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Pepperdine University
Graduate School of Education and Psychology

THE POWER OF ARTISTIC ACTIVISM

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

by

Julio Hanson

June, 2020

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VITA

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ABSTRACT

This phenomenological study highlights the ability of artistic activists to utilize art for political, creative, and social change. Artistic activism is a tool that can be used to mobilize people from different backgrounds to achieve a goal or challenge injustices (Mouffe, 2007). The best practices of artistic activists can be shared with others to positively transform society and address sensitive issues. Increased access to the internet and social media has facilitated the proliferation of art, politics, and culture which has caused a greater influence on people on local, national, and worldwide levels. This influence can have profound effects on the way that individual identities are formed in society. It can also lead to either nonviolent or aggressive social protests. Artistic activists understand that activism can constitute some level of cost for artists and creators. However, many artistic activists view the cost as necessary to obtain their goals. This study pinpoints the discrepancies between the majority entertainment leaders which are white males and three underrepresented groups: Women, people of color, and members of the LGBTQIA community. Critical Race, Feminism, Queer, and Adult Learning theories provide a lens through which these discrepancies are analyzed. This analysis leads to the overall theory of Transformational Change and provides an explanation of how and why individuals, groups, and sectors of society form alliances behind a common cause. Six common causes emerge from the literature: Togetherness, Consciousness, Communication of Feelings, Action, Finances and Resources, and Escapism. Nine elements from the study participants are developed as non-negotiables for artistic activists.

Keywords: Artistic Activism, Women, People of Color, LGBTQIA, Underrepresented

Chapter 1: Introduction

Background/Historical Context

This dissertation is a phenomenological study that will examine the power of arts and entertainment as a tool for social activism to positively impact and transform society. Artistic activism has the power to change the dynamic within societies so that there is an opportunity to appreciate and accept differences. Artistic activism must be implemented with purity and openness so that it does not contribute to the proliferation of hegemonic practices (Mouffe, 2007). Nevertheless, many influential artistic activists within the entertainment industry commit to creating artistic expressions and imaginative content that give voice to the marginalized even when it conflicts with mainstream practices.

The level of influence of the artistic activists in this study will be based on three measures: Their connection to diverse audiences by using imaginative content, their ability to maintain a presence in the industry, and their success at matching their personal or professional goals to their achievements. The level of impact of these artistic activists will be calibrated through their various forms of media and dramatic arts including references to music, dance, graphic design, and sports.

Due to the ubiquitous nature and accessibility of social media avenues, artistic expression has become the vehicle of choice for many artistic activists to bring societal issues to the forefront (Mouffe, 2007). However, increased access to social media can lead to negative actions by members of the same communities that are represented (Clay, 2006). These actions may not be the intention of the artistic activist leader. Still, art continues to be a powerful tool of social mobilization of individuals or groups within various communities.

Current socio-political oppressive systems both in the United States and around the world have been known to give rise to sudden grass-root movements and forces of resistance shrouded by the aesthetics of art (Guyotte, 2018). In American society, many artistic activists address socio-political complexities through music, television, and film because of their mass appeal (Clay, 2006). This mass appeal has given rise to popular culture that performs as a communal force allowing individuals to reimagine their own identity and reposition themselves with equal representation through various disciplines of art. This phenomenological study will primarily focus on artistic activists in the United States of America and the essence of resilience and ability to thrive. However, many international movements have encouraged activism around the world and given Americans a promise of success (Reed, 2005). These international artistic activists will be referenced when applicable.

In addition to international movements, many American societies have been influenced by the response and emergence of the youth as unique artistic activists. The youth tend to form their identity through the leadership of popular figures (Clay, 2006). Their definition of a leadership has evolved from people as traditional organizers of certain group activities who are responsible for the financial or personalized management of logistics and performance (Watts & Ferro, 2012). Traditionally, leaders included politicians, boards of directors, and civic representatives. Pop culture along with Hip-hop movements have empowered the youth to establish their own version of artistic activism dominated by a unique consciousness and understanding of leadership (Clay, 2006). A contemporary understanding and acceptance of a new identity of leaders is helpful and necessary when speaking of artistic activism and its role in impacting current American society.

Connectivity and identity have become more important elements in various communities. As a result, artistic activists continue to evolve as leaders that have the capability of inspiring cultural movements to which the youth attach their activism (Clay, 2006). Contrary to transactional leadership and lower-end management, many artistic activists utilize art to strengthen their transformational leadership skills that inspire others to work towards the same or similar goals (Scandura, 2019).

Mentoring optimistic individuals that are excited about their values, purpose, and mission is fundamental to the core and development of transformational leadership (Vinkenburg, Van Engen, Eagly, & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2011). In the entertainment industry, this type of leadership translates as artists that can create content and motivate others to be visionaries with purpose and direction. Clearly, this is not meant to imply that content created solely for entertainment and mainstream audiences does not have a purpose, direction, and cannot be thought-provoking or emphasize societal change.

The best practices, successes, and challenges of artistic activists that are members of three underrepresented groups, women, people of color, and the LGBTQIA community inspire the practical application of this study. In many ways, the entertainment industry has seen nominal elevation for members of underrepresented groups due to the many obstacles that still prevail. Nonetheless, American audiences are becoming more diverse which has led to an increase in content that is inclusive and representative of various backgrounds in the entertainment industry (Hunt, Ramon, Tran, Sargent, & Roychoudhury, 2018).

High-profile productions such as the musical *Hamilton* and the film *Black Panther* whose casts were primarily formed of underrepresented people serve as evidence of American acceptance of more diverse content. Some members of these underrepresented groups accept

their role as social activists and choose to address injustice through political platforms, protests, or media. Without a doubt, this is often done in collaboration with members of the majority decision-makers who tend to be older white males (Hunt et al., 2018). These collaborations can also result in reinvestment in the community, which can provide other underrepresented members opportunities for creating content.

Reinvestment in the community at the birth of the 20th century was a topic that was frequently discussed by social activists W. E. B. Dubois and Booker T. Washington. Dubois believed that blacks should create a system that was independent of the majority. Contrarily, Washington sought to work within the constraints and regulations of the current society by highlighting and promoting the value of black labor as a useful commodity in society (Harlan, 1974). As an artistic activist, I recognize the value of networking from within a particular segregated society, as well as, with artistic activists that are not members of my underrepresented group. Furthermore, my various collaborations with other members of society has initiated various projects that address societal injustices and address the misrepresentation of minorities. Similarly, I have observed a surge of underrepresented artists that have successfully collaborated with many different people regardless of their associations and experience.

Artistic expression can be colored with experiences that may not be in congruence with a particular sector of society. Yet, art continues to provide a universal vehicle through which communities can unite to accept the status quo or not. Fortunately, artistic expressions allow for personal reflection, understanding, and transformation on individual terms. Utilizing visual and/or audio techniques to engage audiences, artistic activists have the power to link awareness with practice in order to provide mental and physical awareness, socio-emotional learning, and spiritual healing (hooks, 1994). The mental and physical phenomenon of engaging audiences

has been addressed by various psychologists. One of the first psychologists to lay the framework for phenomenology, Franz Brentano, differentiates an individual's feelings about a production from the actual effect of the production on the individual (Brentano, 1874/1973). Moreover, this feeling or level of ecstasy at the end of viewing a live production can be evident in the collective decision of the audience to sit or give a standing ovation. Depending on the ability of the production to connect to the hearts of individuals the audience response of approval may still occur in a pre-recorded setting.

Society has changed in such a way that entertainment can be accessed online or through various media forms. Learning can often occur in this way. It may positively benefit society to be inundated with images that encourage acceptance and respect of differences. Art can be used as a non-offensive means to inspire people to stir away from prejudicial and discriminatory practices. Because I believe art is a powerful medium for positive change, I will focus solely on the practices of artistic activists that use art to positively transform society, bringing people together within and outside of their communities.

Some artistic activists may choose to express themselves artistically solely for the art itself, whereas others may perceive it as a business venture. The inspiration for their involvement in some form of art may come from a dream or a life-changing experience while other artistic activists seek possibilities of exploring something new. But for all intents and purposes, many artistic activists seem to be inspired to create something that will change the world in some way (Flemington, 2018).

Film, television, and theatre that incorporate music, dance, and graphics have the potential to change our perception of life and people. Many films such as *The Green Book* highlight the complexities of race, gender, and sexuality as they intertwine with art (Burke,

Currie, & Farrelly, 2018). This biographical recount of Don Shirley, a well-known African-American pianist, and his Italian-American driver Frank (Lip) Vallelonga exposes the racial discrimination that persisted despite Shirley's artistic value.

As a performing artist, I value the gifts that an artistic activist is able to offer the stage or screen. Some creatives create beautiful expressions of love that represent the joys and pains of life while others feed into the frenzy of video game surrealism. Nevertheless, through my own experiences with art, I have realized that the basic principles of love and respect are fundamental to effective social interaction. The lyrics of the song "All You Need is Love" written by John Lennon and Paul McCartney ring true that nothing can be done in isolation of love.

Love, love, love
There's nothing you can do that can't be done
Nothing you can sing that can't be sung
Nothing you can say, but you can learn how to play the game, it's easy
Nothing you can make that can't be made
No one you can save that can't be saved
Nothing you can do, but you can learn how to be you in time, it's easy
(Lennon & McCartney, 1967, stanza 1)

Songs such as this can be powerful disseminators of messages that transform how we view ourselves and others. This same song was used years later in the musical film *Moulin Rouge* to express how love can conquer all. This exemplifies how art can be used to unify people from different experiences and beliefs. However, art can also be used to push us into a state of disrespect for life. Various video games validate theft, violence, and war as a form of entertainment (Mouffe, 2007). The validation of this form of entertainment can influence behaviors. This does not mean that video games bear the sole responsibility for negative actions and need to be curtailed. However, Brentano's (1874/1973) science of mental phenomena might

suggest that video games are a form of entertainment that needs to be considered and monitored for their influence on our thoughts and actions.

In any case, there is evidence that artistic expression is growing in a more positive and inclusive direction. Artistic activists from underrepresented groups seem to be more visible which indicates that the norm has evolved into an acceptance of differences and cultures to some extent. Still, a chasm remains between what happens at the end of a performance and the audience's reentry into the real world. Lin-Manuel Miranda successfully confronted stereotypes by casting a group of young, underrepresented performers to tell the story of historically white American figures through rap (Binelli, 2016). I hope to learn more about the practices artistic activists like him employ to maximize opportunities and take advantage of possibilities to open and challenge societal perceptions of reality.

Statement of the Problem

In the entertainment industry, minorities such as women and other underrepresented groups including, but not limited to, people of color and members of the LGBTQIA community, have historically been marginalized from leadership and creation of mainstream entertainment. Minorities have continued to experience a lack of demographic representation in many sectors of the entertainment industry (Hunt et al., 2018). This is inconsistent with census data that shows that minorities were approximately 40% of the U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.). Nevertheless, as audiences begin to diversify, there is evidence that there is a preference for more diverse content.

This dilemma has negatively highlighted the deep divisions of race, gender, and sexual orientation that persist in American society. Yet for centuries, many people find ways to put aside their prejudices in order to appreciate talent regardless of these divisions. Artistic talent

seems to weaken prejudice and discrimination almost to a point of total acceptance. Franz Brentano (1874/1973), an influential philosopher and psychologist who is credited with laying the framework for phenomenology explains that there is an intentional nature of consciousness. This intentional nature of consciousness distinguishes the acknowledgment of something from the observable object. Similar to other forms of science, this phenomenon or separation of consciousness is observable from applause or standing ovation at the end of a production that may not follow the rules of mainstream art.

Accordingly, many factors should be taken into consideration. For instance, our state of consciousness before experiencing something can influence how we perceive what we are experiencing (Brentano, 1874/1973). This may come in the form of prejudice, personal insecurity, or level of well-being. Perhaps there is a scientific explanation for the power of art in helping viewers remove prejudicial barriers in order to enjoy someone or something different.

In the United States, stories that tell of how black performers such as singer Billie Holiday and pianist Donald Shirley were allowed to perform in white venues but were not allowed to eat among the guests are plentiful. One explanation for this is that a majority of artists have statistically been white males and control most of the decision-making process (Hunt et al., 2018). Few artistic activists from underrepresented groups have been able to create content that has garnered the attention of those that are in control of the decision-making process.

This study into the best practices of artistic activists that deliver unique content is needed to extract the specific practices, if any, that are utilized to empower minorities and to influence the experience of the majority. I hope to generalize, to a limited extent, the level of change that is occurring in the United States of America and determine its impact on the proliferation of more leaders from underrepresented groups. As an underrepresented artistic activist, I hope to

ascertain how to create content that transforms our global society in such a way that race, gender, and sexual orientation are valued as tools for peace, unification, and acceptance of differences.

In part, my inspiration stems from my previous success as a creative university student. During the Spring Quarter of 1990, I was able to create a production consisting of 40 personal friends from many underrepresented cultural backgrounds to compete in Spring Sing at the University of California, Los Angeles. Until that time, the event was primarily a white, Greek fraternity and sorority competition. The group that I assembled was 50% women and 95% people of color. To my knowledge, at least 10% performers were members of the LGBTQIA community. Winning the highest honor of Best Production that year encouraged me to continue the practice of channeling the power and contributions of people from different backgrounds and experiences. Since our participation, many more underrepresented groups have become involved in subsequent years which shows promise for this university experience.

While there is evidence that art and entertainment have opened and deepened our understanding of issues such as cultural differences, sexual orientation, class discrimination, and immigration, there remains rhetoric of hate that permeates through our society often ending in violence. Art is one medium that is accessible to anyone and has the power to address these differences. Many artistic activists have been able to challenge the status quo and create a product that includes diverse experiences. As a result, artistic activists have a responsibility to use what I consider as the strongest force for change to transform society in a way that inspires us to respect each other for our differences. For decades, movies have shown disparaging images of women, people of color, immigrants, and members of the LGBTQIA community. Consequently, audiences are given limited information about a certain group of people and

perpetuate discrimination against them. Images of members of underrepresented people as strong, valuable individuals have the potential of changing societal perceptions.

The movie *Black Panther* is one example of how people of color can portray strong characters that have rich backgrounds, loving relationships, and sacred traditions. Despite being written and created by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby, who were non-black artistic activists, *Black Panther* appealed to the sensitivities of multitude of people, as well as, African-Americans. Also, *Black Panther* was the highest-grossing film in 2018 across the United States of America and Canada (Motion Picture Association of America [MPAA], 2018). Concurrently, many other films and television shows featuring minority characters were able to receive industry support and come to fruition.

Black Lightning on the CW Network was a superhero show that was also produced by Netflix in 2018 and continues in syndication today. Correspondingly, blockbuster movies such as *The Fast and Furious* first released in 2001 spawned an interest in a twin television show called *RPM Miami* in which I was a lead actor and the cast was entirely Latino. The surge of inclusive entertainment spikes as a result of the successful predecessors. If the images of underrepresented groups in film, television, and theatre are used to promote positivity and connectivity, it is possible that we can have healthier dialogues about the issues that we face in the United States of America and in other countries.

In light of mental health illness that has recently taken center stage as a result of mass shootings in places of worship, family gatherings, and school campuses, arts and entertainment could be used to alert our global community of the signs of societal breakdowns and address the marginalization of people from underrepresented groups. Discussions from this enlightenment may lead to viable solutions for injustices in society.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to examine the evolution and impact of artistic activists that utilize the arts as a tool for social activism. Their effectiveness in influencing other artistic leaders in a Post-Civil Rights era in the United States of America will also be measured. Artistic activists, often referred to as creatives, have access to a wide variety of members of society that have an extensive range of personal experiences. The background of these societal members often intersects race, gender, and sexual orientation and demonstrates how different communities can appreciate artistic expression that may challenge their preconceptions. This study seeks to distinguish the best practices of artistic activists that are able to transform society through contemporary and representative artistic content.

Additionally, this study seeks an understanding of the challenges of creating content that may conflict with the preconceptions of audience members from different backgrounds and experiences. From this study, I hope to collect empirical strategies that artistic activists use to measure success. These strategies and tools can be shared with members of underrepresented groups that seek to best engage in social activism through artistic expression.

To validate the understanding of this phenomenon of social transformation, it is necessary to base this study on the principles of philosophy and psychology. Current phenomenological studies by philosophers such as Franz Brentano, Edmund Husserl, and Alfred Shutz provide a foundation for understanding the essence of social transformation through artistic expression. Brentano (1874/1973) explains this phenomenon as the intentional nature of consciousness which could explain one's ability to suspend prejudices based on a particularly enjoyable experience. Brentano, Husserl, and Shutz also understand how the process between one's interaction with an experience to their perception of it can lead to one extracting meaning

from an event. In other words, the journey from when an individual first interacts with art to when their brain begins to try and contextualize it could be the key to understanding how society changes and derives its meaning.

For the purpose of this study, I will use qualitative research methods such as in-depth interviews supplemented by memoing, observations, written documents by participants, emails, texts, taped recordings, questionnaires, and field notes to obtain data from the various participants. I intend to collect data primarily from participants that are writers, directors, and producers that are listed in the Writers Guild Directory as members of underrepresented groups or artistic activists that are searchable through the internet based on their contributions to content that is deemed as social activism. I also intend to include verified actors, musicians, singers, dancers, and graphic designers that have had a large impact on large audiences through the use of art. In some cases, I will consider artistic activists that may not have had a direct impact on transforming society but were involved in the success of the overall product.

Artistic expression has the potential of transforming society in such a way that gender, race, and sexual orientation barriers can be minimized. Through an artistic lens, I intend to determine how and where artistic activists are engaging in social activism, document their successes, and evaluate the social impact of the transformation that occurred. Though artistic activists around the world engage in social activism as well, I will focus mainly on those that reside in the United States of America due to the volume of high-profile artistic expressions that have recently emerged.

Research Questions

The following research questions (RQs) were addressed in this study.

- RQ1: How do artistic activists define, measure, and track their success in entertainment?
- RQ2: What challenges do artistic activists face in using the arts to address societal issues?
- RQ3: What are the best practices of artistic activists?
- RQ4: What recommendations do artistic activists have for those that choose to pursue artistic activism?

Significance of the Study

Currently, the literature suggests that though there has been some progress in the inclusiveness of underrepresented groups in entertainment, there are still gaps to be filled. Most literature focuses on the continual struggle of many artistic activists to create a product that involves people from various groups and speaks from the underrepresented experience. However, this study intends to focus on the phenomenon that occurs when talent is appreciated regardless of whether or not race, sexual orientation, or gender are focal points. It is important to understand that data contextualizes the entertainment industry in regard to its responsibility to society for positive transformation. First and foremost, the high revenue from the contributions and efforts of many women, people of color, and members of the LGBTQIA community warrants an address of the reciprocity of the entertainment industry. As a result, the industry has a responsibility to produce content that represents the people that support it.

The audiences that will benefit from this study are two-fold. White males make up the majority of decision-makers in the current arenas of entertainment (Hunt et al., 2018). They will benefit from an increased understanding of how their work can respectfully complement the growth of an increasingly diverse community. Secondly, artistic activists from underrepresented

groups will also be able to recognize correlations between their efforts and their counterparts in creating a phenomenon that regenerates our society and provides a meaningful experience that connects all audience members. The work that is valued by members of underrepresented groups can be seen as valuable resources for sustainable revenue while at the same time, maintaining integrity and inclusion of members from the communities that financially support diverse content.

I intend that this study will first be used as a baseline for understanding the effect of best practices and secondly as a blueprint for future artistic activists that have considered participating in social activism to challenge society's perception of gender, race, and sexual orientation through art. I also hope that this study will single out the elements of artistic expressions that contribute to increased intentionality of consciousness.

Assumptions of the Study

For anonymity to be preserved, the identity of all participants will be concealed and their confidentiality will be preserved. Many of the participants I intend to interview are key artistic activists in delivering a product that either represents a challenge to societal norms or a response to an issue of injustice in the community. It can be assumed that these participants will continue to create content in this same way. Therefore, this study will respect the privacy of each participant, as well as, permit them to refrain from answering or explaining any data that may be detrimental to their future endeavors.

The scope of the study will include underrepresented artistic activists that have created or delivered content that challenges social injustice or has encouraged a large audience of individuals towards social activism through art. Though this study will not decode data on

white, male decision-makers in entertainment, literature will be used as a resource to understand their ability to control decisions made for and about underrepresented groups.

Limitations of the Study

It is important to acknowledge that I am approaching this study from the viewpoint of an educator and an artistic activist. As an educator of more than 25 years, I have extensive knowledge and opinions on how learning and teaching take place in traditional classrooms, as well as, the benefits of real-life experiences.

As a professional artistic activist, I also have certain biases towards the power of art to mobilize and emotionally connect to various voices in the community. Combining the two disciplines of education and entertainment has the potential of reaching marginalized populations that have lost access to traditional education. I am also biased in my opinion that art and education both deserve respect and appreciation. For many minority groups, arts and education in a non-traditional sense may be the only way to connect and educate society about their experiences.

Within the next few decades, minorities are expected to become the majority (Hunt et al., 2018). In addition, the entertainment industry is fast-moving and changes based on the success of content that is produced. This study is intended to gather experiential information on how artistic activists have been able to exist within their parameters. These strategies may or may not apply in future studies but will serve as a baseline for understanding where the entertainment community is, was, and potentially can be.

The constants in this study will consist of the objective of extracting meaning from the lived experiences of artistic activists from underrepresented groups. The research questions have been designed in such a way that they address the power of using art as a tool for social activism

and how artistic activists can positively transform society. The population that will be the focus of this study are members of underrepresented groups that have been influential based on their online presence in artist databases or overall impact on the mass audiences. The findings from this study will represent the experiences of individuals from underrepresented groups until the status of the group changes. The findings may indicate strategies that may not be viable options for artistic activists in other countries around the world. Nevertheless, the essence of this study may be generalizable to a larger spectrum of underrepresented groups.

Definition of Terms

- *Art*: Any creative expression of music, dance, drama, visual, or graphics. Also included are some athletes, political leaders, and orators that have utilized past or modern technology to penetrate communities.
- *Artistic Activism*: The utilization and mobilization of art for political, creative, and social change or transformation (Mouffe, 2007).
- *Artistic Activists*: Leaders in the entertainment community that create, write, direct, or deliver social or political content as an artistic or creative expression. Artistic activists may include some athletes and orators that have a presence in social media and considerable influence on groups and discussions about societal ills.
- *Creatives*: Artists that create imaginative content including, but not limited to, musicians, writers, directors, actors, dancers, vocalists, and graphic designers.
- *Intentionality consciousness*: Franz Brentano's (1874/1973) explanation of consciousness as a separate or divided entity from the experience and not taking the actions for granted.

- *LGBTQIA*: Individuals that identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, or Asexual.
- *People of color*: Individuals that identify as Black or African-American, Mexican or Mexican-American or Chicano, Latinx, Latino, or Latin-American, Asian or Pacific Islander, Hawaiian Native, Native-American, East Indian.
- *Social Activism*: An instrument for social movements through which individuals organize themselves, participate in protests, and demand decision-making power in a democracy to decide on issues of social injustices.
- *Underrepresented members*: Individuals that are members of a minority group, including but not limited to women, people of color, and members of the LGBTQIA community.
- *Women*: Individuals that consider themselves natural-born females either heterosexual or lesbian.

Chapter Summary

For many years, artistic activists have used the various mediums of art as a social activist tool to address injustice, discrimination, and prejudice in society. As a professional artistic activist, I have continually explored how certain content highlighting members from underrepresented groups have been able to reach mainstream audiences and how an essence can be derived from this experience. Furthermore, I have been interested in the ability of this experience to transform society positively. In order to gain an authentic understanding of the lived experiences of artistic activists, I have used bracketing to separate my personal biases.

Though the youth are not directly singled out as underrepresented, they constitute a substantial population of women, people of color, and members of the LGBTQIA community

due to social media, television, film, and musical influences. The youth have access to leaders they feel represent their identity or group. These leaders may come in the form of singers, actors, rappers, athletes, or celebrity figures. This changes the dynamic of the focus on past leaders such as Paul Robeson, Dr. Martin L. King, or Mother Theresa. Current rappers such as Nas or athletes like Colin Kaepernick have increased visibility because of the advances in music and television respectively. The internet gives increased access to song lyrics and personal statements that have a powerful impact on the youth and other marginalized people as well.

The United States of America has faced many issues of inequality since its birth. Many issues of racism, sexism, and homophobia have divided our nation and continue to be a point of debate. Art seems to be able to bring together the largest contingency of these groups and influence how people derive meaning from events. Artistic activists could use the power of art to unify our community and address some of the dilemmas that we face. As a country, we may have not maximized the full potential of artistic expression to move our country forward toward inclusivity and respect for differences.

I recognize that previous studies have examined this artistic phenomenon as one component of social activism. Art could be viewed as solely for entertainment without representation of any political or social motive whatsoever. As well, some artistic activists may reject the notion that their success is a residual benefit of the achievements of other artistic activist social activists.

Nevertheless, much of the advancement in artistic expression within communities of underrepresented people is a result of relationship-building. For this reason, the privacy and confidentiality of each participant must be preserved. My goal is to make sure that each

participant understands that they have a right to terminate or limit their participation at any moment and personal security is a top priority.

Generally, my central research question is formulated to determine the power that artistic activists have in influencing how society views the world. The results from this study may explain the distinct benefits of social activism through art and in what ways artistic activists can assume a more responsible role towards positive change.

American society provides opportunities for freedom of expression, but also allows for the dissemination of misinformation, violence, and discrimination towards certain groups. Because of the influence of art, artistic activists have a responsibility to educate each other so that we can grow harmoniously. Creating a list of best practices and a valid measurement tool of success will help to determine if content can really impact underrepresented groups in a positive way and still be successful in the U.S. and around the world.

Chapter 2: Overview of Art for Social Transformation

This chapter gives an overview of the relevant literature that addresses social activism and the use of art as a tool for transforming society. The successful practices of the artistic activists in the literature provide an understanding that can be shared with others who wish to use art as a social activist tool. Historical people and events will be referenced as a means to define American artistic culture and ground the strategies that artistic activists employ. The practical significance of sharing artistic activist strategies will be discussed as a basis for understanding the inspiration behind the current movements of underrepresented groups.

