The **ARTS**
OF DEMOCRACY
ART, PUBLIC CULTURE, AND THE STATE

Edited by CASEY NELSON BLAKE

WOODROW WILSON CENTER PRESS
Washington, D.C.

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA PRESS
Philadelphia
CHAPTER 10

Public Attitudes toward Cultural Authority and Cultural Diversity in Higher Education and the Arts

PAUL DIMAGGIO AND BETHANY BRYSON

For much of the late 1980s and 1990s, controversy rocked America’s universities and cultural institutions. Within the arts, well-publicized battles over controversial photographs, installations, and performance pieces—from the Robert Mapplethorpe controversy to the Brooklyn Museum affair—pitted defenders of modernism and artistic freedom against champions of traditional values and public decorum. Within higher education, universities were castigated as preserves of “political correctness,” dominated by “tenured radicals” who sought to replace traditional Western culture with a curricular goulash reflecting preferences and identities of a broad array of ethnic, gender, and lifestyle interest groups.

As this volume goes to press, the culture wars in the arts and higher education are relatively becalmed. The rate of publication of screeds attacking academic liberalism has slowed, and, for now at least, conservatives have abandoned their effort to eliminate the much-maligned National Endowment for the Arts. With the migration of cultural controversy to the bedroom and the

The authors are grateful to John Evans, Richard A. Peterson, Tom Smith, Lynn Smith-Lovin, Blair Wheaton, and the members of the Princeton Sociology Department Summer Workshop on Empirical Research on Culture for comments and suggestions on drafts of this chapter. They deeply appreciate research support from the Rockefeller Foundation and institutional support from the Princeton Center for Arts and Cultural Policy Studies (as well as grants to the center from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the Pew Charitable Trusts).
laboratory at the new century's turn, we may need to remind ourselves that the "culture wars" began in the nation's museums and universities.

We should not forget, for two reasons. First, the present moment may represent the eye of the hurricane. The paucity of controversial art exhibitions probably reflects curatorial caution more than increased tolerance. And storm clouds are gathering over universities again, as state legislatures across the country consider legislation mandating that public universities embrace the disingenuously titled "Academic Bill of Rights," a conservative effort to influence curricular content and chill academic speech.3

Second, quite apart from the likelihood of resurgent conflict, we have much to learn from the battles of the 1980s and 1990s, for their lessons bear directly upon the nature of cultural authority, especially religious and professional authority, in American democracy; upon the receptivity of the native born to the new immigration of the late twentieth century; and upon the mode and manner of cultural reproduction during an era in which all signs indicate that traditional bases of cultural authority have weakened as cultural diversity has increased. How the still widely perceived tension between greater cultural diversity and weaker cultural authority is resolved—whether it produces a "twilight of common dreams" (as Todd Gitlin put it) illuminated only by the blaze of intergroup conflict, or an efflorescent democratic culture—will depend on the shape and strength of our institutions and on how well we master the "arts of democracy" with which this book is concerned.4

In this chapter, we review the results of a 1993 survey of a statistically representative cross-section of U.S. adults to see what those outside the theater of battle made of the issues around which controversy raged. We conclude that mass opinion is more moderate and in many ways more sophisticated than public rhetoric. If published accounts of controversy have often depicted a two-sided battle between radical multiculturalists and tradition-minded conservatives, the structure of public sentiments has been more nuanced in at least three ways. First, attitudes toward cultural authority and cultural diversity are not polarized: Most opinions hew to the center of the ideological spectrum. Second, attitudes toward cultural authority do not follow in lock step from attitudes toward cultural diversity: Supporters of multiculturalism do not have much more or less faith in cultural elites than their opponents. Third, and most important, respect for the value of high culture—specifically modern art and the classics of Western literature—is not associated with the devaluation of cultural diversity; indeed, people who value high culture are somewhat more likely than others to endorse some multicultural educational reforms.

The Arts and Education as Battlegrounds

Many observers, including some social scientists, perceived the debates over education and the arts as part of a broader "culture war" that pits religious con-
servatives or “traditionalists,” who believe in God-given moral imperatives, against secular progressivists, who espouse moral relativism and seek to exclude religion from public life. In this view, hostility to modern art, a reluctance to open the traditional canon to new works, support for English-only language policies, and distrust of the judgment of the liberal professorate follow from the traditionalist worldview. By contrast, so this position’s adherents argue, support for expanding the canon and bilingual education, appreciation of modern and postmodern art, and respect for the cultural authority of professors and curators reflect a progressivist world view.

Studies of public opinion on other issues (including our own research) have found little support for the proposition that the United States has been in the midst of a “culture war,” if by that we mean that Americans have become more sharply divided on many issues along progressivist and traditionalist lines. Our political institutions, of course, are sites of harsh struggle, and citizens who self-identify as strong Democrats or Republicans have become more sharply divided. But on most social and cultural issues, the attitudes of the public as a whole gravitate to the center; most people derive their attitudes on most issues from experience or specific considerations rather than broad ideological postures; and attitudes on most social issues (abortion being the great exception) actually became less rather than more polarized during the last quarter of the twentieth century.

Nonetheless, many journalists came to the opposite conclusion, convincing themselves by the mid-1990s that the United States was in the throes of a full-fledged culture war. Indeed, reporters employed the term “culture war,” which appeared in the press only rarely during the 1980s, with escalating frequency between 1990 and 1995. Our review of newspapers on the Nexis database indicated that whereas the phrase appeared in two or three articles per month between January 1990 and late 1991, references rose steadily thereafter to approximately fifty (distinct) articles per month by late 1994 and early 1995. Whether or not social and cultural conflict actually increased in the United States during this period, attentive newspaper readers would certainly have concluded that it had.

The arts and education, especially higher education, were among the most visible arenas in which the cultural contests of the 1980s and 1990s were fought. Indeed, these institutions were the central focus of the cultural politics that sprang into public consciousness with conservative attacks on campus “political correctness” and the National Endowment for the Arts in the late 1980s. More than one-third of all references to “culture war” in the U.S. press between 1990 and 1993 (as these were recorded in the Nexis system) were about higher education and the high culture arts. (Many more concerned the popular media.) No less a belligerent than William Bennett, President Ronald Reagan’s chair of the National Endowment for the Humanities, described the “culture war” as a battle “about music, art, poetry, literature, television programming, and movies; the modes of expression and conversation,
official and unofficial, that express who and what we are, what we believe, and how we act.\textsuperscript{98}

Part of the visibility and salience of attacks on universities and arts institutions reflected their sponsorship: Several conservative foundations supported a network of academic associations, publishing houses, and student groups that promoted the attack on the universities.\textsuperscript{9} Many conservative Christian social-movement groups, as well as some Republican politicians, found it convenient to highlight government grants to "obscene" or "sacrilegious" artists in fund-raising appeals and campaign speeches.\textsuperscript{10} Part of the attention lavished upon conflicts in universities and the arts is explicable by their immediacy: Photographs with in-your-face sexual or religious imagery and lurid (if rarely entirely accurate) tales of innocent college students crucified at the altar of "political correctness" have the capacity to engender shock and dismay.

In any case, campus controversies and arts-funding scandals received attention disproportionate to their number or significance, as isolated events were taken as emblematic of broad cultural trends. With respect to the arts, the fact that only a dozen or so grants out of tens of thousands by public arts agencies were suitable for condemnation by those agencies' adversaries is at least as remarkable—and, if one takes it as a sign of timidity, at least as sobering—as the fact that those grants were made at all.

