

Articles

The Arts as a Polarized Issue and the Role of Political Trust in Promoting the Arts: Evidence From the United States

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The arts in the United States, for a long time received strong support from both sides of the political aisle. However, in recent years, the arts have been transformed into a partisan issue that pits conservatives against liberals. The article points to the importance of political trust as a means of helping conservatives overcome their ideological inclinations and support the arts. Scholars argue that political trust influences more strongly individuals who perceive a given policy to be one that imposes ideological risks for them compared with those without such risks. Focusing on the moderating role of political trust, the article examines whether political trust can help alleviate the conservatives' hostility to the arts. Relying on the 2016 General Social Survey, the article finds that conservatives have no direct relationship with arts spending, but they will be more likely to support arts spending when this is contingent upon political trust.

I. Introduction

The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) enjoyed consensual support when it was formed during the Great Society era. For the first fifteen years of its life, the budget of the NEA increased three times relative to other federal programs. However, the NEA began to be attacked by conservative politicians in the 1980s and was embroiled in controversies in the late-1980s. NEA funding was reduced by more than half in 1995 when Gingrich Republicans arrived en masse on Capitol Hill. As the only government agency responsible for funding the arts nationwide, the NEA lost its influence in the 1990s and has yet to emerge as the powerful agency for advocacy of the arts that it had been before the late-1980s. This article focuses on how the arts have turned into a partisan issue and considers what can be done to foster the support of the public and, particularly, that of conservatives, with regard to the arts.

As one such mechanism, this article focuses on political trust. While in earlier years, scholars emphasized the factors that influenced political trust, in recent years they have begun to pay attention to the prominent role of political trust in moderating the relationship between ideology and policy attitudes. In so doing, they found that political trust is a heuristic device through which liberals may support conservative programs and conservatives may do the same for liberal ones. In fact, political trust has been proved to moderate liberals' dislike of tax cuts or Social Security privatization; by the same token, conservatives have become more supportive of minority-oriented, redistributive, or welfare programs, when contingent upon their political trust (Hetherington & Globetti, 2005; Popp & Rudolph,

2011; Rudolph & Evans, 2005; Rudolph & Popp, 2009).

As the arts became a partisan issue at the elite level, they also began to be perceived as partisan by the public, following partisan-ideological sorting through which citizens came to align their ideology with that of their preferred political leaders (Davis & Dunaway, 2016; Mason, 2015). As such, the arts have started presenting ideological risks to conservatives. In this milieu, political trust has come to be a heuristic tool to moderate the relationship between conservatism and support for the arts.

Using the 2016 General Social Survey, this study explores whether ideology still plays a major role in influencing attitudes to arts spending and whether political trust can serve as the moderating force between ideology and attitudes to arts spending. The 2016 model reveals that liberals maintain positive relationship with attitudes to arts spending, but there is no significant relationship between conservatives and attitudes to arts spending. Still, conservatives are more likely to support arts spending when moderated by political trust.

By exploring the changing nature of arts in American political contexts, and emphasizing the role of political trust as a heuristic tool to overcome an individual's ideology, the article offers valuable contributions to the growing literature of political trust and its relationship with ideology and policy attitudes.

The study proceeds as follows. First, we offer an evolution of the arts from being a non-partisan to being a partisan issue. Then, we introduce the literature on ideological risk, political trust and policy attitudes, and generate research hypotheses. Next, we discuss the data and the variables used in the model. We then empirically test the hy-

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potheses and determine the results. Finally, we discuss the relevant implications of the results for political leaders and public officials.

II. The Arts as a Partisan Issue

The federal government has long sponsored the arts prior to the creation of the NEA in 1965. The film industry was subsidized by the Department of Commerce in the 1920s, and the New Deal helped lift the spirits of the down-trodden through arts programs sponsored by the Works Progress Administration (Knochel, 2017; Koch, 1998). Nevertheless, the creation and rise of the NEA in the 1960s and 1970s is attributed as much to homage to the assassinated John F. Kennedy and the Great Society era led by Lyndon B. Johnson, as to the surge of the educated classes in the post-war era (Brenson, 2001; Horwitz, 2016).

