

## **Abstract: Public Institutions of “High” Culture**

Victoria D. Alexander

To cite: Alexander, Victoria D. (2018). ‘Public Institutions of “High” Culture’, in John R. Hall, Laura Grindstaff, and Ming-Cheng Lo, eds., *Handbook of Cultural Sociology*, second edition. Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 369-377.

### **Abstract:**

This chapter focuses on institutions that distribute “high” culture via public or quasi-public mechanisms. High culture includes (Western) fine arts, such as classical and contemporary visual arts, opera, classical music, and ballet. The chapter covers art museums, symphony orchestras, and opera, drama, and dance companies, organizations comprising what is known as the “supported arts sector” because they are reliant to some degree on public (governmental) funding for their continued operation. After noting some difficulties with the concept of high culture, the chapter outlines the organizational forms used to distribute high culture, which include nonprofit and non-governmental organizations, and government agencies. The chapter then turns to look at the public funding of fine arts institutions and considers several issues facing these institutions, including the conflict among missions and the effects of various external pressures. The chapter concludes with a discussion of topics that may be fruitful in the continuing study of public institutions of high culture.