Political Orientation and its Effect on Engagement and Perception of the Arts

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Abstract

Utilizing the Symbolic Interactionism Theory (Gusfield, 2011), this study explored the relationship between political orientation and one’s engagement with and perception of art forms. The study utilized qualitative methods analysis to analyze similarities between participant responses. Findings from participants revealed the following themes: engagement with history leading to a more profound understanding of art, art causing real-life inspiration, and engagement with art leads to the formation of sub-cultures. Additionally, interviews revealed that people choose not to engage with certain art based on political orientation, people who consider themselves to be “spiritual” engaged with art differently, and many people’s perception of the biggest issue in the United States is polarization of politics. Theoretical and practical implications are discussed, as well as limitations and directions for future research.

Keywords: communication, symbolic interactionism, politics, art, culture
Political Orientation and its Effect on Engagement and Perception of the Arts

Art and politics are intertwined by nature. Throughout history, art has reflected the world, and what is considered important at the time will be reflected in art. The values from the past show up in art, as well as the politics of the time. Art is political. In politics, art is used to appeal to individuals' sense of loyalty and values, reaffirming them of what they already believe in. Politics affects art heavily. With changes in politics, art shifts in what is considered important or meaningful. This observation inspired this research, leading to the question: **does one’s own political beliefs/orientation affect an individual’s perception/engagement with various art forms?** To research this question, topics of symbolic interactionism, the relationship between art and politics, and art-inspiring involvement were thoroughly studied.

**Symbolic Interactionism**

Symbolic interactionism (henceforth, SI) provides a fruitful framework to examine the relationship between politics and art. SI is about human relationships, to language and symbols. It seeks to understand one’s relationships to language, to symbols, and to interpretation. Joseph Gusfield (2011) examines the ways in which language and symbols are associated. Central to SI is the idea that everyone is a meaning-making person. Symbols are how individuals interpret and make meaning out of language (Gusfield, 2011). SI assigns meanings to symbols which translate to language, and individuals communicate those meanings to others (Gusfield, 2011). Central to SI is the idea that everyone is a meaning-making person. Human behaviors are a response to the meanings people make through symbols and interpreted through language. This explains the formation of political sub-cultures through SI (Treadway 2005). Climates are defined as similarity of perception among individuals. SI frames humans as making meaning through symbols, and climates have humans with similarly attached meanings to symbols (Gusfield, 2011). Cultures that people belong to and the language they share with one another determines
the political sub-culture that one will end up belonging to (Treadway, 2005). These political sub-cultures exist within every organization, and meaning will be attached to the language shared amongst individuals. This idea of SI forming worldview and perception of meaning is not going to be outdated or replaced; so long as humans have ideas, SI will be around as ideas are connected to symbols, and these symbols have shared meanings amongst cultures (Low, 2019).

**Relationship Between Art and Politics**

Art and politics have an existing relationship and are intertwined by nature, not to be separated into separate entities. Eastern European art, as their economics system moved away from socialism to neoliberal capitalism, the representation of the working-class identity was found to be contradictory in nature. Some depictions of this identity decreased significantly and moved towards a more consumer-based portrayal of identity. Other pieces of art heroized the working-class identity and mourned the losses of those who lost their lives in work. This contradictory nature is emblematic in the ways in which art represents cultures, as many government-issued pieces of art committed to the erasure of working-class identity in favor of depicting the pro-capitalist consumer cycle, while much of the private art and street art was still celebrating the working-class identity (Isto, 2020). Engaging with the past through the means of art as constellations allow for understanding the present. Instead of viewing time as linear, the arts give a nonlinear view of time that informs modern day politics. Not engaging with the past through art leads to an avoidance and lack of critical understanding of present conflicts of justice. Art must be taken seriously as a political agent (Bell, 2020). To be taken seriously as a serious political agent, one’s art must have already garnered a large following, or the art must have led to real-world consequences such as censorship or media coverage. Through SI, art causes people to form meaning towards current political issues both past and present, and interacting with art supports understanding of different sides of the political spectrum (Weji, 2023).
Art Inspiring Involvement

