Reviewer's report

Title: Are variations in rates of attending cultural activities associated with population health in the United States?

Version: 1 Date: 15 November 2006
Reviewer: Maria Rosvall

Reviewer's report:

General

I think the authors have done a good job in rewriting the paper, which now is a stronger paper and also includes a discussion on study limitations and social capital. However, even though the research question is interesting, there are still important limitations, which make it hard to draw any conclusions from this study. The most important limitation is the cross-sectional study design on this research question.

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Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

As mentioned before, first, and most importantly, this study is cross-sectional with no data on baseline morbidity. Even though this limitation is mentioned in the discussion section it is hard to draw any conclusions on the direction of an association between attending cultural activities and self-rated health.

Second, even though this issue now is mentioned in the discussion section and there were stratified analyses made, the measure of cultural activities is restricted to mostly include activities more frequently attended by individuals from higher SES groups still making it hard to draw any conclusions connected to the issue of an association between participating in cultural activities per se and self-rated health.

Third, as mentioned before, the theoretical framework regarding the impact of the measure used of cultural activities on health and potential mediating mechanisms is still rather unclearly stated. Is it theoretically better with as many activities as possible? different activities? or is it the fact that you regularly attend these kind of activities that is of importance to health?

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Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

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What next?: Reject because too small an advance to publish

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

I have no competing interests