The 1980s saw the first chasm in terms of bipartisan support of the NEA. From the outset, President Reagan's aides in the presidential transition team exhibited animosity to the NEA. While they did not advocate destroying the NEA, they revealed the president's dislike of the arts (Andrews, 2017). Deepening tensions concerning the arts and the NEA were manifested and magnified in 1989. Two controversies stood out; Andres Serrano's photo, *Piss Christ*, which depicted Christ on the crucifix soaked in the artist's urine, debuted quietly at a New York event in 1987. However, when it was shown in Virginia two years later, it was subject to withering attacks from conservative politicians when the Rev. Donald Wildmon, a leader of the conservative American Family Foundation of Tupelo (Mississippi), held a press conference and directed concerns to the National Council on the Arts (Andrews, 2017). That the work received financial support from the NEA—amounting to \$15,000—caused the agency to become political fodder against which conservative politicians railed. Criticized for blasphemy, the work enraged the likes of Senate leader Jesse Helms of North Carolina; Senator D'Amato of New York called it “a deplorable, despicable display of vulgarity” (quoted in Andrews, 2017). Representative Dick Armey of Texas sent a threatening letter to the, then, NEA acting chair, Hugh Southern, and urged him to cut the NEA's ties to the artist for the “morally reprehensible trash” (quoted in Koch, 1998).

The second controversy involved another event which further pushed conservatives over the edge: the posthumous photography show by the late Robert Mapplethorpe who died at the age of 42 from HIV/AIDS' complications. Called the “The Perfect Moment,” the show, partially funded by the NEA (\$30,000), opened to the public at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, and several out of the one hundred and seventy-five photographs were sexually explicit involving sodomy and pedophilia. Enraged Senator Helms sent several offending photographs – soon to be called “Helm's Indecent Sampler”—to fellow senators, and the furor began (Andrews, 2017). The show was cancelled due to the ensuing public outcry, but approximately 1,000 artists projected images from the show onto an external wall of the gallery in their opposition to the abrupt cancellation (Andrews, 2017; Holpuch, 2017). The two episodes led the House of Representatives to chastise the NEA and those inside the NEA sensed that the events placed the

agency at the intersection of competing values, and that the two artists seemed to represent the “moral corruption” of the arts (Andrews, 2017).

Conservatives have increasingly framed the arts as a partisan issue. This view is captured by a piece published by the Heritage Foundation. The Heritage Foundation piece mulled over why the NEA was not a worthy government venture (Jarvik, 1997). It pictured supporting the NEA as tantamount to “welfare for artists” (Jarvik, 1997); it raised a variety of reasons as to why the agency needed to be abolished. These included the government's “unwarranted extension” into the private sector, “welfare for cultural elitists”, artists menacing independence, funding obscenity, spreading political correctness, squandering government resources, crowding out charitable giving to the arts, and violating the American heritage of small government (Jarvik, 1997). To conservatives, the arts came to signal luxury and waste that needed to be curbed, to ensure a smaller government (Knochel, 2017).

In other cases, conservatives have mocked NEA-sponsored or -involved events including the activities of the NEA Four (four artists who sued the NEA for the denial of fellowships), Karen Finley's performance (dipping her naked body in chocolate), the Doggie Hamlet project (an outdoor performance in Vermont involving humans, dogs and sheep in a confusing, dreamlike setting) and the support of a theater performance in response to gay marriage (Bowley, 2017; Harrington, 2016; Parachini, 1990; Rowl & Novak, 1990).

Despite the fact that it is a miniscule part of the federal budget (less than 0.004%), the NEA, because of its symbolic representation of the arts and culture, has undergone increasing budgetary threats. In the 1980s, these menaces merely consisted of political haranguing (Ha, 2017; Kramer, 1980); the 1989 NEA debacles did not harm the agency's budget at all despite all the invective (Ha, 2017; Koch, 1998; Wicker, 1989). Soon, however, inspired by Newt Gingrich's proselytization for the Contract for America, the newly-elected Republicans in 1995 were determined to defund the NEA as “an affront to the American taxpayer” in the words of Dick Armey, the House majority leader from Texas (Ha, 2017; Henneberger, 1995; Marquis, 1995). While the agency survived, its budget was reduced by 40% (Horwitz, 2016; Moen, 2002). The rhetoric motivated the Heritage Foundation to propose the termination of the agency; the plan mustered a majority, but it was stifled in the Democratic Senate (Ha, 2017). In 2011, one hundred and seventy-four Republicans in Congress pushed for the elimination of the NEA once again during the Obama administration; besieged, the latter promised to cut its budget by 13%, but the cut was eventually reduced to 6% (Ha, 2017; Trescott, 2011).

Over time, the framing of the arts as a partisan issue has filtered into the media. Since the late 1980s, a number of newspaper articles mentioning the NEA have regularly appeared across media outlets. According to Koch (1998), the focus of the news media also shifted from budget and quality to emotion and partisanship. The funding of the arts represented by the NEA illustrates the tenuous place of the arts in contemporary American politics. While the agency has survived by navigating through tumultuous partisan attacks, it symbolizes a gradual decline of public support for the arts and its early enthusiasm for free spirits and human-

ity as championed by John F. Kennedy (Brenson, 2001; Horwitz, 2016).

