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Artistic Value in America: The Educational Significance of the Arts

Elizabeth Annis

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Vassar College

Artistic Value in America:
The Educational Significance of the Arts

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree
Bachelor of Arts in Sociology

by

Elizabeth Annis

Thesis Advisers:
Professor Marque Miringoff
Professor William Hoynes

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Artistic Value in America:
The Educational Significance of the Arts

The arts are often the central issue of cultural debates in America. Unfortunately, the arts fall victim to dismissal as a result of underlying Puritan beliefs that reject the arts. American ideologies that consider the arts an elitist or luxury endeavor dissuade the United States' government from providing federal funding for arts programs. Therefore, many arts organizations receive most of their funding from private sector contributions. However, if the American government does not soon come to understand and acknowledge the benefits of arts participation, as exemplified by choral singing, the arts will not continue to further develop in American culture. I argue that there is a preexisting American ideology that hinders support for the arts as reflected in the lack of government funding for the arts and arts education. Surveys and reports about arts and choral participation show that the arts and arts education provide individual, cultural, and educational benefits. I conclude that the greater societal implication for arts participation is its role in educating Americans to be innovative and creative thinkers in the twenty-first century.

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Preface

I grew up surrounded by the arts. Both my parents are musicians; they completed graduate music programs and pursued musical careers. My mother and father's passions for music inspired them to become a professional opera singer and clarinetist, respectively. Music has contributed to their personal development and influenced their participation in social activities, and I can confidently say the same for myself.

I frequently participated in various artistic programs in my community and school district, pursuing my own musical talents through piano, clarinet, and voice. I sang in various choirs for over ten years, subsequently inspiring my interest in choral participation. My parents encouraged both my brother and me to learn about music through participation and discussion: my fondest memories tend to be accompanied by classical music. During car rides we did not listen to pop music, but rather classical. Not only did I listen to this music, but I also learned about the different time periods and basic music theory. Recalling these memories allows me to gain an additional depth of understanding of my experiences.

Upon reflection, it seems logical that the arts should be included in a child's development. The arts exposed me to a variety of interactions with teachers and fellow peers, producing the opportunity to work with others and to see the success of a group—a beautiful, collective piece of work. Performing in a final concert each season was an exciting experience, producing a sense of accomplishment.

While at Vassar, I have become a less active participant. However, when I go home during breaks, the arts are reintroduced into my life. From listening to my father

practice for an upcoming concert, or my mother singing around the house, I rarely go a day without some musical experience. I grew up on the campus of Westminster Choir College where I attended choir concerts, bell choir concerts, musicals, operas, and various recitals throughout the year. I experienced first hand the role music can play in a community.

Sitting in a concert hall performing with or listening to a choir creates an encompassing sound, connecting the audience with the performers. I have experienced a sense of satisfaction after concerts, either from my own successes or being able to appreciate the successes of another group. Having participated in my own concerts allows me to recognize the energy and work needed to perform. This deeper understanding translates to all arts, and represents what is to be gained by arts participation.

The following reports about the arts will show its benefits for adults and children. Before examining these reports, I never considered how the arts directly impacted my life, but now the impact is clear. The arts have contributed to the development of my social skills, as well as my confidence and self-image. The arts were part of my upbringing, and undoubtedly influenced my life. I believe it is important to study the role of the arts in communities because of its potentially major social and political implications.

My experiences with the arts inspired my interest in this topic. I began to wonder why the arts and music do not seem to be considered an important aspect of this society. I considered our broader culture. How does American ideology undermine how the arts are valued in this society even though there is evidence that arts participation produces social benefits? Reports examine the social and individual benefits of the arts revealing that the

arts contribute positively to society. However, there remains no additional encouragement for the development and prominence of the arts in society. To answer why there is such a divide between the need for and provision of arts, it is necessary to examine the foundations of American ideology and the debate about the arts in America.

Introduction

“The life of the arts...is very close to the center of a nation’s purpose...and is a test of the quality of a nation’s civilization” –President John F. Kennedy

The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) was founded in 1965 to provide vitality to the arts in America. This was not to suggest that the arts are completely ignored in America, but rather its recognition by the government was questioned. In the 1930s, the Great Depression caused unemployment and great poverty. Roosevelt met this challenge by implementing New Deal programs, which included the Federal Arts Project and Federal Writers’ Project. The main mission of these programs was to provide employment to artists who, just like other Americans, suffered heavily from the economic crisis. It was not to advance the arts. Since World War II, “the American attitude toward the arts has completed a 180-degree turn since the end of World War II. From one of apathy, indifference, and even hostility, it has become one of eager, if sometimes ignorant, enthusiasm” (Neil 1972:96). Historians acknowledge American indifference to the arts pre-1945, but after the war, views started to change as American culture transformed.

The National Endowment for the Arts was created “to nurture American creativity, to elevate the nation’s culture, and to sustain and preserve the country’s many artistic traditions” (Bauerlein 2009:1). It represents the government’s attempt to bring culture to the American people, not just those of the elite classes. Cultural activities and the arts were viewed as a luxury during times when necessities were barely affordable.

Throughout the 1960s, there was a movement in America to support the arts as people began to express themselves more freely and were less hindered by class or economic disparities. President John F. Kennedy commissioned a report to determine the standing of the arts in America, which revealed a growing interest in the arts (Bauerlein 2009:9). America was changing culturally, especially with the increase in young adults from the baby boomer generation.

Even though there now existed a government agency devoted to the arts, Congress still needed to adjust its previous approach. Senator Jacob Javits (R-NY) expressed his desire for change during a 1963 Senate debate:

Congress is lagging far behind the people in its failure to recognize the national importance of developing our cultural resources through support of the arts. It is high time that Congress took a real interest in this very essential part of our national life. Our national culture explosion is reflected in the number of arts festivals held this year, the growing number of new cultural centers in cities throughout the country, and the increasing list of state and local governments who have set up arts councils on the pattern of the New York State Council on the Arts. (Bauerlein 2009:14)

These Senate debates recognized America's social lag in funding arts programs compared to the rest of the world. This lag continues today. To change the American position, funding needs to come from both the private sector and the government. Private funding alone did not and will not encourage arts development in society. Presently, the NEA funding continues to rise, representing a change in American culture. Livingston Biddle, chairman of the NEA from 1977 to 1981, expressed the need to keep the arts free and representative of American society, by not allowing fragmentation. Over thirty years

ago, it was evident that the arts must be public, and must establish a balance in government and private funding.

Even as the NEA continued to provide substantial funding and support to the arts, there remained a political dispute between liberals and conservatives. The Reagan Administration proposed a 50 percent budget cut, requiring the government to evaluate program finances. Economic concerns have always factored into the debate regarding arts in America. But Reagan's own soft side for the arts, as an actor himself, allowed the NEA to survive and only suffer its first slight cut in funding.

However, inevitably, more controversy ensued. In the late 1980s, two art exhibits funded by NEA grants generated controversy, initiating the condemnation of the NEA. The Senate demanded changes in the NEA grant process and sought to eliminate NEA funding for exhibits. These suggestions reignited political opposition within and between the government and private sector. The NEA was no longer controversy-free. Federal support wavered, making an agreement between the government and public uncertain. These public disputes concerning NEA grant decisions began to impact budget allocations, reducing it from \$174 million to \$162 million by 1995 (Bauerlein 2009:116). Congress even considered eliminating the Arts Endowment. The biggest cut was one year away—the 1996 budget fell to \$99 million. Not only did funding for grants begin to disappear, but the Endowment itself was threatened.

Since the arts tend to favor free expression, censoring controversial topics raises concerns, making it harder to provide funding for such projects. Americans continued to support the arts, but as governmental support dwindled, it became harder to promote the importance of arts in America. The U.S. government is supposed to represent its people,

and if the arts are not governmentally supported, it suggests Americans do not support the arts either. Chairman Jane Alexander stated, a great nation has “a heritage that says: this is who we are, this is who we were, and this is who we will be in days to come. That heritage is manifested through the arts, the humanities, and the sciences” (Bauerlein 2009:119). Notably, it is not until 2009 that the arts were compared to the sciences as both being important for the development of America. However, STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) funding surpasses arts funding, potentially because STEM programs provide quantifiable results. By grouping the arts with the sciences as critical to American heritage and individual development, Chairman Alexander underscores the importance of both a quantitative and qualitative education, implying neither is more worthy of resources than the other.

The continuous pressure from Congress to eliminate the NEA forced the NEA to be more innovative with its resources. The next chairman, Bill Ivey, began his position remarking that the arts stabilize communities and the economy by providing a sense of identity and pride, extending our ability to communicate (Bauerlein 2009:132).

Examining the historic timeline of the NEA reveals that people want to engage with the arts, but the political disputes regarding the arts hinder the necessary support. Without clear government support for the arts, its value is discredited. The United States must make a commitment to arts engagement, encouraging lifelong understanding and appreciation. Funding continued to rise to \$167 million in 2010, but has since dropped to \$146 million in 2012. The NEA is highly subject to fluctuations in governmental support, and this frequently affects its funding.

