

PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF ARTISTS IN COMMUNITIES: A SIGN OF CHANGING TIMES

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Abstract

There is a growing recognition within the arts and cultural field that the public roles and work of artists are changing. Within the field, artists are increasingly lauded for their work as entrepreneurs, civically-minded problem-solvers, and agents for social change. Amid a shift away from the arts policy paradigm that has largely focused on nonprofit organizations over the last half-century within the United States, there is a hypothesis stemming from within the arts and cultural field that a policy paradigm focused on artists' roles in community change, development, and placemaking will take hold. Public opinion and perceptions have an important influence on the formation of public policies, yet whether and how artists' roles in public life are perceived beyond the arts and cultural field is unknown. This lack of understanding impedes the arts and cultural field's ability to monitor if such a policy paradigm shift is occurring and to develop policies to support artists' work within and with communities. Therefore, we developed and pilot tested survey indicators to gauge public perceptions of artists within communities. In this article, we describe the indicators, report on the national pilot test topline results, and discuss the indicators' merits to be used over time drawing from the pilot test results. Understanding public perceptions of artists within communities can inform and influence policies supporting artists' work and offer a means to monitor shifts to the larger arts and cultural policy paradigm in the U.S.

Keywords: artists; entrepreneurs; public perception of artists

There is a growing recognition—at least from within the cultural sector—that the role of the “artist” in contemporary society is shifting. The once commonplace understanding of an artist as a genius, often creating in isolation (Kidd, 2012), is seemingly being replaced by one focused on artists' roles in public and civic life. Artists are predominantly being recognized as entrepreneurs and agents for social change, thus making these individuals integral to community change and development (Bell & Oakley, 2014; Cornfield, 2015; Jackson et al., 2003; Lingo & Tepper, 2013; Markusen, 2014). Highly visible creative placemaking initiatives, such as the National Endowment for the Arts' (NEA) Our Town program and ArtPlace, are being recognized as aiding a paradigm change from artists being seen as seeking community support to one of artists contributing and leveraging their skills to support communities (Bonin-Rodriguez, 2015; Markusen & Gadwa, 2010; Redaelli, 2016). Art as a vehicle for social messages and societal critique is not a new idea, but increasingly the work of community development, civically-minded problem-solving, and entrepreneurship that is mindful to issues of equity, accessibility and empowerment is included in the repertoire of artistic process and practice (Bedoya, 2013; Center for Cultural Innovation, 2016; Jackson et al., 2003; Center for Performance as Civic Practice, 2015). Through a growing body of cases and qualitative research, we know that in some communities enterprising artists are creating and facilitating creative work in ways that contribute to the development of inclusive, expressive communities (Cornfield, 2015; Scott, 2012). In addition, expert cultural commentators have described current means by which artists are working in new contexts and with new approaches (Center for Cultural Innovation, 2016; Goethe Institute, 2014; McGlone, 2017), suggesting a new epoch for how artists are perceived and how they are working in enterprise, in civic life, and within local communities.

Since the middle of the 20th-century, arts policies within the United States have largely focused on the non-profit infrastructure (Kreidler, 2013; Mulcahy, 2006; Peters & Cherbo, 1998; Toepler, 2013;

Woronkiewicz, Nichols, & Iyengar, 2012), but the policy paradigm for arts and culture within the United States is currently amidst dramatic change. Shifts in demographics, advances in technology, and expectations for social interactions are contributing to the disruption of the extant paradigm (Novak-Leonard et al., 2014), and the policy paradigm for arts and culture that will emerge after this punctuated change remains to be seen (Toepler, 2013). An important feature of this time of change, however, is the increased focus on arts and cultural policy decisions being made on the local level (Markusen & Gadwa, 2010; Morley & Winkler, 2014). Given the current momentum and pervasiveness of creative placemaking, which values artists as vital community assets and provides them with catalyzing jurisdiction (Bonin-Rodriguez, 2015), there is a hypothesis stemming from within the arts and cultural field that a policy paradigm focused on artists' roles in community change, development, and placemaking is taking hold.

There has never been a singular norm or definition of "artist" (Markusen, 2013b), but the term has been operationalized in particular ways to inform different facets of public policy discourse connecting with arts and culture over time. Over the past 20 years, a dominant approach to researching artists has been discipline-based employment (Jackson et al., 2003; Menger, 1999), which has been used to monitor employment trends and to "counter misperceptions about artists not contributing to economic welfare" (Iyengar, 2013, p. 498). For example, the NEA has used eleven occupational categories employed by the U.S. Census Bureau, which has established a convention used in other research; Alper and Wassall (2006) is one key example. Studies of artists from an occupational lens have a vast body of literature to build on, and operational indicators like income, employment status, educational credentials, and years of employment that make comparison between studies more direct. When it comes to data availability, an occupational operationalization of who counts as an artist intersects with economics and employment research more broadly, which facilitates partnerships with agencies that are concerned with the financial impacts of the arts and arts industries, such as the Arts and Cultural Production Satellite Account from the Bureau of Economic Analysis and NEA (National Endowment for the Arts, 2017).

