

Why do more women participate in highbrow cultural activities?

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This research was conducted by **Angèle Christin** at the **University of Princeton, USA**

Summary

This paper addressed gender as an influential factor in cultural participation in America. It explored the possible reasons why higher numbers of women than men participate in high-status cultural activities. Early exposure to the arts from a young age, especially in the form of art lessons and classes taken during childhood, was identified as a key factor. For a variety of different reasons (mainly gender and socio-economic), more women than men received arts lessons in childhood. In adulthood they continued to participate more in these cultural events.

Highbrow cultural activities encompassed a range of activities

It included attending a classical concert, attending an opera, attending a live play, attending a dance performance (modern dance and ballet), attending a jazz performance, and visiting an art museum.

The research was based on data from the Survey of Public Participation in the Arts

The information was collected in 2008 from 18,444 completed surveys from US households. The research was particularly interested in investigating early exposure to the arts in relation to socio-economic status, employment, and marital status, to better understand why women participate more than men in highbrow culture.

More women work in the culture and education sectors

But this did not explain the patterns of participation, since women *not* working in these sectors also participated more in highbrow activities than their male counterparts. The key factor was childhood exposure, although other things also made a difference. Women working part time were more likely to be involved in cultural activities than those in full time work. Higher education and parental education had a positive impact on highbrow cultural consumption. Additionally, married people participated in fewer highbrow cultural activities than single people.

This summary is written by **Charlotte Fereday, King's Knowledge Exchange Associate**

Keywords

gender **USA** **population** **audience** **survey**

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