Critical Race Theory, Feminism Theory, and Queer Theory will form the lens through which the researcher views the process that artistic activists implement to induce societal change. Additionally, the Adult Learning Theory will be used to analyze the target participants that are adult artistic activists that share their lived experiences. Transformational Theory will form the overall understanding of how societal transformation occurs. These theories and relevant literature pertaining to the neuroscience of the brain will be used to determine the depth of social transformation, as well as, the motivation and readiness of individuals to acquire knowledge through art.

A primary goal of this literature analysis is to understand the positioning of social activism in the arts. Secondly, the researcher seeks to uncover gaps that may exist in the current literature. Finally, the best practices that artistic activists possess that use art as a tool for social activism, how they measure success, and their recommendations for others will be additional goals.

Practical Significance

Though some entertainers may prefer to abstain from mixing art with a political agenda, others take advantage of their high-profile status to influence the positive development of society and address societal injustices. Various artistic activists have been successful in raising societal consciousness and bringing awareness to certain issues such as equal pay and representation on a large platform. Other artistic activists have had nominal success in maintaining their status while using their platforms to transform society. Nevertheless, a positive raising of consciousness may serve to generate strategies that future artistic activists can apply.

Generally speaking, some historical leaders may not be considered leaders in a contemporary artistic sense. However, many historical and civil rights leaders integrated their creative oratory skills with their intellectual abilities to rise in popularity which in turn empowered them as agents of change. Frederick Douglass, who was well-known for his oratory skills, used his celebrity status to fight for the abolition of slavery. Douglass considered himself a poet, a prophet, and a reformer. He was not only revered by blacks but by whites as well because of his ability to paint a picture much like an artist would. However, his instrument of preference was his speaking ability (Stauffer, 2005).

Despite being a former slave, Douglass (1865/1996) rose in such popularity in the community that President Abraham Lincoln asked to speak to him personally. At the same time, Douglass maintained a contemptuous perception of President Lincoln's dismissal of slavery as the evil of American society. Douglass felt this disregard and neglect defined and contributed to much of the struggle that blacks were experiencing at the time. Consequently, Douglass expressed difficulty in expressing the true sentiment of what freedom meant (Stauffer, 2005).

Nevertheless, he used Lincoln's open invitation to uplift the voices of underrepresented people and secure a venue to express the black American desire for equality,

Regardless of their few encounters, Douglass and Lincoln cultivated a mutual respect for each other and agreed that American society was racially divided (Stauffer, 2005).

Subsequently, Lincoln was able to ascertain some mutual benefits of abolishing slavery, though his actions were strategically targeted to weaken his opposition (Douglass, 1865/1996).

Douglass (1865/1996) persisted, expressing that eradicating the institution of slavery would have to come at any cost. Strategies and best practices that artistic activists such as Frederick Douglass have written or spoken about inspired future leaders to affect change in a more powerful way while at the same time alerting them of the pitfalls that could accompany their actions.

In 1937, Paul Robeson, a celebrated performer, used his celebrity status to contest the treatment of black people in the United States (Zinn, Arnove, & Zinn, 2004). Robeson's political activism caused him to be heavily criticized and ostracized by the U.S. Federal Government. Even so, Robeson continued to manipulate his performances to influence audiences. In his book, *The Cold War Performance Complex*, Tony Perucci (2012) explains the basis behind Robeson's political rhetoric. This period was characterized by the fear that was evident during the years following the Cold War regarding Russia exerting its power over the U.S.

As a consequence of Robeson's use of his celebrity platform to denounce colonialist oppression upon African-Americans, his reputation as a vocalist, artist, and orator was tarnished. Robeson frequently argued that capitalism worked together with racism to further systematize

inequality. Still, he figuratively and literally became the voice of the workers' movement. Moreover, not only did his voice reverberate in political arenas, so did his actions. The actions that ultimately led to the end of his career was his rejection of the artistic roles African-Americans were asked to portray and his verbal objection to government machinations that maintained racist and oppressive policies for underrepresented people (Perucci, 2012).

The legacy of historical leaders and artists such as Frederick Douglass and Paul Robeson inspire today's artistic activists to accept responsibility for the fight for equal justice through art. Notwithstanding the pitfalls, select artistic activists seize the opportunity to speak up for the equal rights of underrepresented groups.

Historical Social Activism on an International level

Historically speaking, art and entertainment have often been an amenity that was only accessible to certain populations and classes (Dunkle, 2008). From the ancient times of sand wrestlers in Egypt to gladiators in Rome, the rulers commanded the masses to congregate around an entertainment spectacle even when it related to death and funerals. However, the spectacle evolved into more than just a display of the wealthy ruler's indulgence of negative elements. It became a tool for members of society to express their intolerance of inequality.

The chronological evolution of art and entertainment may not completely explain the essence behind its power in society. Yet, it provides a glimpse of how art has affected society, culture, and education, as well as, how the spiritual connectedness and identity of diverse audiences have grown over time. Over the years, more and more artistic activists have become conscious of the necessity of providing access to artistic expression. As such, art further evolved into a tool for escapism.

In ancient times, powerful members of Chinese societies used entertainment art as a tool to escape reality. However, vivid portrayals and reenactments of war sometimes seemed too real for audience members at times and it led the emperor to believe in the possible reincarnation of enemies (Brandon, 2011). Actors confronted difficult realities on stage, which brought issues of injustice to the forefront.

Rulers eventually began to call on actors to fuse reality with the spiritual realm so that they could see a positive outcome (Brandon, 2011). This ability to immerse the audience in the world of art has demonstrated how people of all social classes can be active witnesses either from within or outside. Accordingly, art has become a powerful force for the transformation of societal thoughts and behaviors.

Art in various forms is a powerful medium through which many people for generations have expressed themselves or informed the way that a particular concept could be viewed. Women, people of color, and members of the LGBTQIA community that have been stripped of the power to create immediate change have often turned to the pen to counter the oppression forced upon them (View, 2013). This retreat to art as a means of empowerment is evident in cultures around the world.

In Panama, the Congo, an African-based tradition that dates back to the 16th Century utilizes dance with song and theatrical costumes to parody the injustices of the European settlers that dominated the land (Alexander Craft, 2015). The Congos retained elements of their African traditions in Panama. They assembled handmade clothing to look like the kings and queens of Spain while painting their faces black to emphasize their African heritage. Painting their faces in black was also an act of resistance to feeling invisible in the eyes of the Europeans.

The Congos' theatrical dance and portrayals accompanied by African rhythms done in the form of a parody concealed their distrust of the European conquistadors (Alexander Craft, 2015). Alternatively, it restored their pride in their native culture and contributions to society, which the conquistadors were unable to dismiss (Erima, 2017). Similar expressions of resistance and pride through artistic rebellion were observable in other contemporary societies.

The suppression of unarmed protestors in China in Tiananmen Square in 1989 and subsequent years brought about artistic activism. Self-expression was and continues to be restricted in China. Some poets and painters such as Wang Zang and Yang Zhengyue pursued art as a vehicle of free expression (Wan, 2014). Other artists succumbed to the pressures of the government and suppressed their voice to avert being arrested.

In Zanzibar, women have used art to fight the existing system that shows a preference for educating males and reinforces male dominance in the culture. In response to being denied equal education because of gender preferences for males, women utilized theatre to manifest their different perspectives on the issues that they face and maintain their connection to society and their culture. The male-dominated culture in Zanzibar continues to push females out of the sciences and other technical areas. As a result, females find themselves unable to access mainstream conversations about including women in education. The gender disparities continue to affect the growth and advancement of the entire economic, political, and social structure of the country (Holmes, 2013).

Evolution of Culture and Society in the United States

The United States has also experienced its own evolution of culture and society through art. Shortly after the emancipation of slaves, the Reconstruction Era was distinguished by a

particular status and culture within the United States (View, 2013). However, this period failed to deal with the inner cultural divisions of the country.

Shortly thereafter, decisions such as *Plessy v. Ferguson*, which allowed for separate but equal educational facilities, reinforced the notion of differences and the superiority between races. As a result, a national system that encouraged racism and oppression found renewed momentum (View, 2013). In the book, *Invisible Man*, the author Ralph Ellison (1952) wrote, “I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me” (Prologue). Ellison alludes to the fact that though the main character who is intentionally unnamed is not literally invisible, has become metaphorically invisible in the eyes of those around him. Furthermore, though the character commits actions to be visible, he is still unable to live his true self. Ellison touches on the complexities of being a black man in America.

White violence upon blacks has been vindicated, legitimized, and engrained in the political system to such a point that the rise of the United States of America as an empire could very well be attributed to its ability to suppress and control minority voices (View, 2013). The systemic legislature provided a venue for majority Americans to depreciate certain cultures, which led to an uprising of underrepresented leaders demanding societal equality. These leaders formed contemporary movements in the entertainment industry utilizing their diverse forms of expression.

After World War II, the entertainment industry weakened somewhat which allowed some black actors to gain leverage in deciding how they should be depicted in film and television. More than a decade following the war, the production of *Porgy and Bess*, a familiar story of love and betrayal told in the context of an all-black neighborhood challenged what people thought

was worthy of any accolade (Raymond, 2015). The writer, Samuel Goldwyn, was a white man, to whom Sammy Davis, Jr. contributed his rising celebrity status as support. Davis was one of the main forces behind the success of the film. Still, Goldwyn's involvement received harsh criticism from many black Americans who felt that the film was a white man's version of black life and would create more challenges for equality. Nevertheless, some positives came from this venture.

A period of black social justice began with the aid of well-known artists from the American Negro Theatre (ANT) such as Sidney Poitier, Harry Belafonte, Ossie Davis, and Ruby Dee. These artistic activists and others accepted their duty to use their status and art for social justice (Raymond, 2015). Although they drew upon the resilience of earlier artists, some of them were not as fortunate to avoid being ostracized by the media. In particular, Harry Belafonte's film career suffered immensely despite his continual presence in Hollywood and in the Civil Rights movement.

The Civil Rights movement experienced large-scale changes in the U.S. The era produced its own set of artistic expressions in American society. The first change was characterized by a population increase in the North. More blacks migrated to the North because it was perceived to be a freer and more liberal society. Though the concept of a more liberal society was found to not entirely be true, blacks were still able to join the workforce in large numbers. The aftermath of World War II stimulated production which led Americans to believe that there was enough work to be shared by all and helped blacks obtain an occupation which generated economic advancement (Reed, 2005).

This second large-scale effect of change incentivized many blacks to show national pride for fighting in the war and defending their country. Veterans returned singing songs of victory. However, they were greeted with the same racism as before they had left (Reed, 2005). Despite having fought in the war as Americans, black men and women continued to be mistreated and lynched.

The third change was characterized by international pressure on the U.S. to make changes in favor of equality. The U.S. had arisen from the Cold War as the leaders of the free world. This image contradicted the unfair and racial practices that were prevalent in the country. The Truman and Eisenhower administrations were forced to make changes to coincide with the American global image. The decision by the U.S Supreme Court in 1954 in the case of *Brown v. Board of Education* remedied some of the racist injustices in the country and provided a new visual image of the possibility of progress for black Americans (Reed, 2005).

The fourth change that laid a path for the Civil Rights movement was the fact that colonial powers were struggling to maintain their control in many third world countries. The demise of many European governments in third world countries inspired blacks in the United States to revolt. Black Americans had begun to see themselves as their own version of internal colonies (Reed, 2005).

Finally, the fifth change for the Civil Rights movement was the successful implementation of nonviolent protests in other countries. India's nonviolent political tactics and strategies led to their independence from Britain. This provided a contemporary model for blacks to follow (Reed, 2005). Nothing more typified the Civil Rights movement than these five changes.

Songs that unified the movement and electrified the community became a central element of black protest (Sanger, 1997). Freedom songs such as “We Shall Overcome” and “I’m an American” became anthems for those that had returned from war (Reed, 2005). The black church that had historically provided resources for people served as a venue where blacks could sing songs that delivered coded messages of freedom. Ironically, these songs had long been allowed by whites because they thought music would keep slaves content and comforted by the possibility of an afterlife (Reed, 2005). Many of these songs galvanized the slave community and re-emerged during the Civil Rights movement.

During the Civil Rights movement, songs were everything from therapeutic healing agents to means of communication and forces of unification. The old spirituals resonated with older generations while Rhythm & Blues revisions of spirituals attracted younger crowds. Media attention became even more instrumental in shedding light on what was happening in the United States. This increased attention put pressure on legislators to change unjust laws (Reed, 2005).

Protestors even began to be creative with songs by creating paradoxical lyrics. The song lyrics of “We Shall Overcome” were changed to, “We shall keep the niggers down. They shall never be free” (Reed, 2005, p. 26). This is comparable to the Congo tradition of Panama that altered words of songs, sung them in reverse, and infused dances and music with codes. This element of identity and collective artistic action was the way that protestors felt empowered, voiced their sentiments, and became active participants of a resistance (Reed, 2005).

Augusto Boal’s Theater of the Oppressed emphasizes forming a collective and encourages participation in transitive empowerment (Flemington, 2018). Through participation, Boal defines his participants as Spect-Actors that interpret reality by acting it out and

transforming it into what they want it to be. The power of collective song plays a similar role in the black community. Singing together is a participatory activity where one can find their voice, understand their purpose, and control their level of engagement, involvement, and power (Reed, 2005).

In modern-day societies, these forms of interpersonal entertainment have become synonymous with power not only because of the revenue that they generate but for their sustained influence on mass populations over the years. Some artistic activists such as Augusto Boal have sought to re-empower others with their own experiences recognizing that all people are artists with an experience to share (Boal, 1993). Boal (1993) created Theater of the Oppressed based on Paulo Freire's ideology of liberation from oppression. Freire (1972), a Brazilian educator and philosopher, explains that oppression is sometimes clouded by one's own actions and complacency with it. To remove the oppression, one must first be socially aware to unveil the problem and analyze it critically.

Freire (1972) continued to explain that the responsibility for eradicating oppression must be shared with others. Invariably, members of the community become accustomed and comfortable with the status quo and do not realize that they are oppressed until violence is directed towards them, marginalizes their participation, and disenfranchises them from society. Those who lack an understanding of how lifting oppression is a communal process that brings us together do not fully share in the desire for emancipation.

Individuals that choose to join together with others that share their goals for emancipation begin to form their identity based on a new popular culture and configuration of their group. Protest and popular culture can almost be seen as inseparable (Corner & Pels, 2003). In many

instances, entertainers have become leaders of disenfranchised people. Many young people follow and find identity in the words of rappers and view them as the new leaders of society. In fact, for some young people, even rappers that are no longer alive such as Tupac Shakur continue to inspire them (Clay, 2006). As a result, music has become a volatile and possibly dangerous form of control of the youngest minds in a new Post-Civil Rights era.

In the Post-Civil Rights era, the influence of artists that are able to counter historical biases is evident, as well as, the growth in revenue over the last 50 years. Art as a tool for social activism in entertainment has a long history. Racism, gender equality, immigration, and LGBTQIA issues have permeated media and continue to be topics of discussion (Zwarenstejn, 2019). Though many of these issues seem to have only emerged recently, they have inspired many works of art.

Jonathan Larson, the creator of the stage production *Rent* which depicted the struggles of underrepresented people, was not able to see his work come to fruition and witness the lives he would change. Later in 2015, Lin-Manuel Miranda created the musical *Hamilton*, which was based on the life of Alexander Hamilton, a foreigner who is considered to be America's financial forefather. In the musical, Hamilton's character and his counterparts are portrayed by an underrepresented cast. Nevertheless, the production received worldwide acclaim and was estimated to garner more than \$500,000 a week at one time (Binelli, 2016). This has contributed to the way that audiences see and react to unique art. It has also motivated members of underrepresented groups to produce art from a unique point of view despite the challenges of doing so.

In a like manner, Miranda chose to confront the deplorable images of immigrants by releasing a video titled *Immigrants: We Get the Job Done*. This content venerated immigrants for the contributions they have made to America (Whitmore & Donoghue, 2017). Despite the momentum behind the works of such artists, the Post-Civil Rights era indicates there is work to be done, in particular for young people who feel they are a low priority in society (Clay, 2016).

Today, young people have greater access to art that portrays their lived experiences and can be used as an organizational tool (Clay, 2006). This affects their perspective on mental and moral qualities that incorporate prior forms of character. Images of Frederick Douglass, Dr. Martin L. King, and Mother Teresa as examples of leaders have been replaced by popular artistic activists that seem to resonate more in contemporary societies. This new perspective seems to lead current American youth towards a new narrative and identity. Understanding the new narrative from their perspective can explain how one can form their identity as they navigate through society.

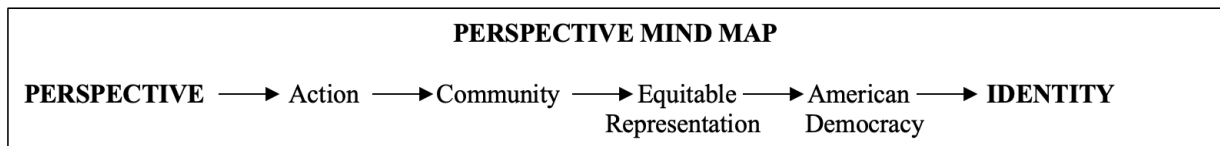


Figure 1. Perspective mind map.

Perspectives can be shared before they are truly developed and understood because of the accessibility of media technologies (Chung & Kirby, 2009). The youth can take immediate action on an injustice they believe threatens their community. Though American values are based on the premise of equitable representation and that all citizens are deserving of basic social rights, the Constitution does not have a clear solution for a collective identity. It also, fortunately so, does not distinguish citizens by color (Douglass, 1865/1996). Nevertheless, American

culture allows some freedom of artistic expressions that are void of respect, love, and peace. Focusing on the integrity of our past leaders and connecting it to our current leaders may help individuals see value in the collective and strengthen our global identity.

Theoretical Foundations

Critical Race Theory. In some areas of entertainment, race seems to no longer be a factor nor a deterrent to success. The Critical Race Theory holds three arguments to counter such racial myths. The first myth is that blindness of the fact that racism exists will eliminate it (Valdes, Culp, & Harris, 2002). Many people from underrepresented groups have been able to achieve recognition for their success. It might appear that race is a lesser factor in the current climate. However, data shows that race continues to determine the access of underrepresented people to the decision-making process.

Despite people of color being more than 40% of the U.S. population, only 13% are directors, followed by 8% who are writers (Hunt et al., 2018). Minorities are soon expected to form a majority of the population, but the current numbers trail far behind. On the other hand, the successes of film and television that feature underrepresented people suggest that Americans prefer diversity.

The second myth that Critical Race Theory challenges is that racism is a result of individual actions as opposed to systems (Valdes et al., 2002). Critical Race Theory highlights that racism in the criminal justice system is a hyper-representation of minorities. The Supreme Court ruling of *Brown v. Board of Education* designated systematic and institutionalized segregation. In spite of this landmark decision, some institutions continue to encourage racist agendas that have provoked actors to form collective action pushing for inclusion riders.

Inclusion riders would stipulate that the cast/crew must be representative of real demographics (Judkis & Merry, 2018). This would change the systemic practice that excludes many members of underrepresented groups. Artistic activists often find their identity through song, faith-based organizations and events, or communal injustice that has motivated them to join together under one cause. Joining together in collective action can become a source of fulfillment and purpose.

The third myth challenged by the Critical Race Theory is that racism is a microcosm of itself. Critical Race Theory explains that racism is frequently a result of living in a heteropatriarchal society that rejects the equal rights of women and members of the LGBTQIA community. This phobia is residual of the industrial, colonial, and capitalist ideologies that thrived on minimizing certain individuals or groups (Valdes et al., 2002).

Those that have tried to minimize certain cultures have found that they have been the impetus for the perpetuation of historical injustices. Freire claims that it is impossible to essentialize people into one race because of the objects of oppression that cut across race in so many different ways (Freire, 1972). Additionally, an antiessentialist movement of theorists argues that diminishing the concept of race to categories ignores the voices of those who remain disenfranchised.

The application of this theory is relevant in the entertainment industries and many others. Race is often used as a tool for compliance or marketing. For many years, the New York School District has unsuccessfully tried since 1954 to desegregate schools. New York continues to be one of the most segregated school districts in the country (Shapiro, 2019). That being said, many

parents have chosen to embrace race and send their children to Afrocentric schools that focus on empowering students from the African diaspora.

In the entertainment industry colorblind casting has triggered new discussions about the benefits for whites and people of color. Robert Brustein, a drama critic, appreciates the relatability of whites to art that diverges from what they are accustomed to (Brown, 2008).

Feminist Theory. Though the feminist movement previously had distinct political and historical points such as fighting for the right to vote prior to the 1960s, it was considered unimaginable that women deserved the right to earn as much as their male counterparts. Women also did not have equal power in relationships nor were there any stipulations that protected them from any type of sexual harassment (Reed, 2005). The artistic presence of women found its momentum around the 1960s as more women began to assert different styles of leadership.

It is common knowledge that women and men tend to lead differently based on the challenges that each face and the strategies that are needed. Women tend to be less hierarchical, more collaborative, and aim to help others which bears a striking difference to men as evidenced by the women's movement in entertainment (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). Some feminists are concerned that focusing on these differences will validate the reasons why women should not be allowed to participate in certain activities as men. Other feminists feel that these differences are a source of pride and can benefit others in the workforce.

One such distinct way that women have shown their leadership and contribution to the movement was through poetry (Reed, 2005). Compared to other nonviolent actions, poetry may not seem to have the same ability to effect change as other forms of protest. However, for many women, poetry is a strong art form that is not as limiting as others.

In the 1960s, poetry was a personal and male-dominated activity. However, women began to blend personal and private elements with the public interest in such a way that poetry gave them access to the political arena. As such, the slogan, “the personal is political” became the impetus behind the feminist movement (Reed, 2005, p.77). Poetry was the form of art that raised the consciousness of the issues that women were facing.

As we learn to bear the intimacy of scrutiny, and to flourish within it, as we learn to use the products of that scrutiny for power within our living, those fears which rule our lives and form our silences begin to lose their control over us.

(Lorde, 1985, p.1)

Audre Lorde (1985), author of “Poetry is not a Luxury,” explains that there is indeed pressure upon women to be complacent, which goes against their natural responsibility of caring for others. Because women have been scrutinized for so long, many may feel a sense of fear in stepping outside of their boundaries and doing what they are able to do. Lorde writes that in using the energy from this scrutiny, women can begin to gain their freedom and open new possibilities.

Lorde (1985) goes on to say that the realm of possibilities within women have been darkened “because they are ancient and hidden. They have survived and grown through darkness” (p.1). Through this art of poetry, Lorde speaks to the forces that have oppressed women without having to call them by name. In the book, *The Art of Protest*, T. V. Reed (2005) explains that the power of poetry is not in producing the same reaction that people have seen from male-dominated actions. On the contrary, poetry is powerful as a vocal tool that women

can use to transform and change the world through raising consciousness and awareness of complex issues.

Women's poetry can be wild, sexually loaded, or politically charged. But it has been able to energize the women's movement and reclaim women's space (Reed, 2005). Lorde (1985) titled her poem, "Poetry is not a Luxury" to emphasize how poetry is a necessary part of women's existence and it serves as their tool to change the world.

Poetry is the way we help give name to the nameless so it can be thought.

Poetry is not only dream or vision, it is the skeleton architecture of our lives.

I feel therefore I can be free.

Our children cannot dream unless they live, they cannot live unless they are nourished, and who else will feed them the real food without which their dreams will be no different from ours.

(Lorde, 1985, p.1)

Lorde (1985) feels that poetry is not an exterior form of protest but instead a part of the female existence. Poems can be potent vehicles for protest that gain their strength from women's voices (Huss, Pasi, & Stuckrad, 2010). The poem "Poetry is not a Luxury" speaks of children that cannot dream unless they live. Children could very well be symbolic of any group of people that need to take care of their own. If people take care of their own they can ensure that dreams and goals are allowed to flourish.

It is necessary to acknowledge that because of the nature of arts and entertainment, feminism is divided between different views. For example, Liberal Feminists do not feel that men are the cause of oppression. Conversely, they feel that men are also victims of oppression

because they are not able to truly and fully benefit from the contributions of women (Carter, 1985; Evans, 2003). Audre Lorde delivers an unobliterated performance in addressing the feminist movement through poetry.

Queer Theory. Queer theorists feel that feminists essentialize the movement, diluting into as a social constructivist confine that blends together assumed understandings of reality (Garber, 2001). This polarization between theorists can be counter-productive to attaining the goal of equal rights for all. However, because one is not often evident without the other, Feminist and Queer Theory do find some congruencies.

One of the main divergent arguments stems from the fact that feminism is seen as emphasizing gender, whereas, Queer Theory emphasizes sexuality. Queer Theory does indeed place sexuality at the front of the topic. However, Queer Theory coaligns with feminist theory by analyzing and challenging where appropriate the images and perceptions of gender as it pertains to sexuality, particularly in film, television, music, and literature (Kirsch, 2000). Queer Theory addresses an issue of sexuality that is not completely congruent with feminism. Therefore, it is valid to discuss how this Queer Theory applies to the social movements in arts and entertainment. Inequalities in these artistic industries converge on many individuals across different spectrums, including but not limited to, people of color (Valdes et al., 2002). This leads to the third identity of oppression.

For some, Queer Theory has ceased to represent the years of capitalist degradation of people who were considered too different to join mainstream society. In a sense, the term Queer can be seen as an attempt to normalize, essentialize, and integrate a community of people that were ostracized from the beginning. Queer Theory, or as some choose to distinguish as Freak

Theory provokes our historical judgments of queer people. Furthermore, the term Freak speaks to the liberation of a new community of LGBTQIA members from an oppressive society as opposed to toleration of the status quo (Lorenz, 2009).

Freak Theory addresses social issues of Queer culture that may have been largely misunderstood such as the use of Drag performance. Drag is considered a valid art form by performers and many spectators alike. Performers become someone else which allows them to discuss issues that they might not normally discuss in front of an audience. Especially, these audiences may not have access to discuss certain issues that pertain to Queer people (Lorenz, 2009).