However, the role of "artist" is not exclusively tied to any required credential, job, process, or place (Lena & Lindemann, 2014; Markusen, 2013a; Markusen, Gilmore, Johnson, Levi, & Martinez, 2006; Menger, 1999), so the occupational framing of "artist" does not fully meet the needs of policymakers and researchers in the cultural field. While it is vital to have a discipline-based accounting of employment to inform trends in arts employment and the related economics, it represents a limited conception of artists and their possible impact. Studies that select for artists occupationally may not generalize to artists more broadly and may miss important variations in artistic practice and needed refinements in the understanding of who artists are and the measures we need to inform policy. Even among individuals who many would consider artists on the basis of earning a credential, it can be difficult to get a clear picture of who is or is not an artist depending on personal conceptions and definitions of what counts (Lena & Lindemann, 2014). In recent years, as policy matters related to concerns about equity and changing demographics within the U.S. have come to the fore, there has been a collective broadening in the understanding of what it means to be engaged with artistic participation and forms of expression, and advances in how to measure these activities beyond occupations (Ivey, 2008; Novak-Leonard, Reynolds, English, & Bradburn, 2015b; Tepper & Gao, 2008).

Existing research about group formation and cohesion in social networks can be informative when considering the relationships and personal connections that constitute the social dynamics of creative placemaking in local communities. The propensity of people to know and interact with people who are like themselves is a strong social force that can make it less likely that people who are of a different race, class, occupation, or religion will meet or build personal relationships (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001). Artists work in locales across the U.S. in rural communities, small towns, suburbs, and cities (Markusen, 2013a), but communities can contain many different cliques, groups, and factions (Wimmer & Lewis,

2010), which means that while some individuals may know or interact with artists in their communities, others do not. We also know that closeness of ties to others influence what resources individuals are able to access (Lin, 2001; Van Der Gaag & Snijders, 2005), which raises questions about who interacts with artists, and how; who may be the beneficiaries of creative placemaking initiatives leveraging artists' skills; and how policymakers might take into account issues of accessibility and equity in the distribution of their efforts and allocation of resources within communities.

Based on the collective actions and language being used by many within the arts and culture field, a vital notion of artist within policy discourse has shifted from one defined by a discipline-based occupation or product to one of processes and ways of working, thinking, and connecting with others within their communities. If this notion also resonates with the broader U.S. public, then this would be a pivotal change in public understanding of and attitudes towards artists from just over a decade ago (Jackson et al., 2003). Public opinion is an important factor in the formation of public policies (Burstein, 2003), yet whether and how artists' roles in public life are perceived beyond the arts and cultural field are unknown.

Therefore, we developed and pilot tested survey indicators to gauge public perceptions of artists within local communities and to assess the closeness of relationships between local community members and artists within the community. The findings of our pilot test provide foundational insights for monitoring the roles of artists in public life, which can inform art policies to evolve from the current period of punctuated change in the United States.

Methodology

The aim of our study was to develop and test survey measures of public perceptions of artists in order to gauge how well they may serve as indicators to monitor potential changes in public perceptions. In this article, we develop the theoretical underpinnings for our survey measures, draw upon cognitive interviews conducted to test and refine the measures, and share the results of the pilot survey fielded with a national sample.

In February 2017, we conducted cognitive interviews with ten adults identified through an intercept methodology in variety of public spaces, including a public library, cafes, and a college campus within the Greater Nashville area. Each interviewee was paid a \$10 incentive to participate, and each interview lasted approximately twenty minutes and was conducted in English. The interviews were semi-structured, including a general question about what the word 'artist' meant to each interviewee and how, or whether, that differed when asked to think about artists that the interviewee might see or interact with in their own local community; descriptions of artists' activities; and the closeness of relationships the interviewee might have with any artists in their local community. Concurrent probing techniques were primarily used. We aimed to cognitively test the questionnaire with demographically diverse adults. Of the nine individuals who agreed to self-report their demographic information at the end of the interview, five were female and four were male. Three respondents were between the ages of 18-24, three between the ages of 35-44, two between the ages of 45-54, and one between the ages of 65-74. Regarding educational attainment, one had a high school diploma, two had associate's degrees, one had completed some college, three had completed bachelor's degrees, and two had graduate degrees. Our interviewees were racially and ethnically more homogenous. Seven interviewees identified as white, one identified as black or African American, one identified as American Indian or Alaska Native, and one identified as Pacific Islander; interviewees had the option to identify as more than one race or ethnicity. We iteratively refined the pilot test questionnaire based on feedback and observations from the cognitive interviews.

Between March 23-27, 2017, the pilot test survey questions were fielded on the AmeriSpeak® Panel, a probability-based panel designed to be representative of the U.S. household population, which is

operated by NORC at the University of Chicago. The sample is comprised of 1,110 adults (age 18 and older) from across the U.S.; 954 respondents answered the questions online, and 156 completed the questions by phone. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish. For our analyses, we apply sampling weights provided by AmeriSpeak[®], which account for age, gender, the nine Census divisions, education, and race/ethnicity. The total survey margin of error is +/- 4.04.¹

Indicator Design And Key Insights From Cognitive Interviews

Indicators that capture public perceptions of artists and assess relationships between local community members and artists are the focus of our research. In order to understand public perceptions of artists within their own communities, a primary aim for the design of the indicators was to encourage respondents to think carefully and widely, but quickly, about identifying practices and activities that respondents may think of as artists doing, while simultaneously directing the survey respondent to focus exclusively on artists within their local geographic community. Given the various ways artists and their work have been and can be viewed, our goals in developing indicators for this study were to focus on three key constructs: (a) what people identify artists doing within their community, (b) the closeness of social ties with artists within their community, and (c) opinions of how artists should be employed or funded within their community. The purpose of each indicator and insights garnered from the cognitive interviews are further explained and resulted in the pilot test indicators in Figure 1.

