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Cultural Policy 11/9/2015  
Notable Quote Assignment #5

**Lewis, G.B., Rushton, M. (2007). Understanding State Spending on the Arts, 1976-99. *State and Local Government Review*. 39(2). pp. 107-114.**

*“Legislatures are most responsive when issues are ‘easy’ (that is, no expertise is required to interpret them) and are politically salient and when legislative action is highly visible. Public spending on the arts is not salient, even to arts supporters. Many voters do not know how much their state spends on the arts or how to participate in the debate over arts spending. Thus, legislators may vote according to their own political philosophies without being concerned about public reaction (Lewis, 2007, pp. 108).”*

The arts are intrinsically complex and abstract by their very nature, meaning that legislation around the arts is never easy. This likely relates to why government skirts around language and policy relating to the intrinsic value of the arts, one of the most important attributes, but unfortunately, one of the most difficult to interpret, demonstrate, and evaluate. While this aversion to “difficult” issues may reduce the arts to the sum of its more tangible and instrumental values, it may also keep the arts and culture policy out of the spotlight, which can be positive and negative. Obviously, downplaying arts in legislation or keeping it in a more obscure position will reduce visibility, involvement and awareness by the public, which does not help advocacy for federal arts and culture support and public funding. On the other hand, this obscurity may keep the arts from becoming a likely target for further legislative attacks. Arts agencies may even have more freedom to operate within the confines of their own judgement if they are not being closely scrutinized by a public that may be in disagreement on the value of the arts. Despite this safety in staying out of the limelight, it is important for the public to have greater awareness and stewardship of arts policy and legislation.

**Rosenstein, C., Riley, V., Rocha, N., Boenecke, T. (2013). The distribution and policy implications of U.S. state government general operating support to the arts and culture: Lessons from the great recession. *Cultural Trends*. 22(3-4). pp. 180-91.**

*“However, a plausible reading of the current state of affairs is that the economic climate is having very different effects on different parts of the sector: a relative few, better-capitalized organizations have protected their assets and found the leverage to survive, regain strength and perhaps even grow, while organizations that make up the bulk of the sector have suffered, with mid-sized organizations bearing the brunt of the slowdown and smaller organizations cutting their operations to the bone (Rosenstein, et al., 2013, pp. 182).”*

Equitable distribution of general operating support (GOS) by state government is important to avoid unfair advantages to larger, already-established arts and culture institutions, and for allowing smaller more community-based organizations the

opportunity for greater sustainability and support. State art agencies have a recognized responsibility to assure equitable funding. At the same time, there must be a certain degree of healthy competition and accountability, assuring that funds are distributed to organizations that are prepared to utilize them in a responsible and effective manner. Economic downturns may demonstrate inequities in funding structures. They also serve to weed out those organizations who may not be successful in generating some level of sustainability due to poor management or other factors. While equitable funding is important for avoiding unfair advantages, it should not serve to float struggling organizations that are unable to stay in operation. Such struggle may indicate larger problems within the organization or its environment. I wonder what role state art agencies should have in directing GOS to smaller and mid-sized organizations in anticipation or result of economic recession, understanding that larger organizations are more likely to maintain resiliency.