit and DiMaggio also posit that Americans are wary of government initiatives – that Americans may support the arts in a broad sense, but that overall trust in government is low (35). This statement is supported by other work finding that people are more likely to support more government involvement when they trust the government (Hetherington 313).

In terms of ideology, opposition to funding generally comes from fiscally and economic conservative men and women. As explained by Arthur Brooks, ideology has been a strong factor in a number of surveys: more socially conservative individuals are less likely to support arts funding. This can in part be explained by the likelihood of right-wing Christians to be offended by outspoken pieces of art (i.e. Andres Serrano's *Piss Christ*) (Brooks "Who Opposes Government Arts Funding" 357). The liberal/conservative split has been found to be significant in that conservatives generally oppose government funding for the arts (360). Given polarization in the contemporary United States (Fiorina et al. 565), I expect partisanship – with Democrats (usually more liberal) and Republicans (usually more conservative) to act in similar ways when it comes to support for arts funding.

Another factor that should predict attitudes towards public funding is religious attitudes. According to the Pew Research Center's Religious Landscape Study, the majority of individuals who identify as conservative also say that religion is "very important" to them (70%), whereas 47% of moderate individuals rate religion "very important" and 36% of liberal individuals rate religion "very important" (Pew 2019). Liberal views tend to be associated with secularism, and

conservative views with religiosity, specifically Christianity (Thomson-DeVeaux & Cox 2019). These findings do not mean that all conservatives are religious or all liberals are secular, but that there is a common link, or pattern, between ideology and religious views.

When considering government subsidized arts funding one must also consider questions of censorship. Some argue that government involvement in the arts can be detrimental due to concerns regarding censorship. Art is generally believed to be protected by the first amendment as a form of free expression. However, if the government is involved in funding the arts does this change how free artists are to express themselves? In a democratic society censorship has a generally negative connotation as it suggests restriction on rights that are considered basic in the United States: freedom of speech. In past scholarship, attitudes towards censorship regarding controversial issues has been strongly correlated with religion and church attendance, as well as with other traditionally conservative political positions and attitudes (Suedfeld et. al 766). In Suedfeld's study he surveyed various individuals on different statements related to controversial topics and they then reacted to whether or not they believed these things should be censored (770). In this party affiliation was not important, but rather, it was people who scored high on authoritarianism, conservatism, and traditional family values who were the most pro-censorship (773); liberals are generally seen as wary of censorship (Lewis J. 47).⁴

⁴ Free speech is protected under the First Amendment as is freedom of expression. Art can be interpreted as both and therefore protected under the law. As a protected right it has the ability to be funded through the government. However, how much funding and what is funded is the question. Do American's view of freedom of expression and free speech align with their support of the arts and arts funding? One of the underpinnings of free speech is the marketplace

Federal vs. State and Local Levels

U.S. policy regarding arts funding is considered responsive, since the arts are treated as a part of civil society, rather than the public sector (Rosenstein et. al. 180). Local and state level arts agencies are more responsive than national agencies. Under the current Trump administration arts funding at the national level is being threatened. There have already been cuts made to the budgets of both the NEH and NEA; further, in the 2018 fiscal budget President Trump proposed cutting funding for independent cultural agencies (Knight 342). Although complete cuts are unlikely, would such changes be supported by the American people and is it a responsive policy? Cuts to NEA funding would disproportionately affect rural art institutions as they rely heavily on federal support; larger institutions in bigger cities have more access to private grants and donations. The NEA has in the past made sure that every single congressional district has at least one NEA grant, so that every community has some sort of access to the arts (Knight 344).

Arts agencies have long dealt with inconsistencies in arts funding as national funds are linked to political opportunity, as seen in the Regan era (and again today). This can also be explained by the decentralization of arts funding – the moving of responsibility from the federal level onto state and local levels (Lewis, McKay 299). Despite the NEA's role as the main source of federal art funding in the U.S., it has very little influence on cultural policy at different levels

of ideas theory; this theory states that in order to have a functioning democracy there must be free debate without government influence to come to new perspectives and solutions (Mahaffey 1). Future analysis should look more at how attitudes towards these rights relate to opinions on arts funding.

of government (Lewis, McKay 305). State art agencies hold far more power and resources in this decentralized system; each hold their own agenda and policies when it comes to funding for the arts (Lewis, McKay 305). These differing state agendas also add to the confusion and lack of cohesion when it comes to arts funding throughout the years.