Identifying Artists in Local Communities

Given the various concepts of what an artist could be and the focus of our indicators, a critical aim in designing our indicators was to encourage survey respondents to think inclusively about the forms of artistic practices that respondents may identify artists as doing, while also directing the survey respondent to focus exclusively on artists within their local geographic community. One key hurdle to overcome in the design of our indicators is the common association with the general term ‘artist’ being taken to mean a painter or musician (Urban Institute, 2002). The results of our cognitive interviews underscored this challenge as eight out of ten interviewees referenced visual artists, primarily painters, when initially asked, “What comes to mind when you think of the word ‘artist’?” Interviewees also referenced famous musicians and performing artists, such as Van Gogh, Taylor Swift, and Kurt Cobain. Hence, a primary goal for the indicator design was to develop framing language to help respondents think more inclusively than these commonplace responses, but to also not exclude them.

Toward this goal, we included key elements into the framing language for the pilot test. First, in order to encourage respondents to think broadly about what they may consider artists to do and to encourage respondents to feel comfortable making their own choice about what they might include as an artist, we used a triangulation of terms to describe the types of activities artists might be involved - “artistic, creative, and cultural activities” (Novak-Leonard, Reynolds, English, and Bradburn, 2015a, p. 15). We adapted this triangulation of terms from the California Survey of Arts and Cultural Participation, as this inclusive priming language encouraged respondents to think broadly and inclusively about the forms of their own participation.

The following questions are about artists. The word ‘artist’ can bring to mind a variety of people who do different kinds of artistic, creative, and cultural activities. For example, some people think of famous painters from the past or current celebrities when they hear the word ‘artist’. **The following questions ask specifically about the kinds of artists you see or interact with in your local community.**

1. Please describe examples of any artists you see or interact with in your local community.
2. Which of the following would you use to describe the artists that you have seen or interacted with in your local community during the past 12 months, that is between March 2016 and March 2017: *(choose all that apply)*
 - Represent or serve as a spokesperson for the people who are part of your community
 - Bring attention to community concerns or causes
 - Collaborate with local individuals and organizations
 - Think about new ways to solve problems
 - Create or perform art as a way to earn money
 - Other, please explain: *[capture response]*
 - I do not see or interact with any artists in my local community *[skip to Q6]*
3. Which of the following best describes the artists you have seen or interacted with in your local community during the past 12 months? *(choose one)*
 - Represent or serve as a spokesperson for the people who are part of your community
 - Bring attention to community concerns or causes
 - Collaborate with local individuals and organizations
 - Think about new ways to solve problems
 - Create or perform art as a way to earn money
 - Other
4. Thinking again about the artists that you have seen or interacted with in your local community during the past 12 months, what are your relationships to them? *(choose all that apply)*
 - I am thinking of myself
 - Family member
 - Friend
 - Acquaintance
 - No personal relationship, but I know of them
5. Which of the following describes the primary relationship you have with the artists that you have seen or interacted with in your local community during the past 12 months? *(choose one)*
 - I am thinking of myself
 - Family member
 - Friend
 - Acquaintance
 - No personal relationship, but I know of them
6. Which of the following, if any, do you feel should employ or provide funding for artists in your local community? *(choose all that apply)*
 - The federal government
 - The state government
 - The local government
 - Businesses or corporations
 - Charitable corporations
 - Community organizations or clubs
 - Individual contributors or sponsors
 - Artists should be self-employed or self-funded

Figure 1
Pilot Survey Questions

Second, in order to help define the survey respondents' frames of reference to focus exclusively on artists within their local geographic community, we next asked respondents to think about artists they "have seen or interacted with in their local community." We used the cognitive interviews to probe interpretations of "community" to garner insight on the degree to which interviewees would develop a frame of reference for community defined by geography as opposed to personal interactions and relationships without regard to geography. Seven out of nine interviewees understood community in terms of geography; two interpreted community as defined primarily by relationships. However, even among these latter two, the relationships they referenced were still seemingly anchored by geography, as opposed to online interactions or personal identity, such as identifying with the scientific community or LGBTQ community. For example, one middle-aged woman referenced her CrossFit exercise group, a Bible study group, and her husband's professional network at a local university as her community. While these are relationship-focused groups, they all still exist within the geographic limits of the town in which she lives. One interviewee described community as, "people and the space, ideally a space where people can come together." While the chosen framing language is not exclusive to communities defined by geography, based on the cognitive interviews, the phrase "*local community*" adequately guides respondents to focus on their geographically local community. Examining variations of the phrase "have seen or interacted with" revealed negligible differences in responses or provided examples. We included an open-ended priming question in the pilot test – "Please describe examples of any artists you see or interact with in your community" – in part to assess the adequacy of the framing language. In addition, the open-ended question aims to elicit examples of respondents' interactions and perceptions of artists in their local communities in their own words to examine against descriptions of artists' roles in local communities used in the following close-ended indicators.