Scholar Meredith Neil counters these theories of indifference to the arts by suggesting Americans actually honor artists, viewing art as "...something above and apart from themselves" (1972:100-101). Neil claims this indifference is a myth. There is a difference between valuing an activity culturally and allotting it funds politically. Americans partake in the arts, but we must remember American government's hesitancy to be involved in the arts. As shown during the time prior to WWII, arts funding depended on the state of the economy. The NEA was a great step toward promoting the arts in American culture because it encouraged all citizens to engage with the arts. Nevertheless government support must continue to exist.

The debate about art results in the culture wars in America during the mid-twentieth century. Presently, analyzing the arts in America requires focusing on American history and contemporary American culture. Many sociologists look at the arts as an activity that assists in the creation of meaning. In order to understand how the arts are viewed in our society, it is helpful to consider American ideology where Puritan beliefs undermine the arts as unnecessary for the development of communities.

Max Weber examined American society and the development of its ideologies. Weber focused on the foundations of Puritan thought in early twentieth century American beliefs, including the Puritan's lack of support for the arts. Hence, these findings are one way to account for American views toward the arts and the present disconnect between reported benefits of the arts and their low priority in American life.

I argue that American ideology undermines the arts to the detriment of our society. The arts help individuals grow and support their ability to contribute to society and the United States' place in the global community. However, there is an imbalance in

funding for arts programs compared to other educational programs. Funding for the arts continues to shrink. While these reductions do not provide a noticeable cut in the national deficit, the arts are losing money that could significantly improve American communities. The argument against funding the arts is that they do not provide a profit. The indirect profit is the physical, social, and emotional benefits for active participants, which in turn encourage Americans to be active and contributing citizens. Especially now, when our standing in the global economy is weakening, it is important that Americans continue to grow culturally and intellectually, both of which the arts can assist.

Americans may want to engage and participate, but if there is no national level of support, the arts will not be able to grow. This thesis will explain how this resistance originated and how it can be countered and its implications for America. I argue that our culture and government should respect and honor the arts in accord with the benefits they offer society, and I call for the reexamination of its societal position.

Chapter One will explore the underlying message in American ideology related to the arts. Chapters Two and Three will provide information examining the social benefits of the arts and why arts participation has such influence, focusing specifically on choirs and group singing. This will show that arts participation corresponds to cultural developments and educational improvements. Economic, educational, and civic benefits derive from an individual's engagement with the arts, establishing individual character development and societal, community based improvements. Chapter Four will explore how to increase engagement with the arts and encourage people to prioritize the arts in their lives as well as the distribution of government funding.

Chapter 1. Puritans and Art as Social Action

“Art is one kind of human activity” (Wilson 1964:37)

In order to analyze the objective and subjective value of the arts, it is necessary to understand how the arts function in society. Sophia Acord and Tia DeNora approach the arts through three categories: as objects of expression, as objects of value and belief, and as a commodity influencing social organization (2008:224). The arts can influence society and how individuals evaluate their experiences. Acord and DeNora suggest that knowledge of the arts contributes to an individual’s appreciation of other social activities. They base their explanation of art through Eyerman and McCormick’s theory “art is a form of social activity through which new kinds of social identities and practices emerge” (Acord and DeNora 2008:230). By engaging diverse groups of individuals, the art world is inherently a social world, establishing relationships that might not otherwise exist as individuals produce collective works (Becker, Faulkner, and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2006; de la Fuente 2007). The collective activity establishes value to the arts and a sense of cohesive engagement.

The arts offer a perspective and a framework that pervade the lives of participating individuals. Acord and DeNora present Geertz’s hypothesis that “the arts allow sociologists to examine how humans *create* meaning and, by extension, how this action provides a window into the workings of culture” (2008:235). Because individuals both consume and produce art through social interactions, it serves as a vital component

of culture. Art is able to reflect beliefs, passions, and the collective conscious of a society.

Studying the arts exemplifies the differences between an individual's particular interest in the arts and their understanding of the broader value given to the arts.

Sociologist Vera Zolberg acknowledges that since individual preferences for the arts vary, it is hard to determine the best standpoint to objectively examine the arts. This range of possible interpretations may hinder the sociological study of the arts, but also fosters a new field of study (1990).

I. Puritan Influence in America

In order to explore American views toward the arts, it is necessary to frame the development of certain aspects of American ideology. One approach is to analyze Max Weber's interpretation of early American beliefs. He argues that America's democratic traditions have Puritan origins and that such influences remain ingrained in America's worldview (Scaff 2011:6).

Weber discusses the regard for Puritan thought in America's development. In *The Protestant Ethic and The Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber notes:

The Puritan's ferocious hatred of everything which smacked of superstition, of all survivals of magical or sacramental salvation, applied to the Christmas festivities and the May Pole and all spontaneous religious art...the situation is quite different when one looks at non-scientific literature, and especially the fine arts. Here asceticism descended like a frost on the life of 'Merrie old England.'
(tr. Parson 1958:168)

These actions attempted to isolate individuals from creative desires. These theories stress the importance of science and its use to create understanding. Weber communicates the hostility felt toward the arts in Puritan thought and how these notions became present in America. During the founding of the nation, Puritan knowledge spread through the colonies, becoming embedded in American ideology.

Vera Zolberg similarly suggests the presence of Puritan thought in American ideology through her attempt to explain why sociologists originally did not study the arts. Alexis de Tocqueville's theory of the masked beliefs of American society resonates with Weber. Tocqueville suggests:

The cultural orientation of the country [is] the Puritanism that he believed to be dominant. Although it impressed him as partly responsible for certain American achievements, he feared it would present a barrier to the development of the arts since, because of its austerity, Puritanism was basically incompatible with the worldliness and sensuous values intrinsic to the arts. It would cause Americans to reject decoration for its own sake in favor of practicality (Zolberg 1990:32-33)

Puritanism's historical prominence in America remains internalized in American culture. According to Weber, the Puritan influence in America contributed to the development of American democracy and its capitalist nature (Hertz 1962:189). Ingrained Puritan views contribute to the debate over the arts in this country. This leads to the association of the arts as a commodity, suggesting that "culture, including art, is an aspect of society's superstructure, dependent upon its base" as a result of its position in the capitalist economy of America (Zolberg 1990:13). Culture is an extension of society, allowing each to influence the other.

Furthermore, Puritanism was not the only factor establishing American opinions toward the arts. Tocqueville's proposition indicates, "the Puritanism of American communities was not confined to the sects descended from the original Puritans. Instead, attempts to censor the arts were likely to emanate from a number of moralistic religious forces in a variety of sects or churches" (Zolberg 1990:34). This question of moral regulation connects to the discussion of moral values made about the arts. Distinctions between values develop when analyzing the arts and their function in society. American culture and its Puritanical threads suggest its resistance to the arts and how these feelings spread throughout the nation. All in all, Weber and Tocqueville offer an historical perspective for America's resistance to the arts, as influenced by Puritan ideology.

II. The Arts and Status

The debate over the arts in American society prompts an analysis of American ideological influences. Opinions regarding the arts and taste preferences contribute to the disparities in individual interpretations about the arts. Perceptions of the arts are frequently polarized, either viewed as too elite for democratic society or too commercialized to be dignified as art (Zolberg 1990:31). Therefore, the arts tend to be scorned at either end of the spectrum, reinforcing the classification of "'fine art' or 'popular' or 'mass' art" (Alexander 2003; Zolberg 1990:195). The artistic hierarchy that these classifications create continues to lower the prestige of the arts. Zolberg postulates, the "debate about the blurring of boundaries between fine art and popular art tends to be corrosive because it has to do with hierarchical rankings not only among art forms but

social status as well” (1990:141). By categorizing the arts, their value is diminished because what they offer is being overlooked.

One of the original scholars studying the arts and music, Theodor Adorno, distinguishes between how individuals appreciate and experience the arts. Adorno postulates, all art has a social function but “‘serious’ music, for example, makes demands on the listener (and is therefore sought after by serious listeners), whereas popular music merely provides background entertainment” (Hamilton 2007; Zolberg 1990:146). This statement acknowledges variations in how individuals experience music. Hypothesizing that serious music requires a deeper level of focus and attention than popular music, Adorno also claims that only those capable of such commitment can gain something from “serious” music (Zolberg 1990:146). However, all individuals are able to gain a level of appreciation when exposed to music. By making the distinction between serious and popular music, Adorno is further polarizing both categories. Pierre Bourdieu notes art classifications can become a status symbol and a form of capital within society (Zolberg 1990:158). Ultimately, these connections associate fine or serious arts with upper status individuals and popular arts with lower status individuals, diminishing the value of the art as personal expression.

Herbert Gans and Pierre Bourdieu present opposing viewpoints regarding the relationship between social status and taste. Gans proposes that “‘taste cultures’” do not correspond to social status and location (Zolberg 1990:151). Gans views the arts “as a matter of consumer choice and object of pleasurable use,” making participation a personal decision to produce enjoyment (Zolberg 1990:160). Hence, the arts depend on individual engagement, regardless of social status. In contrast, Bourdieu argues “taste

preferences” relate to social disparities regarding status as members of higher classes regard their tastes as preferable (Zolberg 1990:156). Bourdieu ponders the idea that individuals engaging with the arts are searching for a particular status (Zolberg 1990:156). This conjecture discredits the intrinsic value of the arts, redirecting the focus to social standings. Both theories approach the arts through differing perspectives while acknowledging the existence of taste and preference for the arts. The potential association between the arts and status hinders its accessibility and conceivably an individual’s willingness to engage with them in society.