Not only are art and politics intertwined, but they shape our foundational understandings of all politics. The ways in which individuals perceive everything from war, prejudices, and various political events all stem from the art consumed. Through SI, individuals assign meanings to art representing events and assign these meanings to new events. Politicians use this art to further their message, adopting it rather than giving it meaning itself. Heroes and villains are painted, prejudices are formed, and general perceptions of the world are all influenced by art. Art has the power to change our perspective and adopt new meanings, so it is important to be mindful of the art that is consumed. (Edelman, 2003). Bracey (2019) grew up in Chicago with a family of artists during the Black Liberation Movement. While his art had always been politically charged, it was in Chicago during this time that he witnessed the cultivation of the “black aesthetic” uplifting black people and helped draw them together. Through his art, he became more involved in the militant wing of civil rights politics and joined the Black-Led freedom now party. In the party, he worked on art that supported black nationalism and helped the party gain traction. Through SI, he interacted with and made art that was reflective of his current realities and inspired countless people to join causes that led to an artistic revolution in Chicago (Bracey, 2019). The formation of meaning through language and symbols is often guided by social and economic standing. However, art can eliminate some of these barriers and allow for taste and opinion formation without these barriers. Barriers that previously informed taste and opinions can be removed through art forms. SI allows for symbolic meaning making through art and allows us to develop our sense of the world, our place in it, and how we perceive events both past, and present (Lascity, 2001).

RQ1: What is the relationship between political orientation and engagement with various art forms, and how do they interact?
Method

This study examines the relationship between one’s political orientation and how it affects one’s engagement with and perception of various art forms. This study is situated in the interpretive paradigm and utilized semi-structured interviews to investigate themes and patterns within participants’ responses to examine emergent similarities and differences in participants’ accounts.

Procedures

Research participants were required to be 18 years of age or older. Participants were recruited through Instagram and Facebook posts. Interested participants were directed to a Google Forms survey where they filled out demographic information, consented to participate in the study, and provided contact information. Participants were then contacted with a consent form to e-sign and send back to the primary researcher. After completing the consent form, the interview was scheduled. Participants completed a roughly thirty-minute, semi-structured interview that sought information on their political beliefs and engagement with various art forms. Interviews were audio and video-recorded and lasted between 13 and 85 minutes.

Sample

15 participants 18 years of age or older were interviewed. Two participants were 20 years old (n = 2, 13%), five participants were 21 years old (n = 5, 33%), six participants were 22 years old (n = 6, 40%), one participant was 38 years old (n = 1, 7%), and one participant was 51 years old (n = 1, 7%). 12 participants identified as White/Caucasian (n = 12, 80%), 1 participant identified as Black/African American (n= 1, 7%), and two participants identified their race as not listed (n = 2, 13%). Ten participants identified as heterosexual/straight (n = 10, 67%), 3 participants identified as bisexual (n = 3, 20%), one participant identified as gay/lesbian (n = 1, 7%), and one participant identified as queer (n = 1, 7%). Of the participants, four had earned
their bachelor’s degree (n = 4, 27%), ten had completed some college (n = 10, 67%), and one participant had earned their high school diploma/GED (n = 1, 7%). 12 participants reported residing in California (n = 12, 80%), with two in Nevada (n = 2, 13%) and one in Canada (n = 1, 7%). Six participants identified themselves as aligned with the Democratic Party (n = 6, 40%), two participants identified themselves as aligned with the Republican Party (n = 2, 13%), one participant identified themselves as aligned with the Libertarian Party (n = 1, 7%), four participants aligned themselves with a party not listed (n = 4, 27%), and one participant was unsure/declined to answer (n = 1, 7%). Economically, seven participants identified themselves as aligned more with socialist ideologies (n = 7, 47%), five participants identified themselves as aligned more with capitalist ideologies (n = 5, 33%), and two participants were unsure/declined to answer (n = 2, 13%). Socially, most participants aligned themselves more with progressive ideologies (n = 10, 66.67%), and five participants identified themselves as aligned more with conservative ideologies (n = 5, 33%).