In the field of higher education, reports of the trashing of Western civilization turned out to represent fevered reactions to modest reforms. As Bethany Bryson concluded from case studies of four very different English departments, campuses themselves (with some well-publicized exceptions) were the calm eyes at the center of the canon-war hurricane. Elite departments turned disagreements into spirited intellectual contests among entrepreneurial professors who, whatever the outcome, remained free to teach what they pleased. In non-elite departments, curricular decisions were dictated by the realities of university distribution requirements, what textbook publishers offered, and student preferences—faculty are happy to teach nearly any decent book if only their students will read it—leaving little time or occasion for philosophical contention.\textsuperscript{11}

Bryson's results were consistent with those of a 1990 survey of English Department faculty conducted by the Modern Language Association. That study found that although courses in modern literature included works by women and African American authors (courses on earlier periods were largely unchanged), such additions only modestly leavened syllabi dominated by canonical figures. And while just over half of the departments had introduced courses on women writers or writers of color, almost 80 percent offered specialized courses on Shakespeare, with the typical institution offering as many sections of the latter as sections in all courses on women and authors of color combined.\textsuperscript{12}
Public Opinion and the Arts of Democracy

Even if the press exaggerated the magnitude of change and the severity of conflict, such reports might have markedly influenced Americans' perceptions. Our purpose here is to explore the extent to which the public battles over the arts and higher education of the early 1990s reflected (or shaped) the underlying structure of American sentiments, as captured by a sample survey of more than 1,400 noninstitutionalized Americans aged eighteen years and over. These men and women were interviewed in their homes in the spring of 1993, a period of relative calm before the escalation of culture war rhetoric that preceded the 1994 midterm elections.

It may be worth asking both why we should be interested in public opinion, and whether surveys are capable of measuring it. As to the first, measuring public opinion is a central ritual of American democracy. This reliance on attitude surveys to characterize the public mind is a relatively novel and highly consequential aspect of contemporary politics. Whereas "public opinion" in other epochs was constituted in salons, coffee shops, or public squares, today it reflects specific practices of survey design and implementation, the results of which insert themselves as social facts into political discourse. Quite apart from whether the percentage of the public that favors or opposes bilingual education or government grants to artists reflects "true" attitudes (insofar as such things can be said to exist), survey results, once reported in the press, structure and constrain public debate.13

Because of this, the results of attitude surveys have significant political implications for both cultural democrats and elitists. If one believes that the public has a legitimate claim on the policies of universities or nonprofit arts institutions, then the weight one gives critical voices will depend, to some extent at least, on whether their views represent those of the constituencies for whom they claim to speak. If one believes that universities and cultural institutions should be insulated from fashions that sway the broader culture, then one must understand public opinion in order to fend off the forces of philistinism.

But do surveys really tell us what people think? Most polls invite respondents to affirm or reject an opinion (declared or embedded in a question) that the survey's authors have constructed. Affirmation does not mean that a respondent fully embraces the position endorsed, only that his or her view is more affirmative than rejecting. Moreover, as survey experts are quick to point out, many people construct opinions on the spot to oblige pollsters. If people have not thought much about an issue, their responses may be driven by the details of question wording. If they have thought a lot about it, their opinions may be too complex and ambivalent to be captured in brief pre-coded responses.14

Even so, attitude surveys can teach us a lot about the direction and structure of people's views, albeit not the specifics of what they believe. For one
thing, surveys are excellent inoculants against partisan claims to represent the masses and against the natural tendency to infer the distribution of public sentiments from their visible expression in collective action and talk show debate. Equally important, inspecting the relationship between different items in an attitude survey—the extent to which people who take a certain stand on one issue take a predictable position on a second—lets us draw inferences as to how people reason about matters of controversy. Analyzing the ways in which responses to opinion surveys fit together helps us recover the narratives that structure the opinions of the public or of particular groups within it. Such narratives are often different and less ideological than those that animate public speeches and newspaper editorials. In other words, attitude surveys cannot reveal the public mind in stark clarity, but they dispel illusions and offer intriguing hints about how people understand their world.

Specifically, we believe that data from the 1993 General Social Survey can help us understand Americans' views of cultural authority and cultural diversity. By "cultural diversity," we refer to heterogeneity with respect to racial and ethnic groups understood to be "minorities." In the United States, cultural diversity ordinarily refers to communities of color, including persons of Asian, African, Latin American, and Native American descent. Debates about cultural diversity address the inclusiveness of institutions as manifested by the backgrounds of persons (faculty or students, curators or actors), of cultural objects (books in a curriculum, paintings in galleries), or of languages (as in controversies over bilingual education in the schools).

By "cultural authority," we refer to the legitimate rights of specialized elites to evaluate objects, ideas, or actions in specific spheres of collective responsibility. Societies vary in the extent to which such authority is vested in anyone at all; in the degree of consensus about what kinds of people possess it; in the extent to which it is differentiated by domain or concentrated across them; and in the extent to which its exercise is embedded in the state, in private organizations, or in more general discursive formations.

In comparison with other wealthy nations, the United States' pattern of cultural authority has been unusual in at least two ways. First, in the domain of arts and letters, it has been relatively weak and strongly contested. Second, at least since the Progressive Era, cultural authority has been concentrated in densely connected networks based in universities and the professions.15

Conflicts over the arts and education often challenge established modes of cultural authority from several directions. Some proponents of "diversity" castigate those who hold cultural authority for maintaining cultural hierarchies that arbitrarily exclude work by nonwhite or female artists, authors, scholars, and musicians. At the same time, attacks on modernist (and postmodern) art, and on "political correctness" (sometimes a code word for attention to "cultural diversity") in the universities have often entailed a rejection of professional authority, an antinomian appeal to the "common sense" of the Ameri-
can public that works, insofar as it does, precisely because cultural authority (in the arts and humanities) has never been very effectively established.

Of course, the most influential of these critics (e.g., Hilton Kramer, Allan Bloom, William Bennett) are no strangers to universities themselves: Such critics often speak on behalf of the traditional canon and in the name of a no-longer-dominant view of the humanities, drawing upon their own professional credentials to underscore their arguments. Thus combatants in cultural conflict construct both protagonists and villains—culturally diverse groups, "great" art or literature, the academic "establishment," and so on—in multiple and often inconsistent registers. Indeed, debates over education and the arts are complicated by the fact that they present themselves both as conflicts within a professorial and intellectual elite, in which each side claims the mantle of professional expertise, and as populist uprisings against secular cultural authority of any kind.

Our study had three objectives. We wanted to find out if attitudes toward cultural authority and cultural diversity in the arts and education were as polarized as the rhetoric suggested. We wanted to know if the general public's opinions on the various issues that had become implicated in public debates cohered into the clusters of interlinked opinions marked out by conservative critics and their liberal opponents. Finally, insofar as we identified lines of cleavage, we were eager to learn how Americans of different genders, races, ages, and levels of educational attainment differed in their views.

Are Attitudes Polarized?

The 1993 General Social Survey contained eight questions designed to tap respondents' views on these conflicts. In each case, respondents were presented with a statement and asked to indicate whether they agreed, agreed strongly, disagreed, or disagreed strongly with the sentiments it expressed. The items tapped attitudes toward the role of the classics in high school and college curricula, the capacity of "great books" to transcend their cultural origins, bilingual education in the public schools, reform of the canon to include literature by women and people of color at the expense of traditional works by white men, whether excellence can be found in popular and folk culture as well as the fine arts, whether teachers and professors can be trusted to decide what students should read, and whether many people are capable of recognizing quality in the arts. In some cases, the statements were phrased tendentiously to provoke varied reactions.

Given that these topics are hardly dinner table staples in most American households, respondents were strikingly able to produce opinions. Just between 4 percent (on the issue of bilingual education, which had been in the news) and 11 percent (on replacing traditional literature with work by women...
and minorities) confessed that they did not know how what they thought about the issues in question. Just over 10 percent were unsure how they felt about the role of the classics, 8 percent were not sure if great books are universal, and 7 percent had no opinion about modern art. These percentages are high by the standards of such surveys; by comparison, just 4 percent said "don't know" when asked if a book advocating homosexuality should be removed from their local public library, 3 percent were unsure if government spent too little or too much money on assistance for poor people, and fewer than 2 percent failed to express an opinion on whether gun buyers should be required to obtain police permits. Nonetheless, most respondents were sufficiently comfortable with the issues to express themselves to interviewers.