State level arts funding has become increasingly important in funding the arts, humanities, and even in historical preservation as federal cultural policy has moved towards decentralization. States often match NEA funding, and many states even increase that amount past the minimum matching requirement (Schuster 182). Traditionally, there has been a lack of coherence in state art agencies as cultural policy is often spread across multiple agencies (189). Additionally, there is much variation from state to state and cultural policy depends on local attitudes and positioning. Schuster, Karraker, and Bonaiuto argue that decentralization can result in flexibility in cultural policy that lends itself to a number of different initiatives that achieve varying goals (88). Using Washington as an example, their study posits that state cultural policy is a combination of arts, humanities, and heritage policies that are manifested in specific agencies that are both non-profit or private or hybrid.

State arts policy has not been understood in depth because it does not have a clear picture and differs from state to state. For example, Denver Colorado has a unique program for funding state cultural institutions called the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District. The SCFD is funded through sales tax; 1 penny on every \$10 in sales which is then distributed across seven counties in the Denver Metro Area (SCFD). SCFD serves Boulder, Broomfield, Adams, Arapahoe, Jefferson, Douglas, and Denver county. The SCFD board in each county determines where funds will be allocated. Colorado as a whole generally spends around 35 cents per capita on legislative appropriations that go to state art agencies (National Assembly of State Arts

Agencies 2018). Colorado is among the states that have the smallest per capita contributions to state art agencies. However, the SCFD is considered a model for local arts funding. Coloradans voted in favor of the tax initiative in 1988, and it has been renewed several times since. In the early 1990s Denver's model became the base for cultural policy changes in other states (Gillette 5). In terms of Colorado as a whole, federal and NEA funding was distributed by the previously mentioned Colorado Council on the Arts and Humanities. In 2010 the council became a division of the Office of Economic Development and International Trade, now known as Colorado Creative Industries (CCI). Between national trends and programs in place in Colorado, there is good reason to examine what Coloradans think about public funding, and what explains these opinions across different levels of government.

Expectations

Based off knowledge of previous studies I expect the following relationships with support for public arts funding for my key variables of partisanship, ideology, trust in government, importance of religion, and demographics:

- Individuals who identify as more liberal are more likely to support funding for the arts than individuals who identify as more conservative.
- Individuals who are more trusting of the government are more likely to support public funding of the arts than individuals who are less trusting of the government.
- Individuals who claim that religion is important to them are less likely to support public funding of the arts than individuals who do not claim that religion is important to them.
- Individuals with higher levels of education are more likely to support public funding of the arts than individuals with lower levels of education.

- Individuals with higher levels of income are more likely to support public funding of the arts than individuals with lower levels of income.

Data: The 2019 Colorado Political Climate Survey

In late October and early November of 2019, the American Politics Research Lab, housed in the Department of Political Science at the University of Colorado, Boulder, conducted a survey on political and policy attitudes of Coloradans (1). The survey sampled 800 individual Coloradans from across the state with a simple random sample margin of error of +/- 3.5%. The sample is weighted as to be representative of the general population of adult Coloradans; the final margin of error for the general population analysis being +/- 4.6% (1). The survey was conducted online through the company YouGov. YouGov drew a sample to be representative of Coloradans based on gender, race, age, education, and region, using information from the 2016 American Community Study.

Dependent Variables: Support for ARTS Funding

The dependent variables aim to gauge Coloradan's feelings towards arts funding, respondents were asked to answer the following question: "As you may know, nonprofit arts organizations receive their funding from a variety of places. How much do you support or oppose nonprofit arts organizations receiving funding from the following sources?"⁵ The sources

⁵ These items were placed on the survey by Anand Sokhey, Carey Stapleton, and Scott Adler. Sokhey developed the items – after our conversations – from a survey conducted in 2018 by Ipsos Public Affairs on behalf of *Americans for the Arts*. AFA's report is available at: https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2018-09/americans-for-the-arts-report-09-27-2018_0.pdf

asked about were the NEA (National Endowment for the Arts), local government, state government, and federal government. Respondents rated their level of support for each level from strongly oppose (1), slightly oppose (2), slightly support (3), strongly support (4), and not sure (5). For my analysis, I removed the “not sure” response from each of the dependent variables, which narrowed the sample size down.