III. Funding for the Arts in Modern America

“Art comes to constitute itself ever more consciously as a system of autonomous values”
(Ringer 2004:156)

Upon the conclusion of World War II, America had repositioned itself in the world as a leading power. As a result, it is suggested that these developments enabled America to support the fine arts to advance as a global nation. (Zolberg 1990:184). Before this change, “national government support for culture was minimal” (Zolberg 1990:183). These adjustments encouraged contributions from corporate and philanthropic organizations to foster the development of cultural activities. Similarly, today, different federal organizations, including the National Endowment for the Arts and the US Department of Education, contribute donations to promoters and producers of the arts (Playbill 2012:46).

Participation is not only about access, but also education levels. America must establish a system of funding to encourage participation and arts education because without government support, both are likely to evaporate (Wilson 1964:57). This dilemma requires an examination of the arts in American society.

First Lady Michelle Obama expresses the Obama administration's support and admiration for the arts. She explains why the arts are important, conveying a sense of urgency to change the thought that "in cities across the country, just minutes away from the centers of culture and power and prestige, many [kids] feel like these resources are really miles away" (Boehm 2009). Americans must encourage government officials to change our approach to the arts, and increase accessibility.

Government studies show the relationship between financial funding for the arts and the recent economic crisis. Most public funding for the arts has "experienced declines in the past decade, reflecting a recessionary economy and stagnant (or in some cases even declining) public revenues" (Stubbs 2012). These declines suggest an imminent threat to the arts and their future in America. Unfortunately, the American economy does not provide any certitude for the future of the arts, establishing a limbo of uncertainty. In 2011, the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities claimed budget restrictions have reduced support for school programs. The recent adjustments to education and arts funding in different communities highlight the need to reinvest in arts education now (President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities 2011:47).

Furthermore, the inclusion of the arts in education programs has demonstrated great benefits. Arts education develops a child's creativity and innovation, which in turn will enrich American culture and help the economy (President's Committee on the Arts

and the Humanities 2011:8). Even more, it has been reported that arts education improves student achievement, increases the likelihood that a student will go on to a secondary education while reducing discipline problems (President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities 2011:3). The overall benefits of the arts contribute to individual and societal improvements. General academic improvements assist individual students with their learning levels, thus impacting their ability to contribute positively to society. In response to this data, the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities created the Turnaround Arts program which endeavors to implement an intensive arts curriculum in some of the lowest performing schools in the nation (2012). Efforts similar to this will pave the way to revisit how to view and value the arts in America. Arts education will provide students new skills and a range of engagement levels between individuals.

IV. A Look at Music

Examining music provides a more specific analysis of the arts in society. It encompasses arts appreciation with the ability to actively engage in its consumption and production. Sociologist DeNora devoted her work to understanding the role of music as a social activity. According to DeNora, music functions as social action through its connection to identity, emotion, and memory (2000:xi). It is important to understand the value of the arts in terms beyond material status.

Music contributes to the formation of individual and social identities while still playing a significant role in cultural relationships (Roy and Dowd 2010:189). Hence, music can be credited with assisting the development of individual characteristics in

terms of social interactions and group dynamics. Music creates connections among diverse groups of individuals by evoking common themes and meanings of social activities (Acord and DeNora 2008:230). Identity is a social concept defined by interactions and individual qualities—augmented by the inclusion of music.

Additionally, music parallels the arts' ability to form social relationships. Music contributes to everyday activities and influences the way individuals experience life (de la Fuente 2007:417). Social groups and individuals develop relationships through interactions, as “music is a mode of interaction that expresses and constitutes social relations (whether they are subcultures, organizations, classes or nations) and that embodies cultural assumptions regarding these relations” (Roy and Dowd 2010:184). Music fosters the development of social relationships, forming communities. The connection between communities and music suggests “all music—all organization of sounds—is a method of creating and consolidating a community; it is the link of power with its subjects, and an attribute of this power, whatever its form” (Qureshi 2002:x). Music allows individuals to engage together through listening and creating. It has the ability to unite individuals and foster social relations, creating a sense of power.

All in all, focusing on music reveals details about individual experiences with the arts. Music shares many of the same qualities as other forms of art and serves as a good example of arts participation and engagement in America. This provides a deeper understanding of the types of benefits produced, relating to the value of music and the arts as a whole.

V. Concluding Thoughts

The arts allow social action to occur, fostering human and personal experiences (Acord and DeNora 2008:235). The arts provide insight and understanding, contributing to the development of individual and group interactions. Weber's interpretation of Puritan influence in American society accounts for the underlying rejection of the arts in America. Opposing theories suggest individuals engage with the arts for enjoyment or social ascendance. Even though reports suggest the positive impact the arts have on individual learning and the function of individuals in society, there continues to be room for the development of government support for arts education. Analyzing music offers more specific insight into how individuals relate to the arts in society.

The next chapter will focus more specifically on the arts in America and its associated benefits. Many studies provide information about why the arts should be supported and valued. It will be particularly helpful to examine the educational component of the arts and how arts education improves learning and social skills for young students. Such skills will then be shown to influence student engagement in society and social group environments. These benefits contribute to the strength of community bonds, a benefit to society as a whole.

Chapter 2. The Arts in America

“The arts offer such a tremendous diversity with something for everyone” (Devlin 2011:69)

The role of the arts in America varies by individual and community. Studies have shown what type of arts Americans are most and least likely to engage with, as well as their social and physical benefits. These reports demonstrate the need to reexamine the arts and the importance of their inclusion in education. As Americans participate in the arts, they experience changes in their personal character that will benefit their ability to partake in the current global society. The previous chapter provided a framework to understand the arts and its contributions to society. This chapter will explicitly discuss data that shows how the arts benefit society.

I. Defining the Benefits

The arts help to define communities by influencing how individuals develop, intellectually and culturally. Acord and DeNora have investigated the relationship between art and a human’s ability to create meaning (2008:235). Measuring American participation in the arts allows investigators to examine the impact arts participation has on other social activities and personal developments. Many discussions of arts participation focus on the role of arts education. By examining attendance at arts events, national surveys are able to assess a community’s active participation in the arts. Creating

art through performance, learning, or leisure is another way participation is measured. These evaluations reveal information about arts participation beyond the individual level.

Arts engagement produces a range of direct emotional, social, cognitive, and physical benefits. Arts participation is a source of “pro-social behavior,” encouraging self-discipline and self-satisfaction while contributing to lower levels of stress, better emotional stability, and higher confidence levels (RAND 2005). These aspects of self-image contribute to the emotional and social growth of individuals’ identities and further the arts’ facilitation of a collective bonding and a sense of connection to community. Personal developments correspond to changes in a child’s learning process and abilities, boosting academic performance. Overall, engaging with the arts increases feelings of general wellbeing.

The simple act of being present and physically next to someone positively impacts both the individual and society by adjustments in personality and the development of communities and group interactions (Devlin 2011:11). Mike White at Durham University states, “arts participation can do a very significant thing – it can identify a problem and it can start to address it at the very same time” (Devlin, 2011: 69). This depiction exemplifies how arts participation contributes to the health and wellbeing of individuals.

II. Surveying Arts in America

Many studies examine the presence and growth of arts participation in American culture and communities. Studies from the National Endowment for the Arts and the

Urban Institute explore how participation facilitates cultural and personal benefits. The following study presents data about different forms of arts participation in America.

- a. The National Endowment for the Arts, *2008 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts*

The National Endowment for the Arts conducts a survey about every ten years studying changes in arts participation and production. These *Surveys of Public Participation in the Arts* examine arts events, recorded or broadcasted live performances, art on the Internet, personal performance, creation of art, and enrollment in arts-related classes. *The Survey of Public Participation in the Arts* (SPPA) dissects “certain art forms [that] have been designated as ‘benchmark’ activities,” defined as attending one of the following seven types of activities, “jazz, classical music, opera, musical plays, non-musical plays, ballet, and visits to art museums or galleries” (NEA 2009:9).

In 2008, the survey revealed the following breakdown¹ (NEA 2009:1):

1. 23 percent visited an art museum or gallery
2. 17 percent attended musicals
3. 9 percent attended non-musicals
4. 9 percent attended classical music
5. 8 percent jazz
6. 7 percent ballet or other music (modern, folk, tap)
7. 5 percent Latin or salsa music
8. 2 percent opera

¹ Please note other forms of art included in this survey are (in order of popularity): historic sites and art/craft fairs and festivals.

Examining data from the four surveys (1982, 1992, 2002, 2008) indicates a clear decline in attendance at arts events. In 1992, 41.0 percent of adults attended an art event, the highest percentage recorded, up from 39.0 in 1982. In 2002, the percent fell to 39.4, and again to 34.6 percent in 2008 (NEA 2009:13). In terms of the number of attendees, in 2002, 497 million adults attended these benchmark activities but only 408 million attended in 2008. As the total number decreased so did the average number of events attended per individual: 6.1 in 2002 to 5.2 in 2008 (NEA 2009:14).