Describing Artists' Roles in Local Communities

Within local communities, our key indicators seek to capture the various notions of how the general adult public may perceive artists and the dimensions of their work. In contrast to prior studies, we did not ask about artists' discipline of practice; rather, the indicators collect opinions on five descriptions of artists' behaviors in their local communities in effort to shed light on how the public interprets the motivations, goals, and purpose of their work. The five measures used in the pilot test draw from existing literature and significant refinement based on results of the cognitive interviews. We define the prior twelve months as the recall period, which has been a convention used in multiple general population surveys regarding arts and culture, including the Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (National Endowment for the Arts, 2015), American Perception of Artists Survey (Urban Institute, 2015), California Survey of Arts and Cultural Participation (Novak-Leonard et al., 2015a), and the General Social Survey – Arts Supplement (Smith, Marsden, & Hout, 2016). Respondents are asked to choose from the following descriptions all that apply to their experiences, as well as which one best describes their perspectives. The descriptions are not mutually exclusive from one another, but rather emphasize different possible dimensions and perceptions of artists' activities within communities. If none of these apply to the respondent's experiences, the pilot test includes options for the respondent to report no interaction with artists as well as write in one's own description of artists in their local community. The five substantive responses for this question are:

"Represent or serve as a spokesperson for the people who are part of your community." As part of the paradigm shift in cultural policy, artists are increasingly being presented as individuals who serve as representatives for the communities they live in to "uniquely testify from and about a particular public" (Bonin-Rodriguez, 2015, p. 2). In the cognitive interviews, the examples that respondents generated in response to this prompt referenced artisan markets and shop owners who serve to represent the communities in which they are located and promote other local artists, artists who fill "ethnic and economic niche[s]", an

artist whose local exhibit focused on drawing attention to understanding mental illness, and an artist friend who the respondent talks with about community issues. Understanding a baseline measure and changes over time in whether artists are perceived as representatives or spokespersons in their communities would provide insight into artists' levels of connection to and alignment with the communities in which they live.

During cognitive interviews, respondents also cited examples such as a political dance group, the recent women's march, and other political statements by artists, suggesting a varied response that describes artists' roles as bringing attention to community concerns or causes. Additionally, the Creativity Connects report indicates that artists, "[give] voice to community concerns and aspirations" (Center for Cultural Innovation, 2016, p. 3). Hence, in effort to capture this sentiment, we include, "Bring attention to community concerns or causes," to elicit whether individuals perceive artists who they see or interact with in their community to be involved in issues of concern in local communities.

"Collaborate with local individuals and organizations." Artists have always been involved in the fabric of their communities in addition to being members of their profession. The idea of the patterned cooperation (Becker, 1984) that connects artists to one another is well-established, and artists are highly aware that their work exists in interconnected occupational communities in which connections to others and a good reputation are essential for their career (Cornfield, 2015; Dowd & Pinheiro, 2013; Gallelli, 2016; Menger, 1999). When asked in cognitive interviews, individuals who perceive artists in their local community to collaborate with local individuals and organizations referenced a tea shop owner who collaborates with local chefs for special events; the community of makers and hackers who collaborate to bridge the gap between artistry and innovation; artists working with the Red Cross and other relief organizations when there are disasters and tragedies like the East Tennessee wildfires in 2016 or a local shooting that targeted an Army recruitment storefront in Chattanooga, TN; opportunities for children to work with local artists through the school system; and numerous arts and music festivals or events. As networking, partnerships, opportunity recognition, and the ability to "recombine resources" are prominent characteristics of arts entrepreneurship in scholarly literature (Chang and Wyszomirski, 2015, p. 25), this measure offers a high-level indicator of the degree to which individuals perceive artists to be operating entrepreneurially in their communities.

"Think about new ways to solve problems." Artists have been described as, "thinkers, creators, and problem-solvers" (Center for Cultural Innovation, 2016, p. 11), and this indicator is intended to capture entrepreneurialism in terms of innovative approaches and problem-solving. Initially, we cognitively tested a phrase used in the 2015 Strategic National Arts Alumni Project (SNAAP) survey, which addresses "inventing new methods to arrive at unconventional solutions" (Strategic National Arts Alumni Project, 2015, p. 1); however we chose alternative language based on cognitive interviewees' preference for easier interpretation. In the cognitive interviews, respondents said that "think[ing] about new ways to solve problems" is a sign of a good artist and that artists "should" do things differently than what we know works currently. One interviewee replied, "I hope so! That is what I want artists to do." Understanding whether individuals perceive artists in their communities as innovative problem solvers offers an additional indicator of understanding artists as entrepreneurs.