For all those who did respond to each question, our findings indicate the percentage choosing each of four options: "strongly agree," "agree," "disagree," and "strongly disagree." In each case, we analyzed results separately for all respondents and for college graduates only. We looked separately at the latter because we assumed that controversies about higher education and the arts are typically more salient to college graduates than to other people. We wondered if college graduates' attitudes differed from those of other Americans and if their views were more polarized than those of the public at large.

The General Public

Responses to questions about education indicate that Americans are more uncertain than sharply divided with respect to the authority of the classics, the desirability of expanding the canon to admit works by authors from previously underrepresented groups, confidence in educators' stewardship of the curriculum, and even the contentious issue of English instruction in the public schools. Most respondents were willing to "trust the judgment of the teachers and professors who decide what... students should be reading," but very few said they felt strongly about this and more than one-third withheld their trust—again, however, with little passion. (When the General Social Survey asked this question again in 1998, the results were very similar.)

When respondents were asked to respond to a provocatively worded assertion that students waste too much time reading the classics, just over one-third rose to the bait, with most disagreeing. Again, strong opinions were notable for their rarity. Indeed, other evidence points to the fact that Americans are divided in their views of the importance of the classics, but not rancorously so. A 1998 telephone survey of registered voters found a bare majority agreeing with the statement that "every college student should have to study the classics of Western civilization in order to graduate," with a large minority expressing disagreement and a similarly small number of "strong" opinions.

Respondents were more willing to agree with a statement, also provocatively phrased, bemoaning the substitution of works "promoted because they are by women or by members of minority groups" for "traditional American
literature." Yet, even though the wording seemed calculated to maximize the proportion of sympathetic responses, fewer than one in twelve strongly agreed, and more than one in three dissented. Between 1993 and 1998, when the General Social Survey repeated the item, opinion shifted toward multiculturalism, with only 56 percent in 1998 (compared with 66 percent) of those who expressed opinions endorsing the statement, 44 percent disagreeing, and an unusually high proportion (15 percent of all those questioned) declining to answer.

Respondents appear more comfortable with the notion of literary universalism: More than three-quarters agreed that "there is no 'white literature,' 'black literature,' or 'Asian literature,'" but that "the greatest books are universal in their appeal." Just over one in ten endorsed this view "strongly," the largest percentage taking a "strong" position on any item. (It is not clear in what measure these responses reflected aversion to ethnic segmentation in literature, admiration for "great books," or perhaps other messages that respondents found in the complex proposition with which they were confronted.)

Responses to the question about the exclusive use of English in public schools were split almost evenly between those who favored at least some bilingual instruction and those who favored English only. Approximately 10 percent of respondents took strong positions on each side, more than for other questions, but still surprisingly few for an issue that had been hotly debated, is linked to feelings about immigration, and had appeared on ballots in state elections.

Questions dealing with the arts also revealed much diversity of opinion and relatively few strongly held positions. Respondents were about evenly split between those who agreed and disagreed with the classically elitist position that "only a few people have the knowledge and ability to judge excellence in the arts." Fewer than 6 percent were willing to endorse this statement strongly, however, and fewer than 10 percent strongly opposed it. Five years later, in 1998, opinion had shifted noticeably in the direction of populism, with 57 percent disagreeing, 17 percent of them "strongly." A majority of respondents disagreed with a statement denigrating the work of modern painters, although two of five agreed; fewer than 5 percent strongly endorsed the negative view, however. By 1998, opinion had turned even more cosmopolitan, with just over 30 percent of respondents agreeing and 14 percent taking vigorous exception.

Responses to the statement "Artistic excellence can be found in popular and folk culture just as much as in the fine arts" were the most lopsided, reflecting a nearly unanimous rejection of the aesthetic ideology that once sharply privileged high culture. Fully 95 percent of respondents agreed with an assertion that most educated Americans would once have deemed philistine, and only 6 of the 1,463 respondents took vigorous exception to it. Nonetheless, even in this case, respondents were reluctant to express strong opinions, with just over 10 percent agreeing "strongly" with the popular stance.
Overall, the responses demonstrate that Americans endorse universalism and reject a narrowly highbrow definition of aesthetic merit by wide margins, but that they hold divergent opinions about virtually everything else. Large minorities of respondents do not trust educators to create curricula, think that students have to read too many "classics," want English to be the only language of instruction in the public schools, are sympathetic to the substitution of works by women and people of color for "traditional American literature," believe that one must have special skills or abilities to judge excellence in art, and agree that "even a child" could produce modern painting—with small majorities taking the opposite positions. The pattern of responses implies uncertainty and tentativeness more than polarization, however, because only the hot-button issue of English in the public schools causes even one in five respondents to take polar positions. For all other items, the ratio of moderate to extreme responses ranges from 5.5:1 (the greatest books are universal) to 7.2:1 (substituting works by women and minority group members for "traditional American literature"). Most Americans, it seems, have either thought too little about these issues to feel comfortable with extreme positions or, if they have considered them, see enough merit on each side to find the extremes unappealing.

**College Graduates**

It stands to reason that people who have graduated from colleges and universities are more likely to care about what goes on in them than are less educated Americans. And because college graduates participate more actively in the arts than others, it seems likely that arts-related topics will engage them more deeply as well. Consequently, we looked separately at the opinions of respondents who reported having graduated from college. Perhaps, we thought, opinions have become polarized among the most highly educated, even if the rest of the public has been indifferent.

For the most part, the views endorsed by college graduates are similar to those of other Americans. This is especially true of confidence in faculty curricular judgment, the universality of the great books, and, to a lesser extent, bilingual education and the expansion of the curriculum. The primary difference between college graduates and respondents with fewer years of formal education is that the former are more willing to take strong stands in defense of traditionally defined high culture and in favor of cultural diversity and cultural democracy. Thus 40 percent of respondents with less than college degrees, but only 15 percent of college graduates, agreed that the classics receive too much emphasis in U.S. education; 20 percent of college graduates—but just 5 percent of other respondents—disagreed strongly with this assertion. Similarly, almost half the respondents without college degrees, but just over one in four college graduates, agreed that "modern painting is just slapped on";
versalism and more than twice as many college graduates (18 percent compared with 8 percent) took strong exception to this view.

At the same time, college graduates evinced a more democratic perspective on taste than other respondents. Whereas well over half of the less schooled respondents endorsed the statement that “only a few people can really appreciate great art,” only 35 percent of college graduates supported this view. By contrast, twice as many college graduates (15 percent as compared with 7 percent) disagreed with it strongly. And although nearly everyone endorsed the populist position that excellence can be found in popular and folk culture as easily as in high art, fully 20 percent of college graduates, as compared with fewer than half that many nongraduates, said that they “strongly” agreed.

Conclusions on Polarization

Three things about these patterns are worth noting. First, as expected, college graduates are great defenders, although not the only defenders, of both classical and modern high culture. This is consistent both with the conventional notion that universities inculcate respect for the arts and with arguments by such sociologists as Pierre Bourdieu and Randall Collins that college graduates represent a kind of status group committed to defending a high culture from their command of which—“cultural capital” in Bourdieu’s terms—they derive much prestige. Although this result seems overdetermined, it does suggest that we must not be too quick to believe the Cassandras who claim that higher education no longer instills respect for canonized art and literature. We shall have more to say about this later in the chapter.

Second, college graduates as a group evince a more democratic view of culture than other Americans, expressing faith in the majority’s ability to judge quality in the arts and refusing to draw strong qualitative boundaries between high culture and other forms. This is surprising for two reasons. If college graduates benefit from their command of prestigious forms of culture, it would seem to be in their interest to endorse, and to claim a privileged relationship with, the established cultural hierarchy. That they fail to do so is news. For another thing, many scholars and journalists have depicted the United States as engulfed in a war over the value of established culture, with populist philistines arrayed against the defenders of the classical faith. James Hunter, for example, has written that “multiculturalists wish to increase the recognition, power, and legitimacy of various minority groups, in part through a delegitimation of an ‘oppressive’ mainstream American culture.” For this and other reasons, he argues “multiculturalism undermines the authority of cultural norms and cultural institutions.” Similarly, Richard Merelman has referred to multiculturalism as “a form of subordinate resistance to dominant group power.” Yet it seems that we find the same kinds of people, especially college graduates, overrepresented on both sides of the trenches. This suggests
that the opposition posited between high culture and multiculturalism is a false one. Again, we shall have more to say about this below.