III. The Arts, Ideological Risk and Political Trust

What might, then, explain the transformation of a seemingly innocuous public issue, such as the arts, into a partisan issue? In recent years, partisanship at the elite political level has increasingly affected the populace as well. Partisan-ideological sorting, as it is called, refers to the alignment of partisan identity and ideological identity (Mason, 2015). Intensified party polarization in Washington D.C., the emergence of 24-7 mass media, and deep Internet penetration, are all blamed for partisan-ideological sorting among the public (Davis & Dunaway, 2016).

Can political trust help individuals overcome their ideological limitations to support government spending on the arts? Political trust is defined as an individual's evaluation of how government is supposed to function. The utility of the evaluation of political trust is based on the premise of process and performance (Rudolph & Popp, 2009). Political trust, therefore, works in consort with government programs. In other words, individuals with high trust levels are more likely to support government programs. Political trust in earlier years was studied more intensely as the dependent variable rather than the independent variable. The upsurge of political distrust in the late 1960s and 1970s motivated scholars to explore the reasons why this occurred (Citrin, 1974; Hibbing & Theiss-Morse, 2001; Miller, 1974).

However, as the literature on political trust matured, scholars began to probe the contingent roles of political trust in affecting individuals' attitudes to public policies (C. Brooks & Cheng, 2001; Chanley et al., 2000; Hetherington, 1998; Hetherington & Globetti, 2002, 2005; Hetherington & Husser, 2012; Hetherington & Rudolph, 2008; Popp & Rudolph, 2011; Rudolph, 2009; Rudolph & Evans, 2005; Rudolph & Popp, 2009). In this way, political trust functions as a decision heuristic that moderates individuals' ideological or material predilections to policy preferences. Political trust only influences individuals who perceive a given public policy or program as involving ideological or material risk (Hetherington & Globetti, 2005; Popp & Rudolph, 2011; Rudolph & Evans, 2005; Rudolph & Popp, 2009). For instance, conservatives may dislike a government welfare program and perceive it as an ideological risk to them. But if they possess high trust levels, this will help them suppress their ideological dislike, and be more inclined to support such programs. Conversely, political trust may not be relevant to liberals who would support welfare programs irrespective of their trust levels (Hetherington & Globetti, 2005; Hetherington & Rudolph, 2015).

In several empirical studies, scholars have proven the utility of political trust as a decision heuristic. A few studies have examined the contingent role of political trust on conservatives' attitudes to liberal causes such as in the case of political trust altering conservatives' views on redistributive programs for African Americans (Hetherington & Globetti, 2005; Rudolph & Evans, 2005). Others, on the other hand, have examined the moderating role of political trust in shaping liberals' attitudes to conservative causes; they showed that political trust helps liberals become supportive

of the likes of tax cuts and Social Security privatization (Rudolph, 2009; Rudolph & Popp, 2009). In both cases, political trust does not affect liberals' preferences for liberal programs; neither does it affect conservatives' preferences for conservative programs, as those programs do not involve ideological or material risks for them.

This study broadens the scope of studies on political trust as a decision heuristic by taking a close look at the arts policy that has long been perceived as a non-partisan policy that does not threaten the ideological preferences of individuals. This study is based on a premise that the arts have been transformed into a partisan issue, with a widening gap between liberals and conservatives in their attitudes toward the arts.

Several studies have noted positive relationships between liberals and attitudes to the spending on the arts, as well as negative relationships between conservatives and attitudes to the arts (A. C. Brooks, 2001, 2003, 2004). Based on the ideological risk literature (Rudolph, 2009; Rudolph & Popp, 2009), liberals should not be influenced by political trust, while conservatives will be more positive toward spending on the arts when moderated by political trust. As such, the article will empirically examine the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Liberals are positively associated with attitudes to arts spending.

Hypothesis 2: Conservatives are negatively associated with attitudes to arts spending.

Hypothesis 3: Conservatives are more supportive of arts spending, when moderated by political trust.

IV. Measurement

1. Data

This study relies on the 2016 General Social Survey. The General Social Survey has been administered since 1972. In earlier years, the survey was implemented annually, but it has been conducted biannually since 1994 (NORC, 2019). Although it resembles a panel data structure, it is cross-sectional in nature, with only a core set of variables available every survey, and with different respondents to each survey. Rotating panels started in 2010, but they do not affect the scope of this study (NORC, 2019). The total number of respondents for the 2016 General Social Survey was 2,867. However, while there were three versions of questionnaires for the survey (version 1, 2, and 3), only version 2 includes all the variables relevant to our model. As a result, the sample size for the model used in this study is 411.