Data Analysis

To analyze the data, I used inductive analysis to investigate how one’s political beliefs might impact their engagement and perception of art. I followed Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six steps for thematic analysis. Firstly, I familiarized myself with the transcripts by taking notes and reading through them multiple times. Second, I came up with initial codes to identify sections that helped me answer the guiding question. Thirdly, I searched for broad themes among the initial sections and matched potential themes with questions that were being answered. Fourth, I reviewed the themes that were appearing, and categorized them. Fifth, I detailed and labeled each theme and made sure to label any subtheme that appeared. Lastly, I collected all my findings and described each theme and chose examples of each that stood out.

Findings
This study’s purpose was to explore how political orientation may be linked to how people engage with and perceive various artistic forms. Thematic analysis illuminated a variety of themes tying political orientation to engagement with the arts. Each theme is discussed below.

**Engagement with History Influencing Perception**

For both engagement with art and politics, one aspect many participants pointed out was the influence of history on their perspectives. As one interviewee who is an art major recalled when asked about if she pays attention to how the arts change over time, “if you look at what was considered beautiful art at the time versus what is considered beautiful art now, it’s cool because Greek and Roman art was the inspiration... But if you look at other forms like impressionist or expressionist movements, while still meaningful and impactful, it’s steered far away from neoclassical, Greek and Roman art... there’s a story behind every painting and a lot of (Greek and Roman art) have biblical references, it’s intertwined with the government.” The participant argues that whether it be from ancient history or present-day artworks, art is evolving alongside culture. This argument is presented in Low (2019) as he argues that through SI, ideas are connected through symbols, and as culture evolves, so do the symbols that represent them. Another participant who is a political science major reflected on the role history plays in political orientation, stating, “When people know I’m a political science major, they’re like, oh, he probably knows a lot about politics. But this **** is mainly history, and I feel like that's kind of shaped how people perceive politics. We kind of focus on the issues that have been more relevant to us.” This participant here, is identifying the role that history has played in his perception of politics. When many people think of politics, often it is under the perspective of issues that are currently trending and think of modern politics. Engagement with history informs political perspective of the now, and the same can be said with art. The two intertwine, as engagement with history will not only allow you to understand the politics of the time, but also
the art that was influenced by the politics. Isto (2020) explores this in his article, as changes in art reflected changes in politics at the time as economic systems were changing, as representations of the working identity changed alongside economic systems. An understanding of history influences not only your perception of art, but also the politics of the time and how they intertwine. Another political science major delves into the importance of history in perception of the arts, saying, “Art does evolve. I mean, just look at your basic history of the arts course. You know, you go from medieval art, which is all paintings of the Virgin Mary, Jesus Saints... Dark colors, very gritty in a way. Then you get to the Renaissance. [There is a] big boom of color and exploration of the arts. Of sciences, of actual literature, of painting, of sculpture. That's all art. Through that, it kind of provides a lens to us that art has changed, art evolves, and then today, looking at modern art, it's more about expressionism, more now so than ever.” This is another example of someone who has a different perspective on the art forms due to an engagement with history, and from my interviews, the more people engaged with history, the more they engaged with the transformation of art.