"Create or perform art as a way to earn money." Our study seeks to understand public perceptions of artists beyond the occupation-based definition of artist, as well as to understand perceptions of artists as primarily seeking to earn a livelihood and make money. One interviewee explained, "you've got to make a living or you can't do it." A few of the interviewees referenced artists who do not create or perform as a way to earn money; some artists, one respondent said, "give people voice," and another said that he has seen some artists transition from pursuing art as a hobby, but gradually turning their practice into a money-making venture. Lastly, one interviewee said that he thinks artists have to create or perform art as a way to

earn money more than ever at this point in time since he thinks people are less willing to have the government fund the arts and that artists have to raise their own money using Kickstarter or other self-initiated ways of earning money.

Social Ties and Financing Artists in Local Communities

Lastly, we include indicators of social ties and of attitudes toward employment and funding for artists. To examine social ties between artists and community members at a high level, we include an indicator of one's social proximity to artists. The response categories for this question stem from the resource generator tool (Van Der Gaag & Snijders, 2005), which is used to measure social capital in terms of the types of resources that individuals are able to access from within their personal social networks. Our final indicator by and large replicates a measure used in the American Perceptions of Artists Survey (Urban Institute, 2002) to measure opinions about funding and employment opportunities for artists. The 2002 survey revealed that people tended to be more supportive of individual and community-sponsorship than support from any level of government (Princeton Survey Research Associates, 2003, p. 16). To further inform hypotheses regarding a paradigm shift of artists' work moving toward entrepreneurialism and away from subsidy and test to what degree the public perceives that artists should be self-reliant, we added the response category, "artists should be self-employed or self-funded."

Reflection on Cognitive Interviews

The aim of the cognitive interviews was to examine and refine language to develop survey indicators that would allow us to establish a baseline, and subsequently monitor changes, of how individuals perceive and relate to artists in their communities. We recognize that Nashville's concentration and visibility of artists, musicians in particular, creates a unique context for interviewees (Peoples, 2013) and acknowledge that our cognitive interviewees likely provided examples from the city's vibrant community of commercial music artists more so than would likely occur from many other communities. For example, one interviewee noted that his interactions with artists in his local community regularly included national and international music artists like Elton John and Jack White. This was the most striking example, but, on the whole, many respondents talked about seeing live music and interacting with professional musicians. In the cognitive interview process, we noted that at some points respondents might abstract the idea of 'artist' further out to the idea of 'art' and respond about art more generally rather than about artists. For example, interviewees referenced buying art from vendors in local markets, listening to punk music, and attending music festivals, but not interacting with musicians at the festival. Overall, the cognitive interview process was iterative and led to many improvements toward reflecting language meaningful to the general public about their perceptions of artists.

Pilot Test Results

The pilot test results provide initial insights on public perceptions of artists, establishing a baseline for monitoring the potentially changing roles of artists in public life and monitoring paradigm change within the United States. We also critically reflect on the results in effort to further improve the indicator measures for future use.

Identifying Artists in Local Communities

Overall, 38.4% of the weighted sample reported having seen or interacted with artists in their local community within the prior year. Men and adults without a four-year college degree reported significantly higher rates of not having seen or interacted with artists in their community than women and those with

degrees respectively. Logistic regression analyses examining race/ethnicity and college education showed that having a college degree significantly predicts higher odds ($\exp(\beta)=1.70$, $p=.003$) of having seen or interacted with an artist, as does identifying as Black ($\exp(\beta)=1.62$, $p=.055$) or as 'Other, Non-Hispanic' ($\exp(\beta)=2.14$, $p=.026$); there were no significant interaction effects between having a college degree and race.¹¹ While having a college education is a well-recognized determinant of participation in the arts, in general (McCarthy, Ondaatje, & Zakaras, 2001; Rabkin & Hedberg, 2011), typically rates of participation are highest for those identifying as White, Non-Hispanic according to findings from the Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (Silber & Triplett, 2015). While arts participation is not necessarily equivalent to having seen or interacted with artists in one's community, the differing patterns of engagement by race/ethnicity are relevant to artists' practices and to supporting policies addressing matters of inclusion.

Of the 439 survey respondents (unweighted) who reported having seen or interacted with artists in their local community, almost half (202 survey respondents) provided substantive responses regarding who those artists were. We use these qualitative responses to gauge how well the priming language prompted and helped frame the type of artist the survey measures aim to understand. In total, 87 respondents - 43% of those who described artists in open-ended responses - identified a personal relationship with an artist; 22 identified themselves as an artist, 29 identified an artist by name, and 36 referenced friends and family members as artists. Examples of relationship-based responses are: "friendship with a pianist", "I work in the arts, so it is my daily job to interact with artists and artworks", "My brother has had his paintings in the newspaper and on display. A friend, *[first and last name of friend, blinded for privacy]*, is an artist and just published a book. My sister is an artist also." Other responses about artists were more generic, but still focused on the roles that artists have rather than on the art that they create. For example, respondents answered: "local theatre artists, actors, directors, designers, playwrights, etc.", "Artist from New Zealand painting downtown", "Blues musicians."