2. Variables

The dependent variable for the model is individual attitudes to government spending on the arts. Respondents expressed their views on arts spending as 'spend much more,' 'spend more,' 'spend the same as now,' 'spend less,' and 'spend much less.' The variable was reverse-coded so that a value of 1 indicates less desired spending and a value of 5 indicates more desired spending. It ranges from 1 to 5 with the mean equaling 2.89, indicating that respondents on average slightly preferred 'less' spending than 'more' spending.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Variables	N	Mean	S.D.	Min.	Max.
Arts Spending	411	2.89	0.93	1	5
Liberals	411	0.30	0.46	0	1
Conservatives	411	0.34	0.48	0	1
Political Trust	411	1.54	0.52	1	3
Age	411	2.28	1.20	1	5
Female	411	0.63	0.48	0	1
White	411	0.74	0.44	0	1
Education	411	13.82	2.91	2	20
Political Understanding	411	3.64	0.93	1	5
Anti-statism	411	3.02	1.28	1	5
Low class	411	0.11	0.32	0	1
Middle class	411	0.42	0.49	0	1
Upper class	411	0.04	0.20	0	1

The research described in this article mainly focuses on the relationship between ideology and attitudes to arts spending, and the moderation of political trust on the relationship between the two. The ideology measure relied on individuals' self-identification with political views. The questionnaire consists of a seven-point scale that ranges from extremely liberal to extremely conservative. Three dummy variables were created from the questionnaire; liberals and conservatives were included in the model with moderates as the reference variable. Scholars note that ideology plays a significant role in affecting individual perceptions of the arts. Liberals are more sympathetic to progressive issues including the arts than conservatives (A. C. Brooks, 2001, 2003, 2004). Additionally, two measures were combined to create the political trust measure. Respondents were asked to give an opinion with regard to how much confidence they have in the executive branch of the federal government and in Congress. A value of 1 indicates low political trust and a value of 3 indicates the opposite. The major focus here is to investigate the moderating role of political trust on the relationship between ideology and attitudes to arts spending. The two interaction variables—liberal x political trust and conservative x political trust—were created to examine the moderation.

The model also accounts for a set of controls. Political understanding asked respondents to rate their understanding of major political issues facing the United States, ranging from 1 to 5; education is expressed as years of formal

education. Education and political understanding tap into individuals' perceptions of progressive issues. The more learned and knowledgeable individuals are, the more likely it is that they will exhibit a positive policy outlook, and will be supportive of progressive issues, including the arts (Barkan, 2004; Galston, 2001; Lewis, 2006). Following this reasoning, individuals with a higher level of education and better political understanding will show more sympathy toward arts spending than those who are less well-educated and show less interest in political issues. Individuals' hostile attitudes to the government (anti-statism) can also negatively affect their support for government policies and spending measures (Quadagno & Street, 2005); the anti-statism element asked respondents to evaluate whether the government should do more or less to solve problems in the country; 1 indicates that the government should do more and 5 indicates that the government does too much. Three indicator variables were included in the model to account for which social class respondents perceived themselves as belonging to. Those who consider themselves to be in a higher class may have enough time and resources to appreciate the arts than those in a lower class, and are more likely to support the arts (Barkan, 2004); working class was excluded from the model and serves as the reference variable. Finally, the model accounts for the demographic characteristics of individuals including age, sex (female) and race (white) (A. C. Brooks, 2001, 2003, 2004); sex and race are indicator variables.

Table 2. Correlations Statistics

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Arts Spending												
2. Liberals	0.20***											
3. Conservatives	-0.17***	-0.48***										
4. Political Trust	0.11**	0.07	-0.15***									
5. Age	-0.06	-0.14***	0.19***	-0.14***								
6. Female	-0.08	-0.01	-0.02	0.05	0.04							
7. White	-0.10**	-0.13**	0.03	-0.20***	0.19***	0.03						
8. Education	0.10**	0.04	0.01	-0.03	0.01	0.05	0.15***					
9. Political Understanding	0.10**	0.06	0.08	0.05	0.12**	-0.14***	-0.07	0.01				
10. Anti-statism	-0.23***	-0.21***	0.27***	-0.16***	0.15***	0.05	0.28***	0.11**	-0.02			
11. Low class	-0.06	0.05	-0.02	-0.12**	-0.00	-0.03	-0.07	-0.21***	-0.11**	-0.02		
12. Middle class	0.08	-0.01	0.02	-0.00	0.15***	0.01	0.12**	0.23***	0.07	0.06	-0.30***	
13. Upper class	-0.00	0.02	-0.05	0.07	0.16***	0.01	-0.02	0.09*	0.12**	0.01	-0.08	-0.18***

* $p < .10$. ** $p < .05$. *** $p < .01$.