Choosing Not to Engage with Art Based on Political Orientation

One common theme that appeared was many people choosing not to engage with certain art based on their political orientation. One political science major touched on this, stating, “There's a part to be said about separating art from the artists... I feel like knowing that Gal Gadot is a huge Israeli fighter is weird. Every time that I go back and watch like a Fast and Furious movie or Wonder Woman like it sours the art... Like Kanye... This art that I’ve loved for so long, every time that I go back to it, I'm like damn, this guy really likes Andrew Tate and is a Nazi. It sours it... it's crazy how much of it is tied to the person and as hard as it is to separate it, the fact that you must separate it is already a step too far and it complicates everything. Because now you must ask yourself questions about consuming this art.” The participant here is raising
questions about the validity of separating the art from the artists. He brings up Gal Gadot and Kanye West as examples who have faced high levels of controversies, and questions if you can separate art from the artist. Due to his own personal beliefs, the participant believes the art that is attached to the works of Kanye West and Gal Gadot, as examples, is now soured and he has a hard time taking in the art for what it is. You can try to separate artist from the art all you want, but there is always an element of an artist in their own art. This is backed up by another research participant, who says, “There's certain art that I just don't really consume because I'm not really interested in the message... like the new Kanye album came out and I was like whatever it might be fine, but I don't need to listen when there's plenty of other stuff that I could listen to where I like the person more and probably won't have any other weird lines in it that I don't agree with. Another example is I’ve watched Zero Dark 30 a couple nights ago and enjoyed it, but I was also like this was pretty racist. I watched it and I felt like they wanted me to be cheering for the Seals killing the families living in the same compound as Osama bin Laden.” This participant backed up the Kanye West example as brought up earlier, as well as presented a piece of art that was soured for him due to the portrayal of an actual event in history. Due to his own perspectives and beliefs, the way the film portrayed certain aspects soured him on the movie's experience. One final participant echoed the sentiments of not engaging with art if it doesn’t align with his own political beliefs, stating, “If it encourages the overall sensitivity propaganda, or if it's something that I find that that makes an absurd statement, then I might disregard it, I don't take it serious.” This participant stated in his interview that he was very against cancel culture and sensitivity propaganda and identified that if a piece of art promoted these principles, he would be more likely to disregard it.

**Polarization of United States Politics**
One major theme that emerged in many of the interviews I conducted is the polarization of politics in the United States. When asked about the biggest problem facing the United States, one participant answered, “I honestly think the fact that we're so divided is kind of scary. I think that is the thing that worries me the most. I feel like unless we fix that, we're not going to really be able to fix anything else. It won't matter that the climate is dying if we're fighting because we wouldn't have had time to look away from fighting each other.” When asked the same question, another participant said, “I would say right now the biggest problem is the polarization of politics. And the constant fighting and us versus them and not being able to compromise on anything politically.” One participant, when asked the same question on the biggest problem the United States was currently facing, disagreed with polarization. According to her, “I feel like what most people are going to say is division... People say America is so close to a civil war. I completely disagree with that. I think that's such a click bait fear mongering perspective to have. We're forced into this terrible system where nothing gets done, and then we get to say, oh, we're having the culture war and nothing's going to get good done because it's conservatives versus liberals, when that's not the situation and that's just what those in power and the media say it is because they want to shift the narrative and blame away from those to blame.” Her perspective was different than some of the other participant’s perspectives on the polarization of our politics, however she knew that it would be what most people answered, so she sought to refute those arguments. Through the participant examples, a majority of which aren’t being quoted, when having to think about the biggest problem in the United States, weather they agree or not, the polarization and political division of the United States is one of the first things that come to mind.

Art as Therapy
Art being therapeutic for those who create is another theme brought up in interviews. One person I interviewed who makes art for a living said, “for people who participate in art and create art, I think it’s extremely therapeutic and I think especially today with the amount of mental health problems that we have, I think we could use that a lot more, and I think it could help people with mental health issues they deal with if they were exposed to more programs where they could do art.” Here, an artist is making the claim that actively engaging with the creation of various art forms can help those that are struggling. The claim that engaging with the creation of art forms leads to helping people through their mental illnesses is supported by another person who is an art major. She said art is “very therapeutic. I struggle with OCD. So, I feel like my brain can turn off once I'm drawing, painting, writing. It's just like my brain is gone, or if I feel like for example, like writing. If I feel like my brain is overworking, then I can write. And it's also just self-expression too, I have a very I have a distinct style of art. So, like I feel like just it's like this is my thing.” This quote supports art serving as therapy, and these two artists I spoke to repeated extremely similar sentiments throughout their interviews of art helping them in their personal life in significant ways.