Analyzing the data reveal that the age of the individuals attending these events is significant. Over time, those adults attending the aforementioned arts events tended to be in their 40s and 50s, older than the average American (NEA 2009:15). Attendees have remained in the same generation such that, “people in each age group 54 and younger in 2008 appear to be less likely to go to a benchmark arts activity than the same age groups in 2002” (NEA 2009:29). Younger generations are not receiving the same levels of arts exposure as older generations, limiting their knowledge and appreciation (Kaiser 2010). Thus, it seems interest in the arts has started to dwindle.

An additional corresponding factor influencing arts participation is education; individuals with higher levels of education tend to have higher levels of attendance at arts events. Education can introduce various forms of art to students, developing their interests. The NEA notes that “people with higher levels of education are more likely to attend the types of arts examined in the SPPA than people with less education”—particularly classical art forms (2009:14). The survey makes a connection between educational and generational differences stating that the higher the education level of an adult’s parents, the more likely they are to attend these activities (NEA 2009:15).

Similarly, those who have participated in the arts activities themselves are more likely to attend the arts activity's events. Education may provide exposure to arts, enabling an individual's interest.

Furthermore, participation in classical music, including "symphony, chamber, or choral music performances," declined from 4.2 percent to 1.8 percent of adults between 1992 and 2002 (NEA 2009:24). However, participation then rose to 3.1 percent in 2008, still showing an overall decline in personal performance and creation of classical music from 1992 to 2008. The age group that attended these performances the most is 45 to 64 years old, as the age of an audience member has increased over the years (NEA 2009:24). Interestingly, classical music attendance declined for all education groups, income groups, and racial/ethnic groups.

However, the introduction of new media forms has resonated with classical music; even though classical music participation has declined since 2002, it is the most watched and listened to art form via electronic media:

Nearly 40 percent of adults who watch or listen to classical music via media are 45 to 64 years old [while] about 39 percent of people who had a graduate education reported watching or listening to classical music via media, compared with less than 10 percent of respondents who had completed high school but not attended college. (NEA 2009:36)

The Internet allows adults to explore different art forms suited to their individual preferences. It is used mainly for learning and gaining information about the arts through articles and reviews, rather than listening to or watching artistic performances. Many art forms have transitioned to new mediums via the development of the Internet and digital media. The Internet provides individuals more opportunities to engage with the arts at a

more affordable price. Thus, people can engage with the arts in a new environment, potentially increasing participation.

The National Endowment survey examines adults' involvement in art and music lessons. According to the report, "participation by young adults in arts learning activities has declined substantially since 1992 across all art forms," now ranging between only 1.4 percent and 2.1 percent participation (NEA 2009:5). This data suggest limited attention to arts education and a decline in enrollments.

The NEA survey reveals a gradual decline by 2008 of individuals performing or creating their own art, as well as learning about art. Only 10 percent of 2008 responders "said they had performed or created at least one of the art forms examined in the survey" (NEA 2009:43). The data show that singing in a choir or other vocal group had the most participants, even though in 1992, only 6.3 percent of adults performed in choir; in 2002, 4.8 percent; and in 2008, 5.2 percent (NEA 2009:44). The data document that nearly one-third of adults has taken music lessons during their life, but those numbers have seen a decline since 1982 (NEA 2009:50).

By applying Gans' taste cultures theory, the NEA data reveal that enjoyment for the arts has decreased and is subsequently reflected in lower participation levels. The correlation between arts event's attendance and education reflects Zolberg's link between fine arts and elitism. Specifically, Zolberg's theories of elitism may explain the decline in participation in classical music for new generations. Ways to participate in the arts have changed, influencing experiences. The Internet makes the arts more accessible, yet hinders the development of personal connections. Zolberg acknowledges that commitment to the arts is necessary for individuals to benefit, suggesting the need for

exposure to the arts. The National Endowment for the Arts' 2008 *Survey of Public Participation in the Arts* reveals these connections between education, age, and arts participation.

b. The Urban Institute, *Arts Participation: Steps to Stronger Cultural and Community Life*

The Urban Institute's *Cultural Participation Survey* examined the arts participation in five communities to determine if people “attend programs and events, encourage their children to participate, make or perform art as amateurs, or support the arts through donations of time and money” (Walker 2003:2). Each type of participation contributes to the arts and culture as well as to community life. The chart below depicts an analysis of each type of participation.

Chart 1. How Arts and Cultural Participation Contributes to Cultural and Community Life (Walker 2003:4)

Types of Arts and Cultural Participation	Contributions to Arts and Culture	Contributions to Community Life
Attendance at Live Programs or Events	Strengthens arts and cultural institutions by building audiences.	Sustains and Increases social connections. Contributes to economic development and community life/spaces.
Art-making as Amateurs	Furtheres personal understanding of art and cultural forms and creates new opportunities to experience arts and culture.	Provides shared experiences in social groups to preserve group ties and cultural practices.
Participation of Children	Develops skills and habits of participation. Leads to long-term audience commitment, appreciation, and support.	Encourages children to participation in community activities. Develops social skills and habits for community and civic life.
Support for arts organizations	Creates opportunities to experience the arts and culture. Helps provide range of programs.	Improves ability of arts organizations to engage in education and community outreach. Helps organizations use arts to build community spirit.

This chart theorizes the relationships between art forms and cultural developments addressing the presence of benefits for civic and community activities. The *Cultural Participation Survey* of 1998 reveals 75 percent of responders attend live programs or events, 63 percent socialize and take their children to events or lessons, 46 percent take part in amateur art-making activities, and 31 percent show support for the arts and culture through donations of time and money (Walker 2003:6).

Those who attend live programs and events tend to participate in at least one other way, while 25 percent of participants attend events, donate, and make their own art (Walker 2003:11). An individual's frequency of attendance correlates to his or her personal commitment levels. Cultural participation encourages further participation, increasing individual engagement levels (Walker 2003:14).

The Urban Institute's study suggests, "arts organizations that make connections to community, civic, and religious organizations can gain access to a pool of participants already active in other forms of community life" (Walker 2003:16). Those engaged with their communities and civic activism are predisposed to active participation in arts activities. Comparing arts participation and volunteer participation reveals a clear similarity; 55 percent attend live events, 47 percent attend with children, 40 percent conduct amateur art-making or performance, and 41 percent volunteer or give monetary support (Walker 2003:17). Thus, this data suggests a correlation between levels of civic engagement and arts participation, both potentially causing the other. Individuals participating in the arts are more likely "to say that 'support for organizations or events important in the community' is a major reason for their attendance at arts and cultural events" (Walker 2003:18). Art is part of culture, thus engagement with the arts encourages the development of social interactions (Becker 2006:3).

An approach to improve participation is to increase "opportunities for adults to engage in amateur art-making as a way to increase their children's exposure to arts and culture and build audience for the long term" (Walker 2003:15). Developing arts exposure for those of the younger generation will help improve future levels of arts participation, fostering life-long attachments to the arts. The Urban Institute reflects the

theories suggesting music as a form of social order contributes to the establishment of communities (Acord and DeNora 2008; Roy and Dowd 2010). However, there must be a predisposition for commitment to encourage active participation as an adult, suggesting the need for early exposure to the arts (Zolberg 1990). Arts participation and civic activism correspond to community development (Qureshi 2002). As individuals engage in the community, they develop connections and a sense of purpose—a benefit from or benefitted by arts participation.

III. Arts Education

“A means of training children to appreciate the beautiful and thereby transcend the real world” (Woodford, 2005: 13-14)

In 2011, the President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities compiled a report of the documented benefits of arts education and how to produce such opportunities. The report states, “decades of research show strong consistent links between high-quality arts education and a wide range of impressive educational outcomes [...particularly] in preparing students for success in the knowledge and innovation economy” (PCAH 2011:vi, 1).

The President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities argues that the arts and other humanities are important in a child’s education. The report cites President Barack Obama’s 2011 State of the Union Address to express his thoughts regarding the education of future Americans and their preparation to enter a global environment; “What

we can do—what America does better than anyone else—is spark the creativity and imagination of our people” (PCAH 2011:13). This parallels Daniel Pink’s analysis of the importance of creativity in relation to the development of the economy and social relationships. In *A Whole New Mind*, Pink conveys the ability of the arts to foster such creativity and imagination in young people—contributing to the development of the global society (2005). The President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities acknowledges, “the United States is losing its competitive edge in creativity and innovation, and that the call for even more rigorous academic standards is insufficient without a concomitant focus on developing creativity and imagination” (2001:29).

Data supports the idea that arts education contributes to the development of student achievement in math, reading, and other academic skills; student motivation and engagement; habits of mind; problem solving and creative thinking; and social competencies, such as team work, collaboration, social tolerance, and self-confidence (PCAH 2011:16). In 2002, Americans for the Arts conducted a report revealing certain benefits attributed to arts education, ranging from thinking skills to personal developments. Furthermore, the arts improve a child’s learning ability, problem solving skills, and critical thinking skills, regardless of possible limitations by socio-economic boundaries (Americans for the Arts 2002). This report allows engagement with the arts in America to develop freely (Zolberg 1990). Additionally, the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies reports a positive correlation between enrollment in arts courses and SAT verbal and math scores, increasing scores by 58 points and 38 points, respectively (Ruppert 2006:9).