Table 3. Ideology, Political Trust, and Attitudes to Arts Spending

	Model 1		Model 2	
	Coeff.	SE	Coeff.	SE
Liberals	0.62	0.26**	-0.76	0.86
Conservatives	-0.16	0.24	-1.43	0.69**
Political Trust	0.09	0.20	-0.45	0.30
Liberal x Political Trust			0.88	0.50*
Conservative x Political Trust			0.83	0.40**
Age	-0.05	0.08	-0.05	0.08
Female	0.05	0.23	0.07	0.23
White	-0.47	0.26*	-0.41	0.25
Education	0.10	0.04***	0.10	0.04***
Political Understanding	0.22	0.12*	0.20	0.12*
Anti-statism	-0.33	0.09**	-0.33	0.09***
Low class	0.44	0.31	0.39	0.31
Middle class	0.41	0.23*	0.42	0.23*
Upper class	-0.07	0.55	-0.19	0.56
T ₁	-1.56	0.78	-2.41	0.86
T ₂	0.31	0.77	-0.53	0.84
T ₃	2.58	0.77	1.76	0.83
T ₄	5.07	0.84	4.26	0.89
Log Likelihood	-485.56		-483.16	
Wald Test	58.80		59.21	
Number of Cases	411		411	

* p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01

V. Results

The dependent variable for the model is individual attitudes to arts spending. It is a categorical variable that ranges from 1 to 5. Consequently, ordered probit was used to examine the influence of ideology on arts spending, and the moderation of political trust on the relationship between ideology and arts spending (Long, 1997). Using a linear model for a categorical dependent variable produces biased estimates (Long, 1997). Furthermore, using a binary variable for ordered categories reduces critical information regarding individuals' varying perceptions of arts spending (Fullerton & Dixon, 2010). The model also relies on robust standard errors and a weight provided by the General Social Survey. The two sets of results are provided in Table 3. Model 1 shows the direct influence of the explanatory variables and controls on the dependent variable, whereas Model 2 adds two interaction variables to Model 1 to show the joint effects of ideology and political trust on the dependent variable.

This article focuses on the relationship between ideology and arts spending as well as the contingent role of political trust on the relationship. As expected, liberals displayed positive attitudes to arts spending. However, conservatives, at least compared to moderates (serving as the reference variable), did not show a direct relationship with attitudes

to arts spending. More importantly, the study focused on whether conservatives who possess an ideological dislike of liberal causes such as arts spending would be supportive of them when contingent upon political trust. While conservatives did not have a direct influence on the dependent variable, they became supportive of it when they had more confidence in the nation's political institutions. Surprisingly, liberals were also affected by political trust; political trust in this model helped amplify liberals' positive attitudes to arts spending.

In terms of controls, as expected, education and political understanding were positively associated with attitudes to arts spending. Individuals with better political understanding were positively associated with arts spending. Politically-knowledgeable individuals exhibited a positive proclivity for arts spending. Similarly, individuals with better education demonstrated favorable views toward arts spending. Middle class membership was also positively related to arts spending. Compared to people deeming themselves to be working class, middle class individuals demonstrated more willingness to support arts spending. Upper class individuals, however, did not show a significant relationship with attitudes to art spending; it is possible that such individuals may support the arts, but this may be muted by their dislike of government spending directed towards the arts and its implications for taxation (Torgler, 2012).

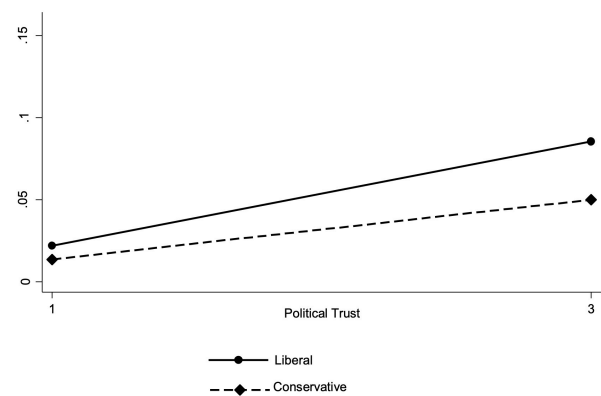
Table 4. The Predicted Probabilities of ‘Strong’ Support for the Arts (2016)