Ron Vawter, a well-known drag performer, uniquely utilized the space on stage but seldom connected with the audience on purpose. His performance was carefully planned so that when he eventually spoke, he addressed sickness and death in such a way that it felt natural and non-offensive. In performances such as these, audience members often learn something personal about a performer. The performer may also leave certain questions open on purpose. Lawter was able to raise consciousness by allowing people to answer some of their own questions (Lorenz, 2009).

Teresa De Laurentis, who had introduced the term Queer Theory to the world felt that the focus on gays and lesbians had become complacent (Jagose, 2009). Queer theory was a way of dialoguing about gay and lesbian sexuality without considering concepts of deviance and preference. De Laurentis and many activists explained that the term queer was a word used to disrupt the homogenization of what people understand about lesbians and gays. Years later, De

Laurentis had doubts about the term feeling that gay and lesbian studies still did not adequately explore the concept of sexuality.

This doubt may have been fueled by critics that felt the term was more counter-productive to the movement than helpful. In instances involving activism, using queer as a label was rejected by some. Some activists felt that the term's negative connotations worked against the goals of gay and lesbian people (Kirsch, 2000). Other critics felt that the Queer Theory did not adequately address intersecting issues such as race, sexuality, and gender. In a sense, the term Queer perpetuated the same normalization that it aimed to eradicate (Jagose, 2009).

Many gay and lesbian activists may or may not have understood the concept queer activists held behind claiming a name with a negative connotation for the mere purpose of disarming it. Nevertheless, queer theory continues to evolve. This will require a careful analysis of the past and a consideration of the evolving needs of gays and lesbians.

For one, equal and accurate representation in film, television, and theatre is needed. Sarah Kate Ellis the president of the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD), a non-governmental media monitoring organization that caters to the LGBTQIA community, stated that gays and lesbians are too often portrayed as jokes or token characters (Anderson, 2016). For years, artistic activists have created content that was radical and politically polemical.

In 1985, Joseph Papp and Larry Kramer produced *The Normal Heart*, a play that addressed the issue of AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome). At one point, the Reagan administration ceased to talk about the epidemic. However, the popularity of the play made it impossible for the media to ignore AIDS. Much like Paul Robeson who used this

performance complex to draw attention to the injustice of the Cold War, AIDS was an issue that was impossible to avoid. For Robeson, the only recourse for those that held opposing views was to brand him as a communist. Still, the inundation of the complex made it impossible for the media to ignore the issues he was fighting. It also became difficult for Americans to accept the status quo (Fryer, Lieberman, & Barbero, 2015). Currently, the entertainment industry is doing more to include members of the LGBTQIA community in the decision-making. Though entertainment data shows that the percentage of LGBTQIA inclusive projects from major studios is growing, it still may not adequately represent the population nor views of the community.

Tony Perucci's (2012) explanation of the performance complex is a clear definition of how the power of art depends on taking on injustice and playing on the irony of its existence. In other words, part of the performance complex involves flooding the media with art that creates urgency around the issue. When the media is saturated with the content, it becomes virtually impossible to pretend that the injustice does not exist. The content then becomes a lived and shared experience by more than those that experience it. This concept ties in with andragogy, Malcolm Knowles's theory of how adults learn.

Adult Learning Theory. The Adult Learning Theory explains how adults perceive and acquire new knowledge as compared to children. In the entertainment industry, artists often use elements of pedagogical teaching to educate and transmit information. Pedagogy is the study of how children learn as compared to andragogy, which is how adults learn. In andragogy, adult learning is based on four assumptions.

The first assumption is that as adults learn they transition from dependence to independence. In other words, adults slowly began to recognize their ability to self-direct or

control their own destiny (Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2012). Most adults might attend plays, musicals, or movies voluntarily. Because most adults are willing to attend, it is easier for performers to connect with their experience and vice versa. This leads to the second assumption which is that adults use their personal experiences for learning.

Though the musical *Porgy and Bess* was set in an all-black neighborhood, diverse audiences could relate to the concept of love and betrayal. One might even argue that Sidney Poitier's portrayal of a disabled man who unsuccessfully seeks the reciprocated love of a woman speaks to the generalities of winning versus losing (Raymond, 2015).

The third assumption of the adult learning theory is that adults learn based on their social roles at the time. If a parent takes their child to a performance, very often this performance can be used as a teaching tool. This teaching tool may lead to action or making decisions that may affect others negatively or positively. However, as adults navigate through different social roles, their goals may also change. Viewing a musical may be part of their desire to appreciate art as opposed to looking for messages from the creator (Knowles et al., 2012).

The last assumption is based on time and urgency. If an adult feels that the lessons learned can be directly applied in some fashion then they will take advantage of the immediate time they have before them (Knowles et al., 2012). Pedagogy explains that children most often learn for future goals. A child that views a television show may or may not see the urgency of the matter, but an adult who does see the urgency may act upon it immediately. This feeling of urgency is akin to John P. Kotter's theory of Transformational Change.

Transformational Change Theory. Very often, artistic activists create content to challenge or change the perspectives of a certain issue. From the moment the audience is

exposed to the content, it is important that they understand the conflict of the story. Critical Race, Feminist, Queer, and Adult Learning theories combine to explain the dynamics of inequalities for women, people of color, and members of the LGBTQIA community in the entertainment industry. As distinct as these communities are, the injustices that pertain to them can intersect at various points.

John P. Kotter (1996), a well-known leader for change management, developed an 8-Step change model in which the first step is to establish urgency. During this step, it is important to raise the consciousness of the existing problem. When there is a raised consciousness, possible solutions may arise to change the existing circumstances. In comparison to artistic expression, Kotter might equate the process of establishing urgency with setting the conflict of a film or story from the beginning.

Hidden Figures, a non-fictional historical account turned Oscar-nominated film is about the lives of four (three in the film version) African-American women computers who exhibit how urgency can supersede sexism and racism to change the world. This film demonstrates how an artistic expression focused on an underrepresented group of individuals can penetrate diverse audiences. Katherine Goble, Mary Jackson, Dorothy Vaughn, and Christine Darden are four central women that work at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) headquarters in Hampton Virginia during the 1960s when many of the injustices against minorities were seen as normal (Lee Shetterly, 2016). The team is faced with the task of calculating the coordinates to send a rocket into space.

Katherine is a math genius who offers her services to NASA. Her talents are utilized but her ability to be part of the decision-making process is limited which implies that elements of the

Critical Race and Feminist theories intersect here as well. At that time, the very structure of NASA perpetuated discrimination not only of people of color but against women (Valdes et al., 2002). Dorothy and Mary also have technical skills but face the same barriers of discrimination. The two main male protagonist leaders, Al Harrison and John Glenn realize that accomplishing the mission of finding safe landing coordinates outweighs the differences of color and they make it possible for the women of color to assist. The white workers were too accustomed to their segregationist practices. They were not able to see the need for change, even in this situation (Lee Shetterly, 2016).

Kotter (1996) could consider this as a crisis in which there is an urgent goal, but there is a competing force of racial discrimination. Kurt Lewin (1975), a German psychologist and pioneer of social change, explains this in his Force Field Analysis. Lewin explains that whenever a change is to occur, there are restraining forces that push against the change. For the restraining forces to be removed, there must be increased driving forces that overpower and promote change.

The workers at NASA were the restraining forces that wanted to maintain the status quo because of racial discrimination. Perucci's (2012) performance complex theory is also evident here in that it became impossible to be blind to the change that needed to occur. Harrison saw the benefit of extending the opportunity to the three women so that the team could be successful. He then used his position to change the practices of discrimination against the women. Utilizing the frame of Lewin's model, the Harrison character had to unfreeze the discriminatory policies that were in place so that change could be made. Lewin stresses that one must first create the perception that change is needed.

In this story, change was needed for the betterment of the team (Lewin, 1975). However, there was enormous resistance from another character in the story by the name of Paul Stafford. Though Stafford was a fictional composite character, he represented sexism and quite possibly the racism that existed that blocked Katherine and many other women like her from mobility within the organization. Nevertheless, the status quo was not amenable to solving the problem at hand. Stafford and many other employees had to acquiesce and accept Katherine (Lee Shetterly, 2016). This is not to mean that all employees were able to understand the need for change nor agree with it, but when the benefits are communicated there is a greater possibility of teamwork.

Kotter's (1996) second, third, and fourth steps from a trio of how to make the first step forward. Step 2 focuses on forming a coalition that will positively move the team forward. The true leader of the team is Harrison. However, the most powerful coalition Harrison formed was with the astronaut, John Glenn. Glenn's safety was of utmost importance. Glenn saw the necessity of completing the task which, for his safety, took precedence over racial divisions. Together, Harrison's leadership and Glenn's needs created a strong enough coalition so that the three women could work together for the good of the Space Task Group.

Step 3 of Kotter's (1996) change model is to create a vision. In *Hidden Figures*, the vision was simple, which is that America would accomplish sending a rocket into space before Russia was able to do it. Still, to do this, NASA needed to calculate the safe coordinates for the astronaut space shuttle to land. However, the process for finding the coordinates was too complex for most of the team. To find the landing coordinates for the rocket, The Space Task Group reluctantly had to allow Katherine, an African-American female mathematician, to be a part of the process. Katherine's genius ability as a mathematician made it easier for the team to

figure out the landing coordinates of the rocket. When all avenues were closed and no one had a solution, it became impossible to not accept that Katherine was the key to calculating the coordinates for a safe landing.

Though Katherine was not allowed in the process in the beginning, she was clear of the vision and how she could help calculate the coordinates. Kotter's (1996) fourth step explains that the vision must be communicated to all parties involved. Communicating this vision must take into consideration the needs of the mission. In this case, America wanted to achieve something before the competition did. The honesty and simplicity of this vision were glaring which put pressure on the leaders in the organization.

Katherine faced barriers not only because of the racism that existed but also because she felt that Harrison was not willing to exert his control over the group and allow her to be a part of the daily informational meetings. In the film version, Katherine politely explained to him that he was the boss, and he just needed to act like it so that she could maximize her ability to find a solution (Chernin, Gigliotti, Topping, Williams, & Melfi, 2016). As a result, Harrison allowed her to join the meeting as long as she did not speak. Subsequently, he allowed her to speak seeing that there are no more solutions to the problem.

This moment in the film exemplifies Kotter's (1996) fifth step, which is to remove obstacles. Harrison's acceptance of Katherine's plea to join the meeting proved beneficial to the team (Chernin et al., 2016). Harrison handed Katherine a piece of white chalk to calculate the coordinates in front of the leaders. This piece of white chalk symbolized her empowerment. Katherine had previously been asked to solve math problems in class and explain them to her classmates. In the meeting, Katherine's ability to calculate the coordinates in front of the white

leaders of the organization represented a breakdown of the sexist and racist obstacles that were keeping the mission from moving forward.

Step 6 of Kotter's (1996) Change Model is to create short-term wins. Katherine had calculated the coordinates and achieved a short-term win, yet the task was still not complete. After John Glenn launched the rocket, he had a warning light that alerted him that the fasteners for the heat shield were not working. If the fasteners did not work, Glenn would not survive the landing. Mary Jackson, who is one of Katherine's African-American female counterparts in the movie is able to contact NASA and advise them on what to do so that Glenn would survive. This was another short-term win that proved beneficial to Glenn and NASA.

The success of the mission depended on what Kotter (1996) signifies as consolidating gains. The Space Task Group would not have been successful unless they were able to accept the skills that Katherine possessed. Kotter's seventh step involves analyzing the elements that have contributed to the success and moving forward on those successes. After the launch, NASA no longer required the services that Katherine had to offer. But Glenn realized the value she brought to the team. When a problem arose with calculations of the IBM machine, he asked for Katherine to calculate the coordinates by hand, as he trusted her more than the machine.

Finally, Kotter's (1996) eighth step for change management that is evident in Hidden Figures is anchoring change in corporate culture. America remained, very much, a segregated and divided society. However, Katherine was asked to continue to serve as a computer for NASA. Katherine Goble Johnson calculated the coordinates for Apollo 11 and Apollo 13. Not only was she recognized by President Obama for her service to the country, but she has since been revered as a role model for many African-American girls and all people of color (Lee Shetterly, 2016).

Stories of dreams, battles, and triumphs such as these share part of a tradition that dates back to the beginnings of Homo Sapiens (Bonds, 2016). These stories not only inform and educate audiences about historical events but they transform society in such a way that we have a deeper understanding of ourselves and others. Storytelling is an art form in itself through which we transfer knowledge, make sounds, and create images.

Stories depicted on cave walls were how humans communicated with each other. Many stories are orally passed from generation to generation. The Epic of Gilgamesh, the story of a man that wants to live forever is known as one of the first great works of literature (Bonds, 2016). With time, Aesop's Fables, the Bible, and works from Shakespeare began to define a tradition of storytelling that challenged how we viewed life. *Hidden Figures* as a book and film is a contemporary example of how art can be used to tell stories that might otherwise be forgotten. Katherine Goble Johnson was born in 1918 and worked for NASA in the 1960s. Her story was not retold until 2016 but it is still a powerful lesson of resilience. The story of *Hidden Figures* is also a testament of human intelligence regardless of gender or race.

Artistic activists and neuroscience. Artistic activists that have successfully created content to transform society use creative practices to attract people to their production. When a person first decides to attend a play or musical, watch a film, or view a television show, the brain releases endorphins that affect the emotions and actions of the individual. This is based on Paul MacLean's studies of the brain as three parts that formed one on top of the other: Reptilian or Primitive, limbic system, and neocortex (Kazlev, 2003). Similar comparisons have been made to humans being made of three parts: spirit, soul, and body (Huss et al., 2010). Nevertheless, each part has a unique and specific function which affects how we receive information.

This is an important factor in the reason that some expressions of art are able to transform people's thoughts and affect their actions. The reptilian, also known as the primitive brain, is indeed the oldest. It is called the reptilian brain because it dominates in animals such as reptiles. Because this part of the brain controls the muscles, balance, and breathing, it does not sleep. However, as it is the oldest brain, it is not as sophisticated as the other two and is susceptible to committing some of the same lower-level mistakes over and over again. This brain is active even when an individual is in stasis such as watching a film or play (Kazlev, 2003).

The limbic system is the middle brain that is most dominant in mammals. This brain controls whether one decides to fight or flee. It also controls instincts and sexual actions. The main goal of this brain is to determine whether the action will render pain, pleasure, avoidance, or repetition. In this brain, fear, joy, happiness, anger, and pain are some of the feelings that resonate. This is often the brain that responds to action or horror films because of the emotional charge that is evoked (Kazlev, 2003).

MacLean (as cited in Kazlev, 2003) explains that this delicate part of the brain is where our opinions and values form. When we are exposed to violence or prejudice, this is the brain that receives this information. Depending on the level of development of the brain will determine how one responds to stimuli. The neocortex, which is the third brain, is more advanced and helps to make decisions to act on the information positively or negatively.

The neocortex, because it is more advanced and developed, is what distinguishes human beings from animals. The neocortex is also the largest brain in human beings contrary to animals where it is the reverse. This part of the brain is divided into two parts: the left hemisphere which controls the right side of the body and the right hemisphere which controls the left side. The left

side of the brain is more rational whereas the right side of the brain is artistic and creative (Kazlev, 2003).

These three parts of the brain are what form the triune brain. Though one is more advanced than the other, humans cannot live without the collaboration and function of each. The mathematical genius of Katherine Goble Johnson possibly indicates that her left hemisphere was quite developed.

Andragogy explains that adults make conscious choices whether they will act upon their emotions, and to some extent, enjoy their involvement (Knowles et al., 2012). It is important to recognize that artistic activists have extreme power over the stories that are told. These stories not only call us to think but to act. Some artistic activists accept the challenge of creating content that transforms our society from individualistic to communal.

Specific literature. The peculiarity about art is that it can be disguised so that it can maneuver in forums that other disciplines cannot (Fryer et al., 2015). From the ancient times of pictures, songs, and poems to contemporary plays and films, we see messages that give direction or guidance for those for whom it is meant.

Follow the drinking gourd

For the old man is a-waitin' for to carry you to freedom

If you follow the drinking gourd

When the sun comes back and the first quail calls

Well the riverbank makes a good mighty road.

Dead trees will show you the way

Left foot, peg foot, travelin' on.

Well the river ends, between two hills

Follow the drinking gourd. (Texas Folklore Society, 2000, stanza 1)

Traditional spirituals such as “Follow the Drinking Gourd,” as well as some folk songs, were the way that oppressed people often communicated with each other (Floyd, 1995). The coded messages in the songs allowed them to communicate without their oppressors deciphering the information (Rao, 2010). For example, the drinking gourd was the celestial map in the skies by which slaves could plan their escape route. The sun and quail calls indicated a time of year or season. Along the way, there were certain men named left foot and peg foot that would guide them on the correct path. The river and hills were additional visual indicators that they were going in the right direction.

Songs like these have continued to represent the fight against injustice even into the Civil Rights era (Rao, 2010). Artistic expressions replaced petitions, rallies, and campaigns in such a way that people could have direct access and influence on a movement without being completely ostracized. While stardom afforded Paul Robeson a platform to address injustice that he later sacrificed, he decided that fighting for equality and justice was more important than stardom (Perucci, 2012). In the African-American community, participating in song has been a long tradition of protest. At times, the lines between art and protest are blurred (Huss et al., 2010). When there is an inundation of artistic expression, the performance complex empowers various networks to destabilize the system. The advancement of media has supported the proliferation of artistic expression.

Media can also be manipulated to connect people to various vehicles of transformation. Miguel Angel Revilla, a well-respected guest on Spanish television networks, was able to assign

values to his speech so that he was more connected to the audience (Durantez-Stolle & Martinez-Sanz, 2019). Through media, transformation is accessible to the people it is directed towards.

Figures in history such as Paul Robeson or Dr. Martin Luther King also had the unique ability to connect to the people through the use of their distinct voices. Robeson was known for his simplicity and directness. King was able to deliver a speech that struck the chords and emotions of mainstream America. They were the frontrunners of the Civil Rights movements. However, other leaders were just as, if not more, involved in the intricacies and success of the movement (Raymond, 2015). Similar to a well-produced play or film, many worked tirelessly behind the scenes because they believed in the power of art to raise consciousness.

In May of 1984, in La Jolla California, 150 elderly women from ages 60-99 participated in a ceremony of artistic expression. They sat down in groups of four and began to discuss their concerns with aging. Two years later, 600 women repeated this ceremony. They sat, discussed, and crossed their arms in such a way that from above, the image resembled the making of a quilt. The goal of this ceremony was two-fold: Intrapersonal and interpersonal. The intrapersonal goal of the designer, Suzanne Lacy, was that women at this age could have a forum to reinforce their self-worth. Their interpersonal network during and after the ceremony would be Lacy's measure of success (Gablik, 1989).

The interpersonal goal that women viewers would see is how a group works together in an organized fashion by sharing their knowledge (Gablik, 1989). Older women tend to accept senility because they accept narratives that others give them that they are no longer needed. They cease to connect with each other and mobilize around important causes. This ceremony strengthened the belief within them that they still have much to offer.

Mobilizing is often confused with organizing. Ella Baker often spoke of the concept of mobilizing as the ability to gather a large number of people for a non-violent movement or action (Reed, 2005). However, the concept of organizing focuses on building leaders that will take the skills and new knowledge they have acquired and commit to an action. This artistic exercise mobilized 600 women through a vehicle for communication and solidarity. It also mobilized elderly women beyond being dependent on the nuclear family and empowered them for extension into other communities. More importantly, it organized some of the elderly to create training programs for elderly women (Gablik, 1989). From this group of 600 emerged 10 that took on the responsibility of leadership.

This is another example of how women's leadership and artistic protest is unique. Instead of staging what might be considered a traditional protest, these women came together to symbolize unity and community. This communal element is more often attributed to women than men because women leaders tend to care about the welfare of each other (Eagly & Johannsen-Schmidt, 2001).

The ceremony of elderly women also exemplifies the difference between transactional leadership and transformational leadership. Some people are able to manage a task and complete a goal. As a result, they are rewarded for completing this task. This is transactional leadership. The 600 women were able to complete the task of sitting together and folding their hands in such a way to resemble the making of a quilt. They were also able to have a discussion with each other about their concerns.

A transformational leader is able to build upon the capacities of others (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt). Though the percentage is small, it proves that the exercise reinforced the

women as leaders. This exercise of transformational leadership helped them realize their full potential so that they can reinvest in their group of women.

Core Elements from the Literature

From the literature, six core elements emanate regarding how society is transformed through art: Togetherness, Consciousness, Communication of Feelings, Action, Finances and Resources, and Escapism. Art is a powerful medium that can reach a plethora of people from different backgrounds. Social movement scholars have agreed that art has a way of providing a vehicle for disseminating a message that might not be accepted through other mediums (J. Adams, 2001).

Togetherness. Art creates a solidarity that can bring people together from different backgrounds and experiences. If the action or aid makes sense to people, it is probable that they will support the mission (J. Adams, 2001). After the dictatorship in Chile in 1973, many people felt a need to help the women and children that did not have food to eat. More importantly, these people felt it was important to let the world know what was happening in Chile at the time. Even cross-national collaboration and support like this can cause a new identity to emerge that provides the purpose and a base.

This new identity may consist of an agreement to emancipate the one that is suffering (Guyotte, 2018). The images that the international community received prompted many nations to join in this effort to free the people of Chile from a dictatorial ruler that was oppressing them. International solidarity galvanized support for the citizens of Chile.

Young people tend to build solidarity around a contemporary local issue that is important to them. When their role is reaffirmed their identity begins to form (Bragg & Manchester, 2011). In addition, when they are able to speak in their voice, they are more apt to act on their own

initiatives and make choices specific to their needs. Through the lyrics of a song, hip-hop artists have provided a venue through which young people can form their own narrative.

We just wanna party

Party just for you

We just want the money

Money just for you

I know you wanna party

Party just for me

(Childish Gambino, 2018, stanza 1)

Hip-hop artist Childish Gambino (Donald Glover) writes about wanting to party in his song “This is America.” There is much symbolism that he uses in this song. The word party is a satirical representation of all the negative things that are occurring in the United States. This includes gun violence, poverty, and homicide. Childish Gambino is able to address these issues behind the veil of rhythm and dance. In his video, Childish Gambino makes reference to money being the source behind a capitalist society that does little to help its own citizens.

This is America (skrrt, skrrt, woo)

Don't catch you slippin' up (ayy)

Look at how I'm livin' now

Police be trippin' now (woo)

Yeah, this is America (woo, ayy)

Guns in my area (word, my area)

I got the strap (ayy, ayy)

I gotta carry 'em

(Childish Gambino, 2018, stanza 2)

Childish Gambino continues to make references to gun violence and the current issues that exist between the police and people of color, in particular, black men. The connection between hip-hop and the youth is important because they see themselves represented not only in the lyrics but in the style of the rapper (Clay, 2006). For many young people, hip-hop is representative of a Post-Civil Rights era in which music, and other mediums, finally represent them.

It ain't a secret don't conceal the fact

The penitentiary's packed, and it's filled with blacks and still I see no changes

Can't a brother get a little peace

It's war on the streets and the war in the Middle East

Instead of war on poverty

they got a war on drugs so the police can bother me.

(Tupac Shakur, 1998, stanza 2)

Tupac Shakur's (1998) lyrics in the song "Changes" expose the dichotomies of equality and injustice that exist in the United States. Shakur compares heroic acts to local and national terrorism, wars that are just and unjust, and poverty that exists in countries that have the ability to help. In some cases, solidarity does not always accomplish its goal. It can often bring people together for non-productive reasons (hooks, 1994). Though Tupac Shakur's goal was to shed light on the societal ills that were pervasive in American society, some youth claim that his lyrics also made them want to react in negative ways (Clay, 2006). Nevertheless, influential artists

such as Tupac Shakur help young people to find their experience, channel their voice, and build their community. It is important to reaffirm the youth or the effect can be counterproductive.

Consciousness. When individuals come together for a certain cause, it does not necessarily mean that the action they will take will be a physical movement on the streets. Many of the movements are not dramatic sit-ins, rallies, and street protests. Contrarily, much innovation can occur in quiet periods allowing for new ideas to come forth and grow (Campana, 2011). These actions can often lead to an enhanced and awakened social and psychological consciousness.

The solidarity created by the feminist movement became the consciousness that became part of their narrative. In the 1980s, a major part of the women's movement consisted of three objectives: Changing the way women are portrayed in the media, equal opportunity in education and employment, and giving women the right to control her own body. These issues, as well as others, have been addressed by raising the consciousness of society. Problems are in the open and their need for a collective and social solution is imminent (Carter, 1985). Gender bias is a major factor that can affect women's cultural and socio-economic status and can deeply impact access to opportunities.

In Zanzibar, young women use the stage to express their feelings about the inequalities between men and women. The women also challenge the norms that exist in reality by performing new roles on stage. In one play, when the husband asks his wife if the rice is ready, she exclaims, "You did not help me plant the rice. You did not help me pick the rice. You did not help me cook the rice. So I'm going to eat alone. But you are still my husband" (Holmes,

2013, p.1). This play demonstrates how women find themselves in the space, locate their voice, and regain their power.

In the United States, the historical use of art is characterized by women that were compelled to create art, despite the economic, social, and political reality that forced them into the workforce (View, 2013). For many women, creating art is the only source of empowerment in a society that seems to be in a war against them. Nevertheless, women writers, artists, and musicians are beginning to assert their right to receive equal support and respect as artistic activists (Reed, 2005).

Communication of feelings. Despite being a central force of many movements, the ability of songs to evoke feelings during protest continues to be underestimated (Sanger, 1997). Unlike poetry, dance, and acting, songs possess the duality of a person's oppression combined with their vocals sung to a certain melody. Songs allow for innermost feelings to surface. For this reason, many of the songs sung during the Civil Rights Era are still used to catalyze many movements and provoke feelings.

Frequently, feelings can be categorized as uncontrollable. However, they are still an important element of protest. When feelings are defined as emotions, they can be categorized as frustration, marginalization, and anger which are often some of the motivators behind protest (Jasper, 1998). Positive and negative emotions can shape social and artistic culture and help to adapt to an environment.