While 202 respondents focused on artists, an additional 118 responses addressed art more generally. We observed a similar challenge in the cognitive interviews, wherein some respondents expanded the idea of 'artist' into one of seeing 'art' more generally. For some survey responses, it was difficult to make a distinction between a respondent's characterization of art vs. artists, so we chose to code discussion of people, roles, or relationships as a response focusing on artists (e.g., "A double bass player in the Tucson Symphony Orchestra is a good friend"; "A few friends who are artists"; "musicians"). If the respondent's answer focused on objects, places, or events, we coded their response as focusing on art (e.g., "Art is regularly displayed in the building where I work on a rotating basis by local artists."; "I like to visit independent local craft shops."; "Painting, music, graffiti"). Of the respondents who talked about art, but not about artists in their responses to this question, most listed types of art and locations or events where they view art in their community. For example: "Richmond, VA has lots of public murals in our city", "Walker Sculpture Garden, Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Guthrie Theater, Ordway Theater, Summer music festivals", "Live music."

Describing Artists' Roles in Local Communities

Most respondents (50.3%) who saw or interacted with artists in their local communities described the artists as creating or performing art to earn money. A large proportion of respondents would describe the artists who they see or interact with as bringing attention to community concerns or causes (43.3%) and collaborating with local individuals and organizations (46.5%). About a quarter of respondents describe artists in their community as thinking of new ways to solve problems (24.7%) or representing or serving as a

		N	Weighted % of Total Sample [95% CI]	DID see or interact with artists in local community [95% CI]	DID NOT see or interact with artists in local community [95% CI]
Adults		1,110		38.4% [.3462, .4231]	61.6% [.5769, .6538]
Gender	Male	514	48.4% [.4447, .5234]	36.2% [.3092, .4185]	63.8% [.5815, .6908]
	Female	596	51.6% [.4766, .5553]	40.4% [.3517, .4594]	59.6% [.5406, .6483]
Education	Earned BA or above	379	25.1% [.2218, .2836]	47.8% [.412, .5448]	52.2% [.4552, .588]
	Earned high school degree or lower	731	74.9% [.7164, .7782]	35.2% [.3075, .3999]	64.8% [.6001, .6925]
Age	18-29	208	21.3% [.1809, .2499]	42.3% [.3338, .5167]	57.7% [.4833, .6662]
	30-44	332	26.5% [.2329, .3004]	34.7% [.2837, .4172]	65.3% [.5828, .7163]
	45-59	284	24.8% [.2166, .283]	40.8% [.334, .4863]	59.2% [.5137, .666]
	60+	286	27.3% [.2393, .3096]	36.7% [.2974, .4432]	63.3% [.5568, .7026]
Race/Ethnicity	White, Non-Hispanic	729	64.4% [.6054, .6803]	37.2% [.3257, .4215]	62.8% [.5785, .6743]
	Hispanic	174	15.8% [.1321, .1866]	28.2% [.2095, .3676]	71.8% [.6324, .7905]
	Black, Non-Hispanic	135	11.8% [.0962, .1449]	46.7% [.3614, .5762]	53.3% [.4238, .6386]
	Other, Non-Hispanic	72	8.0% [.0595, .1078]	55.3% [.3983, .6987]	44.7% [.3013, .6017]
Area	Metro	981	87.8% [.8467, .9029]	37.6% [.3373, .4167]	62.4% [.5833, .6627]
	Non-Metro	129	12.2% [.0971, .1533]	43.9% [.3178, .5683]	56.1% [.4317, .6822]

Table 1
Sample Demographics (Total) & Demographics of Adults Who Did & Did Not See or Interact with Artists in their Community

spokesperson for the people (25.8%). After respondents checked all descriptions that they felt applied, we asked them to choose which description best fit the artists who they see or interact with in their communities. Of the 400 individuals who answered this question, the highest percentage (34.8%) describe artists as creating or performing art to earn money, yet nearly two thirds of respondents felt there were better ways to describe artists in their communities. The next most frequent responses describe artists as bringing attention to community concerns or injustices (20.7%) and as collaborating with local individuals and organizations (16.5%). The remaining respondents said that the best description of artists in their local communities were thinking about new ways to solve problems (9.4%), representing or serving as a spokesperson for the people (8.8%), or another response (9.8%), which they detailed in an open-ended text box.

	Descriptions of Artists' Roles in Local Communities [95% CI] n=439	Best Description [95% CI] n=400
Create or perform art as a way to earn money	50.3% [.4384, .5672]	34.8% [.2868, .4136]
Bring attention to community concerns or causes	43.3% [.3704, .4972]	20.7% [.1591, .2658]
Collaborate with local individuals and organizations	46.5% [.4009, .5292]	16.5% [.1206, .2209]
Other	11.7% [.0804, .1666]	9.8% [.0626, .151]
Think about new ways to solve problems	24.7% [.1992, .3027]	9.4% [.0623, .1404]
Represent or serve as a spokesperson for the people who are part of your community	25.8% [.2059, .3178]	8.8% [.0594, .1277]

Table 2

Descriptions of Artists, Among Adults Who Saw or Interacted with Artists in their Communities

Applying simple logistic regression to the ‘best description’, we find that adults who identify as Black, Non-Hispanic have significantly higher odds than White, Non-Hispanic adults ($\exp(\beta)=2.88$, $p=.016$) to choose “Bring attention to community concerns or causes” as the best description for artists they see or with whom they interact in their local community.