Arts education produces “a sense of craftsmanship, quality task performance, and goal-setting,” while developing personal values and social skills and heightening awareness of surrounding and circumstance (Americans for the Arts 2002). Students develop academically while also advancing their basic comprehension and functioning skills with exposure to arts education. With an introduction to the arts, young Americans will be able to better contribute to the future global society. Sociological theory even supports the notion that the arts contribute to an individual’s appreciation of other activities (Acord and DeNora 2008).

Studies show that listening to classical music increases productivity and overall comprehension of information. A 1993 study proposes listening to Mozart improves spatial reasoning skills more than listening to relaxation instructions (Jenkins 2001:170). The effect is accredited to an individual’s “enjoyment arousal” and appreciation (Jenkins 2001:170). Some scholars suggest, “classical music would make children into better, more loving citizens able to appreciate beauty and thus make a greater contribution to society” (Woodford 2005:83). It seems to be the act of listening that encourages this behavior and cognitive development, implying that learning to listen attentively to music provides necessary skills for other social phenomenon (Oteri 2013). Journalist David Lang compares baseball and classical music, both as pastimes that record history (2011). Fans record statistics and play-by-play moments of baseball games, while music provides the opportunity to listen and relate to new experiences (Lang 2011). Music must promote appreciate of the past to foster the development of future musical achievements.

The aforementioned skills develop through arts education as a result of arts integration, making relationships between the arts and other academic disciplines (PCAH 2011:19). Arts education and integration reinforce the development of such skills, as proven by the shown benefits of the arts.

IV. Developing Communities through Arts Engagement

“In the face of the most challenging threats to his survival, Primitive man created the arts” (Motycka 1976:11)

Paul Woodford acknowledges, “music educators still hold to the Platonic belief that music education has a civilizing influence on students and society, that the study and performance of the *right* kind of music can promote the development of good citizenship and moral character” (2005:83). Music’s influence on an individual’s characteristics can contribute to interactions between community members. As individuals develop and grow in society, they learn from and bond with those around them.

There is a “contribution that arts participation makes to the wellbeing of communities, social inclusion, lifelong learning, active citizenship and volunteering” (Devlin 2011:10). The Voluntary Arts England’s *Restoring the Balance: the Effects of Arts Participation on Wellbeing and Health* suggests that, “the arts create some of the most supreme and lasting achievements of society” (Devlin 2011:14). The effects of arts participation explain why the arts must be repositioned in communities. Together, the arts help humanize individuals (Motycka 1976:1). Acord and DeNora characterize the arts as

objects of expression, values or beliefs, facilitating how the arts assist interaction and social development (2008:224). Participating and engaging with the arts also expands the sense of community.

Historically, the arts have become key aspects of cultural development—but not always in the best light. Nazi Germany transformed its arts, music, literature, and film. Adolf Hitler regarded himself as an art connoisseur, determining what types of art would exist in Germany. Hitler did not ban music, but rather established guidelines for “acceptable” music. His appreciation for art encouraged him to establish a balance between artistic freedom and national censorship. This historical example suggests the Nazis did not ban arts and culture, but rather used arts and culture as part of their propaganda state to help structure society in the desired way. Adam Cathcart claims, Nazi Germany and Hitler “used music as a tool to forge political unity among Germans” (2006:1). This display of musical appreciation by the Germans attempted to justify their own expansion of German culture (Cathcart 2006:16). Here, music clearly defines cultural structures, but can be manipulated by dominant powers.

Estonia’s pursuit of independence represents another way the arts, particularly music, were used as a non-violent effort on the national scale. Estonia unified under its Soviet occupation, expressed their yearning for freedom through a singing protest. This cultural situation highlights the power of the musical voice. Estonians sang the national song, “Mu isamaa on minu arm” (“Land of My Fathers, Land That I Love”) defying Soviet demands. When sung at a national festival, the Soviets attempted to drown out the music with an orchestral performance, but the voices were still heard. These acts encouraged future Estonians to conduct non-violent protests, founding the Singing

Revolution (Tusty and Tusty 2007). It sparked their courage to stand up against the Soviet occupation and sing. Music provided the opportunity to act in a powerful way in which there was no response for the Soviets—you cannot stop someone from singing with singing, and it does not provoke warranted violence. This similarly reflects the power of a national anthem, creating a unifying representation of the nation.

These phenomena exemplify the power of music as a political weapon. The ability for an entire nation to unite around a central idea through the production of music is an overwhelmingly powerful symbol. Germans remained united during a time of cruelty, while Estonians did not resort to violence to fight for their independence and freedom. Music can be molded for the situation. Considering art as a necessary aspect of community life conveys the ways in which “art allows you to rise above, to be able to dream, to play and have some fun” (Devlin 2011:30). If true, community development is possible because of its members’ arts participation. Benefits of arts participation cannot always be objectively measured, but can provide “an immersion in creativity which is so rare in our society” (Devlin 2011:31).

With this developed sense of creativity, communities thrive. It is understood, “creative activities bring people together, encourages *[sic]* cooperation and reminds *[sic]* us all of what it is to be human” (Devlin 2011:70). Arthur Motycka proposes: “it seems to me that a communal activity, like making music together—and learning to do so from the earliest possible age, whether at home, in school, or in the community—is far more apt to get people actually doing what philosophers intend in the abstract” (1976:78-79). Participating in the arts encourages the development of strong, positive communities for its members.

V. Concluding Thoughts

Arts engagement provides benefits of academic, social, and basic skills. As individuals grow, they maintain and establish bonds with their surrounding environments. The incorporation of the arts and these relationships improves behaviors and the overall sense of identity related to and independent from the group. The following chapter will focus on choral participation, and will present a case study analysis of how singing in a choir or group provides specific benefits.

Chapter 3. Music and Choral Participation

Research consistently suggests, “early arts education is a building block of developing brain function” (PCAH 2011:22). All types of arts education contribute to some form of development, illustrated by the case of Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords of Arizona. After receiving a gunshot to the head, she lost her ability to speak. Yet upon hearing the tune of familiar songs she was able to recall certain words because music activates different brain regions (PBS NewsHour 2012). Listening to music triggered the side of her brain that could still function, assisting her recovery and the relearning of language.

I. Music, specifically: *Music as a Language*

The ability for music to function as a language gives it a weighted value in social interactions. Yet, why does music deserve such attention? What validates this focus on music? Deryck Cooke suggests that a musical composer versus a painter can produce physical movement through their art (1959). Music is an activity fostering imagination (Turino 2008:17-18). Cooke theorizes that music conveys greater emotions than any other art form, becoming “the supreme expression of universal emotions, in an entirely personal way” (1959:33).

When examining music in social settings, it is helpful to examine music as a form of social life. Thomas Turino concludes music is an art form that provides necessary experiences for life (2008:1). Music gains value as socially meaningful through its ability

to connect individuals with themselves and others, while projecting an alternative outlet for social engagement. Interpersonal relationships create music through engagement. Music sociologist DeNora discusses the power of music to develop throughout a social activity (2000). Music has the ability to produce a positive social environment, connecting communities and individuals. In its production, music has not developed a formally defined language, but rather continues to be a form of conscious or unconscious expression (Cooke 1959). Considering music as a type of language extends its ability to convey powerful messages, proving that music is a valuable activity for those involved. Music's extension as language identifies that music conveys human communication and supports the growth of social groups and interactions (Etzkorn 1964:103). Simply put, "music is identified by people inside (and outside) the group as belonging to it, and membership in the group is marked by embracing this music" (Roy and Dowd 2010:190).

Music relates to this thesis through Weber's evaluation of music. Some suggest that Weber's analysis that society influences music is the reciprocal model of Adorno's theory that music influences society (Turley 2001). Both theories underscore the importance of music because it explicitly considers how music interacts with society and group characteristics (Etzkorn 1964). Correspondingly, music helps foster communication between individuals as well as the development of individual perspectives in social settings. Music's involvement with the individual allows it to be "a material that actors use to elaborate, to fill out and fill in, to themselves and to others, modes of aesthetic agency, and with it, subjective stances and identities" (DeNora 2000:74).

Music represents a language individuals use to extend social meanings within themselves and others, while interacting with emotions. Music is essential to social life and the development of social relationships, which can be illustrated by a case study of Chorus America.

II. “*The beauty and power of choral singing*” (Chorus America 2009:3)

Chorus America is an organization that develops and promotes choruses and their role in communities. The 2009 Chorus America’s *Impact Study* presents data of current choral organizations in the United States and the relationship between the organizations themselves and their participants. Choral programs and organizations show similar trends as those discussed in the previous chapter. As a form of arts participation, choral participation has positive effects for individuals and their respective communities. *The Impact Study* examines the academic and educational benefits of music, specifically choral engagement.

A choral setting fosters an inclusive, creative environment, which does not restrict individuals, but rather allows individuals to engage with others and the music. Choral conductor Harry Robert Wilson proposes, “there may be social motives but the musical motive is invariably stronger...the total physical and emotional responses in the act of singing make it the most personal musical activity” (Bell 2004:46). Community Choir director Karen Mihalyi, comments, “We are trying to create community and make music too. The choir is about singing and it is about community” (Bogdan 1995). This cultivated relationship distinguishes important characteristics of choral participation,

while also differentiating it from other art forms that do not provide a group setting. Choral participation provides an environment to actively create music with others through individual appreciation. The following evidence suggests how these qualities of group singing assist academic success and civic engagement.