		Strong Support (‘Spend Much More’)		
Political Trust		Min.	Max.	Difference
	Conservatives	1.37%	5.00%	3.63%
	Liberals	2.21%	8.55%	6.34%
	Political Trust	2.04%	2.56%	0.52%
	Age	2.28%	1.90%	-0.38%
	Female	2.08%	2.23%	0.15%
	White	2.91%	1.95%	-0.96%
	Education	0.59%	3.98%	3.39%
	Political Understanding	1.28%	2.85%	1.57%
	Anti-statism	4.21%	1.15%	-3.06%
	Low class	2.08%	3.04%	0.96%
	Middle class	1.80%	2.71%	0.91%
	Upper class	2.18%	1.81%	-0.37%

Some controls proved to be in negative relationships with attitudes to arts spending. Individuals hostile to the government were less likely to support arts spending because they support a smaller government with less government interference in citizens’ economic and social life (Quadagno & Street, 2005). Finally, age and female did not form any meaningful relationship with attitudes to arts spending. Surprisingly, whites compared to non-whites were negatively associated with attitudes to art spending; whites may be exposed to more opportunities to enjoy the arts, but the majority of whites tend to be conservative (Zingher, 2018), resulting in a stronger dislike of a governmental reach into individuals’ social lives. This might have resulted in a negative relationship with attitudes to arts spending; whites may also perceive the arts as a welfare issue, and view it unfavorably (Gilens, 1996).

Table 4 demonstrates the predicted probabilities for ‘strong’ support for arts spending (a value of 5 for the dependent variable). It illustrates how political trust interacts with ideology for a ‘strong’ support of arts spending. The predicted probabilities derive from setting each variable at its minimum and maximum values, while holding other variables at their means. The difference in the values between minimum and maximum is considered a one-unit shock.

For conservatives, a change from the lowest to the highest political trust levels increased ‘strong’ support for arts spending by 3.63%. Political trust also increased liberals’ support for arts spending, and its influence was bigger in magnitude (6.34%) compared with its influence on conservatives (3.63%). As shown in Table 3, political trust influences not just conservatives who possess an ideological dislike of arts spending, but also liberals who already possess favorable attitudes towards it. Among the controls, education and political understanding are positive contributors to strong support for arts spending. Figure 1 confirms and visualizes the findings presented in Table 4. The shift of

**Figure 1. The Interaction between Political Trust and Ideology for Strong Support of Arts Spending**

political trust levels from low to high results in increased support for arts spending among both conservatives and liberals.

VI. Discussion

Consensual political support enabled the creation of the NEA in 1965. Although it was created by a Democratic administration, the agency also enjoyed ebullient support from Republican administrations in the 1970s. In the first decade and a half, the agency’s budget quadrupled. Beginning in the 1980s, however, the NEA encountered increasing criticism. Right from the presidential transition period, the Reagan administration were hostile towards the NEA. While the enmity did not usher in a dramatic budget cut initially, it eventually led to a 10% cut by the end of the decade. The NEA controversies in the late 1980s, however, renewed conservatives’ animus towards the NEA. The ascendancy of

the Republicans in the wake of the botched healthcare reforms of the Clinton administration in the mid-1990s finally consolidated years of conservative hatred of the agency, and the budget was promptly cut by 40%.

In this context, this article focused on the potential role of political trust as a heuristic device to encourage conservatives to increase their support for arts spending. Scholars have argued that political trust as a moderating force works only when individuals are exposed to ideological or material risks regarding a government program (Hetherington & Globetti, 2002, 2005; Hetherington & Rudolph, 2008; Rudolph, 2009; Rudolph & Evans, 2005; Rudolph & Popp, 2009). However, this requires that the arts present a threat to individuals. This article points to the fact that conservative politicians successfully framed the arts as a partisan issue aided in part by the NEA controversies in the late 1980s and by conservative organizations such as the Heritage Foundation. Scholars have also argued that the constant demonstration of partisanship at an elite level finds its way into the public domain, and the public are beginning to sort themselves by issues they perceive as being partisan (Davis & Dunaway, 2016; Mason, 2015). As the arts became a partisan issue, it also began to present ideological risks to conservative individuals.