Third, college graduates are more likely to give emphatic responses—to report not just that they “agree” or “disagree” but that they do so “strongly.” This tendency is small—like other people, most college graduates hew to moderate positions—but it is statistically significant for all items but two (bilingual education and trusting professors to decide on curricular matters). Only attitudes toward bilingual education—where 10 percent strongly agree and 12 percent strongly disagree—show signs of polarization. In other cases, college graduates tend to choose only one of the two polar alternatives. Thus 20 percent of college-educated respondents disagree strongly with the proposition that students have to read too many classics (compared with the 3 percent who strongly agreed); and almost 20 percent strongly agree that excellence can be found in folk and popular culture, compared with the just over half of 1 percent who strongly demurred from this view. Consistent with the notion that these issues are more salient to them, college-educated respondents are more willing to take strong stands on these items, but (except on the subject of bilingual education) not in a way that indicates that opinions are polarized. In other words, these data suggest strongly that the cultural battles that have raged around academia and the arts have neither reflected sharp division in the views of Americans (either college graduates or the general public) nor have had much of an effect on those views.

Are Attitudes Ideologically Coherent?

Even if Americans’ views on cultural authority and cultural diversity are far from polarized, it is still possible that, consistent with the “culture war” story, people’s attitudes (strongly held or not) might cluster into coherent ideological packages. If so, such a structure could serve as a scaffold around which broad polarization might yet occur.

We explored this issue by looking at a matrix of correlation coefficients, statistics that range from −1 (if x, then not y) to 1 (if x, then always y), with 0 representing statistical independence (knowing x tells one nothing about y).31 If the conservative culture critics are right about how the sides line up, we would anticipate the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditionalists</th>
<th>Progressivists</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not enough emphasis on classics</td>
<td>Too much emphasis on classics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great books are universal</td>
<td>No universal literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English only in the schools</td>
<td>Bilingual education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not revise the canon</td>
<td>Make the canon more inclusive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only a few can recognize good art</td>
<td>Anyone can recognize good art</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Traditionists
Modern painting is just slapped on
Excellence in high culture
Do not trust teachers and tenured radicals

Progressivists
Modern painting is serious art
Excellence in all kinds of culture
Trust teachers and professors to decide what students read

The first headline is that there is little evidence of ideological coherence of any kind. Correlations among items, though often statistically significant, are also quite low. The highest for the general public is 0.24. (Where opinions are ideologically coherent, so that different items essentially measure the same underlying worldviews, coefficients of 0.50 or greater are common.) As it happens, the strongest positive correlation is between two items that are often portrayed as negatively associated: People who think that schools should continue to teach the classics also take modern painting seriously.

Indeed, of twenty-eight pairwise correlations, only ten were statistically significant and consistent with the conventional wisdom described above. Almost as many—eight statistically significant associations—contradict the conventional wisdom. (Another ten pairs of opinions are essentially unrelated to one another.) In other words, the notion that solid blocks of ideologically unified traditionalists and progressives vie for control of our universities and cultural institutions, although possibly correct as a characterization of mobilized interest groups, provides no purchase in understanding patterns of response among a cross-section of the U.S. population. If in 1993 there was a culture war in progress, clearly most of the population had not enlisted on either side.

One might argue that ideological coherence in attitudes toward these matters would be found only among those highly educated men and women for whom the issues are most salient. Indeed, more responses were significantly associated for college graduates than for those with less education, and the number of correlations consistent with the conventional wisdom rose from ten to thirteen (with seven contradicting it and eight pairs not significantly associated). Correlations remain modest, but they do indicate somewhat greater ideological coherence in the opinions of more educated respondents.

Almost all of this coherence reflects significant associations among five of the eight items: bilingual instruction in the schools, expanding the canon to include works by women and authors of color, whether many people can judge excellence in art, whether excellence is as likely to be found in popular and folk culture as in high culture, and views of modern painting. College graduates who oppose bilingual education and opening up the canon are also somewhat more likely than others to deride modern painting, believe that few people can judge aesthetic quality, and agree that excellence is more easily found in high culture than in other forms. Cultural democrats—people who think that excellence can be found in any cultural form and that most people can identify good art—are also more likely to favor bilingual education and ex-
panding the canon, and are more willing to defend modern art. None of these tendencies is very strong, but they are all sufficiently marked that one would not likely find them by chance.

In other respects, however, the polarity that conservative critics have constructed was not evident in the opinions of the college-educated public. Support for the role of the classics in schools is associated not with conservatism but with commitment to cultural democracy, including an expansive view of how many people are qualified to judge art, appreciation of the excellence of folk and popular cultures, and support for modern painting. Also inconsistent with the conventional wisdom is the fact that respondents who endorse two "traditionalist" views—a belief in literary universalism and the belief that only a few people can judge quality—also express more confidence in professional educators.33

If the structure of opinion among the college educated affords only partial and equivocal support for the conventional wisdom, patterns among respondents with high school diplomas or less provide none at all: Only eight of twenty-eight correlations are significantly consistent with the "culture wars" story; nine significant associations contradict it; and eleven pairs of opinions are unrelated.

Some differences between college graduates and those whose schooling ended with high school are instructive. Whereas college graduates who agree (and agree strongly) that excellence can be found in folk and popular art are less likely to deplore replacing traditional American works with multicultural fare and more likely to defend modern painting, the pattern for the least educated respondents is the reverse. These and other results suggest that for college graduates, equating the value of popular and folk culture reflects a democratic openness to art and culture of many kinds. By contrast, for the least well educated, the same equation appears to reflect a rejection of all cultural authority and a devaluation of many kinds of art. Put another way, the most educated respondents tend to reject hierarchy in order to elevate the bottom, whereas the least educated tend to reject hierarchy as a means of devaluing what has been at the top.

Beyond Binary Oppositions: A Multidimensional View

We have seen that no one-dimensional explanation suffices to capture the complexity of Americans' beliefs (even as these are expressed in responses to prefabricated survey questions) about cultural authority and cultural diversity. In particular, the notion that conservative traditionalism and multicultural liberalism exhaust the space of opinions on these matters turns out to be especially implausible.

What then does explain how people respond to these items? To pursue this question, we eliminated two of the items—whether excellence can be found
in folk and popular culture (because there was so little disagreement about it), and whether the great books are universal (because the question was confusing)—and submitted the rest to a “factor analysis” (a statistical program that places items that are associated with one another into clusters and provides some statistical guidance in deciding how many are necessary to apprehend the complexity of people’s responses).34

The results indicated that three distinct dimensions structure people’s responses. These three dimensions are

1. **orientation to high culture**, measured by attitudes toward the literary classics and modern art;
2. **resistance to multiculturalism**, tapped by attitudes toward bilingual education and expanding the literary canon; and
3. **rejection of cultural authority**, reflected in distrust of educators and the view that most people can judge art.35

Far from representing binary oppositions, these three dimensions tapped distinct and largely independent points of view. In the statistical analyses that follow, each of these dimensions is measured by a scale summing each respondent’s score on the two items on which each dimension is based.