Singing in a choral program or group is the most popular form of participation. From 2003 to 2009 the number of choral participants increased to 35.4 million adults, and 46.2 million Americans overall (Chorus America 2009:4). The 2009 Chorus America's *How Children, Adults, and Communities Benefit from Choruses: The Chorus Impact Study* looks at participation in choral groups and the development of character. Most adult participants are patrons of the arts, active volunteers, financial contributors to their choruses and other philanthropic organizations, and frequently prominent civic leaders (Chorus America 2009:5). The study showed that most children improve their academic and social skills and learn to express themselves and work in a team environment (Chorus America 2009:5).

Although this data emphasizes the importance of choral participation and group singing, many communities and school districts still lack these programs; in fact "one in five parents say there are no choir opportunities for their children in their communities" (Chorus America 2009:6).

III. Chorus America Report

Early introductions to choral singing foster an individual's later participation. If these early opportunities disappear, it will reduce adult interest in choral singing. Chorus

America reveals that choral group involvement improves active community membership. The study found correlations between choral participation and greater civic engagement, an association with volunteer activities, and an increase in charitable contributions (Chorus America 2009:9, 8).

There is a disparity between chorus members and average Americans in terms of civic engagement: voting regularly in national and local elections (96 to 70 percent); contributing money to political parties, candidates (50 to 20 percent); working as officer or committee members in civic organizations (30 to 11 percent); and working for political parties (23 to 15 percent) (Chorus America 2009:9). Additionally, chorus members are more likely to have read a book in the last month and read newspapers daily than the general public (Chorus America 2009:9). It is important to consider that individuals who will join a choir may already be inclined toward activities specified by the study, such as reading the newspaper. If this is true, it does not discredit the data, but rather strengthens the relationship between choral participation and such activities. If choral participation were more often encouraged, then people would start to foster feelings supporting both aspects. Tom Sander of Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government believes, "Community choruses are critically important in rebuilding the fraying connections in our communities...[they are] crucial to schools working well, neighborhoods being safe, economies working well, [and] government being responsive" (Estes 2001).

Along with its many benefits for community structure, choral participation impacts an individual's physical health, social skills, and emotional conditions. Choral singers compared to the general public are more likely to exercise regularly, promoting better health (Chorus America 2009:10). Not only is choral participation correlated to

better physical health, but also it is correlated to an individual's character and personal qualities. Chorus members consider themselves reliable and open to criticism more than the general U.S. population, revealing that the singers are more confident in themselves (Chorus America 2009:10). Chorus members report working well in team environments and desiring to engage in team activities rather than activities for personal gain, succinctly capturing the positive influence choral participation has on both individual character and citizenship.

The effects of choral participation are not exclusive to adults, but rather benefits are evident early in development, with most of the research coming from school-age children. According to both parents and teachers, choral activity influences a child's academic scores and behavior. Chorus America interviewed teachers from a range of disciplines, strengthening the argument since "educators were, in many cases, virtually unanimous across disciplines about the positive impact chorus participation can and does have on children and their environments" (2009:12).

Comparing those in choir to those who have never sung reveals: 47 to 38 percent get A's in mathematics and 54 to 43 percent get A's in English, respectively (Chorus America 2009:12). Overall, parents reported 61 percent improvement in academics (Chorus America 2009:12). These results may be attributed to either the direct result of singing in a choir or the secondary effect of the inclusive, choir environment that develops interpersonal and personal skills.

By separating the data between a child who had and had not participated in choir, parent responses reveal a strong trend supporting the benefits of choir for children

(2009:13):

- 90 to 72 percent say their child is very creative
- 86 to 63 percent say their child has a strong sense of self-worth/self-esteem
- 82 to 68 percent say their child has a very good memory
- 72 to 50 percent say their child improves in activities after practicing efficiently
- 70 to 57 percent say their child does their homework immediately
- 43 to 29 percent say their child watches less than one hour of TV per day

Thus, choral participation improves both a child's ability to work diligently and their skill sets. The majority of parents believe their child is more self-confident, self-disciplined, focused, creative, alert, punctual, physically fit, and better at solving problems, contributing to the general improvement of a child's wellbeing and ability to succeed in American society (Chorus America 2009:14). There may be underlying factors that influence these parents' responses, potentially their socioeconomic standing or view toward the arts, but the data still suggest strong enough trends for these disparities to remain credible.

Chorus America also examines how these children do home chores, work in teams, and engage in class discussions and activities. Parents of a child in choir versus parents of non-choir children are more likely to report that their child helps around the house and frequently participates in group activities with friends (Chorus America 2009:16). Overall, this data convey that a child in choir has better social skills and a greater willingness to interact with peers. These qualities contribute to a "child's ability to read others' emotions or manage their own," an observation upon which 66 percent of

parents with a child in choir agree (Chorus America 2009:17). This type of skill helps improve an individual's ability to appropriately interact with others.

To counter the potentially subjective evaluation of parents, Chorus America gathered data from educators for a more objective viewpoint. Both perspectives confirm that there are personal improvements as a result of choral participation. The below data reveal the percentage of educators who agree that there are benefits from choral participation in schools (Chorus America 2009:15):

- 94 percent said it enhances students' self-confidence
- 93 percent said it improves students' memory skills
- 90 percent said it develops student creativity
- 90 percent said it can instill efficient and effective practice habits
- 88 percent said it improves overall academic performance
- 81 percent said it develops the connections between disciplines
- 86 percent said it boosts students' language skills
- 63 percent said it improves students' math skills

A majority of these educators have recommended singing in a choir to students, classes, and parents to help improve academic achievement levels (Chorus America 2009:15). Chorus America discovered similar data when educators evaluated a students' social behavior. Educators reported students in choir work better in groups, are more social, better listeners, able to manage their emotions, and are more involved in their communities (Chorus America 2009:17). A middle school principal recalls, "I have seen youngsters come through here who perhaps weren't as motivated, and I have seen them take off and fly because we pulled them into an art [program] and opened up new avenues" (Fiske 1999:51). The impact the arts have on students is enormous and visible through the student's self-presentation.

Overall, educators observed choral participation as a positive experience for the development of classroom behaviors. These qualities contribute to children feeling comfortable with peers and expressing themselves completely. A common trait, observed by both educators and parents, is listening skills. Music requires the ability to listen and differentiate between sounds, translating into everyday activities. This links to the notion of music as a language, where music facilitates a form of interaction between individuals. Choral participation improves a child's personal behavior and social prowess.

Choral participation not only develops personal and social skills, but also contributes to school involvement and community participation. Educators agree choral participation contributes to the child's sense of community and school spirit through more active engagement at school and community events (Chorus America 2009:18). This data show that choral participation creates a positive and engaging environment for students to interact and learn. A student's ability and willingness to volunteer and participate in school activities establishes a better learning environment.

The Chorus America report advocates for the importance of choral participation by showing the relationship between participation and development of personal character. These aforementioned benefits create personalities that are more likely to succeed in today's global society. Active engagement in community and group dynamics encourages the development of socially successful individuals. All in all, Chorus America's report provides compelling evidence that choral participation improves civic responsibility, academic performance, and personal characteristics that contribute to positive group activity and social interactions.

IV. Integrating Music into Educational Systems for the Future

The data indicate that music and arts education will benefit children in schools and communities throughout the United States. Program selection and success within school districts depends on social and political issues, as well as parental support. Chorus America examined the influence parents can make in school districts: 96 percent of districts with high parental influence have a music program (80 percent have a choir) compared to 81 percent with low parental involvement (61 percent have a choir) (Chorus America 2009:19).

Parents contribute to the development of music and choral programs by raising money, providing logistical support for competitions, acting as community advocates, blocking program cuts at the school and district levels, insisting on more time/availability for programs, and demanding better quality instruction (Chorus America 2009:20). Actively committing to the integration of music and choral programs into the educational system helps safeguard these programs from being cut.

Making these civic and personal benefits known to those not involved with the arts can strengthen its presence in communities. As others become aware of the benefits of choral participation and other arts participation, they become harder to overlook. Historically, the arts were not considered a necessary component of American society and were seen instead as a distraction from more imminent issues. Today, those views may still influence the development of the arts in society and their incorporation into American life. It must be accepted that a child can have instruction to an art form, becoming part of school curriculums (Keene 1982).

The following chapter will analyze government funding for the arts. There is deterioration in arts appreciation at the government level, displayed through severe cuts and exclusion from the national budget. An example is the disparity between funding for STEM and arts programs. The benefits both programs offer suggest that there should be equal funding. Ultimately, levels of arts engagement must increase in order for the full effects of the arts to be observed and acknowledged in American society by both the public and government.

Chapter 4. Societal Importance

In August 2013, *The Economist* posed the question, “Should governments fund the arts?” (2013). *The Economist* conducted an Oxford style debate within the confines of an online forum presenting both sides of the argument by experts in their respective fields. Throughout the debate and upon completion, listeners voted whether or not they agreed with the notion that governments should fund the arts. Sixty-one percent voted “Yes” while thirty-nine percent voted “No.” It is true that *The Economist’s* readers might be classified as a particular type of person, from a range of backgrounds and nationalities, but the fact that this question was debated shows the precarious situation of many arts programs.