Songs that define the character of the revolution and challenge the attitudes and values of oppressors are capable of effecting social transformation. Nevertheless, only after a change occurs in the attitudes and values of people can this social transformation take place (Danker,

2018). Through song, individuals are free to respond artistically and emotionally to issues that might be otherwise too complex to understand by other mediums and mistaken for uncontrollable feelings. Emotion can help to explain the connection that protestors have to the art. In reciprocity, art can provide emotional tonality, musical quality, and rhythm to a movement (Heau Lambert & Gimenez 1997).

Action. Through a heightened state of consciousness, human beings become aware of themselves as social beings and act upon this awareness (Guyotte, 2018). When ethical concerns come to the forefront, they are awakened into action because they are no longer congruent with the social paralytic state that they have been living. When the social imagination is freed, artists can raise consciousness by disclosing what cannot be seen and reimagining how we educate others so that the habits of the social stasis are broken (Greene, 1995). Art opens up the opportunity for us to challenge and simplify social and political issues that might otherwise be too complex for mainstream (Guyotte, 2018). By seeing the world with peripheral vision, we learn to appreciate and empathize with others.

Art and imagination help us learn how to act in a variety of situations, even when the current reality is difficult. As reality constantly changes, it is important to be able to use the connective spaces that art affords us to create new ways to be interconnected with others (Greene, 1995). Being interconnected with others is one of the keys to maximizing the power of artistic expression.

When people use imagination to see things differently, they can become fully participatory in the community. Becoming part of a community, one finds purpose in advocating for their rights and the rights of others. Using the arts as a vehicle to act on issues such as

homelessness can lead to new public policies that can impact the community in a positive way (Danker, 2018). Allowing art to open doors, individuals then have the freedom to make changes and positively affect others.

Finances and resources. Production in television and film that is more inclusive of underrepresented groups is increasing and seems to be moving in the right direction (Miranda, 2017). According to data, broader audiences prefer diverse films and television programming which have performed well financially (Hunt et al., 2018). As the United States of America begins to embrace its diversity, this can only be a sign of the progress of social movements and promise of representative programming.

In theatre, the musical *Hamilton* is one example of diverse and inclusive art. Its multicultural cast played a specific period of time in America in which the leaders of the nation were white males. The creator, Lin Manuel Miranda, who is of Puerto Rican, Mexican, and other Latino descent, challenged the perception of what race the actor should be to play the role of Alexander Hamilton, a native of Saint Kitts and Nevis of the West Indies (Sun, 2016). Miranda not only challenged color barriers, but he used Hip Hop as the basis for the music score, which is often considered a genre that is the voice of the people (Clay, 2006). These elements altered the theatre world because it not only took a chance to use arts in a creative new way but it was financially rewarding (Sun, 2016).

The musical was crafted in such a way that it was able to penetrate audiences that might not previously have had an interest in learning about this period. Correspondingly, it introduced historical content through a genre of music that might not have been of interest to a broad audience. This production about American history was able to deliver not only a message about

our national currency but of the struggles of a man that was a leader. This leader's central struggle is portrayed through the eyes of a male Latino performer and viewed by thousands.

The production of Hamilton has not only been accepted by a variety of audiences, but it has been effective at garnering revenue. Much of the \$529 million dollars that it earned nationally and worldwide could be reinvested in the art and futures of so many more people (The Wrap, 2019). Miranda subsequently used his celebrity and revenue to raise awareness of the challenges facing immigrants in his video *Immigrants, We Get the Job Done* (Whitmore & Donoghue, 2016).

You know, and it gets into this whole issue of border security
You know, who's gonna say that the borders are secure?
We've got the House and the Senate debating this issue
And it's, it's really astonishing that in a country founded by immigrants
"Immigrant" has somehow become a bad word
So the debate rages on and we continue
And just like that it's over, we tend to our wounded, we count our dead
Black and white soldiers wonder alike if this really means freedom
Not yet

(Whitmore & Donoghue, 2016, 0:15-0:50)

Border security is a current issue that has taken center stage, not only in the U.S. but around the world. Miranda brings this issue to the forefront using music. In this song, he alludes to the political incongruence between the main decision-making bodies of the United States. Miranda also plays with the irony of immigrants being seen as a negative concept when the foundation of American culture was birthed from immigration.

In the film industry, the movie *Black Panther*, a portrayal of a fictitious powerful superhero leader of Wakanda, showed values of leadership that resonated with people of color, as well as, many different audiences. The screenplay, *Black Panther*, written by African-American filmmakers Ryan Coogler and Joe Robert Cole, remains an important element of the artistic movement in that it awakened the black popular community with an image of strong blacks that was contrary to past images of inferiority (Mattimore, 2018). But it also depicted blacks as royalty that were completely self-sufficient and independent of outsiders which empowered and inspired many people and other creative works of art.

The concept of the Black Panther evolved from a character created by two Jewish men from New York, Stan Lee and Jack Kirby, to being produced as a blockbuster film. The primarily black cast represented characters that were technologically and scientifically advanced and educated and used technology and science in such a way that viewers were provided a glimpse into Afrofuturism (Mattimore, 2018). Afrofuturism is the futuristic and unapologetic display of African and black people through traditions of art, science, and technology.

In the United States of America, most of the African-American cultural images were systematically destroyed which has led to a void that the country has never been able to fill (Dery, 1994). This void continues to plague the advancement of racial consciousness in American Society. However, seeing these newly imagined creations of black people through a black scientific lens gives a view of the possibilities of regaining some of the cultural remnants that were lost.

Ironically, though creations such as Hamilton and Black Panther may have opened opportunities for many people of color and proved to be financially successful, data shows that

there is still much work to be done. Many films, television shows, and other artistic projects are not as inclusive as they should be (Hunt et al., 2018). Women have an increased presence on TV, but Hollywood has a long way to go when it comes to diversity, the report says (Miranda, 2017).

Hollywood entertainment is a major producer of content with a global box office revenue of over 38 billion. It is also dominated by four big networks: ABC, CBS, NBC, and Dumont Television. Hollywood has opened up to the creation of smaller companies that develop reality television shows, many of which are or have become scripted. Many of these diverse projects and films have performed well financially. However, even with the plethora of smaller networks that provide more diverse content, and the progress that has been made, the percentage of minority actors rose from 8% to 11%, which does not represent the more than 40% minorities that exist (Hunt et al., 2018).

In addition, women, who represent slightly more than half of the population only comprised 20.9% of the creators of content, and were 31.2% of the leads in top theatrical films in 2016 (Hunt, et. al, 2018). The entertainment industry in Hollywood and other locations does seem to be moving in the right direction in producing representative content. In the past 5 years, the percentages of women and other underrepresented groups as leads in top theatrical films have increased by more than 3% (Hunt et al., 2018). However, this data continues to show the discrepancy that exists in the involvement of artistic activists from diverse backgrounds.

Escapism. For some, art is the only medium through which they escape harsh and uncomfortable realities or turn hope for change into action. Through this escape, artistic activists can often confront the pain or pleasure and connect the audience members to the subject matter

in a positive way. When hope turns into action it can lead to a societal transformation where consciousness is raised and the work itself elevates the emotional value (Miles, 2000). The duality of embracing or freeing oneself from the pain or pleasure allows the artist to live authentically outside of realms that limit creativity.

Girls in Zanzibar peel back the layers of emotion and shed them on the stage in order to escape the repression of gender inequalities (Holmes, 2013). As a result, these girls find alternatives so that they can transform it (Freire, 1972). Yan Zhengxue, a Chinese artist and activist continued to hold on to hope for change despite being jailed for many years. The artwork he created in his jail cell elevated him from a realm of defeat to one of victory (Wan, 2014). More importantly, Yan chose to live his truth rather than accept his reality.

Compared to existentialism, living authentically as artistic activists is to produce work that grows from experiences and does not conform to society. The realm not only takes artists away from the realm of totalitarianism. It also frees them from their own repression and ruptures the language they use to express their art (Miles, 2000). Through this rupture, the artistic activist is able to use creativity to overcome obstacles and surpass others.

In *The Vagina Monologues*, the creator Eve Ensler (1998) chose to openly free herself and others from the stigma attached to the female body and from the repression of sexual violence against women. Conversely, *In Art and Social Transformation: Theories and Practices in Contemporary Art for Radical and Social Change*, Malcolm Miles (2000) quotes John Beardsley who writes that to use art publicly can be detrimental to art itself. Art should remain an intimate expression or enclosed in a studio. Of course, Ensler exposes herself metaphorically in order to rupture the language that has been used around the word vagina. For Ensler, and

other women that have been involved in this project, it is the journey of truth. Women and the audience escape a realm where they are confronted with the realities of pain and returned to the totalitarian realm strengthened and empowered. Though the Vagina Monologues are for the many women that have been oppressed, Ensler succeeds in doing what Donald Kuspit calls Abstract Expressionism (Miles, 2000).

The artist, then, not only can realize himself more than anyone else by reason of his creativity, but is a beacon to these banal others, even a kind of Moses leading them out of their ordinary world of perception...to an altogether novel sense of life. (Kuspit, 1993: 2 as cited in Miles, 2000, p.35)

The monologues are largely based on interviews with women that have given Ensler the authority to share their stories. But Ensler has been able to shine a light on women's issues that have consistently been ignored. Ensler speaks how the word had become almost invisible because it was seen as dirty. She used other people's escapism of the word to fuel her passion for empowering the word vagina.

Chapter Summary

It is impossible to understand the current achievement of many social activists without recognizing those that came before. Within the United States, there have been many historic leaders that challenged injustices and fought for equal rights, regardless of the dangers to their personal lives and professional careers. Frederick Douglass and Paul Robeson are only two of many leaders that used their celebrity platform to raise consciousness for the plight of black people. Robeson, who was a celebrated performer, was never able to regain his status due to the critics that labeled him as anti-American and Communist. The Civil Rights movement suffered

due to the false rumors of the fluid sexuality of leaders. Nevertheless, these and many other artistic activists held firm to what they stood for despite the confines of the American system which was built on inequality.

In other countries, there are both ancient and contemporary examples of artistic activists that fought for equal rights. Serving as a spectacle for those that could afford it, the wrestlers in Egypt and Rome exemplify the divisions that existed between the different classes of society. Despite China's stronghold on their society and their ability to suppress the will of the people, it has been a cradle of dissension both in ancient and modern times. Many students preferred death in Tiananmen Square as opposed to life under Chinese governmental oppression. Finally, other countries such as Panama and Zanzibar find recourse in using the stage to address racial discrimination and gender bias.

These are issues that continue to permeate through American society. From the time of Reconstruction Era, the United States has allowed for inequality to be systematized. Many used the Constitution against its own citizens. Though World War II allowed for a loosening of the overall American reign on discrimination, civil rights leaders still found themselves fighting a battle for just and equal representation of all people.

As the arts have become an even more financially lucrative industry, revenue has been substituted for power. Many productions in music, on television and film, and in theatres allowed for some artistic activists from underrepresented groups to be able to create more inclusive content and represent a diverse population. Nevertheless, race, gender-bias, immigration-status, and sexual preference continue to be used against the equal progress of all individuals.

Critical Race, Feminist, Queer, and Adult Learning theories are distinct and use a different lens to understand and calibrate an understanding of the current state of artistic activists. However, they often converge upon each other at the onset of societal transformation. Unfortunately, this can often lead to members of underrepresented groups working in opposition to each other as opposed to in conjunction with common goals.

The positive result of artistic activism has led to six core elements: Togetherness, Consciousness, Communication of feelings, Action, Finances and Resources, and Escapism. These six core elements are prevalent in the history of artistic activism and equal representation in the arts. Art is a powerful tool that provides a venue through which current artistic activists can not only acquire revenue to circumvent some inequalities but a platform upon which they can freely express themselves and transform society.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study is to discuss and demarcate the best practices of artistic activists that use the arts as a tool for social activism. These artistic activists have been able to successfully affect and influence society in a positive way and on a large scale. The primary goal of chapter 3 is to explain the research design and methodology while maintaining a central focus on the best practices of these artistic activists as participants in this study. The research design will include details of how the participants were selected and the consideration that was taken to establish precautions for human subjects. The selection process was carefully designed to render the maximum understanding of the phenomenon of social activism in the arts.

Interview questions were specifically tailored and executed according to a protocol that was appropriate for studies involving human subjects. Each question was validated through a process of reliability, prima facie, peer review, and expert review. Doctoral students familiar with the dissertation process and the topic provided the peer review. Committee members, including a chair and two committee members knowledgeable of social activism and verified as doctoral scholars, provided the expert review to ensure the validity of the study.

The intent of this study was to formulate a non-biased representation of artistic activists. Notwithstanding, this study has an element of personal bias because the researcher is also an artistic activist with experience in social activism. These biases and their possible effect on the study will be discussed in the Statement of Bias. The researcher used a technique of bracketing also known as epoche to impede any influence that might deter the essence of the participants to emerge and render the study incongruent to their ideas.

The data analysis section will provide detailed information about the results and how they were collected, recorded, transcribed, classified, and coded. Inter-rater reliability and validity of the data will also be present in the data analysis section.

Re-Statement of Research Questions

This chapter delineates the research methods that were applied to achieve the objectives of this study. However, the following research questions were the central focus of the study and were used to extract the best practices and lived experiences of the participants:

- RQ1: How do artistic activists define, measure, and track their success in entertainment?
- RQ2: What challenges do artistic activists face in using the arts to address societal issues?
- RQ3: What are the best practices of artistic activists?
- RQ4: What recommendations do artistic activists have for those that choose to pursue artistic activism?

Nature of the Study

This study is a phenomenological qualitative inquiry that seeks to determine the best practices of artistic activists that use music, visual, and theatre arts as a tool for addressing injustice in society. Creswell (2013) states that a qualitative design is best for describing and understanding a problem that may be inherently complex. The problem herein is the lack of representation of women, people of color, and members of the LGBTQIA community in the decision-making process of arts and entertainment. Through various genres of entertainment, many individuals and groups obtain information and skills. As a result, it has become a powerful tool to influence and change the dynamic of society.

Fundamental to qualitative research is the focus on the essence or the lived experience of individuals (Moustakas, 1994). This phenomenological study explored, described, and quantified the essence that emerged from a select genre of social activist entertainment with an emphasis on a social movement. Contemporary artistic activists shared their lived experiences in using art as a tool for social activism, explained their process for obtaining and synthesizing information, and discussed strategies to implement these practices in their genre or field (Creswell, 2013). To ensure this study was a good qualitative study, the following nine characteristics from Creswell were considered.

1. *Rigorous data collection procedures.* Data collected in various ways may reveal different viewpoints or responses. As a participant, responses may be different than those collected by an outsider. Moreover, data that is collected through varied forms of technology including paper and pencil may yield different results than data collected through an online or digital format.
2. *The study is framed with correct qualitative research assumptions.* There are many different ways to view data. In entertainment, the response from the audience, visual images, audio recordings, sounds, comments, body language, and expressions of physical emotion can be seen as valid forms of data. Based on the situation or uncontrollable circumstances, the results may fluctuate from either within or outside of the context of the research.
3. *One of five qualitative approaches is used.* The five qualitative approaches are Narrative, Phenomenological, Grounded Theory, Ethnography, and Case Study. Depending on the approach, the results of a study may look different and yield

different results. Phenomenology focuses on a description of the human experience which lends it to the best approach for this study.

4. *There is a single focus.* There are numerous areas of human experience that could be studied. However, a single focus on the phenomenon of artistic activism allows for the researcher to go deeper into the concept as opposed to obtaining data that is broad or vague.
5. *The study contains detailed methods for collecting and analyzing data.* A detailed description of the methods for collecting and analyzing data must be included so that the research is replicable and verifiable. Subsequently, a clear report is fundamental for readers to have an understanding of the results.
6. *Multiple views can be used to analyze data.* Multiple elements may affect the results of a study. These elements can include cultural interpretations, historical or situational connections, or personal biases affected by lived experiences. While these views are valuable, triangulation can serve as a tool for validity when elements counter the outcome of the results.
7. *The research is persuasive and inviting to readers.* The researcher must present the information from a place of authority and commit to a detailed study of the topic. The writing is persuasive.
8. *The personal connection of the researcher explains the effect of the results of the study.* The researcher must disclose all biases that may affect the interpretation of the findings. The personal connection helps to authenticate the applicability of the results. Moreover, consideration given to the personal biases may help to explain the essence that emerges from the study.

9. *The research is ethical.* When involving human subjects, it is important to obtain approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). However, the significance of obtaining approval goes beyond IRB. The study must be one that preserves human dignity, maintains the respect of others, and serves as a source of pride for the researcher.

Methodology

The chapter will describe the methodology used in this phenomenological study of artistic activists using the arts as a tool of social activism to empower underrepresented people. For the purpose of this study, underrepresented people include women, people of color, and members of the LGBTQIA community. Chapter 3 will describe the lived human experiences of the participants.

Structured process of phenomenology. A phenomenology is a qualitative approach to research that focuses on the lived experiences of a common group of people. Artistic activists that are members of one or more underrepresented groups formulated the group. They were interviewed and observed because of their expertise and recognized success in the entertainment industry. Their success was determined based on their mass appeal to diverse audiences, recognizable work, and association with a recognized labor union. Audio and visual artifacts were documented through transcription and coded to find the essence of the human experience (Creswell, 2013). From the themes that emerged from the coding, commonalities, differences, and an understanding of the phenomenon was developed. Throughout chapter 3, this phenomenological research design, as well as, the process of the protection of human subjects, data collection, interview techniques, and interview protocol will be discussed.

Appropriateness of phenomenology methodology. Philosopher Alfred Schulz emphasized that the human world is complex because of the meanings that are formed (Groenewald, 2004). Prior to Schulz, Franz Brentano focused on the intentional nature of consciousness. Contemporary leaders express that there is a duty to raise the consciousness of individuals in society when addressing injustices such as racism, sexism, or sexual orientation (Greene, 1995). Based on Maxine Greene's interpretation of the ability of art to nurture relational, critical, and social education, Guyotte (2018) expressed that art creates aesthetic activism. Aesthetic activism is a phenomenon that can inspire a social movement to occur. Artists such as poets, actors, and singers who share their innermost insights with others can be seen as natural phenomenologists because many have a raised consciousness of their artistic responsibility to society. W. E. B. Dubois takes this concept of raised consciousness a step further and claims that one who is underrepresented must have a double-consciousness; understanding who one is, and then understanding who they are in the eyes of their oppressor (Bates Oates, 2019). Accepting this double consciousness is the only way that people can break through what Dubois calls the veil of discrimination that keeps them from full and equal participation.

In this study, one's consciousness is fundamental because what appears in that consciousness is the phenomenon. This phenomenon then becomes the pathway for the acquisition of new knowledge and real-life experiences. Husserl calls this process of mingling consciousness with the real world, ideation (Moustakas, 1994). From the point of ideation comes a process that foments learning and gives meaning to life.

This empirical phenomenology is the appropriate qualitative method for this study because similar to other research models (Ethnography, Grounded Research Theory,

Hermeneutics, Heuristics) there are seven elements that distinguish it from quantitative methods (Moustakas, 1994).

1. Qualitative designs focus on the human or lived experiences of the participants. This is important because it describes a phenomenon based on relationships and situational contexts that affect the results.
2. The wholeness of the experience outweighs the individual parts.
3. The purpose is to determine the meaning as opposed to the measurements.
4. First-person informal and formal accounts further support the goal of exploring human experiences.
5. Focus is placed on the data of experience that explains human behavior.
6. The research questions reflect the interest and involvement of the researcher and substantiate the personal commitment herein.
7. Experience and behavior forms a personal and inseparable relationship that extends to understanding the parts and whole experience.

Research Design

The research design was based in part on information from the literature review that highlighted the abilities of artistic activists to use art as a tool for social activism. Because of the researcher's experience in the entertainment field, some cognitive decisions pre-existed in regards to how the material should be presented (Creswell, 2013). This will be further addressed in detail in the Statement of Bias. The preliminary decisions were taken into consideration. The goal of capturing the lived experiences of the participants and providing an accurate reflection of their ideals outweighs that of the researcher and took precedence.

Analysis unit. The analysis unit was each artistic activist that is a member of one or more underrepresented groups. Each artistic activist was chosen for their high level of participation in entertainment and their connection to a particular social movement or injustice in entertainment.

Population. Each participant was a member of one or more underrepresented groups. Each participant has written, produced, created, or directed a product that addressed a social issue based on gender, race, or sexual orientation. Participants have experienced social injustice towards them based on their gender, race, or sexual orientation. The study did not employ significance testing. Any generalizations to other populations should be done with caution.

Sample size. Each artistic activist has distinct valued experiences that contribute to the overall understanding of how art can be used as a social activist tool. It is important to recognize their differences as well as their similarities to not generalize one idea to a population but to illuminate the detail in their intentional artistic creations (Creswell, 2013). Fifteen participants were studied to produce enough data for a clear understanding of the phenomenon and saturation of the themes in order to compare multiple concepts.

Purposive sampling. To show different perspectives on the use of art as a social activist tool, a purposeful sampling technique was used to assemble responses from artistic activists that have varied experiences yet similar goals within the field of entertainment. The information from each participant consisted of various modalities, including, but not limited to, observations, interviews, documents, and audio and/or visual recordings.

The purposive sampling provided rich data that amplified an understanding of how art can successfully be used as a tool for social activism. The participants stated that they had experience with the phenomenon of using art as a tool for social activism. Some interviews were interviewed multiple times. However, the researcher was cognizant of personal biases that might

influence the results and used bracketing techniques to set aside personal experiences during each interview.

Participant selection. All participants have experience in the phenomenon being studied. 30 participants were preliminarily identified based on their public promotion of a social cause and recognizable work in the entertainment industry. Twenty-one participants were selected for contact upon approval. Fifteen participants were interviewed. The unique experience of each participant was of specific interest to the researcher and informed the understanding of social activism as an artistic tool. Each participant had a minimum of 10 years of experience in the entertainment industry as a leader.

Sampling frame. The sampling frame includes the participants that are writers, directors, and creators with an online presence or membership of an internationally recognized labor union including, but not limited to, the Writers Guild of America, the Directors Guild of America, the Producers Guild of America, of the Screen Actors Guild-American Federation of Television Radio and Artists (SAG-AFTRA).

Criteria for inclusion and exclusion. The criteria for inclusion and exclusion delineate how certain participants were qualified or disqualified for this study. These members were chosen because of their understanding of the phenomenon of using art as a tool of social activism and their relation to the unique challenges that members of underrepresented groups face.

The criteria for inclusion included the following:

1. Artistic activists that have more than 10 years of experience in the industry
2. Artistic activists that are members of one or more underrepresented groups such as women, people of color, and the LGBTQIA community

3. Artistic activists that have actively created or participated in at least one production that was focused on a local, national, or international societal injustice

The criteria for exclusion included the following:

1. Artistic leaders and creatives that stated that their experience in entertainment was not characteristic of social injustice.
2. Artistic leaders and creatives that stated that their professional success was not the benefit of the social activism of underrepresented people.
3. Artistic leaders and creatives that do not identify with a social movement against a particular social injustice.
4. Artistic leaders and creatives that have not intentionally and purposely used entertainment as a social activist tool.
5. Any artistic leader that does not meet my inclusion criteria.

Purposive sampling maximum variation. The strategy of maximum variation was used to first differentiate the participants and then select them based on their differences. The purpose of this strategy was to maximize the perspectives on the use of art as a tool for social activism. Maximum variation also ensured that these artistic activists were reflections of a diverse group that would contribute unique ideas regarding having access to the decision-making process in entertainment.

Protection of Human Subjects

The participants in this study are human subjects. To protect the participants and abide by the regulations of the International Review Board (IRB) that monitors this process, certain guidelines were followed. All forms were submitted to the IRB, approval was received, and informed consent forms were emailed to each participant, signed, and obtained from each

participant before beginning the study. Each interview will be stored on a USB and locked in a protected computer that uses a passcode and will be under my supervision. The names of each interviewee will not be released unless they choose to do so. Each interviewee will be identified by “Participant” and a number specifying the order of their interview.

Data Collection

Data collection included the permission of the participants to be recorded by the interviewee and the interviews transcribed on paper or in digital form. Confidentiality and ethics were considered prior to obtaining the data so that the information obtained would be stored securely to provide minimal risk if any. Twenty-one participants were contacted by phone or email or both using an IRB approved script (See Appendix A). Once access to the participants was obtained, building rapport was fundamental prior to the interviews. During the phone call, the same call script was read to all participants in order to ensure that all received the same information pertaining to the interview. If the participant did not answer or a representative for the participant answered, a message was left for the participant to return the phone call. Once, the phone call was returned, the entire call script was read to the participant. The participants were asked to reserve one hour of uninterrupted time for the interview. In the case that the interview happened in person, the participant was asked to select a safe space for the interview to take place.

Participants were told that the interview would be recorded and transcribed with subsequent deletion of the audio at the completion of the study. The participant was emailed the agreed-upon time and place for the interview, as well as, the informed consent form with the due date of the interview. All interviewees were provided a copy to review and sign in the cases

where they had forgotten to provide one on the day of the interview. The interviewee received a confirmation email two days prior to the interview to ensure that they were still available.

On the day of the interview, the interviewees were presented with the recording tools: iPhone 8 using the Voice Notes application and a Mac computer using the Garageband program. The interviewee was presented with a physical copy of the interview questions followed by an ice-breaker inquiry “Tell me about your career.” All participants were asked the same 9 questions, except in cases where clarification was needed. To obtain clarification, the interviewer asked, “Can you explain that?” or “Tell me more about that.” When all questions were asked, the interviewee was thanked for their time and a copy of the transcription was promised to be emailed as soon as possible for validity.

Interview Techniques

Interviewing the participants is an essential piece of the study because it allows for participants to reflect and answer questions based on their personal experiences. The interview questions were open-ended, general, and focused on understanding the overall phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). The interview questions were limited to 9 except in cases where the interviewee mentioned information that the researcher needed clarification. Each interviewee was interviewed using naturalistic inquiry (in their natural setting) or in a setting of their choosing in order to allow the meanings of their environment and context to be a part of their experience and responses (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Interview Protocol

Interviewees were selected based on their ability to answer the questions and provide thoughtful answers. In all cases where possible, in-person interviews took place. In other cases

and upon the permission of the interviewee, video conferencing using Zoom, Skype, or FaceTime was used. An interview guide (Figure 2) was used to annotate answers to questions.