Tables 1-4 show Coloradans responses for each level of government arts funding. Overall, support for public arts funding among Coloradans is quite high. Table 1 shows that **NEA funding** for the arts is strongly and slightly supported by 83.89% of respondents, and opposed to any degree by only 16.61% of Coloradans. Table 2 shows support for **other federal government arts funding**; 61.26% of respondents support this, while 38.75% oppose. Table 3 again demonstrates strong support for arts funding, this time from the **Colorado state government** (66.57% supporting and 33.43% opposing). Lastly, Table 4 demonstrates that Coloradans support for arts funding at the **local level**, where support is at 69.86% and opposition is at 30.14%. While public opinion towards public arts funding is generally positive in Colorado, there are differences among respondents. To explain these differences, I will look at the independent variables of partisanship, ideology, trust in government, religious importance, and education and family income.

[Tables 1-4]

Independent Variables

The independent variable **trust in government** asks respondents “how often do you trust each of the following levels of government to do what is in the public’s best interest?”

Respondents answered “all of the time (1),” “most of the time (2),” “about half of the time (3),”

“rarely (4),” or “never (5),” for the local, state, and federal government; responses are reported in Tables 6-8. As seen in Table 6, Coloradans responded that they trust the federal government “about half of the time” at 36%, “rarely” 40.25%, “never” 9.38%, and “most of the time” 10.88%. Table 7 shows Coloradans trust in the Colorado state government, where Coloradans said “most of the time” 32.13%, “about half of the time” 34.38%, and “rarely” 23.88%. Lastly, Table 8 reflects Coloradans’ trust in local government. Respondents said “all of the time” 39.5%, “most of the time” 36.38%, or “rarely” 15.5%.

There seems to be a greater lack in trust on the federal level with only 14.38% of people saying they trust the government “all of the time” or “most of the time.” However, trust increases at lower levels of government: at the state level, 35.25 % Coloradans trust the government all or most of the time. And, at the local level 43.5% Coloradans trust the government all or most of the time. I expect the relationship between higher trust in government and greater support for arts funding to work the same way across different levels – those with higher levels of trust in the federal government should be more supportive of federal arts funding, those with higher levels of trust in state government should be more supportive of state arts funding, and so on.

Previous scholarship has shown partisanship and political ideology are important factors in understanding public support for arts funding. Table 5 displays the party identification of respondents from “strong democrat,” “democrat,” “leaning democrat,” “independent,” “leaning republican,” “republican,” and “strong republican.” On the one hand, out of 765 responses, 310 people identified as some sort of Democrat (strong, democrat, leaning) or 40.53%. On the other hand, 212 people identified as some form of Republican (strong, republican, leaning) or 27.6%. This leaves 31.8% identifying as Independents. Based on party, most Coloradans lean towards the Democratic party. Ideology allows for another view of the political attitudes of Coloradans.

Table 9 outlines ideology in the sample, as respondents are asked to rate themselves as “very liberal,” “liberal,” “moderate,” “conservative,” or “very conservative.” Out of 774 respondents, 290 people said they were either “very liberal” or “liberal,” which is about 37.5% of responses. 231 or 29.84% identify themselves as moderates and 253 identify as “conservative” or “very conservative,” equaling 32.75%. The political ideology of Coloradans seems to be similarly split to the party identification. More Coloradans identify as liberal and as Democrats, but Democrats/liberals, Republicans/conservatives, and Independent/moderates split close to even, each holding about a third of the population.

Due to the nature of past controversies surrounding arts funding (as related to potentially offensive art works), the religious right is often brought up as an opponent to government funded arts programs. To measure this in relation to support of arts funding, I am using the religious importance variable include in the Colorado Political Climate Study. This question asked Coloradans to rate the level of importance religion serves in their lives from “very important,” “somewhat important,” “not too important,” to “not important at all.” Table 10 outlines the responses to this question. Out of 800 respondents, 424 people said that religion was important (very or somewhat) making up 53.01%. 376 people said that religion was either “not too important,” or “not important at all” which is about 47%. This again is a close to even split when it comes to the importance of religion in people’s lives.

As for demographic factors, I focus on education level and family income. Table 11 shows family incomes in the study (the 719 people who responded to the question). 52.6% of the Colorado population makes less than \$70,000 a year. Table 12 shows the spread of education levels across the survey population, from “no high school,” “high school graduate,” “some college,” “2-year college,” “4-year college,” and “post-grad.” Only 1.25% of respondents did not

attend high school, while 20.75% graduated college. 23.35% of people attended some college, and 28.75% of people graduated from a 4-year college, while 18% went on to post-graduate school.