### Explaining Attitudes

Having identified the dimensions that appear to structure people’s attitudes toward cultural diversity and cultural authority, we can now begin to explain why people vary along them. We use “explanation” in the special sense, limited but illuminating, common to this kind of research: the prediction by statistical means of a person’s position on scales representing each of the three dimensions. To accomplish this, we looked at many other “variables” (aspects of identity, life experiences, or beliefs) on which people differ, and we asked how these differences are associated with people’s positions on the dimensions of interest (attitudes toward high culture, multiculturalism, and cultural authority). To distinguish between the “effects” of different characteristics, we used a statistical method called “multiple regression analysis” to examine each variable while “holding constant” effects of all the rest. Thus we can interpret the results as representing the difference between people who differ with respect to any given variable but are similar with respect to other characteristics of which we have taken account. The characteristics we used to predict the attitude measures are age, race, gender, years of formal education, residence in the Southeast, income, membership in a conservative Protestant religious denomination, and political conservatism.36

In addition, we used four scales based on the addition of other separate measures. One combines three items tapping support for legally sustained
racial separation into a measure of *racism* (of a particularly crude variety). A second scale, *tolerance*, is based on responses to fifteen questions about whether advocates of various unpopular opinions should be permitted to speak in public, teach in a college, or have a book in the local library. A third scale, *confidence in professional institutions*, sums measures of the respondent's confidence in education, the press, medicine, and the scientific community. A final scale sums measures of attendance at several kinds of arts events and several related attitudes into a measure of *commitment to the arts*.

We shall discuss the three dimensions (our three kinds of cultural attitudes) one at a time. In each case, we start by examining the way in which people's identities and experiences are associated with their cultural attitudes (without considering their attitudes in other domains); then we look at the relationship of cultural orientations to other attitudes; and finally we examine together the effects of cultural characteristics and attitudes that are associated with the perspective we are trying to explain, in order to see the effect of each with the others taken into account. We separate the measures in this way because a strong (if not unassailable) case can be made that personal characteristics are causally implicated in the development of the attitudes they predict. By contrast, the link between attitudes in one realm and attitudes in another is more logical than causal, representing affinity rather than sequence. We put them together, in the end, in order to explain to what extent personal characteristics influence cultural attitudes by shaping other aspects of a person's worldview, and to what extent their influence is independent of the other attitudes measured here. We shall focus on major findings described in broad strokes. Readers who would like to see the statistical tables may request them from the authors.

**Support for High Culture**

Respondents who scored high on this dimension rejected both the notion that schools focus too heavily on classics and the dismissive characterization of modern art. We expected that more educated respondents would evince more allegiance to high culture, because many studies have found the number of years a person has gone to school to be the best predictor of his or her participation in and attitudes toward the arts. As expected, educational attainment is by far the best predictor of positive attitudes toward high culture among the sociodemographic variables, with an effect three times as large as that of any other. Considerably smaller, but still statistically significant, differences exist in the views of women (more supportive) and men, between Euro-Americans (more supportive) and African Americans, and between people who live in rural areas (less supportive) and others.

Members of theologically conservative Protestant denominations are also significantly less supportive of high culture than others. We initially attributed this difference to the inclusion in the scale of a measure of attitudes toward
modern art, government support for which had been the target of highly publicized attacks by some evangelical leaders. To see if this interpretation was correct, we separately examined predictors of the scale’s two components—attitudes toward modern art and positions on the place of the classics in school curricula. To our surprise, members of theologically conservative denominations have more negative sentiments toward the classics as well as toward modern art, and the magnitude of the differences are almost identical. Apparently, religious and secular conservatives part company in their view of the importance of traditional works of high culture.

It was no surprise that people who attend arts events, enjoy classical music, and like their friends to be “cultured” would rank high on this dimension, because both scales tap an underlying interest in high culture. Indeed, this is the case. What was surprising is that political tolerance is almost as strongly related to positive attitudes toward the classics and modern art as is high cultural participation and taste. Moreover, racist attitudes are negatively and significantly associated with support for traditional high culture.

When we look simultaneously at the effects of both personal characteristics and other attitudes on support for high culture, we find that differences related to gender, race, residence, and religion stem from the fact that these characteristics shape other attitudes and behaviors—especially participation in high culture—that are associated with attitudes toward the arts. By contrast, fully 75 percent of the positive effect on attitudes toward high culture of educational attainment persists even after we take account of the fact that more educated people attend more arts events, are more politically tolerant, and are less likely to endorse racist views than those with less education. Apparently schooling succeeds in instilling respect for the value of high culture, even among people who do not personally participate in the arts. (Schooling also engenders support for the arts because it has such a strong effect on people’s own arts participation, but that mechanism appears to be of secondary importance.)

Support for Multiculturalism

Respondents who scored high on this dimension do not regret the displacement of traditional male authors by women and authors of color in university curricula, and they support the use of languages other than English in public school classrooms. We expected that education would be associated with support for multiculturalism, because research has shown that the highly educated tend to be cultural “omnivores,” enjoying many kinds of cultural forms; and because they ordinarily express lower levels of racial or ethnic prejudice. In fact, the more educated are significantly more sympathetic to multiculturalism, as are women and African Americans.

A few proponents of multiculturalism have implied that assertion of the value of traditional Western culture represents a thinly veiled rejection of mult-
Iticulturalism, or even a distaste for the "cultural others" themselves. We suspect that this is too simple, and that one can be partial to Euro-American high culture because one likes it, not because one dislikes people who are not Euro-American. At the same time, research on symbolic racism suggests that cultural attitudes may be extensions or displacements of intergroup antipathies, with cultural representations of a group bearing a burden of hostility otherwise directed to the group itself. For this reason, we anticipated that the less racist the respondent, the more he or she would favor multiculturalism. Indeed, racism is indeed significantly and positively associated with opposition to multiculturalism.

Curiously, however, self-described political conservatism is even more strongly associated with opposition to multiculturalism than is the endorsement of crudely racist positions. Students of racial attitudes disagree on how to interpret such results. Some would argue that positions on policy issues related to cultural diversity (e.g., bilingual education and curriculum reform) are structured by both racial views and matters of philosophical principle unrelated to race. These scholars might interpret our findings as indicating that philosophical considerations are even more important than racial views in determining opposition to multiculturalism. Other scholars contend that changes in the political landscape and social norms have led to a conflation of racism and conservatism—that is, a situation in which people define themselves as "conservative" partly on the basis of attitudes that reflect subtle forms of racial stereotyping and aversion. As declines in the proportion of Americans endorsing crudely racist positions have made the latter poor predictors of most policy preferences, more subtle correlates of racial intolerance have picked up the explanatory slack. In this view, then, the fact that conservatism and racism together explain about 15 percent of the variation in people’s positions on the multiculturalism scale reinforces the suspicion that opposition to multicultural reforms is often a form of symbolic racism.

Interestingly, the effect of conservatism is significant only for the more educated respondents, and the effect of education depends upon how respondents placed themselves on the scale of liberalism to conservatism. For self-described liberals, higher education is strongly associated with support for multiculturalism; for self-described conservatives, it is associated with opposition. Thus it seems that education polarizes opinion by increasing the salience of multiculturalism, and therefore the correlation between political ideology and attitudes, for conservatives and liberals alike.

Rejection of Cultural Authority

Respondents who score high on this final dimension reject the proposition that only a few people are capable of judging excellence in art and are reluctant to trust educators to choose what students will read in school. One might expect that education would instill faith in the authority of cultural elites, by expos-
ing people to such elites and also leading them to view themselves as possessing legitimate cultural authority by dint of their own training. This is not the case: Consistent with the notion that the highly educated participate in an antinomian "culture of critical discourse" and exhibit a chronic disposition to question authority, formal education is actually the strongest positive predictor of rejection of cultural authority.\textsuperscript{52} Older people and those living in the South are less likely (respectively) to question cultural authority than the young and people in other parts of the United States. These effects are small, but sufficient to refute the claim that Middle America has rejected the authority of a cultural establishment it views as a left-wing "cultural elite."\textsuperscript{53}

We expected attitudes toward cultural authority to be related to attitudes toward professional authority of other kinds. Specifically, we anticipated that people who expressed little confidence in physicians, scientists, journalists, and educators would also hold populist attitudes toward judgments about art and literature. Our expectation was confirmed by a modest but statistically significant association in the expected direction.

The most striking finding about attitudes toward cultural authority, however, is that they are very hard to predict: Even with both sociodemographic characteristics and attitudes included, the statistical model explained (i.e., rendered predictable) only about one sixteenth of the variation in responses. We suspect that different Americans reject authority for quite different reasons—some out of grudging resentment and others out of a Whitmanesque faith in the capacity of the common woman or man—and that these different motives are associated with very different antecedents, making them unlikely to be well predicted by a single statistical model.