In order to develop the arts in society and improve levels of individual involvement, we must examine the opposing viewpoints in American society. The arts are important; the previous chapters presented the evidence, documenting their importance and the benefits of participating. Examining popular culture references to the arts and their government funding presents a compelling analysis of the current debate, similar to that submitted by *The Economist*.

I. “*A great nation deserves great art*” (Hahn 2009)

The National Endowment for the Arts provides subsidies and grants for artists to pursue artistic careers. Both President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama have expressed interest in the arts. There are government organizations and other cultural

programs promoting and encouraging the development of the arts. However, a limitation in funding for the arts compared to funding for other educational programs remains.

Recall the 2012 presidential election where presidential hopeful Governor Mitt Romney commented on arts funding. During the first presidential debate, Mitt Romney stated, “I’m sorry Jim, I’m gonna stop the subsidy to PBS. I like PBS. I love Big Bird. I actually like you, too. But I’m not gonna keep spending money on things to borrow money from China to pay for it” (Bond 2012). His plan to tackle the economic deficit exposed his belief that programming for the arts is not critical enough for funding. Romney’s promise to cut off PBS’s funding from tax dollars was the most reviewed clip from the debate (Bond 2012). Why did Americans choose to focus their attention on this statement after the debate when there are other pressing issues? It may be that Americans do not agree with the government’s limits to arts funding.

But, how much funding is in fact given to PBS and Big Bird? Would its redistribution actually improve the American economic position? In the television series, *The West Wing*, the President’s senior aide debates NEA funding while preparing for the upcoming State of the Union address. This episode, aired in 1999, paralleled and foreshadowed concerns regarding arts funding and the future of the National Endowment for the Arts. The following transcript explains the Communications Director’s discussion with Congressmen regarding the President’s position (to increase funding by fifty percent) (Giorgio 2000):

Communications Director: The National Endowment amounts to less than 1/100th of one percent of the total budget for the federal government. It costs taxpayers 39 cents a year. The arts budget for the U.S. is equivalent to the arts budget of Sweden.
Congressman 1: Well, once again, all we’d like is for you to not mention the N.E.A.

Congressman 2: Personally, I don't know what to say to people who argue that the N.E.A. is there to support art that nobody wants to pay for in the first place. I don't know what to tell people when they say Rogers and Hart didn't need the N.E.A. to write Oklahoma, and Arthur Murray didn't need the N.E.A. to write Death of a Salesman.

Communications Director: I'd start by telling them that Rogers and Hammerstein wrote Oklahoma, and Arthur Murray taught ballroom dance, and Arthur Miller did need the N.E.A. to write Death of a Salesman, but it wasn't called the N.E.A. back then. It was called W.P.A.

While this exchange is from a fictional television series mimicking White House scenarios, the argument is relevant. One side supports arts funding and the National Endowment for the Arts while the other does not, potentially from a misunderstanding of facts. This example shows how the social debate construes the arts as a result of the challenge to provide objective evidence, typically required for political support.

Members of American government examine the arts and other programs through economic evaluations. The documented benefits of the arts in the previous chapters convey the positive impact the arts have on individuals and their contributions to society, but do not reveal direct economic benefits from arts involvement. The benefit is the enhancement of how individuals function in society, which corresponds to their professional successes, indirectly connecting arts participation to America's economic environment.

In 2009, a proposed stimulus package offered \$50 million to the National Endowment for the Arts and \$150 million to infrastructure repairs at the Smithsonian. This package reflects the belief that the arts deserve money, even in a time of economic turmoil. However, the opposition suggests that the borrowing of money to distribute to others does no economic good because "the only way to increase economic growth is to increase productivity" (Blair 2009). This stimulus plan recognizes the impact of the arts

on communities and quality of life, saying, “the job of the NEA is to give out money to stimulate OUR jobs in the economy’s arts sector,” ultimately creating productivity and economic improvements (Hahn 2009). Although a profession may be considered unconventional, it still contributes to the economy. Offering the NEA \$50 million would provide a 30 percent increase to its budget, while only equaling 0.00597 percent of the overall stimulus plan (Hahn 2009). The Senate removed this NEA funding from the bill, but it remained on the House’s bill. House Representative David Obey, D, remarked, “we’re trying to treat people who work in the arts the same way as anybody else” (The New York Times 2009).

This stimulus report, along with the above *The West Wing* scene, highlights the discrepancy between the public and government’s views regarding the arts. A public survey reports that the majority of Americans “believe that NPR and PBS funding accounts for five percent of the federal budget” (Dawson 2012). In actuality, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting receives \$420 million a year or roughly .01 percent of the national budget. Last year, the NEA and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) received \$161.3 million for both agencies to share (Dawson 2012). Dawson reports, “if you take all the 2011 funding for the CPB, the NEA, and the NEH, it would only take you 58 years to equal the amount of money that we spent [in one year] on super advanced warplanes that can’t seem to get enough oxygen to their pilots” (2012). Comparatively, the government gives limited funding to the arts, and the public is not always aware.

In the end, many politicians believe the arts are not profitable. But, other nations compared to the US highly value the arts. In the United Kingdom, the arts received £3.8

billion [5.82 billion USD] for the development of “theatres, opera companies, dance troupes, film-makers, artists and others since it began in 1994” (*The Economist* 2012). Recently, government changes caused budget adjustments, adding further evaluation for arts funding. This revision has been criticized as “a more American [meaning limited] style of arts funding” (*The Economist* 2012). As funding started to resemble the American approach, many British citizens became frustrated. Internationally, other nations do not agree with the American treatment of the arts. This disagreement reiterates the necessity to reevaluate arts funding compared to the funding of both educational and cultural government programs.

II. Government Funding

In November 2012, the National Endowment for the Arts conducted a report addressing the question of “How the United States Funds the Arts?” The NEA analyzed direct public funding from the NEA, other art agencies, federal departments and agencies, and contributions from the private sector (2012). The NEA accounts for the majority of public funding, but a significant portion comes from federal, state, regional, and local agencies. These groups provide grants aimed to “fill gaps, enhance arts education, nourish arts creation, assist in the presentation and delivery of artworks, and enable preservation” (NEA 2012:3).

Since 1965, the NEA has united government funding and the arts, while “advancing artistic excellence, creativity, and innovation for the benefit of American individuals and communities” (NEA 2012:3). The House and Senate committees determined NEA

funding to be \$146 million in 2012 (NEA 2012:3). To allocate funds and grants, a panel of arts experts reviews applications and elects recipients. In 2012, the NEA issued 2,158 awards, ranging from \$5,000 to \$150,000 (NEA 2012:4). However, most funding for the arts still comes from raised donations; for every \$100 from the Arts Endowment, an average \$910 is raised in donations and contributions.

Furthermore, in 2009 President Obama approved the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) to create and protect jobs during the recession by supporting the economic contribution of the not-for-profit arts industry. The ARRA distributed funding through federal grants and other state arts organizations in conjunction with the NEA's \$50 million budget for arts professionals in need.

The NEA also works with state and regional arts agencies to determine the most beneficial way to distribute funding. In 2001, state funding surpassed NEA funding by 77 percent, the first time in twenty years. Each state works in conjunction with the NEA so "planning is inclusive and responsive, reflecting the goals and activities determined to be most important to that state" (NEA 2012:7). State populations, the number of programs, and program competitiveness determine which programs need the most funding. In 2012, state legislation provided \$260.1 million to art agencies while the NEA provided only \$32.9 million (NEA 2012:7). Furthermore, the NEA reports about 5,000 groups exist throughout the United States at a local level (2012:9). The agencies receive funding from "the NEA; state arts agencies, municipal budgets, and private donations. Many of the larger local arts agencies are now funded through a dedicated revenue stream, such as hotel/motel tax revenues" (NEA 2012:9).

The National Endowment for the Arts stabilizes the structure of pre-existing funding programs in local communities, by uniting apportioned funding and grants. Arts programs developed as “city governments moved toward subsidizing a wide variety of artistic institutions including museums, art spaces, historic buildings and neighborhoods, and symphony orchestras” (NEA 2012:10). Local agencies establish and maintain close relationships with community programs, while promoting and developing support for the arts and culture (NEA 2012). Overall, the NEA plays a large role in the distribution of funds, extending their influence to the funding provided by state and local agencies.

Local success depends on communities providing sufficient support to organizations. Unfortunately, some local funding is not stable. In 2011, the Philadelphia Orchestra and the New York City Opera both faced financial troubles (Kosman 2011). These financial uncertainties threaten the existence of both musical organizations. Joshua Kosman accounts for these repercussions from a lack of strong leadership, unable to defend the costs of production (2011).