[Tables 5-12]

Correlations

Table 13 shows the correlations between all variables used in my analyses – that is, between all dependent and independent variables. Correlations that are statistically significant are bolded. There is a significant correlation between the dependent variables for arts funding at the various levels; it makes sense that individuals’ opinions on arts funding would be related across levels. Interestingly, there is no significant correlation between income and any of the dependent variables. However, there is a correlation between income and education, and between income and trust in state and local government. There is also a strong correlation between education and local, state, federal, and NEA arts funding; the same is there for religious importance. Additionally, ideology shows a significant correlation with all levels of government arts funding, as does partisanship. Partisanship and ideology are also significantly correlated with one another, as we might expect. Do these relationships hold up when we account for these different variables at the same time? To address this, I turn to regression analysis.

[Table 13]

Results: Predicting Coloradans’ Opinions

To understand if there is a relationship between the dependent and independent variables I tested the correlations between each of the four dependent variables with the independent variables. Naturally, I only tested the relationship between trust in government and support for arts funding at the same level of government.

I use an ordinary least squares regression model to test how support for the dependent variables is predicted by the independent variables. Table 14 presents the estimates from a model predicting support for arts funding from **the NEA** from the six independent variables, with 520 recognized observations for this model. The ideology coefficient is -0.1; it has a small standard error of 0.04 (and a p-value of .01) – which means there is a statistically significant negative relationship between ideology and support for arts funding: the more conservative a respondent is the less likely she is to support funding for the arts by the NEA. Similarly, there is a negative relationship between trust in the Federal government and support for NEA arts funding with a coefficient of -0.04, and standard error of 0.04 – the less someone trusts the federal government, the less they support funding for the arts. However, the p-value is greater than 0.05 and therefore, trust is not a significant predictor of opinion on NEA funding. For partisanship we again, see a negative relationship; the coefficient is -0.08 and its standard error is 0.02. This indicated that Republicans are more likely to oppose funding, and the p-value shows that this relationship is statistically significant ($p < .01$). Importance of religion does not seem to be a significant predictor with a p-value of 0.4, and nor does income. But, education has a positive significant relationship, where higher education levels are more supportive of NEA funding.

[Table 14]

Table 15 shows a similar OLS regression model using the same six independent variables with the dependent variable of support for arts funding on the **federal level**. Ideology is statistically significant with a p-value of < 0.01 and a coefficient of -0.24; this indicates that the more conservative a respondent is then the more they oppose arts funding. Unlike with the NEA variable, trust in the federal government is statistically significant in relation to support for federal arts funding (the p-value equaling $2.15e-11$). There is a negative coefficient of -0.31

which indicates that the less trust in government the more the respondent opposes federal arts funding. Party identification has a negative coefficient of -0.12 with stronger Republican identification indicating less support (this is also statistically significant due to its low p-value). Importance of religion is positively signed, but it has a p-value slightly higher than 0.05, and is therefore a not significant predictor (family income also had a high p-value and is not significant). Education does show a statistically significant relationship (p-value of 5.26e-03; positive coefficient of 0.1), which indicates that as education levels rise support also increases. The adjusted R^2 for the model indicates that almost 30% of the variance in opinion on support for federal arts funding can be explained by the independent variables in the model; this is about 2.5 times as much as these same factors explained for the NEA variable.

[Table 15]

Table 16 shows the model of the independent variables in relation to the dependent variable of support for arts funding at the **state level**. Similar to the federal level, ideology at the state level also has a negative coefficient (-0.21), showing that more conservative individuals are more opposed to support; this is also statistically significant (p-value well below 0.05). Trust in the state government also seems to inform support for the arts at the state level, as there is a negative coefficient (-.36), and statistically significant (p-value 2.28e-15) – this indicates that as trust in government decreases so does support for the arts. Party identification is also negative and significant (p<.05; 0.09). This (again) demonstrates that Republicans are less likely to support the arts. Religious importance does not end up being a significant predictor, and neither are income or education in this model.