\textbf{Closed Minds and Tenured Radicals: Are Universities Responsible for Generational Differences in Cultural Attitudes?}

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, a conservative critique of higher education asserted that there had been a generational trend toward civilizational decline (i.e., devaluation of high culture, rejection of cultural authority, and support for multiculturalism), and it laid the blame for this supposed trend at the gates of higher education. We evaluated this argument by dividing our sample into three age cohorts—pre–baby boomers (born before 1947), baby boomers (born 1947–60), and post–baby boomers (born between 1961 and 1975)—and examining differences among them, focusing especially on people exposed to the effects of higher education.

There are actually two versions of the conservative story. We refer to the first, articulated by Allan Bloom in \textit{The Closing of the American Mind}, as the \textit{theory of boomer exceptionalism}. In this view, things began to go wrong in the 1960s, when the baby boomer generation seized control of America's campuses, laying waste traditional educational values as cowardly liberal administrators capitulated to their demands. If this story were true, we would expect
to see steep declines in support for high culture among the baby boomer generation, accompanied by sharp increases in support for multiculturalism and rejection of cultural authority.

We call the second approach the *tenured-radical theory*, because Roger Kimball set it forth in his book *Tenured Radicals*. Not all boomers were corrupted, Kimball argued, but the bad eggs went disproportionately into college teaching. The diffusion of barbarism awaited their elevation to the tenured professoriate, just in time to corrupt the values of subsequent student cohorts. If this is the case, we should see a particularly sharp decline in support for high culture, increases in support for multiculturalism, and greater rejection of cultural authority in the postboomer cohort. Moreover, in each case, the generational change should be greater for respondents who attended college than for those who were unexposed to the academic milieu.

Both these accounts prove inconsistent with the evidence. Support for high culture evinces no decline from one cohort to the next, and years of education predicts respect for high culture as well for younger as for older respondents. Support for multiculturalism does increase with the boomer cohort (and it stays higher among the postboomers); but the increase is visible at all levels of education, so it cannot be attributed to the effects of higher education. (It more likely reflects a decline in racism as the baby boomers came of age.) Similarly, both boomers and postboomers are less accepting of cultural authority than their elders but, contrary to conservative criticisms, the change is actually less pronounced among those exposed to higher education.54

**Conclusions: Public Opinion's Democratic Vistas**

In this final section, we return to the broader themes that animate this volume. Whereas up to this point we have been cautious in presenting and interpreting our data, here we take more liberties, exercise more interpretive license (even to the point of speculation), and address normative, as well as positive, concerns. Our normative stance is both conservative, in the sense that we wish to conserve the great art and culture of the past, and democratic, in that we hold an inclusive understanding of the arts and culture, favor widespread diffusion of many cultural forms, and are reasonably optimistic about people's capacity to make their own choices about culture and the arts.

From this normative standpoint, we find the results of this inquiry into public opinion encouraging for at least three reasons. First, our analyses refute the notion that Americans (at least any sizable number of them) are engaged in a clash of coherent ideologies between traditionalist conservative and secular progressivist forces. Neither the views of the general public as a whole nor of college graduates constitute the coherent packages that culture warriors of the right and (to a lesser extent) the left have attempted to construct. Cultural conflicts in our schools, universities, and arts institutions reflect not a
struggle between two well-defined sets of values but rather a set of loosely related contests knit together more by strategy and convenience than by common ideology.

Second, the worst fears of both liberals and conservatives are largely imaginary (with respect to public opinion, if not necessarily with respect to organized social movements, of course). Liberals may take cheer in the fact that (after one controls for political conservatism and other factors) fundamentalists and evangelicals are no less sympathetic to multiculturalism than other Americans. And supporters of high culture (though not opponents of multiculturalism) are likely to be less, rather than more, racist in orientation than opponents of the classics and modern art. For their part, conservatives may be pleased to learn that a university education and generational change have not had the radicalizing impact attributed to them. Other things remaining equal, younger generations are no less oriented toward high culture than their elders.

Third, and perhaps most encouraging, whereas a conservative cultural critique presupposes and constructs an opposition between Euro-American high culture and the cultures of women and people of color—"a culture war over the value of traditional Western civilization versus the works of Third World authors and thinkers"—it appears that most Americans are not buying it. Support for traditionally defined high culture is driven by formal education and cosmopolitan values: Far from representing a form of symbolic racism, belief in the value of high culture is negatively associated with racism and positively associated with political tolerance. By contrast, opposition to multiculturalism reflects, to some extent, symbolic racism, as well as more general political conservatism. Despite the efforts of critics of cultural diversity to construct an opposition between traditional high culture and cultural pluralism, support for both is associated with high levels of formal education and racial tolerance.

None of this is to deny that cultural conflict exists, that activists form alliances across many different issues, or that social-movement elites hold more coherent ideological understandings of disparate issues than ordinary noncombatants. Nor is it to deny that rhetoric about "culture wars," or the recitation of discourses that link previously disparate issues, may eventually contribute to creating the very conditions they purport to describe. Rather, it suggests that explanations for conflict over education and the arts must be sought not in the structure of public opinion but in the specific institutional features of these fields and in the strategies and tactics of mobilized social movements.

Indeed, given the energy that the right poured into struggles over education and the arts, it is surprising that Americans' attitudes are as unpolarized as they are. We suspect that our findings provide a clue as to why efforts to foment broad-based conflict over the arts and education have not been more successful. To erupt into a culture war, differences in opinion should both pit
one form of culture against another at the symbolic level and be rooted in a structural cleavage (e.g., membership in identity groups or political organizations) that permit identities to crystallize around symbolic struggles. Instead, we find that the strongest supporters of the traditional canon and of the alternative to it both come from the same social location—that is, the ranks of the highly educated—and that those who support one are also likely to support the other.

Moreover, reflecting the victory of the celebrated American faith in cultural democracy with the rise of mass higher education, college-educated people steadfastly refuse to play the role of "cultural elite" into which some have tried to cast them. Instead, college degrees are associated with support for traditional culture and multiculturalism, and with democratic attitudes toward cultural authority and a broad definition of aesthetic value.

The absence of a large constituency for cultural hierarchy would seem to indicate a sea change in educated opinion, given the cultural and institutional dominance of hierarchy at least through the 1950s. It is difficult to pinpoint the timing of that change. It appears that at some point higher education stopped inculcating an exclusive version of cultural hierarchy and began instead to produce an openness to and appreciation of a wide range of cultural forms. This change coincided with a shift in the social meaning of the arts, such that interest and participation in high culture became attached to an attitude complex including tolerance, social liberalism, and skepticism toward authority.56

This change may also have marked a shift in the form of cultural reproduction from the intergenerational transmission of a fixed hierarchy to the transmission of a capacity for cultural adaptation and flexibility. Whereas in past generations, prestige was mapped hierarchically onto cultural forms in a manner that reflected the stratification of their audiences, contemporary education instead imparts a standardized ability to display "individualized" tastes that enact identity and defy categorization. If this interpretation is right, the ranks of the highly educated will yield few willing conscripts to culture wars in higher education and the arts; and, as the stakes of such wars ultimately matter the most to the highly educated, even the most bellicose generals will find it difficult to raise large armies.

We suspect that this augurs well for cultural democracy, albeit cultural democracy of a particular kind. However one defines it, cultural democratization first entails an expansion of cultural diversity, so that art forms or genres cannot be dismissed because they failed to be sacralized in the late nineteenth century or because of their association with non-Western or non-elite social groups. Second, cultural democracy entails a rejection of narrow conceptions of cultural authority, so that more voices can be heard in conversations about artistic quality.