Interview Guide
Time:
Date:
Location:
Interviewer:
Interviewee:
Title:
Brief Description of Experience: Tell me about your career.
Questions:
1. How do you define and measure your success as an artistic activist?
2. What are some examples of your success as an artistic activist?
3. What challenges have you faced when using the arts to address societal issues?
4. Does being a member of an underrepresented group pose any disadvantages to you using the arts to address societal issues?
5. Has using the arts to address societal issues come at an expense or cost to your personal or professional life?
6. What strategies did you use to lead you through your challenges to your successes?
7. What lessons have you learned?
8. If you could have done something differently, what would that have been?
9. What advice would you give to future generations of artistic activists?

Figure 2. Interview guide.

Relationship between research and interview questions. The questions were formulated in such a way that the interviewees can easily understand and recognize terminology from the entertainment industry and social activism. The following interview guide was used to facilitate this process.

Validity of the study. The level of validity will be subject to whether or not measurement of the phenomenon involved appropriate methods as listed in this chapter. Validity will also be compared in conjunction with the reliability of the methods. The researcher intends to maintain the integrity of the process for each participant to ensure this reliability and reflect

real concepts and ideals, as well as, variations between them. The interview questions have been carefully crafted according to research, proven methods, and other relevant theories. The use of an interview guide for each participant will also assist in assuring the validity of the study.

Prima-facie and content validity. The prima facie and content validity will be based on the first questions used to establish the level of the social activist consciousness of each participant (Thomas, 2009). Establishing prima-facie ensures that the interview questions are valid on their own and establishes the level of consciousness of the participants. Having a raised consciousness plays a major role in this study because phenomenology positions it as a gateway to ideals and real-life experiences (Moustakas, 1994). Double consciousness is the construct under which participants define themselves and how others define the participants (Bates Oates, 2019). For these reasons, consciousness is both the validity of the content of this study and leads to new interpretations of understanding. Notably, this study of raised consciousness was based on peer-reviewed research and its comparison to real properties and characteristics from the experiences of the participants.

Peer-review validity. This study was peer-reviewed by the researcher's peers that are familiar with the phenomenon being explored. The peer review team of two people had special characteristics of research so that they could provide support, challenge the researcher's assumptions, and question the methods and interpretations in a debrief (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This written feedback was provided to the researcher (Appendix B).

Expert review validity. This study was subjected to the review of experts that have experience with the phenomenon of social activism. The suggestions of the committee were taken into consideration and modifications were made where necessary to ensure the validity of the study.

Reliability of the study. The reliability of this study is based on how dependable and consistent the results were. There is a complete understanding that the results of this study may change in their applicability according to a particular situation (Creswell, 2013). For this reason, this study seeks the dependability of the results in the hopes that the best practices of artistic activists can be reproduced with minimal modification and maintain their integrity. To ensure this dependability, these results will be cross-checked with those of peer-reviewed literature, the comments of various artistic activists, and within the study itself. As some of the best practices may or may not be conclusive, the researcher will rely upon the validity of the content for support.

Table 1

Research Questions and Corresponding Interview Questions

Research Questions	Corresponding Interview Questions
RQ1: What challenges do artistic activists face in using the arts to address societal issues?	IQ1. What challenges have you faced when using the arts to address societal issues? IQ2. Does being a member of an underrepresented group pose any disadvantages to you using the arts to address societal issues? IQ3. Has using the arts to address societal issues come at an expense or cost to your personal or professional life?
RQ2: How do artistic activists define, measure, and track their success in entertainment?	IQ4. How do you define and measure your success as an artistic activist? IQ5. What are some examples of your success as an artistic activist?
RQ3: What are the best practices of artistic activists?	IQ6. What strategies did you use to lead you through your challenges to your successes? IQ7. What lessons have you learned? IQ8. If you could have done something differently, what would that have been?
RQ4: What recommendations do artistic activists have for those that choose to pursue artistic activism?	IQ9. What advice would you give to future generations of artistic activists?

Note. The table identifies four research questions and corresponding interview questions. Interview questions were reviewed by a panel of two peer-reviewers and expert reviewers.

Table 2

Research Questions and Corresponding Interview Questions (Revised).

Research Questions	Corresponding Interview Questions
RQ1: How do artistic activists define, measure, and track their success in entertainment?	IQ1. How do you define and measure your success as an artistic activist? IQ2. What are some examples of your success as an artistic activist?
RQ2: What challenges do artistic activists face in using the arts to address societal issues?	IQ3. What challenges have you faced when using the arts to address societal issues? IQ4. Does being a member of an underrepresented group pose any disadvantages to you using the arts to address societal issues? IQ5. Has using the arts to address societal issues come at an expense or cost to your personal or professional life?
RQ3: What are the best practices of artistic activists?	IQ6. What strategies did you use to lead you through your challenges to your successes? IQ7. What lessons have you learned?
RQ4: What recommendations do artistic activists have for those that choose to pursue artistic activism?	IQ8. If you could have done something differently, what would that have been? IQ9. What advice would you give to future generations of artistic activists?

Note. The table identifies four research questions and corresponding interview questions with revisions based on feedback from peer-reviewers and an expert reviewer. Subsequent changes were made to the order and phrasing of questions within the interview protocol.

Statement of Personal Bias

Though some researchers feel it is not possible to remove oneself completely from the study, the researcher intended to use an open approach to the knowledge that was obtained from the interviews (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher understood that his experience as an entertainer and participant in social activism might affect the interpretation of the results. However, the researcher used bracketing or epoché as a remedy to this issue.

Bracketing and epoché. Through bracketing and epoché, the researcher intends to set aside presuppositions that may interfere with the analysis of the data (Creswell, 2013). The

researcher of this study is a writer, director, and performer with many experiences in creating and performing content that has elements of social activism. The researcher has also spoken and worked with many artistic activists that are social activists. However, the goal remained to accurately represent the lived experiences of the participants and not those of the researcher in any form.

The literature also presented the researcher with information that both conformed to previous knowledge and informed the researcher's subsequent practices. Furthermore, the researcher hopes to be able to apply the best practices from this study. Bracketing personal biases and suspending judgment on all participants during the interview process assured that the researcher focused on the data obtained. The three-step data analysis process to obtain consensus from the peer and expert reviewers also assured that personal biases were minimized or nullified.

Data Analysis

Inter-rater reliability was used to solidify the co-reviewer process. The data was coded and themes emerged as a result of common keywords and phrases. These themes were then color-coded to classify these keywords or phrases until the researcher reached saturation. Following this process, two co-reviewers analyzed and assessed the validity of the coding process. These themes were discussed and modifications were made where appropriate. The themes were then presented to the committee for final approval. Creswell's (2013) six steps to phenomenological analysis were employed to ensure the validity of this data analysis process.

1. Data Organization. Data was collected, transcribed, and organized by the researcher.

The data was then filed into separate files on a computer and secured using password protection.

2. Reading and Memoing. The text was annotated for initial coding purposes and reviewed multiple times. This step allowed for commonalities of ideas of concepts to visually emerge. The memos were dated and organized along with their corresponding theme.
3. Description of data. The data as a representation of codes and themes formed the basis of the essence of the phenomenon.
4. Classification of data into themes. The themes were both color-coded and cross-coded when necessary to ensure saturation and limit the repetition of concepts.
5. Interpretation of data. The researcher used textural (written) and structural (experiential) descriptions to describe the essence. Utilizing these descriptors may cause multiple codes within each theme. However, each subcode will maintain its integrity to the theme. Common themes arising from the literature review will assist in analyzing the data. The applicability of the data will infer the best practices for artistic activists that want to effectively use social activism as a tool in the arts.
6. Visual representation of data. The researcher used figures, tables, charts, and bar graphs to depict the data that was synthesized. The visual representations further explained and supported the correlation of the findings.

Inter-rater reliability and validity. To ensure inter-rater reliability and validity, the following steps were implemented (Creswell, 2013).

1. Principal Investigator Coding. Data was prepared for coding and analysis. As a result, preliminary themes that recurred were classified.

2. Peer Reviewer Validity. Two peer reviewers analyzed the results of three interviews to attain a consensus. The three interviews were coded until saturation and reviewed by the peer review team composed of doctoral students.
3. Expert Review Validity. The committee, led by the committee chair, reviewed and validated the results of the three interviews to reach consensus.
4. Once verified by a consensus from the committee, the same coding process was employed with the remaining 12 interviews.
5. At the completion of the 12 remaining transcripts, all 15 interviews were sent to the committee for review.

Chapter 3 Summary

This chapter defined the research design and methodology of this study of artistic activists and social activism through art. Consciousness connects the real world to ideals and concepts. Artistic activists, such as writers, directors, producers, and creators incorporate a raised consciousness to educate, entertain, and disseminate information to mass audiences. Thus through this connection, the phenomenon is created (Moustakas, 1994). Literature that addresses leaders that use art as a tool for social activism supports the fact that using art as a tool of social activism involves a raised consciousness (Greene, 1995).

Though the researcher has extensive hands-on and personal knowledge of entertainment and social activism, the researcher relied on bracketing and epoché to set aside personal biases. The purpose of this was so that the data would reflect the true and real concepts of the interviewees. The interviewees agreed to be interviewed and recorded according to IRB protocol and the researcher used the same process for each interviewee to maintain the validity of the process and ensure the reliability of the results.

The ultimate goal was that the best practices of the artistic activists could be replicated for other leaders in the entertainment industry who desire to use art as a tool for social activism. Underrepresented people such as women, minorities, and members of the LGBTQIA community face many issues that often provoke social movement. Social movements are characterized by the connecting of identities. Chapter 3 outlined the methods for determining what identities represent to underrepresented people and how artistic activists exercise their knowledge and expertise in the arts to create a more inclusive artistic society.

Chapter 4: Findings

The purpose of this study is to extract the strategies that underrepresented artistic activists use to navigate through their challenges to achieve success. Underrepresented artistic activists in this study include women, people of color, and members of the LGBTQIA community that have intentionally used their art and/or their platform to speak out against injustice, discrimination, and their lack of representation in the entertainment field.

The importance of this study is that many underrepresented artistic activists contribute to the high revenue of the artistic product that they take part in while continuing to have limited access to leading and decision-making positions (Hunt et al., 2018). Though this exemplifies the disparity that exists within the entertainment industry between underrepresented artists and the white majority, various artistic artists use strategies to circumvent challenges. The findings herein substantiate the fact that more dialogue is needed both within particularly underrepresented groups and the majority which consists mostly of white males. The benefit of this study is that underrepresented artistic activists may visualize the collective thought and share strategies they use to maintain their values and integrity. To understand the dynamics of equal representation in the arts, the difficulties of using art as a means to raise consciousness, and the essence of how people are motivated beyond the experience, this study is centered around four research questions.

- RQ1: How do artistic activists define, measure, and track their success in entertainment?
- RQ2: What challenges do artistic activists face in using the arts to address societal issues?
- RQ3: What are the best practices of artistic activists?

- RQ4: What recommendation do artistic activists have for those that choose to pursue artistic activism?

In addition to the research questions, an interview protocol was developed to organize the participants' responses. Nine interview questions (IQ) that correlated to specific research questions were reviewed using an inter-reliability procedure to assure their validity. These open-ended questions were shared with a peer-reliability group for comments and submitted to an expert team for approval. The interview protocol also consisted of soliciting and receiving approval from the IRB after which I officially invited participants to be interviewed. The interviews were scheduled on select dates and times upon their returning a signed Informed Consent form. Upon receiving approval from IRB, the following nine interview questions (IQs) were emailed within the body of the consent form to the participants and used during the interview:

- IQ1. How do you define and measure your success as an artistic activist?
- IQ2. What are some examples of your success as an artistic activist?
- IQ3. What challenges have you faced when using the arts to address societal issues?
- IQ4. Does being a member of an underrepresented group pose any disadvantages to you using the arts to address societal issues?
- IQ5. Has using the arts to address societal issues come at an expense or cost to your personal or professional life?
- IQ6. What strategies did you use to lead you through your challenges to your successes?
- IQ7. What lessons have you learned?
- IQ8. If you could have done something differently, what would that have been?

- IQ9. What advice would you give to future generations of artistic activists?

Each participant contributed valuable knowledge about the challenges and successes of creating diverse content. Their answers also correlated to their various experiences and backgrounds. None of the participants expressed discomfort during the interviews. Moreover, at the conclusion of each interview, each participant offered further assistance and additional clarification if it was needed. The nine interview questions helped to expound upon the disparity that exists between underrepresented people and the white male majority in entertainment. However, despite the disparities, each of the nine questions demonstrated that the participants continue to be dedicated to seeking equal representation, creating diverse and valuable content, and uplifting each other within their communities.

Participants

21 potential participants were selected because of their experience as artistic activists. A total number of 15 individuals participated in this study based on their identification with an underrepresented group and high level of artistic activism. The participants demonstrated a wide range of expertise and diverse artistic contributions that fit the inclusion criteria. Participants ranged in age from 28 to 70. Three of the participants were women and four of the participants openly identified themselves as a member of the LGBTQIA community. All 15 participants identified as people of color consisting of Black or African-American, Mexican or Mexican-American or Chicano, Latinx, Latino, or Latin-American, or Asian. All participants currently reside and work in Los Angeles, California or surrounding counties within the United States of America.

Data Collection

To collect data for this study, an internet search for the terms of artistic activism, activism, and activists in entertainment was utilized. Variants such as movies, art, music, spoken word, clothing, theatre, LGBTQIA, and producer were added to render large samples. The pro.imdb.com website was then instrumental in obtaining representation and contact information for potential participants. Thirty potential participants were initially identified. After obtaining approval from the IRB on February 24, 2020, 21 individuals were selected according to the inclusion criteria and received an official invitation. From the 21 that were selected, 15 participants responded to the invitation and were interviewed according to the dates on the following chart:

Table 3

Codes, Dates, and Categories of the Participant Interviews

Participant	Date Interviewed	Woman	People of Color	LGBTQIA
P1	25-Feb-2020		X	X
P2	29-Feb-2020		X	X
P3	29-Feb-2020		X	
P4	2-Mar-2020	X	X	
P5	2-Mar-2020		X	
P6	4-Mar-2020		X	
P7	5-Mar-2020		X	X
P8	5-Mar-2020		X	X
P9	7-Mar-2020		X	
P10	7-Mar-2020	X	X	
P11	8-Mar-2020		X	
P12	8-Mar-2020	X	X	
P13	10-Mar-2020		X	
P14	10-Mar-2020		X	
P15	10-Mar-2020		X	

Data Analysis

The researcher that conducted the interviews was aware that there may be some preconceived notions regarding the responses from each participant due to the researcher's

artistic activism work and familiarity with some of the participants. However, the researcher used bracketing, also known as epoché, to separate presuppositions and personal biases from the process and the results in order to allow for the true essence of the phenomenological study to emerge (Moustakas, 1994). Each participant agreed to be audio-recorded and did not express any anxiety in answering any of the questions. The researcher took notes during the interview to assist in follow-up questions for clarification if needed. After the interview, the notes and the recording were transcribed on a Word document and reread for accuracy. Distinct words that exemplified the nature of the interview were highlighted.

After each interview was transcribed and highlighted, the highlighted words were transferred to a Microsoft Excel worksheet that listed each participant as P and a numeric value (i.e., P2, P5) corresponding to the order of their interview. Subsequently, the words from each participant were color-coded for similarities or commonalities. The words that expressed common elements for each interview question were then grouped into categories based on their similarities (Creswell, 2013). At times, the category themes were developed using the words from the participant responses.

Inter-Rater Review Process

After the first three interviews, the excel worksheet was shared with the peer review team for inter-rater reliability and validity. This team consisted of two doctoral students in the Organizational Leadership program who were trained to analyze and interpret data for validity. The worksheet was then shared with the expert committee. Once approval was received from the expert committee, the researcher continued to interview the subsequent 12 participants with the same interview protocol and analysis process. After all the interviews were completed, the common words were again reviewed by the peer review team to ensure the use of accurate

descriptors for each theme (Creswell, 2013). Recommendations from the review team are listed in Table 4.

Table 4

Inter-rater Coding Table Edit Recommendations

Interview Question	Items	Inter-rater Recommendations	Modification Applied
1	People leave the theatre talking. Conversation	Create a separate “Conversation-Starter” theme instead of integrating into “Sharing my Story” theme.	Yes
2	90% capacity filled	Does not coincide with the themes. Delete.	Yes
3	Cyber-Bullying. Social Media. Backhanded comments	Combine under one theme of “Cyber-Bullying” or “Social Media”.	Yes
3	Career sacrifice	Delete.	Yes
4	I don’t think so. No. I can’t control how I was born. I work with who I want to.	Combine into a simpler theme such as “No”.	Yes
5	Themes	Very nebulous. Create simple themes, Yes, No, etc.	Yes
7	There is a disparity between the haves and have nots.	Delete. Not necessarily a lesson learned.	Yes
9	See what is around you. Look at things clearly.	Move from “Strategy” theme to the “Focus” theme	Yes

Data Display

The interview questions were created to obtain specific data in relation to the research questions to obtain data that could be visibly displayed on a graph. As such, the interview questions were pre-grouped according to their correspondence to each of the four research questions. For a visual display of the results of each interview question, a frequency bar chart was created using Microsoft Excel. This bar chart was labeled with the frequency of keywords and phrases that the interviewees responded with and the themes that emerged from analyzing their commonalities. Each bar graph on the chart was separately labeled with the number of responses for each theme to ensure clarity.

Research Question 1

Research Question 1 (RQ1), “How do artistic activists define, measure, and track their success in entertainment?” was designed to focus on the trajectories of success of artistic activists. The following two interview questions (IQ1, IQ2) helped to interpret the personal ways that the participants view success:

IQ1. How do you define and measure your success as an artistic activist?

IQ2. What are some examples of your success as an artistic activist?

The common key phrases from each of these two interview questions were grouped to form themes. Each one of the 15 participants was allowed to make multiple responses.

Interview Question 1. How do you define and measure your success as an artistic activist? Interview Question 1 rendered a total of 35 responses that formed the following eight themes: (a) Life-Saving, (b) Stories, (c) Fulfillment, (d) Resilience, (e) Thought-Provoking Conversation, (f) Maintain Values, and (g) Raising Funds.

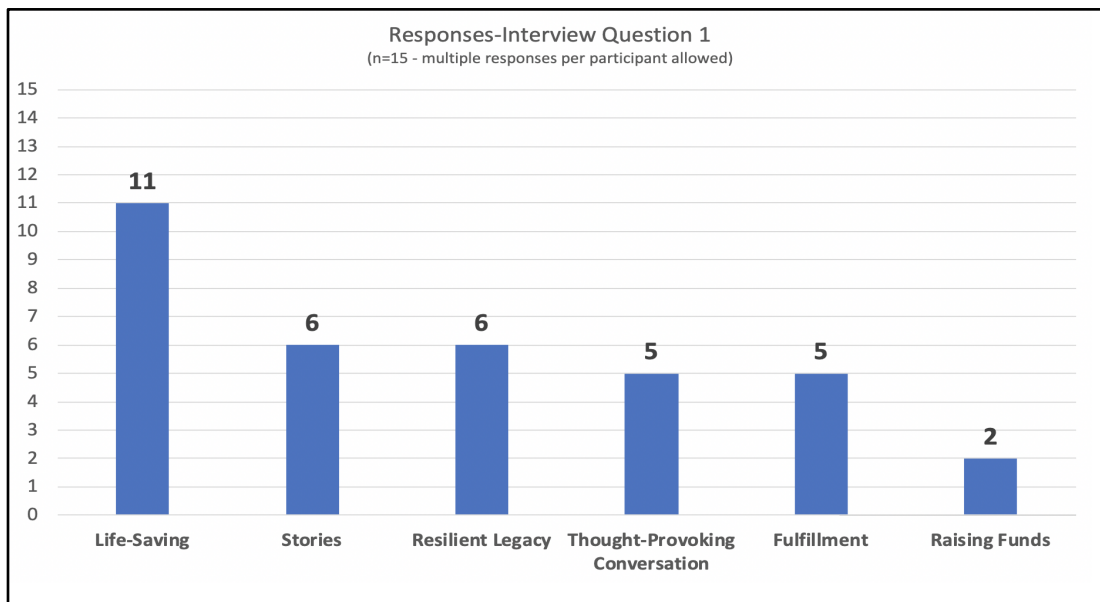


Figure 3. The criteria and elements by which artistic activists define and measure their success. These are the eight themes that resulted from Interview Question 1 (IQ1) in decreasing frequency. Each bar is labeled with a numeric value that represents the number of times each theme was referenced.

Life-saving. Interview Question 1 revealed Life-Saving as the main response to how artistic activists define and measure their success. The 11 responses in this theme are the highest quantity for IQ1 and are composed of words such as encouraging, impacting people to move, and helping people get through rough times. P1 claimed that social media is a tool that can be used for change regardless of some people saying that they need a break from it. P1 says, “Anything that I post always comes from the heart to inspire, motivate, and educate our youth or anyone that gets bullied into silence.” P4 stated that the purpose of the arts is for the artist to find themselves in the space which allows individuals to be themselves and feel proud of their contribution. P4 said, “When I see a young dancer, who had no self-esteem, now they are starving to learn and they want to be pushed. Now there is another strong black, Latina, or LGBTQ dancer, who found themselves in the space. I have saved lives for real.” P7 stated that art is often “not about the money. It’s about helping people get through tough times.”

Stories. Stories that speak of the artistic activists’ experiences yielded six responses. These responses included words such as making a cultural contribution, reflecting the current state of what is going on, and teaching history. P5 and P15 call attention to the connections they make with other artists and the various venues they are invited to speak to share their stories. Participants explain that this increased access to larger public venues provides them a larger audience to share their stories.

Resilient legacy. Resilient Legacy resulted in six responses. This theme consisted of words such as longevity while maintaining morals, values, and standards. P4 and P11 both extrapolated on their ability to be resilient and continue to work to create a legacy. P3 stated that it was necessary to be selective and specific with the projects that they take part in order to maintain values and morals.

Thought-provoking conversation. Participating in work that was thought-provoking as a determinant of success yielded five responses. This theme consisted of words such as changing someone's mind, making someone think positively, and encouraging people to start a conversation. P2 acknowledged that the arts disarm people and encourage them to leave the theatre talking about what they experienced. P2 also stated that people are more free and open to start conversations about difficult subject matter after joining others in an experience. P7 says that success is measured when "one person says, 'you changed my mind and the way I have thought about people for the positive.'" P9 emphasized the importance of pushing the creation of thought as a successful manifestation of ideas.

Personal fulfillment. Personal fulfillment rendered five responses. These responses included words such as meaningful and validation. P6 values the fruit of the labor of impacting audiences. P11 finds fulfillment in showing underrepresented people in a positive image.

Raising funds. Raising Funds consisted of two responses. The two responses indicated that being able to raise funds is an indicator of success. P12 emphasized their success in raising a substantial amount of funds to execute their work as an artistic activist.

Interview Question 2. What are some examples of your success as an artistic activist? Interview Question 2 rendered a total of 28 responses that formed the following seven themes: (a) Socialization, (b) Teaching History, (c) Starting Something, (d) Own Aesthetic, (e) Family Togetherness, (f), Personal Change, and (g) Suicide Prevention.

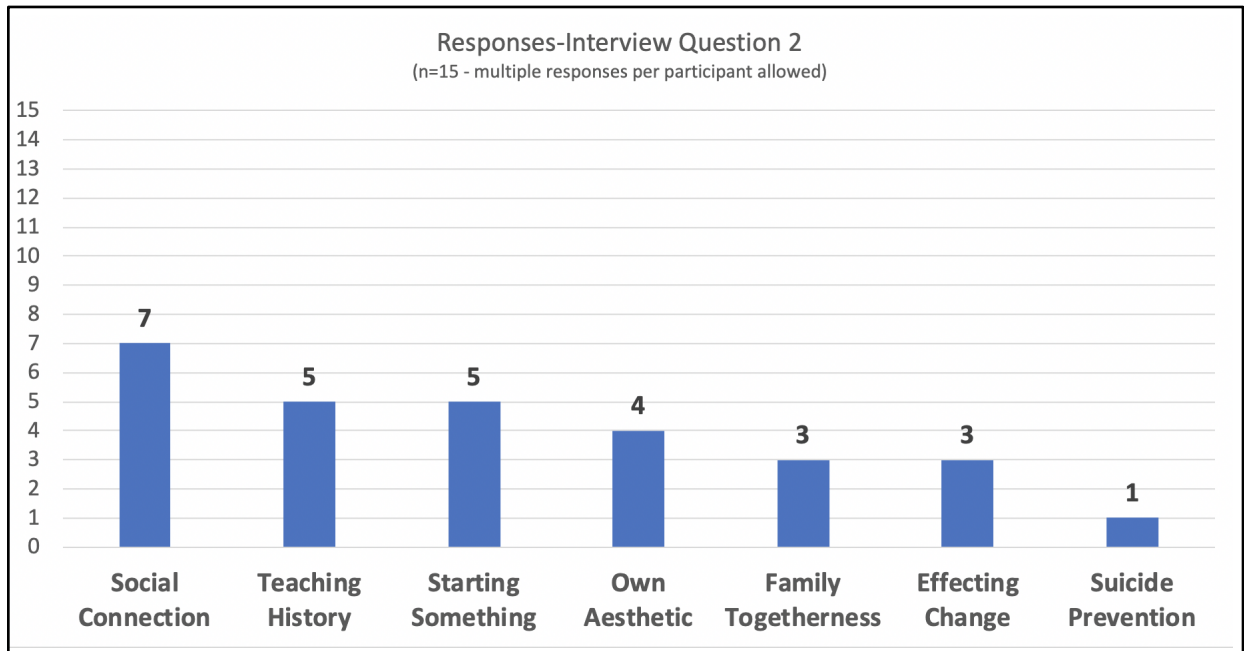


Figure 4. Results and examples of the artistic activists’ instances of success. These are the seven themes that resulted from Interview Question 2 (IQ2) in decreasing frequency. Each bar is labeled with a numeric value that represents the number of times each theme was referenced.