**Art as Inspiration**

Another theme that popped up semi-consistently was art being a source of inspiration for participants. One participant reflected on a video game that meant a lot to him, stating, “I played a game called Dark Souls, which is about overcoming adversity... that that one game taught me a lot about like. Trying something over and over, even if it seems impossible, you're able to overcome it. And so, like when I'm going through something difficult, I think... I beat this one, boss, so maybe I can do it.” This participant identified a video game that has a reputation of being incredibly difficult for teaching him lessons on overcoming adversity, inspiring him to accomplish difficult things even when they seem too hard. I interviewed someone else who did
theater all throughout high school, and he reinforced the theme of art causing inspiration. According to him, “The effort that it takes to put on a show, I was so oblivious to, how much time and effort goes into a play. They have not only the actors, but you also have the stage managers. You have people in the back, sound and music, and then you have the directory. Everybody is so important. It’s a well-oiled machine... but I think that... it made a bigger impact. on my life because I realized not only that it takes a team, it takes a village to do something like that.” Through his time doing theater throughout high school, this participant gained greater understanding of the value of teamwork and what goes into a stage production. It inspired him to see the value of working with other people, and through his experience working in the art form of theater, allowed him to gain a new perspective.

**Art and Spirituality**

Another connecting factor that linked participants together was the role that art played in their spiritual lives. One participant who is an artist went into detail about how his art and creative process are intertwined, stating, “I got really into meditation and Buddhism philosophy and stuff like that. There's an art movement called Sabi Wabi which is like Zen Buddhism, but a lot of the philosophy is instilled in like my creative process... I'll look at everything I do almost like a co-creation between me and God.” This artist reflects on his spiritual life being tied to his creative process, identifying that creating art makes him feel connected with his spiritual side.

Another participant reflected on how his spirituality and the arts are intertwined. When asked about if he believes his political views and his perception of the arts are intertwined, he responded, “Maybe not my political beliefs, but I think more of my religious beliefs. A lot of early art was all like crucifixes and all was like designed to be inside church. Me looking at that through my perspective versus someone who is from a secular point of view or non-religious atheist, agnostic would see that differently.... And I can also point out more Christian-esque
lyrics... like Johnny Cash... there’s a lot of underlying tones about Christ.” This participant identified that he perceives religious art differently than other people who may not be religious, as well as picking up on religious themes in art that may be missed by other people. When asked the same question, another participant responded, saying, “Being raised Roman Catholic and still practicing, I think that it's my spiritual background on a lot of moral issues that tend to influence how I see art... Something I have adjusted to is art involving a high degree of nudity and stuff like that is super contextual with me. I personally try to be careful about what I consume.” Going back to political beliefs influencing what art you choose not to consume, here is an example of someone choosing not to consume art that could be considered “pornographic” due to his own spiritual beliefs.

**Discussion**

This study sought to seek out and understand the influence of political orientation on one’s engagement and perception of the arts through utilizing the theory of social interactionism to analyze responses. Findings are consistent with Treadway (2005) advancing the research on formation of cultures based on similarity of perception amongst individuals. Interviews with participants brought forth evidence to support Isto (2020) and Bell (2011) and their findings on engagement with the past and engagement with art forms and how they are intertwined. Findings brought forth a variety of theoretical implications for one’s perception of political issues and culture influencing their perception of the arts. Limitations and directions for future research are discussed.

**Formation of Cultures**

Findings from this study support the study conducted by Treadway (2005) on how political sub-cultures are formed through SI. Through interviews with people who had no relationship to one another, we see sub-cultures formed through SI. In *Art as Therapy*, two
participants interviewed cited art as a significant source of therapy for themselves. Through interacting with symbols and meaning they have made through their own art; they are able to tune out some of their own struggles. One participant cited the fact that art should be encouraged for people struggling with mental health issues. The United States is having a mental health crisis, and while it certainly wouldn’t solve that problem, encouraging widespread creativity through art could at the least help with the issue.