The cultural hierarchy that reigned in the United States for most of the twentieth century—a system that associated artistic quality with nonprofit in-
stitutions created and governed by urban upper classes, supported by philanthropic contributions, and closely tied to university specialties—provided a neat but flawed solution to the problem of defining and expanding access to excellence in the arts: "neat" because it sustained a lot of good art in ways that the market could not; and "flawed" because it embedded definitions of excellence in the status culture and identities of the upper classes upon which high cultural institutions relied for leadership and support. The institutions of that system remain largely intact; but the system's ideological erosion can be witnessed in the near unanimity with which Americans refuse to view excellence as limited to—or even more easily found in—high culture than in popular or folk art; and in the large plurality of the most educated Americans who regard the ability to identify excellence as widespread. The challenge is to nurture institutions that are consistent with this more democratic ethos. The challenge is not to eliminate cultural distinction but to establish a basis for identifying and promulgating excellence that is independent of class, race, and gender—in other words, to liberate artistic hierarchies from social-structural constraints. Thus stated, this is a utopian vision. The practical question is: How closely can an actually existing society approximate it?

In addressing this question, it is important to recognize that each of the constructs with which this chapter is concerned—cultural authority and cultural diversity—comes in two very different forms. As we have seen, some people reject cultural authority because they reject many kinds of culture; this nihilistic antinomianism is associated with rejecting both traditional high culture and multiculturalism. By contrast, higher education appears to inculcate in many Americans an expansive antinomianism, an inclination to reject artificial distinctions in order to affirm the value of many forms and cultural traditions. Likewise, there is more than one route to cultural diversity. One approach, favored by classical cultural democrats, is collaborative and deliberative: Communities come together to celebrate their many strands, schools expose children to the wealth of cultures to which they have access, and artists and writers from different traditions share their work and even collaborate around common projects. We see examples of this in French experiments with cultural animation, in community arts projects throughout urban and rural America, and in some programs in the schools. The other route, theorized less but practiced much more, is through the market: As technological change permits narrowcasting, commercial enterprises can bring to market many more types of culture, tailored to the tastes of ever smaller audiences, thus fostering both diversity and innovation. The classic example here is the field of music, where the massive changes engendered by digitalization transformed the economic logic of the music industry virtually overnight.

With respect to cultural authority, expansive antinomianism is clearly superior on normative grounds to its nihilistic alternative. With respect to cultural diversity, the normative conclusions are less clear. The collaborative approach to diversity is deeper and more inclusive: It permits a cultural critique...
in which many voices can be heard and underlying assumptions can be made explicit. But it is also very labor-intensive (and therefore expensive, either in contributed time or in philanthropic donations), and it is therefore unlikely to prevail except during periods in which broad-based change-oriented social movements are politically active.

By contrast, the market has provided an extraordinarily efficient means of implementing cultural diversity (and, indirectly, by sidestepping institutions congruent with the existing cultural hierarchy, in fostering democracy). But the market is a risky ally. For one thing, whether markets foster diversity and excellence or hierarchy and monoculture depends upon details of industry structure, technology, and the incentive structures the latter produce. In large part due to the enabling effects of the Internet and the digitalization of cultural products, the market is a source of abundance today—but we cannot count on it remaining so in the future. Typically, new technologies have unleashed innovation and diversity, which is ultimately limited by the efforts of oligopolistic competitors to control markets and maintain stable revenue flows, efforts that have typically limited diversity. Moreover, market-fostered diversity presents a risk of fragmentation: Cultural democracy requires not just diversity but also mutual awareness and respect; by contrast, emerging marketing practices reinforce the segmentation of taste cultures.

In considering the prospects, it may be useful to consider how the differing approaches to authority and diversity might intersect. Nihilistic antinomianism is clearly destructive. Tied to collaborative cultural action, it leads to repression rather than democracy. Articulated to market forces, it is conducive to the mass culture of which the Frankfurt School warned us.

By contrast, the expansive approach to authority—increased faith in the aesthetic capacity of regular men and women, a willingness to find excellence in many genres—is an indispensable ingredient in cultural democracy. Associated with a collaborative approach to diversity, it provides the ingredients for cultural animation—an integration of art and literature into ongoing efforts at community development and change. Associated with the market version of diversity, it offers a means to overcome the danger of fragmentation: a faith in the active intelligence of consumers and in their willingness and ability to cross boundaries and exercise critical discrimination in many realms.

We believe that public sentiments provide a basis for realizing some of the promise of cultural democracy—"a program of culture, drawn out, not for a single class alone, or for the parlors or lecture rooms, but with an eye to practical life ... a scope generous enough to include the widest human area ... eligible to the uses of the high average of men—and not restricted to conditions ineligible to the masses," as Whitman described it at the moment that the United States' urban elites were actively constructing a hierarchical culture of limited permeability. To be sure, nihilistic antinomianism, opposed to both high culture and multiculturalism, retains a constituency, but it would appear to be dwindling. Instead, the sentiments of typical educated Americans—the
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ones with the most to say about cultural policy and educational practice, and
the ones whose consumer decisions drive the cultural marketplace—combine
a persistent respect for high culture with a curiosity and openness to new
forms; a belief in critical standards with skepticism about their application;
and a cosmopolitan openness to the cultural other with a persistent inclination
to invest in conventionally defined cultural capital.

Given these sentiments, the commercial marketplace can contribute to the
emergence of cultural democracy, at least as long as low barriers to entry per-
mit many producers to offer a wide range of materials. Indeed, given the per-
sistent respect for high culture evinced by Americans who reject the ideology
that privileges high culture and the judgments of critics and curators, it
appears that conservative traditionalists have had too little faith in the inherent
value and appeal of the objects of their veneration. At the same time, there are
many types of culture—and, even more, ways of apprehending cultural ob-
jects—that could not persist, or would persist much less widely and effectively,
without the existing framework of philanthropically supported nonprofit or-
ganizations, and without continued public and philanthropic investment in
institutions of collaborative diversity and cultural animation. Moreover, without
public policy to ensure that barriers to entry in cultural industries remain low,
the liberating potential of the market will not be realized. The key is to find
the mix of policies, both public and philanthropic, that can guide and manage
the new cultural marketplace in ways consistent with the new sensibilities that
structure the public’s understanding of culture and relationship to it.

Notes


14. Herbst, *Numbered Voices;* John R. Zaller, *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992). Although public-opinion researchers know all this, they still usually describe results as representing that, e.g., “35 percent of Americans believe x” rather than writing “35 percent of respondents reported that they agreed with statement x.” In effect, the terse form has become
a shorthand for more accurate but less graceful constructions. In this chapter, we compromise, using the tense form in most cases, but interjecting the long form frequently enough (we hope) to keep the reader on his or her toes.


16. The most sophisticated chronicler of cultural conflict is Pierre Bourdieu, who has addressed the professional politics of both universities and the arts in France in a series of trailblazing works. The primary difference between the United States and France is that the boundaries of cultural and educational institutions are for many reasons more permeable in the United States than in France, and claims against established institutions are more likely to be placed on behalf of groups defined by racial or ethnic identity in the United States, and by groups defined on the basis of class or region in France. See Pierre Bourdieu, *Homo Academicus*, trans. P. Collier (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1988); and Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).


20. Question phrasings were intended to maximize variation in response. Because of the novelty of the topic area, however, it was difficult to anticipate the phrasings that would do this most effectively. In the case of this item, a more even break—perhaps with a plurality in the opposite direction—might have been achieved by changing "is ignored while other works are promoted because they are" to "receive less attention in order to make room for works." A considerably cruder formulation—"Adding material about women and minorities to the college curriculum makes it less rigorous"—elicited the agreement of 33 percent of a 1998 national sample of voters, with 59 percent disagreeing (Daniel Yankelovich Group for the Ford Foundation, *Campus Diversity Initiative Survey, July–August 1998*, Roper Center Public Opinion On-Line, Question ID: USDYG:98CULT,R17B).

22. The item was taken from Pierre Bourdieu and Alain Darbel, with Dominique Schnapper, *The Love of Art: European Museums and Their Public*, trans. Caroline Beattie and Nick Merriman (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1990), which reports results of a survey of French respondents in the late 1960s. One might argue that the wording was more appropriate at a point when modern art was still often popularly identified with abstract expressionism; but agreement was sufficiently high to suggest that negative stereotypes from that era are alive in popular culture even if the styles on which they were based are no longer fashionable.