Social connection. Social Connection delivered seven responses. This theme included invitations to speak, receipt of awards from the community, and the ability to share stories with different people. P1 stated, “I’m an introvert, but [because of the arts] I can socialize as an extrovert. When I’m done, I’m the quietest one. I can share my coming out story. My story is unique.” P7 emphasized that being able to expose people to a different lifestyle or viewpoint is a primary example of success. As a result, this exposure can “usually help to socially uplift everyone.” P11 describes this as a “contribution to the global community.”

Teaching history. Teaching History consisted of five responses. This theme included being well-read, having a willingness to learn, and helping people experience the history that they have not been exposed to before. P10 stated that teaching history can light a spark and touch people’s hearts.

Starting something. Starting Something rendered five responses. This theme was composed of terms such as seeing, doing, and repeating. Multiple participants expressed being the first or youngest to start something new as an example of success.

Own aesthetic. The theme of Own Aesthetic had four responses. Participants speak about how social messaging can carry universal feelings. P3 stated that it was important for underrepresented people to find, define, and claim their own aesthetic in order to be successful.

Family togetherness. Family togetherness resulted in three responses. Participants used words such as family love and being accepted. P1 acknowledged having supportive family members as a basis for success.

Effecting change. Personal change resulted in three responses. Participants stated that audiences that leave thinking and wanting to do something will change the current status of injustice in society. P14 expressed that reaching one person is sufficient to feel successful.

Suicide prevention. Suicide prevention only rendered one response. P4 stressed that artistic activism was instrumental in preventing someone from taking their life because it provides a venue for reflection and support. This theme is worth highlighting because it connects with the high response of “Life-Saving” from Interview Question 1.

Summary of RQ1. Life-saving artistic activism and Social Connection with others that do not know about the experience were the themes that rendered the most notable responses. However, the themes Telling Stories, Teaching History, Starting Something, and Own Aesthetic all provided comparable insight for the success of artistic activists. Themes such as Conversation-Starters, Maintaining Value, and Suicide Prevention were less significant in numeric value. However, some participants stressed that these themes are equally important and are an integral part of holistic success.

Research Question 2

After focusing on the positives, Research Question 2 (RQ2), “What challenges do artistic activists face in using the arts to address societal issues?” addresses some of the negative realities of being underrepresented in entertainment. This research question sought to understand the nuances of each artistic activist’s challenges. The research questions also analyzed the artistic activists’ impression of how being an underrepresented member galvanized or stifled their challenges. Finally, this research question analyzes the cost that they may have had to incur when creating a raw product of social, political, and cultural experiences. The following three interview questions (IQ3, IQ4, IQ5) were asked in correlation to research question 2 (RQ2):

IQ3. What challenges have you faced when using the arts to address societal issues?

IQ4. Does being a member of an underrepresented group pose any disadvantages to you using the arts to address societal issues?

IQ5. Has using the arts to address societal issues come at an expense or cost to your personal or professional life?

Interview Question 3. What challenges have you faced when using the arts to address societal issues? Interview Question 3 rendered a total of 33 responses that formed six themes as follows: (a) Public Perception, (b) Lack of Resources, (c) Limited Audience, (d) Challenging Content, (e) No Collective Vision, and (f), Cyber-Bullying.

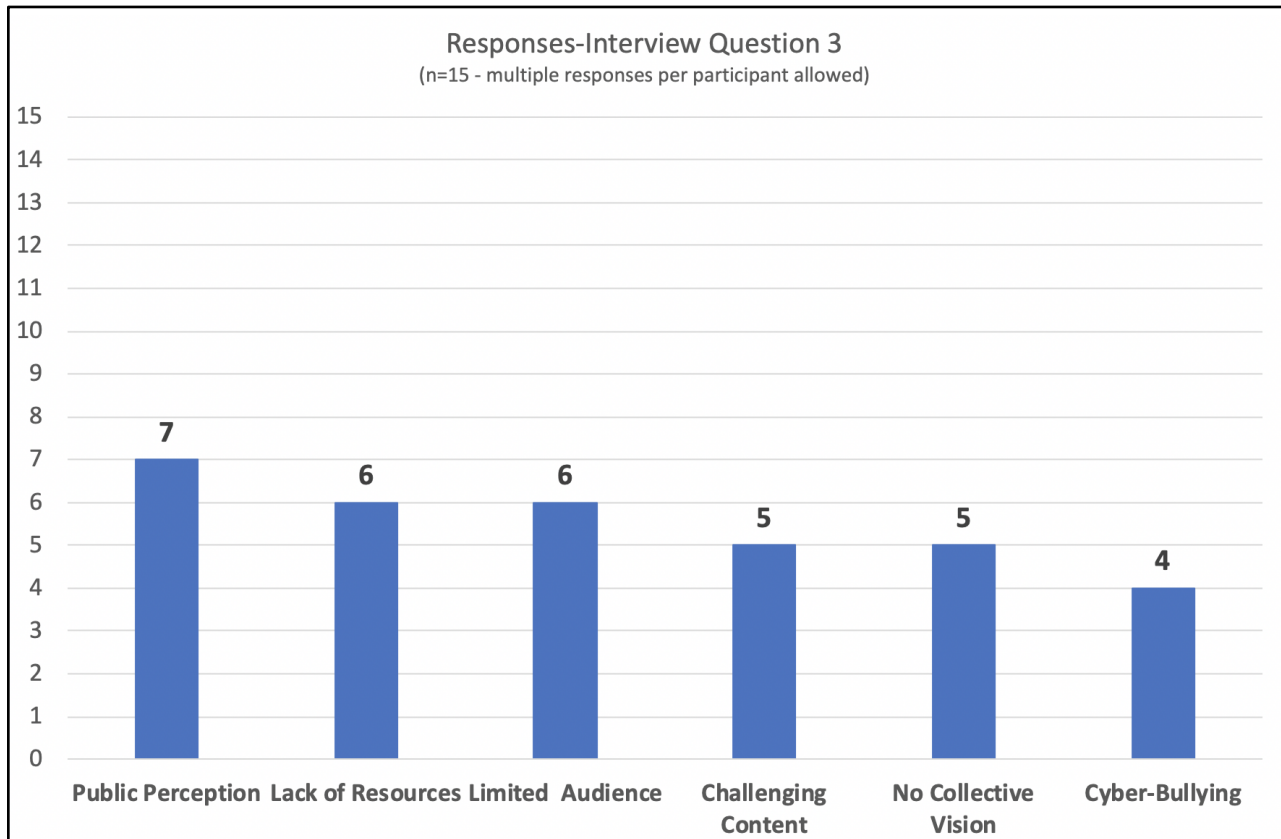


Figure 5. Challenges artistic activists faced when using art to address societal issues. These are the six themes that resulted from Interview Question 3 (IQ3) in decreasing frequency. Each bar is labeled with a numeric value that represents the number of times each theme was referenced.

Public perception. Public Perception resulted in seven responses. Participants used words such as closed-minded people, assumptions, and being misunderstood. P1 stated, “You just never know how people are going to perceive you. But there are people that are closed-minded. I can’t please everyone. I can only do what I do.” Referring to skin color, P3 stated that “underrepresented people are usually seen through the eyes of a white man’s prism.” P4 explained that some white presenters and curators cannot understand it [the black experience] but we “cannot be scared of certain pieces. You have a white community. Maybe there is some engagement or maybe there is another way to expand.” P9 strongly expressed, “People will tell you that the world isn’t like that, the story you are telling. But we have been conditioned to believe that everything should be white.” P5 and P14 concur that underrepresented people are

misunderstood. P5 explains that people assume that they know everything about artists just because they have seen their work.

Lack of resources. Resources rendered in six responses. Participants used words such as lack of public funding, cost of productions, and loss of self-sufficiency in underrepresented communities. P10 expressed the difficulty of creating diverse artistic work because of the lack of funding and the changing regulations regarding actors that are equity members in Los Angeles.

Limited audience. Limited Audience resulted in six responses. Participants used words such as cultivating relationships and expanding talent. P3 stated that cultivating relationships with a broader audience that can financially support the work continues to be a struggle. P4 explains that some creators have removed “the raw and emotional piece” that blocks the appeal to Eurocentric audiences so the work can continue. P4 also acknowledges the benefit and detriment of this practice.

Challenging content. Content yielded five responses. Participants that referred to content as a challenge alluded to the fact that the subject matter of underrepresented groups is often raw and emotional. P4 expressed that some artistic activists have removed the emotion and rawness in order for the content to be accepted.

No Collective Vision. No Collective Vision resulted in five responses. Participants addressed the fact that people that cannot understand the purpose of something generally want to water down the message. These people consist of decision-makers that have the power to approve or block the forward progress of the content. P8 expressed that there are underlying explicit biases that prohibit people from seeing the vision.

Cyber-bullying. Though Cyber-Bullying provided the lowest responses. However, the four responses are still somewhat significant because according to P1 and P5, social media holds enormous pressure and a lack of empathy for others.

Interview Question 4. Does being a member of an underrepresented group pose any disadvantages to you using the arts to address societal issues? Interview Question 4 rendered a total of 25 responses that formed 5 themes as follows: (a) No, (b) Limited Counterparts, (c) Systemic Racism, (d) Misinformation, and (e) Homophobia.

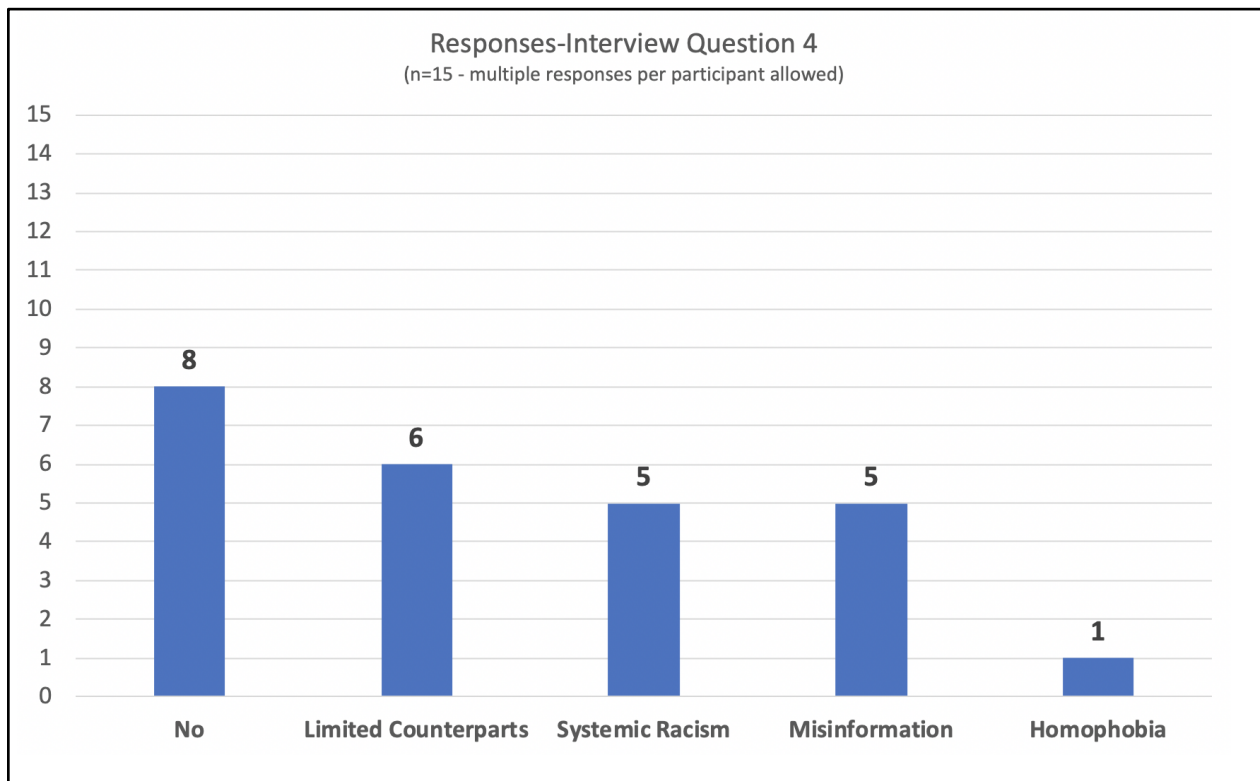


Figure 6. Artistic activist responses that indicated if being a member of an underrepresented group was a disadvantage and, if so, how. These are the five themes that resulted from interview question 4 (IQ4) in decreasing frequency. Each bar is labeled with a numeric value that represents the number of times each theme was referenced.

No. The theme No resulted in eight responses. This theme was supported by participants expressing unapologetic pride for their artistic activism. P8 confidently expressed, “You can’t tell me anything that I haven’t lived or gone through. When I’m speaking to people I can tell you about being a black man in America, growing up in a very racist Philadelphia, being a gay

man growing up in a homophobic family. My experience is translating that. It's an advantage to turn that into art and use it." In a like manner, P11 states, "As a minority in America, I'm already pre-labeled. So I embrace it and use it as a platform. My responsibility is to let the majority know." P14 stated that they can not change how they were born nor the color of their skin, but they will "not act like a stereotype" to please others.

Limited counterparts. Limited Counterparts resulted in six responses. Participants used words such as being accepted, having an underrepresented perspective, and having a limited number of successful counterparts to model themselves after. P7 acknowledged having to work harder as an underrepresented person of color.

Systemic racism. Family togetherness yielded five responses. This theme was composed of words such as lack of access and the invisible chains that are reinforced in this capitalist system. P11 acknowledged that the media plays a role in portraying underrepresented people in a certain way that perpetuates the process of pre-labeling people.

Misinformation. Misinformation resulted in five responses. This theme was composed of words such as discrimination based on sexuality, prejudgments, and psychological blocks. P6 expressed that underrepresented people see things differently than the majority.

Homophobia. Homophobia was the lowest numeric response to IQ3 (1 response). P2 stated that treatment towards those of a sexual preference that is not of the majority can deter many artistic activists from expressing their sexuality through the arts.

Interview Question 5. Has using the arts to address societal issues come at an expense or cost to your personal or professional life? Interview Question 5 rendered a total of 22 responses that formed 4 themes as follows: (a) Yes, But (b) No, (c) Yes, Definitely, and (d) Financially, Only.

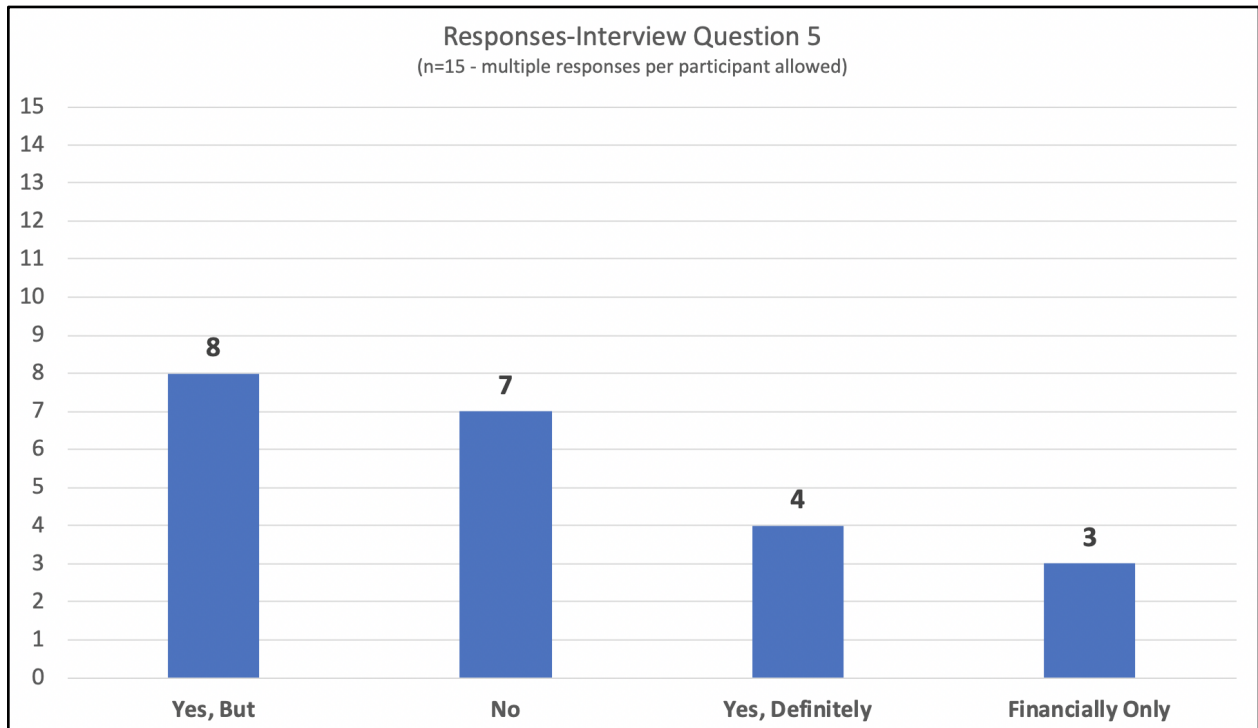


Figure 7. The determination of whether or not there was a personal or professional cost using the arts to address societal issues. These are the four themes that resulted from interview question 5 (IQ5) in decreasing frequency. Each bar is labeled with a numeric value that represents the number of times each theme was referenced.

Yes, but. The theme Yes, But yielded eight responses. This theme affirmed that there is a cost for using the arts to address societal issues but some results were beneficial to the personal character of the participants in the end. P8 stated, “I actually soared because I walked in my truth and power. My gift made room for me.” P11 likens the personal and professional cost to a biblical saying that “Before a king goes to war, he has to cover the cost (Luke 14:31). P11 continued to explain that “What does not kill you can only make you stronger.” P12 expressed that anything that is great comes with strife.

No. The theme No yielded seven responses togetherness. These participants reject the notion that there has been a real cost or expense to using the arts for activism. P1 explained that things became easier which outweighed the costs that might have been incurred. P14 expressed that there was a cost, but it subsided once people understood their purpose.

Yes, definitely. The theme Yes, Definitely resulted in four responses. This theme was composed of words such as being watchful and the privilege that others have to influence. P6 expressed that underrepresented people have a stigma and are often seen as a threat.

Financially, only. Financially, Only consisted of three responses. This theme was composed of words such as lack of wealth compared to counterparts. P15 stated that financial cost is less of a concern than other challenges because of their purpose and mission.

Summary of RQ2

Research Question 2 (RQ2), “What challenges do artistic activists face in using the arts to address societal issues?” highlights the underlying biases that underrepresented people experience and the system that is set up to discriminate against underrepresented artistic activists. Though participants express that negative public perception and limited resources are main examples of challenges and there is some cost to their personal and/or professional lives, most participants utilize their disadvantages as motivators to obtain success.

Research Question 3

The third research question (RQ3) asked, “What are the best practices of artistic activists?” The purpose of RQ3 was to extract the specific tools and strategies that individual participants used to navigate through their challenges. RQ3 incorporated interview questions 6 and 7 (IQ6, IQ7) and provided a reflective piece on the choices that the participants made and the lessons that they acquired on their journey. The following two interview questions were asked:

IQ6. What strategies did you use to lead you through your challenges to your successes?

IQ7. What lessons have you learned?

Interview Question 6. What strategies did you use to lead you through your challenges to your successes? Interview Question 6 rendered a total of 32 responses that formed

8 themes as follows: (a) Be Myself, (b) Analyze the Mission (c) Spiritual and Social Awareness, (d) Perspective, (e) Play the Game, (f) Take Risks, (g) Necessity Dictates, and (h) Don't Force It.



Figure 8. Strategies artistic activists used to lead them through challenges. These are the eight themes that resulted from interview question 6 (IQ6) in decreasing frequency. Each bar is labeled with a numeric value that represents the number of times each theme was referenced.

Be myself. The theme Be Myself resulted in six responses. This theme was composed of words such as using an artistic platform to raise awareness and creating a personal scenario. P1 stated that the previous strategy was to try and appease other people. However, the best strategy is to be oneself. P6 states that “not everybody is going to like you” so it is important “to not fall into the popularity trap.” Creating one’s own scenario helps someone focus on what they do regardless of what other people may expect or want. P8 emphasized the only time that energy might be accommodated or diverted towards others is when it is used as a strategy for policy change.

Analyze the mission. Analyze the Mission resulted in five responses. This theme was composed of words such as analyzing and staying true to the mission. P6 affirmed that because “being an artist is about taking risks” it is necessary to analyze the mission with a clear focus on in case things do not go as planned. P12 stated that it is more productive to look at the work they are doing instead of the results that are happening.

Spiritual and social awareness. Spiritual and Social Awareness resulted in six responses. This theme consisted of words such as meditation, fasting, building rapport, or asking God for wisdom. P7 stated that if you “think of them [challenges] as negative, they will be negative. So it is better to think of them as what am I learning and what I am taking away.” Meditation is one way to clear the mind so that one can learn from the challenges.

Perspective. The theme Perspective resulted in four responses. This theme consisted of putting the artistic activist’s views into the writing. P6 stated the power of bringing people together to see common perspectives as a strategy for change.

Play the game. Play the Game resulted in three responses. This theme was composed of words such as popularity trap and sacrifice. P1 stated that they formerly used strategies to be accepted and liked. Participants also stated that underrepresented people see things differently than the majority.

Take risks. Take Risks yielded in three responses. Participants focused on taking responsibility and going directly for what you want. P5 expressed that underrepresented people must speak out for what is needed.

Necessity dictates. Necessity Dictates resulted in two responses. This theme was composed of words such as necessity determining action and utilizing the resources that a union might provide to survive.

Don't force it. The theme Don't Force It resulted in two responses. This theme was composed of words such as avoiding conflict and finding ways around it when it occurs. P2 states that it is best not to force something if people cannot see the vision.

Interview Question 7. What lessons have you learned? Interview Question 7 rendered a total of 32 responses that formed 6 themes as follows: (a) We are Capable, (b) Purpose and Direction, (c) Stories are Worthy, (d) Study Precedes Action, (e) The Work Speaks, and (f) Enjoy Life.

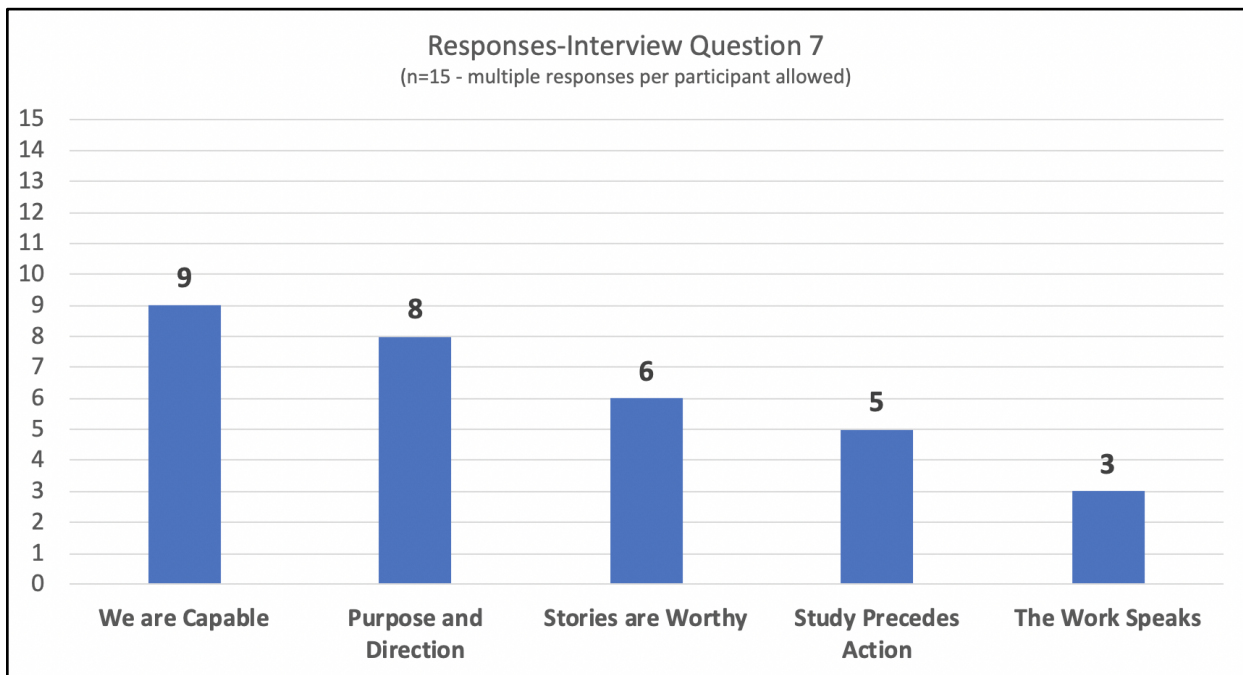


Figure 9. Lessons learned from using the arts for artistic activism. These are the six themes that resulted from interview question 7 (IQ7) in decreasing frequency. Each bar is labeled with a numeric value that represents the number of times each theme was referenced.

We are capable. We are Capable resulted in nine responses. This theme was composed of words such as celebrating success, staying motivated, and knowing we are all in this together. P3 stated, “We are capable of more than we thought. There are times when I must compromise and other times where there is no room for compromise.” P13 strongly stated, “Being black is

personal. Don't compromise." P7 explained, "Never get too high. Never get too low. Celebrate successes and learn from failures."

Purpose and direction. Purpose and Direction resulted in eight responses. This theme was composed of words such as having pure intentions, making choices, and doing the work for love. P3 expressed that success is really an illusion for most people. Therefore, it is important to make the right choices, have a clear direction, and remember the purpose of doing art. P9 also stated that it is important to write and create from the perspective that the purpose is for the love of art. P11 stated, "I try to lead by example. This society we live in. Be humble, be grateful, be thankful. We are all in this together."

Stories are worthy. The theme Stories are Worthy resulted in six responses. This theme was composed of words such as addressing issues through conversation, collaborating, and working towards more dialogue. P8 and P9 both expressed that everyone has a story and it is about the journey.