Based on this premise, this article hypothesized that conservatives would be negatively associated with attitudes to arts spending, whereas liberals would be positively associated with such attitudes. The ordered probit results show that liberals behaved as expected in their positive relationship with attitudes to arts spending. Conservatives, however, did not form a negative relationship with the dependent variable. In fact, when moderated by political trust, conservatives showed positive preferences for arts spending. Surprisingly, liberals were also affected by political trust; political trust enhanced the already positive relationship between liberals and attitudes to arts spending.

The results raise two important questions. First, why did conservatives turn positive toward arts spending (Model 2) despite the fact that they did not show any direct relationship with arts spending (Model 1)? It is true that conservatives do not show any animus toward arts spending once other variables are accounted for. It should be noted, however, that this non-significance is expressed in comparison to moderates, who serve as the reference variable. In fact, conservatives are still negatively correlated with attitudes to arts spending ($\rho = -0.17$). Moderates are also in a negative correlation with attitudes to arts spending ($\rho = -0.03$). This may have affected why conservatives were not negatively associated with arts spending in Model 1, and might explain why conservatives showed more willingness to support arts spending when moderated by political trust.

The second question that needs further exploration is why liberals are affected by political trust even if they do not feel ideological risks relating to liberal causes such as spending on the arts. Several studies have consistently demonstrated that liberals should not be affected by political trust when they are asked to support a liberal policy, and that conservatives should not be affected by political trust when they support a conservative cause (Rudolph, 2009; Rudolph & Popp, 2009). The results of this study demonstrate that this is not necessarily the case. Liberals still lend

more support for a liberal cause when they have a high degree of confidence in political institutions. In this case, political trust serves as an enhancer for liberals' support of a liberal cause. Similarly, conservatives may lend more support to a conservative cause such as tax-cuts or welfare reduction. This study offers two contributions to the political trust and ideological risk literature by showing that political trust can function as a buffer for conservatives' attitudes to arts spending, and as an enhancer for liberals' attitudes to it.

While political trust can be a buffer as well as an enhancer for people with strong ideological preferences, the results also reveal that the impact of political trust is somewhat weak. The weak magnitude of political trust—for instance for a 3.63% increase among conservatives and a 6.34% among liberals—indicates that the arts are not such a politically-charged issue as welfare programs such as food stamps (officially called the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Programs) or Medicaid in the United States (Gilens, 2000).

Still, political trust can be an effective moderator of the relationship between ideology and individuals' attitudes to a public policy. When severe partisanship rules mainstream politics, any increase in support—albeit weak—will serve as a welcome respite for governmental support of the arts which has undergone a decline over the last four decades in the United States. Moreover, when many governments across countries are under serious fiscal austerity constraints, any incremental change—however small it is—will have crucial consequences for the area affected by such change.

Nevertheless, it is one thing to drum up the importance of political trust, but it is another to shore it up. The latest political trends in the United States do not look optimistic in terms of an increase in levels of political trust. Political trust plummeted in the late 1960s and during the Vietnam War struggles, and underwent an onslaught in the aftermath of the Watergate scandal in the 1970s. Some argue that it would take herculean efforts to raise trust levels to the pre-late 1960s era when the Cold War made both political elites and the public lend strong support to the country (Hetherington & Husser, 2012).

The presidential election of 2020 revealed that ideological divide is as wide as it can be. Extreme supporters of President Trump even denied that the election result was legitimate. A survey of U.S. adults conducted between September 30 and October 5 in 2020 showed 89% of Trump supporters to be very concerned about the direction of the country if Joe Biden were to be elected; similarly, 90% of Biden supporters exhibited serious concerns about the country's direction if Trump were to be re-elected (Dimock & Wike, 2020). The attacking of the U.S. Capitol by Trump supporters when the electoral college was about to be certified demonstrated an extreme political chasm between Democrats and Republicans (Barry et al., 2021). Thus, it would be quite challenging for future policymakers to see those who oppose their policies support them, because the level of political trust may not change in a widening political divide where liberals and conservatives do not appear to get along with each other in any way (Dimock & Wike, 2020).

Nonetheless, small, infrequent opportunities exist when

political trust spikes. Occasions such as national crises, both domestic- and foreign-originated, are known to promote the public's trust in government. This is when political leaders need to push for their favored policies with zeal. Additionally, political leaders collectively need to think about what the pervasive bashing of government has led to (Kim, 2010). These are not easy matters, particularly for Republican leaders, as the party rose to prominence by debasing government and threatening to starve it.

Although this article is not about the virtues of the arts and their usefulness in society, one can easily imagine a world without the arts that inspire humankind. As the arts are directly connected with individuals' happiness or well-being (Puig et al., 2006), supporting them is critical for enriching human life.