[Table 16]

Finally, Table 17 demonstrates the relationship between **local level support** for the arts and the six independent variables. Similar to the estimates for the other dependent variables, ideology is significant (p-value of 6.69e-05); it has a negative coefficient of -0.2, meaning, more conservative respondents are predicted to have lower support for local arts funding. Trust in local government is also significant (p-value of 9.19e-12), with a negative coefficient of -0.32 – as trust in local government decreases so does support for local level arts funding. Party identification shows a negative coefficient of -0.09 that (again) demonstrates that Republicans are less supportive of arts funding (p<0.01). Importance of religion and family income are not statistically significant. However, education is significant and positive (p<.05; coefficient of 0.06). This can be understood as higher levels of education indicating higher support for arts funding at the local level.

[Table 17]

Discussion and Conclusion

Generally, Coloradans are supportive of government funding of the arts, which aligns with previous scholarship about the American public. In terms of what explains the patterns of support here in Colorado for public arts funding from different sources, ideology and partisanship were both strong indicators. These variables have been in the studies used to build my theory; I expected that individual Coloradans would be more supportive of arts funding – across all levels of government – if they identified themselves as liberal or Democrat, respectively (as these are distinct, but often closely related things). My models demonstrate that ideology is in fact a significant predictor across all levels of government. Each model produced, exhibits that conservatives are less supportive of arts funding. Additionally, across all models, Republicans are less supportive of arts funding than Democrats.

Previous research had suggested that conservative individuals are often opposed to arts funding, in part due to religion. Because of this, I hypothesized that the more important religion was to an individual, the less support they would express for arts funding. I included a separate variable for religious importance in order to look at whether religious importance was an important predictor of opinion, controlling for ideology and partisanship. And, after including partisanship and ideology, I find there is no significant relationship between the variable “importance of religion” and any level of government arts funding. While there was a significant, correlation between importance of religion and support for funding, this effect went away in my regression models. In the end, the pattern of results suggests that religion could potentially be a stronger indicator for feelings towards censorship, rather than overall arts funding (given previous controversies).

In terms of demographics, income was not a significant predictor in any of the models. Although, income was significant in older, national surveys, it was not predictive of Coloradans opinions on arts funding. *Income and education are correlated in the data used in my study, but income does not dictate support.* Education, however, was a significant predictor of support for arts funding, except for at the state level – as the individual’s level of education increased so did their support. Past scholarship found that more educated individuals were more likely to support the arts and funding for the arts; this seems to be true for Coloradans. However, why state level findings differ from the other levels of government funding deserves additional attention.

Support for NEA funding was not significantly predicted by trust in government, perhaps because the organization is more autonomous/has less interaction with people than the other levels of government represented in the other dependent variables. However, trust in government was a significant predictor for support for public arts funding at the local, state, and federal

levels. As hypothesized, the higher level of trust an individual reports, the more support they express for arts funding at each level. Supporting government spending on the arts seems to be dependent on an overall sense of trust towards the government. This seems like an intuitive response, based on tables 6-8; Coloradans have a greater degree of trust in state and local governments than the federal government, and federal arts funding has slightly lower levels of support vs. state and local arts funding.

What should we make of all this? Based on the results, it could be argued that Coloradans feel the government should play an active role in cultural policy and funding cultural institutions, based off their support for government funding towards the arts. This leads me to believe that President Trump's proposed cuts to arts funding would not be supported by Coloradans, especially since these cuts would be aimed at the NEA (which is supported by 83.4% of Coloradans). Additionally, as Coloradans seem to be generally supportive of their state and local government's pursuits towards funding the arts, it seems as though Colorado's SCFD – Scientific and Cultural Facilities District—could become a more concrete model for other states, and is something worth additional study. People seem to generally want to advance the arts within their communities, which could potentially be explained by people's interests in supporting their local economies and simply wanting to enrich their communal lives.

My analysis of a recent, statewide survey of Coloradans reveals that government arts funding is supported by Coloradans, and potentially explained by ideology/partisanship, trust in government, and education. Further research into each of these variables could allow states to create efficient models for funding their art and cultural institutions while catering to the needs of their constituents. Looking forward, it seems relevant to explore how access to the arts affects the variables discussed in this project. A more extensive survey may produce greater insights

into levels of access and participation with cultural institutions, which in turn, will help us better understand how these factors then predict support.

Still, this project allows for an important, rare look into what variables are predicting support for arts funding at all levels, especially when it comes to what is happening below the national level – there has been a lack of research on public opinion towards arts funding at the state and local levels. Additionally, my findings with respect to religion (not being a significant predictor) raise questions about how the relationship between ideology and religion has changed, and about how religion has been measured in past studies. Government arts funding allows for cultural institutions that educate and enrich the lives of their audiences. And, citizens are supportive of this type of government spending. There seems to be an important relationship between art (and arts funding) and politics.