Through interviewing these two artists, I was able to conclude that through interacting with and engaging with art to the extent they have, they would belong to a sub-climate formed through SI. This sub-climate would believe art should be more encouraged in treating mental illness and may be more likely to vote for programs that fund the arts or creative expansions in public schooling. Through SI, artists may be more likely to form a subculture with their own beliefs and perceptions about the importance of art due to art being the source of a significant source of therapy for them.

**Art and Engagement with History**

This study reaffirms Isto (2020) and Bell’s (2011) findings on the importance of history in understanding politics and art. Isto (2020), explored representations of the working class as Eastern Europe moved away from socialism to neoliberalism capitalism. Without understanding the context of economic policy change in Eastern Europe, the representations of the working class and how they evolved are not likely to be understood fully by the observer. One political science major participant pointed out art history classes to understand how the arts evolved, citing medieval artworks representing Jesus and the Virgin Mary, to the Renaissance, to modern times, and how art is completely different in each era. Spanning centuries, the world changes radically, and while that is obvious, an understanding of historic changes in science, policy, race relations, etc. will help provide an understanding of the arts. Through SI, the more we understand
about history and can identify significant changes and tie them to our own symbols, the more we can understand the art of the time and draw meaning from them, intentionally or otherwise.

Bell (2011) explores the erasure of history in Northern Ireland, and engaging with art as historic constellations leads to an understanding of the past. When considering what art is considered beautiful in certain time periods, one participant identified the differences between certain time periods. This is just an example but provides an insight into cultures of the time and their values. This claim backs up Bell (2011) and his exploration of art as constellations. Through SI, people who engage with history form symbols and ideas for what the time was like and carry these symbols over to the art from that time. People who engage with the arts gain ideas and symbols through SI and carry these ideas and symbols over to their engagement with history. They parallel each other, and engagement with one is beneficial to engagement with the other. In many ways, they are one in the same.

**Art and Involvement**

Interviews with participants revealed that art can cause inspiration. One participant cited a video game that taught him lessons in overcoming adversity motivating him to accomplish difficult tasks, and another participant drew on his experiences in theater production as inspiring him to see the value in teamwork and cooperation. These interviewees support the research presented by Bracey (2019) on the power for art to inspire. Bracey grew up in a family of artists in Chicago during the Black Liberation Movement. The cultivation of the “Black Aesthetic” inspired Bracey to contribute to black art of the time and led to him joining the militant wing of civil rights politics under the black-led freedom now party. Through growing up with other black artists and seeing the effect it had on communities Bracey grew up in, Bracey made meanings of this art through SI with the art and the artists around him. This caused inspiration for him to become politically involved. The other two participants cited as inspirations due to art, they
formed meanings through SI, which led to them being positively influenced in real life. While
neither of them ended up doing things politically directly because of their respective arts, they
both had art make a real-world impact on them that affected their lives.

Limitations and Future Directions

While this study brought forth meaningful implications and insightful responses, this study was not without its’ limitations. Firstly, a majority of the participants identified themselves to align with the democratic party (n=6, 40%), with only 2 participants aligning themselves with the republican party (n=2, 13%) one participant aligning themselves with the libertarian party (n=1, 7%), and 4 participant aligning themselves with a different unlisted party (n=4, 27%). Second, only 2 participants were over the age of 22 (n=2, 13%), with the rest of the participants being aged 18-22 (n=13, 87%). Thirdly, the sample lacked racial diversity, with most participants identifying as White/Caucasian (n=12, 80%). Fourthly, this study lacked voices from outside of the United States, with only one participant living in a country outside of the United States (n=1, 6%).

