

Whether live or online, participation is unequal: Exploring inequality in the cultural participation patterns in the US

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Abstract:

Cultural participation is an individual activity with relevant social dimensions. Democratic societies are concerned about the representation of social groups in cultural audiences and promote policies to increase participation focusing on planning aspects, such as in creative placemaking, or educational policies and social interventions targeted at some under-represented social groups. Using the data derived from the 2017 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts from the US, we estimate Generalized Entropy Indexes to explore the dimensions more relevant to explain divides in cultural participation across the US adult population, considering geographical and socio-demographic variables. Cultural engagement is characterized by the participation by live, digital, highbrow, lowbrow, passive and active activities. Overall, we find that spatial and racial characteristics are not the most relevant, while education appears to be the most important source to explain inequality in the access. The pattern of digital participation is remarkably very similar to the pattern of physical participation, thus showing some evidence that the divide and stratification of cultural practices in the real world translates to digital practices.

Keywords:

2017 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts, Entropy indexes, inequality, cultural participation.

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