Appendix

All data can be found in the American Politics Research Lab survey on political and policy attitudes of Coloradans conducted by YouGov.

Dependent Variables:

Table #1: Support for Arts Funding -- NEA

Level of Support	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative
Strongly Support (4)	435	61.27	61.27
Slightly Support (3)	157	22.12	83.4
Slightly Oppose (2)	53	7.46	90.9
Strongly Oppose (1)	65	9.15	100
Total	710	100	

Table #2: Support for Arts Funding -- Federal

Level of Support	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative
Strongly Support (4)	250	34.97	34.97
Slightly Support (3)	188	26.29	61.26
Slightly Oppose (2)	103	14.41	75.67
Strongly Oppose (1)	174	24.34	100
Total	715	100	

Table #3: Support for Arts Funding -- Colorado State

Level of Support	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative
Strongly Support (4)	259	35.92	35.92

Slightly Support (3)	221	30.65	66.57
Slightly Oppose (2)	108	14.98	81.55
Strongly Oppose (1)	133	18.45	100
Total	721	100	

Table #4: Support for Arts Funding – Local

Level of Support	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative
Strongly Support (4)	269	37.36	37.36
Slightly Support (3)	234	32.5	69.86
Slightly Oppose (2)	100	13.89	83.75
Strongly Oppose (1)	117	16.25	100
Total	720	100	

Independent Variables:

Table #5: Party Identification

Party ID	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative
Strong Democrat (1)	134	17.52	17.52
Democrat (2)	98	12.81	30.33
Leaning Dem (3)	78	10.2	40.53
Independent (4)	243	31.8	72.33
Leaning Rep (5)	56	7.32	79.7
Republican (6)	71	9.28	89

Strong Rep (7)	85	11	100
Total	765	100	

Table #6: Trust in Government – Federal

Level of Trust	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative
All the time	28	3.5	3.5
Most of the time	87	10.88	14.38
About half the time	288	36	50.38
Rarely	322	40.25	90.63
Never	75	9.38	100
Total	800	100	

Table #7: Trust in Government – State

Level of Trust	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative
All the time	25	3.125	3.125
Most of the time	257	32.125	35.25
About half the time	275	34.38	69.63
Rarely	191	23.88	93.5
Never	52	6.5	100
Total	800	100	

Table #8: Trust in Government – Local

Level of Trust	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative
All the time	34	4.25	4.25
Most of the time	316	39.5	43.75
About half the time	291	36.38	80.13
Rarely	124	15.5	95.63
Never	35	4.38	100
Total	800	100	

Table #9: Political Ideology of Coloradans

Ideology	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative
Very liberal (1)	140	18.1	18.1
Liberal (2)	150	19.34	37.5
Moderate (3)	231	29.84	67.35
Conservative (4)	141	18.23	85.6
Very conservative (5)	112	14.5	100
Total	774	100	

Table #10: Importance of Religion to Coloradans

Level of Importance	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative
Very important (1)	271	33.88	33.88
Somewhat Important (2)	153	19.13	53

Not too important (3)	106	13.25	66.25
Not at all important (4)	270	33.75	100
Total	800	100	

Table #11: Family Income

Income (\$)	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative
Less than \$10,000	20	2.8	2.8
\$10,000 - \$19,999	54	7.51	10.31
\$20,000 - \$29,999	56	7.8	18.1
\$30,000 - \$39,999	73	10.2	28.25
\$40,000 - \$49,999	60	8.34	36.6
\$50,000 - \$59,999	62	8.62	45.22
\$60,000 - \$69,999	53	7.4	52.6
\$70,000 - \$79,999	73	10.2	62.6
\$80,000 - \$99,999	85	11.82	74.42
\$100,000 - \$119,999	58	8.1	82.5
\$120,000 - \$149,999	52	7.23	89.73
\$150,000 - \$199,999	46	6.4	96.12
\$200,000 - \$249,999	16	2.3	98.42
\$250,000 - \$349,999	7	0.97	99.39
\$350,000 - \$499,999	3	0.45	99.84