24. Ideologies distinguishing sharply between “high culture” and popular forms and privileging the latter rose to prominence in the United States in association with the emergence of urban upper classes in the Victorian era, and were quickly embraced by much of the middle class. On this point, see Paul DiMaggio, “Cultural Entrepreneurship in 19th Century Boston,” parts 1 and 2, *Media Culture and Society* 4 (1982): 33–50, 303–21; and Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow*. Surveys consistently have reported that people from higher socioeconomic status backgrounds participate more actively in audiences for high culture art forms (they also participate more actively in other kinds of cultural audiences, in differences that are less pronounced), but this is the first study that asked people to evaluate broad genres in this way.


29. Ibid., 208.


31. The measure of correlation is Kendall’s tau-b statistic.


33. One might ask whether we were correct to locate trust in professional educators on the “left” or “progressivist” side of the ideological spectrum in the first place. Doing so is certainly consistent with the assertions of the conservative critics of universities like the National Association of Scholars, who tend to view academic professionalism and multiculturalism as wrapped in an unholy alliance; see, e.g., Bruce Robbins, “Othering the Academy: Professionalism and Multiculturalism,”
But we were somewhat skeptical, and initially assumed that the unexpectedly positive correlations of the "distrust-of-educators" item with these two liberal views might disguise different patterns of association for liberal and conservative respondents (such that those on the left who distrust the professorate are likely to be especially radical, while those on the right who distrust educators are likely to be more ideologically conservative). But when we analyzed patterns of correlation between distrust of educators and the other items separately for GSS subsamples who characterized themselves, respectively, as liberal and conservative, we found no systematic differences.

34. We used the SYSTAT/PC Statistics principal-components factor analysis with varimax rotation (replicated with oblique rotation to explore the possibility that the factors were correlated), and retained all factors with eigenvalues of greater than 1.0.

35. Factor loadings on orientation to high culture were 0.845 for the classics and 0.620 for modern art; on resistance to multiculturalism they were 0.802 for expanding the canon and 0.691 for bilingual education; and on rejection of cultural authority they were 0.834 for confidence in educators and 0.631 for the ability to judge art.

36. Race and ethnicity are based on two binary variables identifying respondents who are African American or who describe themselves as being of Hispanic origin. (Race was assigned by interviewers, except when interviewers were uncertain. Hispanic origin was assigned to respondents who described their national background as Spanish, Latin American—excepting Brazil—or Filipino.) Income is based on a twenty-one-category scale, coded at the midpoint of each range. Conservative Protestant denominations are coded by GSS from denominational affiliation. The method is described in Tom Smith, "Classifying Protestant Denominations," GSS Technical Report 67 (Chicago: National Opinion Research Center, 1986). "Political conservatism" is based on self-placement on a seven-point scale ranging from "extremely liberal" to "extremely conservative."

37. The three items involved the right of Euro-Americans to keep African Americans out of "their" neighborhoods, legal establishments of a homeowner's right to discriminate by race when selling or renting, and laws against racial intermarriage, each rescaled to range from 0 to 1, with racist views taking the higher value.

38. The categories of persons toward whom tolerance was measured were atheists, communists, gay men, militarists, and racists—a selection intended to ensure that the scale measured tolerance and not simply right- or left-wing political sentiments. Each item was recoded so that 1 represented an intolerant response and 2 represented a tolerant response, and they were summed so that scale values ranged from 15 (less tolerant) to 30 (more tolerant).

39. Items were recoded to range from 1 (less confident) to 3 (more confident), with the scale value ranging from 4 to 12.

40. Items included in this scale are attendance at classical music performance, dance concerts, and art museums (three separate items); attitudes toward classical music and opera, respectively, and the importance of being "cultured" as an attribute of one's friends. Each item was recoded to make a higher response indicative of a positive orientation to high culture and then rescaled from zero to one, yielding a scale ranging from 0 to 6.

41. Howard Schuman puts this problem well: "Attitudes are mental entities or constructs based on verbalizations, and they all swim round in the same heads, with
no temporal or other labels to conveniently indicate causal order." Howard Schuman, "The Perils of Correlation, the Lure of Labels and the Beauty of Negative Results," in Racialized Politics: The Debate about Racism in America, ed. David O. Sears, Jim Sidanius, and Lawrence Bobo (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 302–23; the quotation cited here is on 304.


43. To see if religious conservatives were less supportive of high culture because of messages they received from the pulpit, we undertook the same analyses for actively church-going members of conservative denominations only, but the results were unchanged. A more recent study using a wider range of measures of religious conservatism and a more extensive range of attitude measures has likewise found theologically conservative Protestants to exhibit less favorable attitudes toward the arts; Peter V. Marsden, "Religion, Cultural Participation, and Cultural Attitudes: Survey Data on the United States, 1998," report to the Henry Luce Foundation, Harvard University Department of Sociology, 1999. By the mid-1990s, religious conservatives were also far more likely than any other group except partisan Republicans to favor sharp reductions of federal spending on the arts. Pettit and DiMaggio, Public Sentiments Towards the Arts.

44. We infer this by first including only sociodemographic measures in the predictive model, and then investigating a second model to which attitude measures are added. We interpret the percentage decline in the size of the coefficients of the sociodemographic measures as reflecting the percentage of their influence that is the result of (is mediated by) the attitudes. The remaining coefficient represents the portion of the original effect (in the first model) that remains even after differences in attitudes are taken into account: i.e., the difference one would expend to find between people with similar attitudes who differed on the sociodemographic variable in question. The assumption in this procedure is that people's attitudes are shaped by the life experiences of which variables like race, gender, or educational attainment serve as indices, rather than the other way around.


46. Surprisingly, the views of respondents of Hispanic descent are not significantly different from those of otherwise similar Americans. Higher family income is associated with declining support for multiculturalism, but the relationship is small.


Somewhat surprisingly, a related value, political tolerance, is unrelated to attitudes toward multiculturalism. This suggests that political tolerance and social tolerance may be distinct dimensions.

To decide which of these two positions represented a more accurate interpretation of these results, we would need additional measures that are not available. For a useful discussion of these contrasting positions, see David O. Sears, John J. Hetts, and Lawrence Bobo, "Race in American Politics: Framing the Debates," in Racialized Politics, ed. Sears, Sidanius, and Bobo, 1–43.

These results reflect the inclusion of a multiplicative interaction term (education x political conservatism) in the model predicting attitudes toward multiculturalism. The results are consistent with other research that has noted stronger effects of blatant racism on preferences toward policies related to race for less-educated persons than for more-educated persons, and stronger effects of political ideology on the views of the latter. It is also consistent with the view that educated respondents who reject (or realize that they are not supposed to express) crudely racialist views nonetheless harbor antiminority sentiments ("subtle prejudice") that may be expressed in the form of conservative or traditionalist views. See Donald R. Kinder and Lynn M. Sanders, Divided by Color: Racial Politics and Democratic Ideals (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); and Thomas Pettigrew and Roel W. Meertens, "Subtle and Blatant Prejudice in Western Europe," European Journal of Social Psychology 25 (1995): 57–75.


In models not presented in this chapter, we replaced "age" with dummy variables for the boomer and postboomer cohorts, and we included interaction effects between the cohorts and educational attainment to test for differences in trends related to extent of formal education.


59. Joseph Turow, Breaking Up America: Advertisers and the New Media World (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997). See also Douglas Hartmann and Joseph Gerteis, "Dealing with Diversity: Mapping Multiculturalism in Sociological Terms," Sociological Theory 23, no. 2 (2005): 218–40, for a useful typology of forms of multiculturalism that makes a similar distinction between “interactive” and “fragmented” or “cosmopolitan” forms of multiculturalism. Depending on how they are structured, markets can sustain “fragmented” or “cosmopolitan” forms, but are less effective, in themselves, in fostering “interactive” pluralism.