Of the 439 respondents who had seen or interacted with artists in the past year, 47 chose to provide their own answer to this question after selecting the box “Other, please explain.” We inductively coded and analyzed these open-ended responses to gain insight into where the descriptions of artists that we generated may be unclear or less inclusive than intended or if there were common perceptions of artists not included in the pilot test descriptions. While we would argue that about a quarter of these responses match the given closed-ended descriptions of artists, two emergent patterns of responses suggest the possible inclusion of additional descriptions for the future use of these indicators. Seven responses talked about art as a hobby, a vocation, or unpaid activity. One respondent said, “create art for my own enjoyment,” and another said, “Pursue art as a life long interest.” Another said, “True artists don't care about the money. They care about

the art. They are in touch with their feelings.” This suggests that a description of artists that explicitly identifies individuals’ interests in creating or performing art as a personal interest, hobby, or unpaid activity, might also be useful. An additional seven respondents described artists as educators. Five of the seven respondents specifically referenced artists’ role in youth development or teaching art to children (“Provide educational resources and outlets for others in the community. Especially young people”; “...to help young people develop and engage in the arts and get them off the streets.”). As many people come into contact with artists through education, it may be important for future indicators to include a response that allows respondents to indicate whether they see artists to be educators either in formal or informal capacities.

In addition, seven responses divulged specific examples of artists or arts-related activities. Of these, four talked about artists and two gave examples about art or spaces where art is made, displayed, or performed. For example, one respondent said, “A friend will be having readings on her book coming up next month,” and others referenced specific musicians in their town or particular art galleries, events, or organizations. Only two respondents noted that they interact with or see artists and art online. On the whole, these results suggest additional descriptions of artists in communities that are meaningful to residents.

Social Ties with Artists in Local Communities

In general, most respondents who interacted with artists know them as friends (33.5%), acquaintances (35.1%), or know of them but do not have a personal relationship with an artist (51.4%). Just over one quarter of respondents have closer personal relationships with artists, as 14.2% of respondents have a family member who is an artist in their community, and 12.2% of respondents identify themselves artists. When asked to identify their primary relationship to artists in their community, respondents answered similarly with 45.0% reporting their primary relationship with artists they know of, but with whom they do not have a personal relationship. Approximately a fifth reported a friend (22.1%), or an acquaintance (19.1%), and a lower overall percentage of respondents reported having familial ties (6.8%) to artists, or being an artist (7.1%).

Financing Artists in Local Communities

In line with the American Perceptions of Artists Survey in 2002, we found that in general, respondents are more supportive of private, local organizations and entities employing or funding artists in comparison to government funding or employment. More than half of respondents felt that individual contributors or sponsors (54.8%) should fund or employ artists. Likewise, slightly more than half of all respondents felt that artists should self-fund their endeavors or be self-employed (51.6%). Fewer respondents felt that private organizations and entities, that is, community organizations or clubs (47.7%), charitable corporations (40.2%), and businesses or corporations (35.1%), should fund or employ artists. On the whole, government funding or employment of artists was the least popular set of responses. Respondents were more supportive of more local forms of government funding or employing artists (local government 32.4%; State government 26.0%) than they were of federal government funding or employment of artists (21.5%).

There are significant differences between who respondents felt should fund or employ artists based upon whether they had seen or interacted with artists in their local community in the past year. Adults who did not interact with artists in the past year were generally more supportive of non-government entities, organizations, and individuals funding or employing artists. They were most in favor of artists self-funding their own work or being self-employed (57.4%) and least supportive of the federal government as a funder

	Relationships between adults and artists in their local community	Primary Relationship
	[95% CI] n=408	[95% CI] n=402
Myself	12.2% [.0851, .1708]	7.1% [.044, .114]
Family member	14.2% [.1014, .1948]	6.8% [.0417, .1081]
Friend	33.5% [.2741, .4009]	22.1% [.1698, .2818]
Acquaintance	35.1% [.2871, .4196]	19.1% [.1401, .2536]
No personal relationship, but I know of them	51.4% [.4477, .5795]	45.0% [.3855, .5156]

Table 3

Social Ties to Artists, Among Adults Who Saw or Interacted with Artists in their Community

or employer of artists (15.4%). Adults who have interacted with artists in the past year are generally more supportive of both public and private funding and employment for artists. They are most in favor of individual contributors or sponsors (61.2%) and are also least supportive of federal government support for artists (31.4%), though they are far more supportive of the federal government as a source of funding and employment for artists than are those who have not interacted with artists. Of note, adults who did not interact with artists are more in favor of artists self-funding their work or being self-employed (57.4%) than are those who did interact with artists (42.4%).

Reflections on Effectiveness & Limitations

Our goal in this study was to set baseline measures of perceptions of artists in hopes of establishing initial understandings of perceptions of artists that can, over time, be used to understand whether the public perceives the shifts identified and initiated at the policy level. This pilot test survey constitutes the first national study of perceptions of artists since the American Perceptions of Artists Survey in 2002, and expands the understanding of artists beyond disciplinary-based occupations. We sought to establish baseline measures of individuals' perceptions of artists in their local communities and to measure the closeness of relationships between individuals and the artists who they see or interact with in their communities. While the cognitive interview process helped us to make the survey indicators more parsimonious, the results of the pilot test provided insights on possible approaches to further increase the effectiveness of the survey items.