\$500,000 or more	1	0.16	100
Total	719	100	

Table #12: Education Levels of Coloradans

Level	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative
No high school	10	1.25	1.25
High school grad	166	20.75	22
Some college	186	23.25	45.25
2-year college	64	8	53.25
4-year college	230	28.75	82
Post-grad	144	18	100
Total	800	100	

Table #13: Correlations

	NEA	Local Fund	State Fund	Federal Fund	Income	Educ.	Rel. Impt.	Ideo	Party ID	Fed. Gov. Trust	State Gov. Trust	Local Gov. Trust
NEA												
Local Funding	0.64 0.00											
State Funding	0.64 0.00	0.89 0.00										

Federal Funding	0.64 0.00	0.83 0.00	0.89 0.00									
Income	-0.01 0.91	0.03 0.48	0.03 0.45	0.04 0.33								
Education	0.13 0.001	0.19 0.00	0.18 0.00	0.2 0.00	0.43 0.00							
Religious Importance	0.24 0.00	0.27 0.00	0.29 0.00	0.29 0.00	0.05 0.22	0.11 0.002						
Ideology	-0.44 0.00	-0.49 0.00	-0.52 0.00	-0.53 0.00	-0.03 0.45	-0.17 0.00	-0.55 0.00					
Party ID	-0.38 0.00	-0.44 0.00	-0.49 0.00	-0.48 0.00	0.01 0.81	-0.14 0.0001	-0.4 0.00	0.68 0.00				
Fed. Gov. Trust	-0.16 0.0001	-0.24 0.00	-0.27 0.00	-0.3 0.00	-0.1 0.14	-0.1 0.01	0.1 0.03	0.06 0.11	0.08 0.03			
State Gov. Trust	-0.4 0.00	-0.5 0.00	-0.51 0.00	-0.52 0.00	-0.13 0.0004	-0.18 0.00	-0.17 0.00	0.4 0.00	0.38 0.00	0.62 0.00		
Local Gov. Trust	-0.29 0.00	-0.36 0.00	-0.36 0.00	-0.34 0.00	-0.15 0.0001	-0.17 0.00	-0.07 0.05	0.19 0.00	0.21 0.00	0.54 0.00	0.73 0.00	

Table #14: OLS Regression – Support for NEA Arts Funding

Independent Variables	Coefficient	Standard Error	P value
Ideology	-0.1	0.04	0.01828

Trust in the Federal Gov.	-0.04	0.04	0.24895
Party Identification	-0.08	0.02	0.0012
Importance of Religion	0.03	0.03	0.36454
Family Income	-0.01	0.01	0.31258
Education	0.07	0.03	0.00848
Constant	3.9	0.21	<2e-16
Number of Obs: 520	Multiple R2: 0.1249	Adjusted R2: 0.1146	

Table #15: OLS Regression – Support for Federal Arts Funding

Independent Variables	Coefficient	Standard Error	P value
Ideology	-0.24	0.05	8.9e-06
Trust in Federal Gov.	-0.31	0.05	2.15e-11
Party Identification	-0.12	0.03	7.27e-05
Importance of Religion	0.07	0.04	5.7e-02
Family Income	-0.01	0.01	4.75e-01
Education	0.1	0.03	5.26e-03
Constant	4.5	0.3	<2e-16
Number of Obs.: 526	Multiple R2: 0.2936	Adjusted R2: 0.2855	

Table #16: OLS Regression – Support for State Arts Funding

Independent Variables	Coefficient	Standard Error	P value
Ideology	-0.21	0.05	3.49e-05

Trust in State Gov.	-0.36	0.04	2.28e-15
Party Identification	-0.09	0.03	0.00236
Importance of Religion	0.03	0.03	0.3119
Family Income	0.01	0.01	0.29242
Education	-0.01	0.03	0.10894
Constant	4.7	0.2	<2e-16
Number of Obs. 530	Multiple R2: 0.3133	Adjusted R2: 0.3054	

Table #17: OLS Regression – Support for Local Arts Funding

Independent Variables	Coefficient	Standard Error	P value
Ideology	-0.2	0.05	6.69e-05
Trust in Local Gov.	-0.32	0.05	9.19e-12
Party Identification	-0.09	0.03	0.001
Religion	0.03	0.03	0.368
Family Income	-0.01	0.01	0.407
Education	0.06	0.03	0.041
Constant	0.53	0.03	<2e-16
Number of Obs.: 531	Multiple R2: 0.2616	Adjusted R2: 0.2531	

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