Study precedes action. Study Precedes Action resulted in five responses. This theme emphasized studying the rules of the game and only allowing people to take what you give them. P13 expressed that one should not make concessions and continue to let integrity be personal.

The work speaks. The Work Speaks resulted in three responses. This theme was composed of words such as being vulnerable and writing about the pain. P2 suggests that writing from the pain and acknowledging that all writing is worthy is a great lesson. P5 confirms that one should be vulnerable to the writing and let the writing speak for itself.

Summary of RQ3

The third research question (RQ3) "What are the best practices of artistic activists?" delineates the practices that artistic activists took in order to navigate through their challenges to

be successful. Being oneself, analyzing the mission, and having spiritual and social awareness are the most notable themes. However, acknowledging that one is capable of more is the start to achieving success. Enjoying life is the least significant but it trails just behind letting the work speak for itself and not forcing something if the vision does not work.

Research Question 4

Research question 4 (RQ4), “What recommendations do artistic activists have for those that choose to pursue artistic activism?” focused on the takeaways for future artistic activists. Interview questions 8 and 9 (IQ8, IQ9) provided another reflective piece to share tools that can be implemented by other artistic activists to avoid pitfalls and be inspired to never give up regardless of the challenges they face. The two interview questions, IQ8 and IQ9, are as follows:

IQ8. If you could have done something differently, what would that have been?

IQ9. What advice would you give to future generations of artistic activists?

Interview Question 8. If you could have done something differently, what would that have been? Interview Question 8 rendered a total of 21 responses that formed 8 themes as follows: (a) Start Earlier, (b) Be Fearless, (c) Finance Differently, (d) Collaborate, (e) Be a Friend, (f) Understand Impact, (g) Advanced Education, and (h) Nothing.

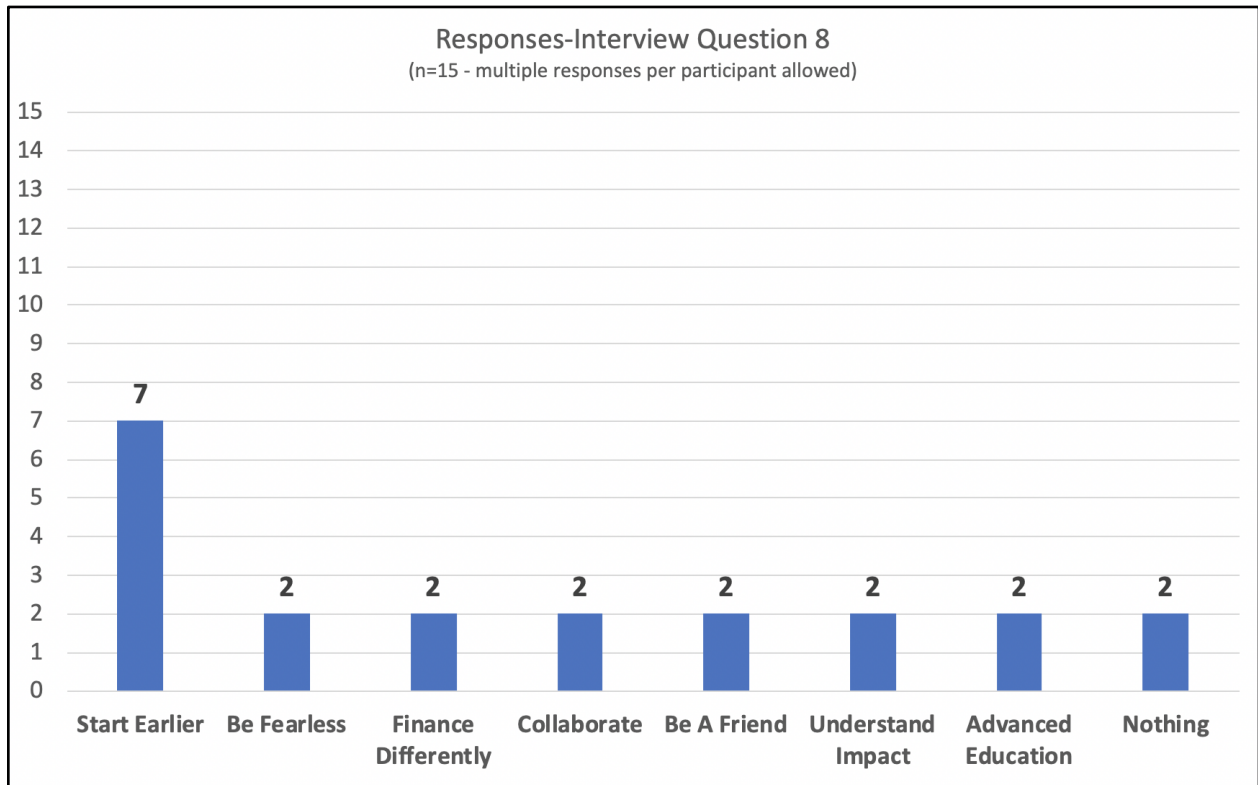


Figure 8. Actions the artistic activists would have done differently. These are the eight themes that resulted from interview question 8 (IQ8) in decreasing frequency. Each bar is labeled with a numeric value that represents the number of times each theme was referenced.

Start earlier. Start Earlier resulted in the majority responses (seven responses).

Participants stated that it is helpful to know what you want to do early in life and make hard decisions to go in that direction. P4 explained that they did not make hard choices until long after they started their career. P4 explained that there is a strong pull of chasing the commercial culture of Hollywood as opposed to working on oneself. “Hollywood is big. If I can work with somebody important to me, it’s an opportunity step for me. [But] The work that we are doing at the studio is more important. They can’t be on the ground like I can. It became more important to me to do the work.” In addition, P9 did not make the connections between using “my thoughts to pursue my passion and at the same time, and have this altruistic experience of helping people” when they first began in the entertainment industry. P11 stated, “The earlier you

start and find your passion, the more impact you will have. The more momentum you will have. When people see there is a trail, a legacy, a foundation you built, it speaks volumes.”

Be fearless. Be Fearless resulted in two responses. Participants stated that having less fear is one thing they would have done differently. P8 stated that they would have not lived by other people’s opinions.

Finance differently. Finance Differently yielded in two responses. Participants stated that knowing how to finance their ventures differently would have helped. P3 stated that figuring out how to obtain finances to relocate would have been beneficial earlier on in their career.

Collaborate. Collaborate resulted in two responses. This theme emphasized collaborating with more people of color and ensuring that there is diversity on projects. P2 stated that they would have collaborated and not self-produced in order to handle the weight of the production.

Be a friend. Be a Friend provided two responses. P1 expressed that it is important to apologize to those that one has hurt. P13 confirmed that having an anti-establishment mentality was not a productive strategy earlier on in their career.

Understand impact. The theme Understand Impact resulted in two responses. Participants stated that it is important to understand the impact of the work. P4 explained that the work artistic activists do is more important than Hollywood.

Advanced education. Advanced Education resulted in two responses. This theme expressed the possibility of using advanced education at one point in time. Both participants that related to this theme stated that they considered getting their doctorate.

Nothing. The theme Nothing resulted in two responses. This theme confirmed that some participants would have done nothing differently. P6 and P7 both feel that doing something different might have changed their success or their experience.

Interview Question 9. What advice would you give to future generations of artistic activists? Interview Question 9 rendered a total of 44 responses that formed six themes as follows: (a) Have a Strategy, (b) Focus and Pursue, (c) Be Authentic, (d) Believe in Yourself, (e) Build Support Team , and (f) Do the Work.

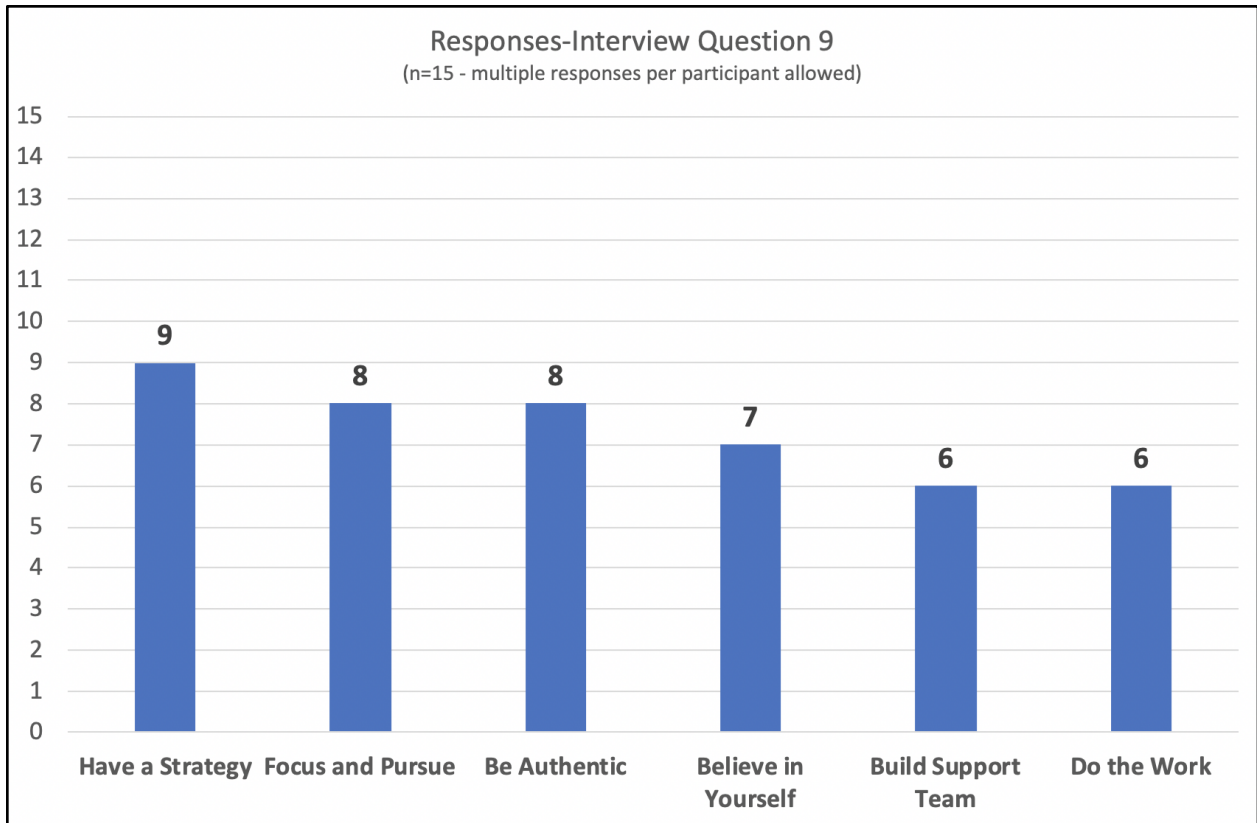


Figure 9. Recommendations for future artistic activists. These are the six themes that resulted from interview question 9 (IQ9) in decreasing frequency. Each bar is labeled with a numeric value that represents the number of times each theme was referenced.

Have a strategy. Have a Strategy resulted in nine responses. This theme consisted of words such as being present, using art as an avenue to express intentions, and being proactive. P3 says that it is important to “have resources, figure out how to get more resources, look at it clearly, and put things in order.” P4 confirms that it is important to be intentional. P6 stresses the importance of raising one’s game and being prepared for the next project. P8 clarifies that

having a strategy consists of “being proactive, setting goals, and going for it.” P8 also adds that one should not plan for success because you will never know whose lives you have touched.

Focus and pursue. Focus and Pursue resulted in eight responses. This theme emphasized seeing what is around you and pursuing what makes your heart pound. P1 stated, “I made sacrifices to live my dream. Whatever it is that you want to do, it isn’t an easy road if you wanna be the best. You have to work at it, and have laser-like focus. P11 stated that it is important to “focus on your core, figure out what drives you and motivates you to get up in the morning.”

Be authentic. The theme Be Authentic resulted in eight responses. Participants utilized words such as relevancy, willpower, and authenticity. P2 says that one should “just write what you feel, write from the pain, from the hurt and not be preachy. I hope my work doesn’t preach, I hope I tell stories.” P10 stresses that underrepresented people need to make sure they educate people and not just seek to entertain.

Believe in yourself. Believe in Yourself resulted in seven responses. Participants emphasized knowing your beliefs and standing behind them and making sacrifices for your purpose. P4 states, “You have to be willing to go and be the only one to say the thing and figure out how to do that. It’s not easy work...every day there will be something to knock you down. Your work is worthy and vital. You have to believe in this kind of work.” P5 also confirms, “stand behind what you believe in. Don’t compromise that.” P6 expresses that “to be an artistic activist, you have to know your calling and know what your belief is and be willing to go through that no matter what your circumstances are.” P8 affirms that it is important not to let the “opinions of others drive your passion.”

Build support team. Build Support Team resulted in six responses. Participants emphasized the importance of surrounding yourself with people that support your vision and listening to people that tell you the truth. P7 said, “Listen to the people that will tell you the truth. I had two people that helped me stay on track. Are you doing exactly what you said you were going to be doing? You need somebody to remind you to stay on track.” P12 expressed that it is important to “surround yourself with people that support your vision and move with them.” P12 also stressed that you need “people that you believe in and are willing to go along the journey with you.”

Do the work. Do the Work resulted in six responses. This theme consisted of words, such as reading, studying, learning. P3 and P4 both agree that you must do the homework so that you are prepared. P3 states, “It was hit and miss. It still is. And to somebody just wanting to start, God bless. Look and see what is around you. Do your homework.” P10 stated that we must commit to being students of life and have a desire to learn. P10 also says that “The most important thing is what we do. We are telling our stories. We have so many stories. Not just to entertain but educate people. If we don’t tell our stories, they will not get told.”

Summary of RQ4

Research question 4 (RQ4), “What recommendations do artistic activists have for those that choose to pursue artistic activism?” gives real tools that aspiring activists can use to pursue artistic activism. One of the main responses is to know what you want to do and start on it earlier. Participants also state that strategy, focus, and authenticity are essential. Believing in yourself, building a support team, and being prepared for the work are less significant. However, they are necessary tools one must have before pursuing this journey of artistic activism.

Chapter 4 Summary

The purpose of this study is to understand the unique challenges that underrepresented people face and the strategies that they use to navigate around such challenges. This chapter is meant to highlight some of the tools that successful artistic activists have used to gain access and momentum on their respective journeys. Each research question was designed to obtain data that could be coded and categorized to understand the power of artistic activism.

Research Question 1 emphasized the element of telling stories that people can feel motivated to take action upon or talk about. Research Question 2 expressed how though the system is set up for some to fail. Yet, artistic activism still allows for one to learn from the best practices of Research Question 3 and apply the techniques that are revealed in Research Question 4.

Each of the nine interview questions was asked of the participants to extract data that would pertain to corresponding research questions. Each of the 15 interviewees was knowledgeable in their field and were very willing to give information that pertained to their challenges and success. Table 5 summarizes the commonalities that emerged from each interview question as they relate to the research questions.

Table 5

Summary of Themes for Four Research Questions

RQ1: How do artistic activists define, measure, and track their success in entertainment?	RQ2: What challenges do artistic activists face in using the arts to address societal issues?	RQ3: What are the best practices of artistic activists?	RQ4: What recommendations do artistic activists have for those that choose to pursue artistic activism?
Sharing our story	How people perceive you	Sit and listen	Be fearless
Moving people to want to know more	Discovering our own aesthetic	Speak out	Be savvy with finances

(continued)

RQ1: How do artistic activists define, measure, and track their success in entertainment?	RQ2: What challenges do artistic activists face in using the arts to address societal issues?	RQ3: What are the best practices of artistic activists?	RQ4: What recommendations do artistic activists have for those that choose to pursue artistic activism?
Saving lives	Underlying implicit biases	Find the right place	Know what you want
Making connections with people	Haters can't understand why	Find people who understand and want to promote	Work with more people of color
Impact	Art that coincides with values	Necessity Dictates	Come out earlier
Longevity	Cyber-Bullying	Put my views into my work	Make sure there is diversity
Personal Fulfillment	Seen through White prism	Stay true to the mission	Have resources
Creating and pushing the creation of my thoughts	Broadening the audience	Push my energy for policy change	Do all the work
Audience Reaction	Judged beforehand	Write what would make you think or do	Read
Audience leaves thinking, wanting to do something	How things are set up	Utilize my platform to raise awareness	Know and stand behind what you believe in
Families see love	Sexuality Discrimination	Bring people together	Tell stories not just to entertain but to educate an add to the collective consciousness
Willingness to learn	Financial	Write about the pain	Pursue what makes your heart pound
Contribution to the community	Being accepted as an educator	Know we are capable	Listen to people who tell you the truth
	Not many counterparts look like me	Be vulnerable in your work	Surround yourself with people that support your vision
	Invisible chains	Get to somebody that can move the people you want to move	Have a job

Note: These are the overall themes that resulted from the nine interview questions in relation to the four research questions.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

Utilizing the arts to politically, culturally, or socially transform society continues to be a tool that many artistic activists use to address societal ills, escape conformity, or bring awareness to certain injustices (Adler, 2006). The experience of feeling personal change amongst diverse audience members alludes to the interdependence of gender, race, and sexual orientation barriers (Campana, 2011). The experience can be face-to-face or be in the form of technology such as going to see a movie, play, or musical, or listening to a song on the radio. Nevertheless, mobilizing audiences beyond the experience is what inspires many artistic activists to persevere regardless of the challenges to gender, race, and sexual orientation equality (Reed, 2005).

The entertainment industry continues to financially benefit from the contribution of diverse artists from underrepresented groups (Hunt et al., 2018). However, many of these individuals express that there is a lack of access to the decision-making process and the resources that are available to their white counterparts (Rawdon & Moxley, 2016). Fortunately, this access is constantly evolving and opening to all people because of the proliferation of the internet, computer programs, and various forms of technology. But there is still much work to be done.

The literature that was reviewed in this study primarily consisted of scholarly articles that formed the basis for this research. Trade magazines, entertainment publications, and reviews were consulted to provide current documentation of the findings in the literature. This study adds to the literature because it provides a contemporary analysis of the evolution and status of underrepresented peoples in the entertainment industry and the challenges that pertain to them. It addresses the problems of unequal representation, work-sustainability as an underrepresented person, and motivating audiences beyond the experience.

Though the literature presented many similarities with the participant responses, there were some differences as well. The first and probably most notable difference is that the participants did not address the media as a solution to galvanizing artistic activism. The literature emphasizes that the media can often determine the narrative around social issues (Clay, 2006). Many of the participants did express that the media is a current vehicle for disseminating misinformation. To this end, many participants explained that creating from the heart and letting the work speak for itself is more productive than challenging negative narratives.

The literature also made reference to individuals unknowingly contributing to unjust systems. The philosopher Paulo Freire states that one must self-liberate from the domestication of oppression or they will continue to be oppressed, as well as, oppress others (Freire, 1972). Most of the participants did not address any blame towards underrepresented people. However, the participants expressed that they have had challenges to overcome within themselves.

Summary of the Study

This is a phenomenological study of artistic activists that create and deliver content that addresses societal injustices or compensate for the inequalities that exist in entertainment. The phenomenon of creating a transformational experience that attracts diverse audiences exemplifies the effectiveness of artistic activism in initiating dialogue about injustice. In the article “Art Activism: Through a Critical Approach to Place,” Danker (2018) explains that when artwork is socially engaged, it creates a momentum of discussion around the quality of life and the consideration and positioning of art in that arena.

Each artistic activist was selected to be interviewed not only because of their expertise in their field but on their level of social engagement. The criteria for inclusion ensured that each participant identified as a member of an underrepresented group and had extensive experience in

the area. The data that was collected from their interviews, organized, coded, and categorized to determine the commonalities of their challenges and success.

This study aims to delineate the evolution and impact of artistic activists throughout American history that have utilized the arts as a tool for social activism. This study seeks to highlight the current experience that underrepresented artistic activists have in creating content that gives voice to the marginalized. Most importantly, this study acknowledges the challenges and successes that hopefully will inspire resilience and perseverance for artistic activists that seek to follow in the path of their predecessors. Modern-Day America may be considered a Post-Civil Rights Era (Clay, 2006). With the influx of media sources, increased access to the internet, and technological inventions, the dynamics of protest have rapidly changed over the last 80 years (Park, 2010).

Chapter 1 acknowledges the historical context that has laid the foundation for many artistic activists today. Social activists prior to and during the Civil Rights movement implemented successful practices that gave rise to many grass-root movements. In the Post-Civil Rights era, the youth have connected to Hip-hop music and culture as a way to establish their identity and create new perceptions of leadership (Clay, 2006). In the article, All I Need is One Mic: Mobilizing Youth for Social Change in the post-Civil Rights Era, Clay emphasizes the strong connection between identity, leadership, hip-hop, and the youth.

This leadership at times parallels traditional leaders but very often is unique finding new avenues for exposure through celebrity status (Clay, 2006). Finally, Chapter 1 states the problem that though many underrepresented peoples contribute to the financial success of entertainment, there continues to be a lack of representation in the decision-making processes, sustainable work

and access for underrepresented people, and limited resources to motivate people beyond the experience to fight injustice (Hunt et al., 2018).

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the literature that supports how art has been and can continue to be used as an effective social activism tool. Transformational change through the use of the arts is a pivotal element throughout this study (Park, 2010). As a result, this study is seen through the lens of theories such as Transformational Change, Feminism, Queer, and Critical Race to clarify how the needs of underrepresented peoples frequently intersect with one another. Chapter 2 also recognizes the various ways in which artistic activism occurs in other countries, their similarities or effect on American actions, and how they have influenced many of our past and current leaders (Reed, 2005). As transformational change occurs first in the brain, Chapter 2 discusses how the brain's three parts, reptilian or primitive, limbic system, and neocortex are activated in different capacities when an individual experiences art (Kazlev, 2003). Finally, six common principles emerge from the literature: Togetherness, Consciousness, Communication of Feelings, Action, Finances and Resources, and Escapism.

Chapter 3 explains the research design and methodology that was used to extract the best practices and reflections of the artistic activists. To do this, four research questions were designed to preserve the central focus of this study:

- (RQ1) How do artistic activists define, measure, and track their success in entertainment?
- (RQ2) What challenges do artistic activists face in using the arts to address societal issues?
- (RQ3) What are the best practices of artistic activists?

- (RQ4) What recommendations do artistic activists have for those that choose to pursue artistic activism?

Each research question had corresponding interview questions. In all, there were nine interview questions. Data was collected, recorded, transcribed, coded, and categorized in order to find commonalities of the interviewees. To avoid any personal biases, bracketing was used, as well as, epoché to suspend judgment based on the researcher's personal biases. Inter-rater reliability for the validity of the questions and interview protocol were also implemented. To ensure this was a good qualitative study, John Creswell's (2013) Nine Characteristics of a Good Study were applied. Fifteen participants were interviewed based on inclusion and exclusion criteria. All consideration was made for the protection of human subjects including but not limited to the provision of a consent form explaining the protocol and precautions for the interviews and information obtained. The questions were reviewed by two of the researcher's peers that were trained in inter-rater reliability and validity and finally approved by the expert committee.

Chapter 4 reintroduced the four research questions and the data that was collected in relation to the findings from each of the nine interview questions. The keywords and phrases were color-coded and the main themes were graphed to present a visual display of the most outstanding themes. Chapter 4 also provided a final summary of the key themes in the form of a table (Table 5). Chapter 5 will provide a discussion of the findings, the implications they have for other artistic activists, and the potentialities for future research.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study were based on the experiences and responses obtained during participant interviews. An analysis of the common responses from each participant assisted the researcher in developing themes for each of the nine interview questions. Furthermore, the essence of the successes, challenges, best practices, and recommendations of the artistic activists culminate to define strategies that members of underrepresented groups can implement.

The following research questions were developed in conjunction with a peer review team and an expert review team. These questions reveal the understanding of artistic activism in the United States of America. Each research question had corresponding interview questions that revealed some common themes. Also, the findings will exemplify how artistic activists contend with the lack of representation and resources amidst the realities of the entertainment industry.

Results for RQ1. Research question 1 asked, “How do artistic activists define, measure, and track their success in entertainment? An analysis of the answers to the corresponding interview questions (IQ1, IQ2) resulted in the following significant themes:

- Life-Saving
- Stories
- Fulfillment
- Resilience
- Thought-Provoking
- Conversation-Starter
- Maintain Values
- Raising Funds
- Socialization

- Teaching History
- Starting Something
- Own Aesthetic
- Family Togetherness
- Personal Change
- Suicide Prevention

Discussion of RQ1. The findings from responses to Research Question 1 indicate that saving lives is one of the most important elements of artistry and a determinant of success. Telling stories of challenges and triumphs not only provides a sense of fulfillment for the creator but also connects the neurons in the brain that address societal pains, as well as, provides pleasure (Kazlev, 2003). Philosopher Franz Brentano (1874/1973) makes a distinction between the physicality of an event and the feeling that one experiences from the event. Defining success for artistic activists goes beyond the physical event. In line with Brentano, artistic activists create a mental phenomenon through art by presenting the event in such a way that it lowers barriers for the audience and allows them to feel emotions. As a result, positive socialization through fulfilling and thought-provoking conversations inspire artistic activists to own their aesthetic. In addition, positive socialization can ignite dialogue to change institutions, laws, and policies that threaten the success of underrepresented people in entertainment (Mouffe, 2007). Personal and collective transformation then become the measurement of success for many artistic activists because it brings people together to see and hear stories that hold values and beliefs of the artistic activist. Artistic activists first need to be confident in the worthiness of telling their stories in order for this phenomenon to occur (Sharp, 2013). Participants reveal that maintaining the morals and values of their own stories leads them to create a fulfilling and resilient aesthetic.

Though few participants express that having money is a definition of success, constantly having to raise enough money to be resilient and continue the work is a financial reality for some. The literature explains that when content does not have a shared collective vision it can obstruct the procurement of financial resources (A. Adams, 2019). Raising funds can pose a challenge for many underrepresented groups. However, according to participants, the act of starting something new and different to create opportunities for successful education and entertainment is sufficient satisfaction.