Other federal government agencies assisting the arts include the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), National Public Radio (NPR), American Public Media (APM), and Public Radio International (PRI). The following chart presents these organizations and departments’ corresponding 2012 appropriations (NEA 2012:14):

Chart 2. 2012 Appropriations for Selected Federal Entities Funding Arts and Culture

Federal Entity	Funding (in millions)
Smithsonian Institution	\$812
Corporation for Public Broadcasting	\$444
Institute of Museum and Library Services	\$232
National Endowment for the Arts	\$146
National Endowment for the Humanities	\$146
National Gallery of Art	\$128
Department of Education (Arts in Education)	\$25
Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts	\$23
Presidio Trust	\$12
Institute of American Indian and Alaska Native American Culture and Arts Development	\$8
Advisory Council on Historic Preservation	\$6
Commission of Fine Arts	\$2

A variety of organizations and departments devote part of their budget to funding the arts. For example, although not included in the chart, some arts funding comes from the Department of Defense. The department “uses the arts in various ways to boost the morale of the nation’s armed forces and their families;” for example, there is \$388 million available to fund the nation’s military bands (NEA 2012:14). Playing in one of these bands is an honorable form of military service, requiring a rigorous audition process, representing an area of our culture in which the arts are highly respected.

Another key contributor to arts funding is the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA). The ECA produces educational and cultural exchanges with other countries through “a range of programs, including American Music Abroad, which sends musicians from the United States to more than 40 nations annually” as well as museum collaborations, dance showcases, and performances by artists for abroad audiences (NEA 2012:15). United States’ programs assist and maintain the development of the arts in

American culture. In collaboration with the NEA, publicity for the arts increases as all departments work toward “advanc[ing] public knowledge about the arts’ role in human development” (NEA 2012:17).

Lastly, private donations and tax incentives are huge contributors to American art programs. In 2011, Americans donated to arts, culture, and humanities programs, totaling \$13 billion, while 1.3 million US adults volunteered 65 million hours (NEA 2012:18, 19). Since these donations fall under a tax-exempt, not-for-profit category, it is estimated that “the U.S. government’s foregone revenues from charitable donations are expected to reach \$230 billion between 2010 and 2014” (NEA 2012:18). The US economic structure provides money for the arts, but it is dependent on the public’s personal decision to give to the arts.

Such donations from the private sector are not only individual, but also corporate. A 2010 study reveals that “28 percent of all businesses surveyed gave money to the arts, and that businesses devoted an average of 5 percent of their philanthropic budgets to the arts” (NEA 2012:21). These donations are not only coming from large corporations, but also smaller corporations with revenues below \$50 million.

Arts funding in the United States comes disproportionately more from private sector individuals and corporations than US government departments. The federal application process for grant approval requires artists to prove their importance and significance. Many Americans support the arts and want them to thrive. Many federal departments share the same feelings, contributing large sums to the development and maintenance of arts programs. However, the private sector’s shown support for the arts

differs from the government's view, accounting for the economic disparity. The economic contributions do not match social opinions favoring the arts.

Specifically, the Department of Education only gives \$25 million to arts education (United States Department of Education 2012). Yes, the NEA strives to promote the arts and is successful in some respects, but federal and state governments' commitment to its arts education aspect does not reflect the NEA's mission. This lack of arts education funding caused its decline in public school and the reduction in educational programs supporting student involvement in the arts.

A recent focus has been given to STEM program—science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. In 2012, the Department of Education gave \$269 million to STEM programs surpassing its funding for arts education (McNaull 2012; United States Department of Education 2012). At the same time, the NEA's \$146 million budget, formerly \$168 million, showed a 13 percent drop in funding for the arts in President Obama's budget for the 2012 fiscal year (Arts & Education 2012). In the educational reform section of the 2013 State of the Union address, President Obama promotes investment for early education to prepare students at an earlier age for success. He continues by advocating for the teaching of science, technology, engineering, and math courses to prepare students for future employment (Obama 2012). Obama does not discuss arts education and its relationship to success in today's economy and global market. The dismissal of arts education from Obama's education reform plan suggests the United States' lack of support. Both STEM and arts programs are valuable and together contribute to social and economic successes.

Government funding for the arts is disproportionately compared to funding for other education programs. Individuals must have access to the arts and must experience the arts in educational programs to receive its potential benefits.

III. The Next Steps: Engagement and Value

The arts provide a comprehensive experience for adults and children to improve their civic duty as well as personal and academic achievement. There is government funding for arts programs and cultural development, but the funding for arts education programs must increase. Building programs to include the arts in community activities and school programs will help facilitate social benefits for American citizens. Funding for educational programs must be reevaluated to show a similar distribution for both STEM and arts programs as both offer valuable educational benefits.

The financial disparity between these programs does not reflect society's need for the arts. Drawing attention to the issues, while presenting the benefits of arts engagement, can further a discussion of the role of the arts in society and in America.

Conclusion

In 1916, Rose Yont entitled her dissertation, *Status and Value of Music in Education*. She concludes, “the past attitudes of educational institutions toward music has created an unfavorable sentiment among the masses, and a belittling of the art which will be hard to uproot. In addition, the separation of a scholastic and a music training has served to intensify the isolation, and ingrain strong prejudice, even more so than old Puritanism” (Yont 1916:278). This thesis has presented the emotional, physical, educational, and social benefits of arts participation and arts education, and as well this thesis extends to more general societal terms. What do these benefits mean for America? Why question the development of the arts in America and its governmental support?

Throughout world history, the arts have proven to provide a unifying constant for citizens. Not only do the arts benefit the individual, but they also benefit society as a whole. The arts enable a collective environment for individuals to relate to each other. Nazi Germany and Estonia’s Singing Revolution exemplify how music can be manipulated to facilitate a national movement. This is reminiscent of the more modern incorporation of music during the United States’ response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks, where music provided a platform for unity.

Many concerts took place nation-wide to help people mourn and move forward after the devastating events. Experiencing music can influence how someone feels (Gabrielsson 2011). American singer Pat Benatar recalled, “Politics aside, we were all together in this circumstance...we saw the healing power of music” (Gamboa, 2011). Paul McCartney claimed, “One of the things I am most proud of is that I have lucked out

and am in a profession like this that can help heal and help people get in touch with their emotions” (Gamboa, 2011). Music unites people and provides an outlet to express feelings and an understanding that others are going through the same emotions and struggles.

Both the Estonian Singing Revolution and the American response to 9/11 provoked the power of music. Individuals express themselves while communities unite. The next steps to acknowledging this power of music, and the arts in general, involves American government presenting a united front supporting the arts. The United States must move past the political divide and show that the arts are able to provide individuals and society a vast range of benefits.

Music is part of every day life, whether actively played or passively listened to by people in society. Try to think of a day you did not experience any music or art in general. It is fairly difficult to do. Engagement with music and the arts allows emotions to develop naturally, and either be internalized or externally expressed. It is these simple occurrences that contribute to interactions in society, fostering relationships.

The studies previously presented show how the arts contribute to the development of a well-rounded individual. The skills and knowledge produced by participation in the arts and arts education are essential for success in today’s growing economy. The global world requires creative thinking as well as academic intelligence and finding the ideal balance is key for innovative approaches. The United States needs individuals to develop these skills to further its presence in the progressive global economy. The lack of government funding and continued political debate reflect an American indifference toward the arts in the world. When confronted with budget cuts, we cannot initially jump

to cutting arts and arts education programs. Art electives tend to be replaced by more traditional subjects because they are viewed as nonessential (Fowler 1996). It must be understood that the arts are equally as valuable as other cultural and educational programs. What America devotes to those types of programs should be consistent for all.

Not only must funding for the arts be equal to funding for other educational programs, because of the equally important benefits, but also it must be clear that America wants the arts to prosper. Both the private and public sectors must express united support for the arts and an understanding of its power to develop communities and mature Americans.

There is a new movement to incorporate the arts into the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics programs to form the STEAM program—“science and technology interpreted through engineering and the arts, all based in mathematical elements” (STEAM Education 2013). This approach incorporates using both the right and left side of the brain together to produce more creative and efficient information for our global culture. The shown benefits of arts education advance students’ abilities to learn other disciplines.

Ultimately, arts education provides students with an experience that teaches them necessary social and academic skills for future professional success. In this changing, fast-paced economy in modern society, young adults must be able to incorporate intangible skills to provide a unique, creative perspective. Many scholars discuss the importance of using the right brain to find success in an economy where assembly-line work is dwindling. Basic jobs in America have been exported to other nations, making an

American's success in the economy dependent on being able to bring and apply a distinctive outlook to work.

Focusing on STEM education will improve America's academic success in those areas, but the production of creative and innovative ideas must advance. This thought process is attainable through an individual's ability to combine their academic subjects with cultural learning, expressed through the skills learned from the arts. The arts and music are ever-present, defining individual character through cultural phenomenon. Listening to Beethoven and singing to the radio contribute to an individual's development of expression and cultural appreciation.

In order to obtain this regard for the arts, the United States' government must evaluate the arts in economic terms. Political debate will not disappear, but there are certain indisputable findings promoting the arts that must be recognized. Washington has attempted to promote the arts and arts education, but there remain deep seeded hostility to fully appreciating its value. Governmental endorsement for the arts will make them accessible to the public and no longer only seen as a private resource.

To overcome the social barrier hindering the arts from being part of American life, American communities must incorporate arts programs and include a financial commitment for their development. If government and public officials support the arts, America as a whole can overlook the preexisting values and ideologies that suggest the arts are not beneficial for life. Ultimately, the arts are critical in establishing a prosperous life experience.

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