For future research, it would be beneficial if there was more diversity in political orientation. With most of the participants identifying themselves to be a part of the democratic party and are left leaning, it heavily limited the scope to which this project can be applied to. In the future, a wider scope of candidates could be recruited from a variety of different places to limit the possibility of biased results. Also, participants could be drawn from a greater variety of places to avoid any age biases. To avoid racial biases, future studies can go out of their way to increase the sample size and draw from more places, lessening the odds of the participants being majority white. Additionally, using similar strategies for expanding the diversity of our participants, avoiding having solely United States participants will be able to factor that in and widen the range which we can generalize findings to.
Conclusion

This study sought to examine the relationship between one’s political orientation and their engagement and perception of the arts. Findings suggested engagement with history leads to a more profound understanding of art, art causes real-life inspiration, and engagement with art leads to the formation of sub-cultures. Additionally, interviews revealed people choose not to engage with certain art based on political orientation, many people’s perception of the biggest issues in the United States is polarization of politics, leading to a lack of cultural understanding of each other, art can be a form of therapy for people, art can inspire people to make changes in the real world, and people who are spiritually inclined perceive certain art in a different way. Most limitations were due to lack of variety in the sample.
References


https://books.google.com/books?id=4lcthzR5SNgC&lpg=PR7&dq=politics+and+art+perception&lr&pg=PR8#v=onepage&q&f=false


Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Hi, (PARTICIPANT'S NAME)! Thanks again for agreeing to participate in this study! This interview should last approximately 30 minutes and will be recorded. I am going to ask you some questions about your political beliefs and orientation and your engagement with art forms. You are not required to answer any question you do not want to answer, and if you are uncomfortable with a question do not hesitate to request to move on. Are you ready to begin?

To preface, this study is centered attempting to find any relationship between one’s political orientation and how one engages with and perceives the importance of art.

POLITICAL ORIENTATION

1. What are some of the key political issues that are important to you that you are passionate about? Where do you fall on these issues?
2. Generally, do you believe you are more progressive or more conservative? How do you know? Please explain.
   a. FOLLOW UP: On the political spectrum, do you say you fall more in line with left-wing, right-wing ideologies, or a combination of the two? Please explain.
3. What are some of the key areas you believe we need to change as a country?
   a. FOLLOW UP: What systems in the U.S. do you believe allow the continued success of the United States?
4. What is far and away the biggest problem the United States is currently facing in your opinion?
5. If someone asked your political orientation, what would you say? Please explain.

ARTS

6. How important are various art forms in your life?
   a. FOLLOW UP: Which form of art is/are your personal favorite(s)?
   b. IF NEEDED: Consider - TV, movies, music, paintings, sculptures, videogames, etc.
7. How do you engage with the arts? *Will let participants answer, then ask follow-up questions.
   a. FOLLOW UP: Do you find yourself engaging in the arts outside the home (going to a movie theater, going to a record store, buying tickets for an art gallery, going to a concert, etc.). Please explain how you engage.
   b. FOLLOW UP: Do you find yourself engaging in the arts at home (listening to spotify, watching a movie on your tv, etc.). Please explain how you engage.
   c. FOLLOW UP: Do you ever create any art? Please explain what you do and your level of involvement.
      i. PROBE: Do you make music, paint, take photographs, etc.? Please explain your level of involvement.
8. How much value do you believe the arts add to society? Explain.
   a. FOLLOW UP: How intertwined are art and culture in your opinion?
9. Have the arts ever made a profound impact on your life? If so, please explain.
10. When engaging with art, do you often try to look for deeper meanings, or do you tend to engage with what is present at a surface level? Please explain.

11. Have you ever engaged with any art that made you reflect on real-world problems? Please give an example and explain.

12. Do you pay attention to how the arts evolve and change over time? How so?

13. Finally, can you tell me how you think your political views affect the way you engage with art?

Debrief

Are there any other details you would like to provide or questions you would like me to revisit? Any questions you have for me?

If anything comes up, please don’t hesitate to contact me via email prmckenz@calpoly.edu

Do you want to get sent the results of this study?
- IF YES: Can I get a good email address for you?
- IF NO: Thank you for your participation anyways!

Would you also be willing to share this study opportunity with others you know who may qualify? If so, that would be great! Feel free to give them my number and I’ll send them the link to the survey.

Thanks so much for participating! Hope to hear from you again soon.