An issue we anticipated was distinguishing between art and artists. This was a prevalent abstraction in the cognitive interviews and was also observed in the open-ended responses of the national survey, which captured this common mismatch between the intent and purpose of the survey and the respondents' understanding of the questions. If respondents are expressing opinions about their perceptions of art, places where they view art, and art-focused events in their local community in the open-ended questions, it is

n=1,110	Support for employment and funding sources for local artists (% of adults) [95% CI]	DID see or interact with artists in local community [95% CI]	DID NOT see or interact with artists in local community [95% CI]
Individual contributors or sponsors	54.8% [.5083, .5874]	61.2% [.5462, .674]	50.8% [.4585, .5579]
Self-employed or self-funded	51.6% [.4764, .5551]	42.2% [.3601, .4868]	57.4% [.5243, .6226]
Community organizations or clubs	47.7% [.4376, .516]	53.3% [.4678, .596]	44.2% [.3935, .4914]
Charitable corporations	40.2% [.3643, .4409]	48.1% [.4171, .5455]	35.3% [.3078, .4005]
Businesses or corporations	35.1% [.3146, .3888]	43.3% [.3701, .4972]	30.0% [.2575, .3459]
Local government	32.4% [.2887, .3617]	45.6% [.3922, .5206]	24.2% [.204, .2848]
State government	26.0% [.2259, .2963]	35.9% [.2984, .4235]	19.8% [.1607, .2412]
Federal government	21.5% [.1837, .2509]	31.4% [.2555, .3791]	15.4% [.1209, .1941]

Table 4
Financing Artists

possible that they may also be thinking of these examples instead of thinking of artists who they see or interact with in their local community when answering multiple choice questions. This insight reminds us to be especially careful with question and response item wording and to consider adding additional framing language that makes it clearer that the survey is about artists but not about art. We expect that this may be an ongoing challenge in this line of research.

While possible additions for artist descriptions as educators or hobbyists were previously addressed, we also note the possibility to reduce or narrow the description of artists. Of those who answered “Bring attention to community concerns or causes” as a description of artists within their community, 44% also selected it as the *best* description; of those who answered “Represent or serve as a spokesperson for the people” as a description of artists within their community, 30% selected “bring attention” as the *best* description. We suggest collapsing these two descriptions in the future. In the cognitive interviews, respondents tended to give different examples for these two items, with “bring attention” being more focused on philanthropic and charitable issues and “represent” more frequently eliciting examples of political or social issues, but the results of the national pilot test suggest that the potential differences between the two are not as empirically meaningful.

Discussion

In light of the seeming paradigm shift underway that is hailing artists as entrepreneurs, agents for social change, and problem-solvers in public life, the goal of our study was to gauge if this concept of artist is

meaningful to the general public and to understand public perceptions of artists. In this pilot study, we tested indicators of public perceptions of artists and community members' closeness of relationships with artists as a means of monitoring potential paradigm change and informing public policies supporting artists' work in civic and public life. Our results highlight modest modifications for improving the exactness of the indicators and establish a baseline understanding of how communities see artists, the closeness of relationships between individuals and artists, levels of self-identification as an artist, and opinions of who should fund artists, including a measure of the expectation that artists act entrepreneurially in the form of self-financing or self-employment.

The pilot test's topline results suggest that public opinion data is an important complement to employment statics, case studies, and qualitative work in informing community development and arts policies. While approximately one-third (34.8%) of the pilot test respondents who had seen or interacted with artists in their local community described artists primarily as an occupation and seeking to earn a livelihood, nearly two-thirds of respondents felt there were better ways to describe artists in their communities. This suggests that segments of communities are aware of artists leveraging their skills to support their local community, and this in particular would be important to monitor over time, offering insights on the national level and, with appropriate samples and data collection means, to monitor potential change in public perceptions within specific communities.

The indicators of public perceptions can also be used to inform arts policies at the local level. Our results signal that the general public wants artists in their local community to be self-employed or self-funded, which dovetails with the artists working as entrepreneurs and civic problem-solvers. Such information can inform conversation about decisions and policies regarding opportunities and efforts that can involve and benefit the community. Deployed at the local level, these indicators offer insights into a community's sense of understanding artists as community assets and can shed light on a community's public readiness to engage or reaction to engaging with creative placemaking efforts.

Public opinion matters for taking stock of and informing public policies, at the national and local levels. Beyond intermittent measures of opinions toward public funding for arts (DiMaggio & Pettit, 1998), the arts and cultural field has little systematic understanding of public perceptions, let alone how they may change over time. More than ever, as artists and the broader arts field seek to work within and with public life, understanding how the public may or may not connect with artists will be important for fostering supportive policies and to take stock of this unprecedented time of change for arts and cultural policies within the U.S.

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ⁱ Additional technical documentation is available at <http://amerispeak.norc.org/research> [Accessed April 18, 2017]

ⁱⁱ Complete regression results available from authors.