To this end, this article pointed to political trust as a heuristic device to overcome an individual's ideology. The results show that the transformation of the arts into a partisan issue is a recent phenomenon, at least among the public. This demonstrates the increasing polarization of American politics that is reshaping individual citizens' views towards government programs, turning many policies into partisan issues. Environmentalism is another issue that exemplifies this. The Environmental Protection Agency was founded during the Nixon administration and garnered bipartisan support in its early years. A series of significant bills to protect and preserve the environment were passed in the 1970s. However, starting with the Reagan administration, environmentalism began to be assailed, and this trend has continued during the Trump administration, with frontal assaults on environmental regulations from coal power to offshore drilling (Greshko et al., 2019; Krauss, 2019; Lipton & Friedman, 2018; Popovich et al., 2018). Many experts fled from the EPA (Lipton et al., 2018). Climate change and science was questioned and mocked by the administration (Davenport, 2017; Davenport & Lipton, 2017; Lipton et al., 2018). The evolution of environmentalism is strikingly similar to how the arts have become an issue that differentiates conservatives from liberals. As every policy arena is seemingly caught in the tentacles of partisanship, political trust will play an increasingly prominent role in sustaining and pursuing government programs in the years ahead.

While this article focused on the United States, its findings also offer broad implications for other countries. In recent years, countries around the world have experienced serious fiscal austerity (Edwards, 2018; Goodman, 2019; Yeginsu, 2019). Consequently, spending on the arts and humanities has been under critical strain. Fiscal threats by conservative leaders can be easily found in the United States, Australia and Britain. Governor Rick Perry in the United States proposed an increase in student tuition fees for liberal arts and social science programs, drawing a student-led petition; there has also been a decline in humanities funding in Australia and Britain (Delany, 2013). A recent rise of conservative regimes around the world offers ideal cases to test the potential force of political trust in contemporary politics, where seemingly bipartisan issues have turned into those attracting heated political battles. In such a context, the need for political trust is as urgent as it has ever been before for political leaders who need to pur-

sue policies that may provoke hostility on the part of the public. This study, therefore, has strong practical relevance for political leaders as well as for government officials.

This study does have some limitations. First, it should be noted that not all conservatives oppose spending on the arts. In fact, there were times when the level of government support for the arts was similar under a Republican administration as it was under a Democratic administration (Jacobsmeier, 2020). Thus, future studies need to make a clear distinction between conservatives' support for the arts in general, and their support for government-assisted art that attacks conservative values. Second, we recognize that conservatives are not the only group politicizing the arts. Liberals have also had a role in politicizing the arts. In fact, art critic Jed Perl claimed that liberals were "killing art" by emphasizing ideology over beauty (Perl, 2014). Liberals have increasingly considered the arts, not in terms of its inherent value, but as a medium to deliver other values (Perl, 2014). Third, the study was based on the premise that the arts as a partisan issue is a recent phenomenon for the public. Whether this is a one-time phenomenon needs further verification in future studies. As the results contained in this paper are only significant for a cross-sectional period, the study is limited in terms of its broad applicability and generalization. Fourth, our model does not account for the fact that conservatives may be naturally inclined to trust a Republican administration. This problem may not be a major concern for our data which related to the Democratic Obama administration, but there is an urgent need for studies that account for this by separating data years under a conservative administration from those under a liberal administration. Fifth, it should also be noted that the impact of political trust in the model was quite small. The confidence intervals of marginal predictions for both liberals and conservatives when political trust is strong (political trust = 3) overlap, indicating that our model has very limited practical effect. However, this also reflects the arts as a minor issue in contemporary American politics compared to such issues as welfare and taxation. Thus, future studies are needed to verify the role of political trust in connecting ideology and support for the arts. Sixth, in terms of log likelihoods and the Wald test, there are very slight differences between the two models. In particular, Model 2 has lower log likelihood and a greater Wald test statistic than Model 1, indicating that Model 2 has slightly better goodness of fit than Model 1. While two models are in essence similar in terms of the two statistics, our research focus on the moderation of political trust warrants a model incorporating the interaction (Model 2) even though the two models are not much different in terms of goodness of fit. Sixth, our measures are mostly based on one item or two items with regard to political trust. Consequently, the validity of our measures may not be ideal compared to multi-item measures (Diamantopoulos et al., 2012). A future study may consider those variables whose measure consists of multiple items. Finally, the study did not examine the direct relationship between policy attitudes and policy outcomes, as it only touched upon individuals' intentions to support a policy. Future researchers are advised to consider the relationship between behavioral intentions and actual behaviors.

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