Results for RQ2. Research question 2 asked, “What challenges do artistic activists face in using the arts to address societal issues?” An analysis of the answers to the corresponding interview questions (IQ3, IQ4, IQ5) resulted in the following significant themes:

- Public Perception
- Resources
- Expanding Audience
- Content
- Lack of Vision
- Cyber-Bullying
- No [None]
- Limited Counterparts
- Systemic Racism
- Misinformation
- Homophobia
- Yes [Definitely or Some]
- Financial

Discussion of RQ2. The findings from responses to Research Question 2 indicate that one of the main challenges for members of underrepresented groups is the perception of the public. The dynamic of public perception seems to go hand in hand with the lack of access to resources that are available to the majority population. Many of the misperceptions tend to be driven by misinformation. In particular, homophobia and a lack of understanding is a challenge to the LGBTQIA community. In many cases, the societal injustices of underrepresented groups intersect with one another. Though many underrepresented people have contributed to the success of art, many believe that the problem is systemic (Valdes et al., 2002). High grossing diverse films such as Black Panther are sometimes able to expand the audience because of their artistic appeal. But data shows that women and people of color continue to trail behind white males across the board (Hunt et al., 2018). The internet has made it easier for artistic activists to promote diverse social messages. However, it is also easier for people to criticize or denigrate work that showcases the talents and contributions of underrepresented people.

Determining the type of content that mainstream audiences will accept can be a challenge for artistic activists according to some participants. The literature explains that some creators create content that intentionally challenges the consumer in order to advance specific goals (A. Adams, 2019). Nevertheless, some artistic activists view this lack of collective vision as obstructive to finding support for raw and emotional content. Cyber-bullying and other forms of social media are also used to express disagreement with the vision or control the creator's content (Pellegrini, 2007).

Systemic racism, which was illuminated in the Civil Rights movement, continues to be a challenge for underrepresented groups and pervade American society (Reed, 2005). Regardless of the progression of equality in many areas, injustices such as racism, sexism, and genderism

still exist (Valdes et al., 2002). It is by acknowledging their existence that these injustices can be eradicated.

The findings implicate that artistic activists need to focus on building their own financial, social, and political resources. These resources are part of a market force that artistic activists can access for financial stability and in turn provide creative assets to traditional organizations (Adler, 2006). Participants note that there is a lack of resources, both financial and personnel, to produce diverse material. The literature supports that transformational and transactional leaders must work hand-in-hand to ensure financial sustainability for arts organizations (Reynolds, Tonks, & MacNeil, 2017). With financial sustainability, diverse content can be used to counter the proliferation of misinformation and racist policies.

Participant responses to Interview Question 4 strongly indicate that being a member of an underrepresented group does not pose a disadvantage to using the arts to address societal issues. Though much of the literature tends to focus on injustices based on gender, race, and/or sexuality, it also confirms the resilience of many of our country's underrepresented artistic activists, including but not limited to, Paul Robeson, Audre Lorde, and Tupac Shakur. The scholarly article, "Agents of Possibility" by Alina Campana (2011), focuses on the tools the community needs to navigate through challenges.

Activism is not one of indoctrination of the masses being led by the few. Activism focuses on building a democracy (Giroux, 1995) based on critical inquiry and thinking (Freire, 2006) taking risks, and becoming "insurgent citizens to challenge those with political and cultural power as well as honor the critical traditions within the dominant culture that make such a critique possible and intelligible" (Campana, 2011, p. 281).

In essence, artistic activism encompasses more than just the act of advocating for something. Artistic activism inspires movements and dialogue not only for those that are involved but also for those that receive the message. Though being a member of an underrepresented group may be characteristic of some challenges, the shared life experiences have the possibility of changing the political and cultural balance of the United States of America.

Participants 7 and 9 stress that though they may have had to work harder to achieve goals, the result garnered new perspectives that changed the dialogue about the value of underrepresented people. Participants 13 and 14 also stated that the reality is that you cannot change how you were born, but you can focus on what you want to do. Participants 4 and 12 explained that accommodating others is not the main goal. Instead, participants 11 and 15 see perceived disadvantages as a psychological block. According to participants, the disadvantages can be turned into advantages. Participants also believe that effectively addressing societal issues comes from relying on a lived experience. Participant 8 explains that the lived experiences they have had facilitate turning disadvantages into advantages, as well as, help them tell a unique story.

Results for RQ3. Research question 3 asked, “What are the best practices of artistic activists?” An analysis of the answers to the corresponding interview questions resulted in the following significant themes:

- Be Myself
- Analyze the Mission
- Spiritual and Social Awareness
- Perspective

- Play the Game
- Take Risks
- Necessity Dictates
- Don't Force It
- We are Capable
- Purpose and Direction
- Stories are Worthy
- Study Precedes Action
- The Work Speaks
- Enjoy Life

Discussion of RQ3. The findings from responses to Research Question 3 indicate that most underrepresented people use the best practice of working hard, and in some cases harder, for success. This best practice is coupled with knowing they are capable of doing more than they imagined. Accordingly, these efforts are driven by purpose and direction. History has shown that when people work together as a team, they can accomplish insurmountable goals (Abfalter, 2012).

The theme Be Myself is fundamental to artistic activism. Participants stress that authentic identity is necessary for resilience. Art has allowed for the youth in our contemporary societies to find identity through music. In particular, Hip-hop music has given the youth a new avenue to express themselves and contribute to their political consciousness (Clay, 2006). Art, in general, has redefined what leadership means to the younger generation. Some people feel that the younger generation lacks direction and perspective and is a threat to progress (Bragg & Manchester, 2011). Participants state that everyone, even the young, has a story to tell and that

all stories are worthy. However, participants also state that there are things that can take you off the mission. P4 and P13 state that having a short fuse or moving too fast can keep you from “understanding yourself and acting on a deeper level.”

Art as an educational and entertainment tool provides an experience for the audience. The Adult Learning Theory explains that adults learn by having purpose and direction and the experience comes from within (Knowles et al., 2012). However, children learn from the experience that happens to them. Connecting adult veteran perspectives of learning to the new perspectives of the youth could provide an experience that signifies potential and promise for the future and understanding what some participants call The Game.

Finally, the findings describe that being true to the work and allowing “the work” to speak for itself ensures that artistic activists will be able to enjoy life and the collective experience (Clay, 2006). Art moves the heart, body, and soul which can, in turn, lead to social change (Mouffe, 2007). Successful artistic activists focus on their mission. This mission can either consist of creating a product that can be tailored to fit the game or refusing to force content that does not fit within the scope of someone else’s understanding.

Results for RQ4. Research question 4 asked, “What recommendations do artistic activists have for those that choose to pursue artistic activism?” An analysis of the answers to the corresponding interview questions resulted in the following significant themes:

- Start Earlier
- Be Fearless
- Finance Differently
- Collaborate
- Be a Friend

- Understand Impact
- Advanced Education
- Have a Strategy
- Focus and Pursue
- Be Authentic
- Believe in Yourself
- Build Support Team
- Do the Work

Discussion of RQ4. The findings from responses to Research Question 4 indicate that artistic activists recommend knowing what you want to accomplish, starting on it earlier, developing a strategy to pursue it, and focusing on your goal with authenticity. The theme Have a Strategy had the most responses. Participants discuss that there are many financial, mental, and emotional pitfalls that one needs to be prepared for. However, if one believes in themselves and does the homework they can withstand many of the challenges that arise.

Collaboration is another recommendation that artistic activists provide. Building a support team and ensuring that the work is not done in isolation will lead to success. Additionally, where there is a team led by fearless leadership that truly understands the impact of the work, success can also occur (Abfalter, 2012). These recommendations are real tools that artistic activists can use to affect social change.

Application

The following theories provided the lens through which their responses were viewed: Transformational Change, Adult Learning, Critical Race, Feminism, and Queer theories (Carter, 1985; Jagose, 2009; Kotter, 1996; Knowles et al., 2012; Valdes et al. 2002). More importantly,

the essence and purpose of artistic activism continue to be for social change (Mouffe, 2007). There are many ways and means to achieve social change. However, certain elements are non-negotiable. As a result of this study, the researcher developed the Non-Negotiable Nine. These nine elements connect the concept of how artistic activists can tell authentic stories and motivate people beyond the experience. The following diagram (Figure 10) lists the Non-Negotiable Nine in relation to the research questions.



Figure 10. This is a diagram of the Non-Negotiable Nine themes that artistic activists need to integrate into their activism. These themes are based on their corresponding interview questions.

There is no doubt that lives are changed through interaction and dialogue with people who share different viewpoints. Psychologist Edward Husserl (as cited in Moran, 2005) eloquently explains that the brain is the pathway to receiving knowledge and acquiring real-life experiences. For hearing and seeing individuals, sound and sight become the doorway to their neurons. Being exposed to a story that connects with your soul causes a fusion of thought that can be catalyzed by a collective appreciation for art.

1. Life-Saving. First and foremost, art changes people's lives because it physicalizes the experience. However, the emotionality of art gives voice to the marginalized and strength to those that may have been weakened by challenges in society. When one invests their heart in creating content for stage, film, television, radio, on the internet, this is a process of vulnerability and giving to others from that place. In turn, when one sees themselves in that place, it reinforces that life is worthy. The fusion of art and life is fundamental to the success of artistic activism.
2. Social Connection. Artistic activism has a way of connecting people from different communities and experiences in one space to enjoy an exploration of art. Though people may have differing views on an issue, being able to come together ultimately uplifts society. Some audience members may come and go without physical interaction with someone of a different experience. Yet, the exposure to communal acceptance of an event can plant insight into the minds of individuals in the community. The hope is that at some point, this insight may come into contact with others that share the same positive feeling. The internet has enabled many individuals to stay home and isolate themselves from others. This deeply

impacts the social connection and power of artistic activism. The primary power of artistic activism is to be able to induce social change. This starts with the change of attitudes or mentality. This process begins in the brain when a person is first exposed to a new thought or a different idea. When the brain is stimulated with positive thoughts, it may lead to an individual taking action to do good for others in the community. The brain is a powerful tool that can be utilized to motivate individuals to activate beyond the experience. This experience can happen in a plethora of venues. However, artistic activism can bring people together in a single place or space to shape identities and teach about connectivity and love for each other.

3. Public Perception. Negative public perception can turn into reality unless there is a narrative that shows the opposite. Due to the fact that discrimination can be tied to systemic practices that have divided our nation, many people are closed-minded and unaware of the similar struggles that we share. Unless we are exposed to other communities, we will continue to see others from our own prism. Participants concur that it is impossible to know what people really think of you. Therefore, it is a better strategy to focus on oneself and not let the opinions of others determine your destiny. In addition, it is the responsibility of artists to educate as well as entertain so that the public can see other perspectives.
4. No. [Being a member of an underrepresented group is not a disadvantage]. As a member of an underrepresented group, there are certain life experiences that can only be told from a particular point of view. These life experiences may mirror the majority. But one's perception of the disadvantages is nullified by the fact

that these experiences are the reason that many underrepresented artistic activists continue to do the work. This work entails opening the space to tell the stories that may often go ignored. These stories are recognizable for the emotional journey that they take the audience on. However, when told from a place of raw emotion, they maintain their connection to the culture or community from which it came. In sum, participants agree that one cannot control nor change the color of the skin that they were given at birth. Therefore, it is best not to try to please others by neither succumbing to popular culture nor by playing into the stereotype.

5. Yes, [There is a cost] But. Participants demonstrate that when one begins to walk in their power, the costs incur a minimal value compared to the catalyst of using one's gifts to transform society. The majority of participants agreed that there is some cost. In fact, it can be argued that there is a cost for all individuals that choose to do art, whether or not it is for entertainment or activism. However, having to bear these costs gives many artistic activists the needed motivation to invest themselves fully in the work. This truly emphasizes the fact that nothing great comes without strife.
6. Be Myself. One must be willing to be the only one to tell their story regardless of the obstacles. Stories are especially worthy if they come from the truth of lived - experiences. As human beings, there are as many of those that will approve of the work you do than those that will disapprove. When one tries to imitate another very often their former self emerges. For this reason, participants state that one should start by first acknowledging themselves. Once they have acknowledged

themselves, they can begin to speak from their own truth and find their own aesthetic.

7. We are Capable. The participants were chosen because of their vast array of experiences. Their responses demonstrated that we are truly all wired differently. But the important fact is that as an artistic activist, one is not alone in seeking equality and justice. One must trust the journey, stay motivated, and believe that they are capable of doing their best. There are times when one must compromise. There are also times when one must forgive themselves for compromising out of need. But in the end, the goal should be to focus on the intention of doing the best work possible.
8. Start Early. Very often, the images of successful artists are the ones that have become popular with mainstream society. However, this can deter an artist from knowing their true purpose and start on their personal journey towards excellence. many participants express that knowing their purpose earlier on in life would have given them the momentum to be further in their careers than they are today. One must not get so immersed in mainstream culture that it takes them far away from who they really are. It is best to recognize and maximize your talents early. Decide what is most important for your goals.
9. Have a Strategy. Intentionality needs to meet preparation. As an artistic activist, one must be proactive in setting goals, putting things in order, and being intentional in getting the truth out. It is important not to measure nor plan for success based on the lives that may be touched. This is intangible. One can never know the amount of lives that will be transformed from the work. Continue to

focus on using art as an avenue to express the truth, find your passion, and add to the collective consciousness.

Study Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to obtain insight into the power of artistic activism. The best practice of navigating around or through unequal representation and creating content that moves people to action is the essence of why artists use the arts to challenge the audience's thought process. This is a powerful phenomenon that some artistic activists have been able to master. This is evident in not only their ability to maintain their success but also to provide opportunities for others that have the same or similar goals.

One of the main facts that was found in the research was that the literature highlighted many of the systemic injustices in American culture. However, most of the participants expressed that they have learned ways to maneuver around the obstacles. The participants did not harbor any resentment towards those that have decision-making power. On the contrary, participants find their momentum in their collaboration with others while combining resources and creating a product that speaks to the community they represent and the broader audience.

Women, people of color, and members of the LGBTQIA community are very distinct groups with specific needs. This study does not pretend to suppose that the successes, challenges, best practices, and recommendations can be generalized for all. For instance, there are dynamics between women and society that exemplify the domination of one gender over another. This is the same society that has hindered women's exploration of their own identities and potentialities.

The women's movement has changed over the last hundred years. Women continue to strive to change their image. Artistic activists have used art to show pride in the contributions

that women have made. Leadership and protest is another area that shows distinct differences. The leadership style of women is different than men. Poetry is a verbal weapon that draws attention to the injustices that women endure. One promise of progress is that women are beginning to be included in more decision-making positions. Still, though the data has improved in some areas, there is work to be done until there is a true representation of women in the arts.

People of color have organized and mobilized in the United States for decades. Most notably, this study focused on the periods during the Civil Right movement and Post-Civil Rights era. The main difference is that the mechanism for racial oppression has changed from systemic and institutionalized racism to other means of oppression. One participant alludes to the fact that underrepresented people are now living with invisible chains because of how the entire capitalist system is organized. Data also shows that there has been some progress in the lack of representation of people of color in the entertainment industry. However, many people of color feel that racism still exists and they use the momentum as inspiration to work harder to reach their goals.

Understanding the needs of the LGBTQIA community and public perception continues to be a developing topic. Through many discussions with members and research about the LGBTQIA community, I have come to understand that the community continues to grow. For this reason, the term LGBTQ+ seems to be a more accurate and inclusive term at this time. Nevertheless, it is necessary to seek a better understanding of gender and sexuality so that we are better prepared to provide for the needs of all. As the identity of the LGBTQ+ community continues to evolve, artistic activism challenges us to rethink our past and anticipate a future that is more representative of all underrepresented people.

Implications of the Study

It is important to note that although there are these differences and particular implications for each group in this study, it is evident in literature and in the responses for the participants that their needs often intersect with each other. Many of the strategies that they use are congruent. In particular, believing in oneself is a fundamental value that has emerged in conversations with all participants in this study.

As an artistic activist, I have had to bracket my ideas of the needs of each community and the strategies that one needs to employ to combat challenges. Having worked with people that are representative of the three communities studied in this research, my personal biases could have easily influenced how I saw and analyzed the needs of each group. Instead, my purpose was to understand how other underrepresented people in the entertainment industry use their inner and outer resources to navigate around challenges to obtain personal and professional success. From the interviews, four essences of artistic activism emerged: Worthiness, How They See Us, Believe, and Focus then Do

From the interviews, the following four main essences emerged:

- **Worthiness:** Every individual has a worthy story. These stories often create opportunities that allow people of different social backgrounds to socialize and dialogue. This is a useful tool for artistic activism. Knowing that stories are worthy can provide fulfillment and help communities to be resilient in the face of oppression. Very often, these stories have the power to connect with others and save lives. Sharing of one's history also encourages personal change and the creation of one's own aesthetic.

- **How They See Us:** One of the challenges of being a woman, a person of color, or LGBTQIA is that others connect their past knowledge or experiences to the present. In other words, when someone sees an underrepresented person, they judge them before they have a chance to get to know them. Correspondingly, many underrepresented people form alliances with each other and combine their resources remembering that the audience is still a powerful tool for change.
- **Believe:** Regardless of the category of underrepresented person, it is evident that believing in oneself and the mission is the first start in being an artistic activist. History has shown that oppressed people can be resilient. Most of the participants believe that they are resourceful and capable of achieving what they want. Artistic activists need to lead by example and not let obstacles keep them from their goals.
- **Focus then Do:** One of the highest numbers of responses from the participants was knowing what you want to do, focusing your strategies on it, and executing your plan. Many artistic activists stressed the importance of being fearless and starting as early as possible to lay a foundation or the trail of a legacy.

Artistic activists can use the information in this study to have a clearer understanding of how their work towards equal representation is not a work in isolation. The artistic activists herein come from a variety of experiences and expertise. However, many of them addressed some of the same issues that are pervasive in the entertainment industry. Almost half of the participants identified with more than one underrepresented group. The Non-Negotiable Nine strategies that resulted from the interviewees serve as a preliminary blueprint for artistic activists.

Artistic Activists have a responsibility to not only reimagine education but to utilize art for political, cultural, and social transformation. How people receive information continues to

evolve. Having a firm understanding of the power of artistic activism to ignite social change can catalyze education and facilitate the valuable work of underrepresented people.

Recommendations for Future Research

Though this study was successful in determining the strategies and essences of artistic activism, future research on the following areas are needed to continue to understand the needs of underrepresented people:

1. The phenomenon of the Standing Ovation. There is a unique and ephemeral aspect of seeing a group of people from different backgrounds stand in agreement and acceptance for art. The elements that creators use to achieve this may involve somewhat of a format of production. However, it is also possible that there is a spiritual connection that creators access in order for audiences to connect to the story that was presented.
2. The Motivational Power of Artistic Activism. As noted by most interviewees, art is life-saving work. It can be used to motivate, stimulate, and encourage those that are marginalized to find themselves in the theatre space. It will be beneficial to understand the extent to which artistic activism can be used for a specific change in areas that are difficult to penetrate by other means.
3. Artists with Disabilities. Artists with disabilities are a growing population that has begun to find their place in entertainment. Some regulations need to be put in place to ensure that their voices are represented as well. As yet, research on their progress and the entertainment industry's accommodation of this population of creators and audience members is necessary.

4. **Generational Divisions.** There is a nuance in the generational separation between the youth and adults. Many young people may not be as aware of or affected by the struggles or circumstances of their predecessors. A large part of conquering circumstances occurs when one establishes confidence in the brain. As young people are more rapidly exposed to information and have unlimited access to mediums of expression, they may not be open to knowing the stories of the past that opened the doors for them. One of the participants mentioned that the generational gap between the young and old can be a barrier to the progress of understanding gender, race, or sexuality.
5. **Contemporary Leadership.** As culture begins to evolve in American society, so does our understanding of leadership. Leaders are no longer traditional purveyors of financial or personalized management of logistics and performance. Leaders have begun to take the form of celebrity figures that often have a different impact on culture. Though this is not a negative thing, it may have ramifications as to whom future generations respect and take seriously.

Author's Observations

While I used bracketing to separate my own experiences from those of the participants to understand the essence of their points of view, at this time I am compelled to fuse their experience with mine so that I can understand the impact that this study has on my future practices. According to Franz Brentano (1874/1973), an event is a separate entity from the person who attends the event which is separate from the feeling that emerges from the event. This means that we cannot assume that these entities happen all at the same time. The writing of this dissertation was the event that set the foundation for me as the researcher (or author).

In chapter 1, I felt confidence in my experience in the arts as an activist. I understood that my past activism has been half-tailored by my creative desires and by the circumstances of the people that I have associated myself. In chapter 2, I begin to see how artistic activism represents 100% intention for many creatives like myself. I also saw the value of having purpose and direction that I had taken for granted in my creations. Chapter 3 further framed my exploration into how to gather information from others without influencing the result with my preconceived notions. It was in Chapter 4 that I found the inspiration to be a fearless artistic activist.

Much of my experience as a professional artist has been tainted by the volatile nature of the entertainment industry. As a result, I allowed for fear to become a psychological block as opposed to an instrument of power and advantage. Though each of the participants might otherwise have valid reasons to succumb to the pressures of a society that does not accept their artistic contribution, they chose to utilize their experiences as a vehicle for change. Many of the participants expressed a clear understanding of the dynamics of being an underrepresented individual. However, none of the participants voiced resentment nor defeat.

In light of this, I am inspired to use my abilities in the arts to raise consciousness for the voices that may go unheard. I am fortunate to say that I truly experienced each interview from the standpoint of an outsider. This allowed me to listen to each participant with open ears and understand the raw emotion in their stories. Chapter 5 helped me to develop the Non-Negotiable Nine elements of an artistic activist and my own plan of action.

Final Thoughts

The given element is that underrepresented people will have obstacles whether or not they choose to pursue a path of truth and justice using the arts. However, the mission remains

the focus and believing that lives can be figuratively and literally saved is a main strategy for achieving success. Accepting the responsibility of combining these strategies and best practices with the responsibility of educating society can open up opportunities for transformational change. As an artistic activist, I am motivated to continue my work utilizing my education and performance skills. The newfound openness of the artistic community shows some progress in equal representation of women, people of color, and LGBTQ+. As we continue to work together and tell our stories, we will begin to understand the value of love and persistence.

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APPENDIX A

Recruitment Script

Dear [Name],

I am a doctoral student at Pepperdine University. My thesis is the power of Artistic Activism.

I would love to interview (Name) about his/her professional artistic activism because his work has transformed our understanding of life in our society in so many ways. I was particularly inspired by (Name of work).

If he/she is available and willing, I will send the consent form and questions in advance and offer a date that we can meet in person or via some form of technology for a 1-hour maximum interview.

I thank you in advance for your response.

Thank you for your participation,

Julio Hanson

Pepperdine University

Graduate School of Education and Psychology

Status: Doctoral Student

APPENDIX B

Peer Reviewer Form

Dear reviewer:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research study. The table below is designed to ensure that my research questions for the study are properly addressed with corresponding interview questions.

In the table below, please review each research question and the corresponding interview questions. For each interview question, consider how well the interview question addresses the research question. If the interview question is directly relevant to the research question, please mark “Keep as stated.” If the interview question is irrelevant to the research question, please mark “Delete it.” Finally, if the interview question can be modified to best fit with the research question, please suggest your modifications in the space provided. You may also recommend additional interview questions you deem necessary.

Once you have completed your analysis, please return the completed form to me via email to julio.hanson@pepperdine.edu. Thank you again for your participation.

Research Question	Corresponding Interview Question
RQ1: How do artistic activists define, measure, and track their success in entertainment?	IQ1. How do you define and measure your success as an artistic activist? IQ2. What are some examples of your success as an artistic activist? a. The question is directly relevant to Research question - Keep as stated b. The question is irrelevant to research question –

	<p style="text-align: center;">Delete it</p> <p style="text-align: center;">c. The question should be modified as suggested:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <p>I recommend adding the following interview questions:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>RQ2: What challenges do artistic activists face in using the arts to address societal issues?</p>	<p>IQ3. What challenges have you faced when using the arts to address societal issues?</p> <p>IQ4. Does being a member of an underrepresented group pose any disadvantages to you using the arts to address societal issues?</p> <p>IQ5. Has using the arts to address societal issues come at an expense or cost to your personal or professional life?</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">a. The question is directly relevant to Research question - Keep as stated</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">b. The question is irrelevant to research question – Delete it</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">c. The question should be modified as suggested:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <p>I recommend adding the following interview questions:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>RQ3: What are the best practices of artistic activists?</p>	<p>IQ6. What strategies did you use to lead you through your challenges to your successes?</p> <p>IQ7. What lessons have you learned?</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">a. The question is directly relevant to Research question - Keep as stated</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">b. The question is irrelevant to research question – Delete it</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">c. The question should be modified as suggested:</p> <hr/>

	<hr/> <p>I recommend adding the following interview questions:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>RQ4: What recommendations do artistic activists have for those that choose to pursue artistic activism?</p>	<p>IQ8. If you could have done something differently, what would that have been? IQ9. What advice would you give to future generations of artistic activists?</p> <p>a. The question is directly relevant to Research question - Keep as stated b. The question is irrelevant to research question – Delete it c. The question should be modified as suggested:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <p>I recommend adding the following interview questions:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

APPENDIX C

IRB Approval Notice

NOTICE OF APPROVAL FOR HUMAN RESEARCH

Date: February 24, 2020

Protocol Investigator Name: Julio Hanson

Protocol #: 19-09-1166

Project Title: The Power of Artistic Activism

School: Graduate School of Education and Psychology **Dear Julio Hanson:**

Thank you for submitting your application for exempt review to Pepperdine University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). We appreciate the work you have done on your proposal. The IRB has reviewed your submitted IRB application and all ancillary materials. Upon review, the IRB has determined that the above entitled project meets the requirements for exemption under the federal regulations 45 CFR 46.101 that govern the protections of human subjects.

Your research must be conducted according to the proposal that was submitted to the IRB. If changes to the approved protocol occur, a revised protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before implementation. For any proposed changes in your research protocol, please submit an amendment to the IRB. Since your study falls under exemption, there is no requirement for continuing IRB review of your project. Please be aware that changes to your protocol may prevent the research from qualifying for exemption from 45 CFR 46.101 and require submission of a new IRB application or other materials to the IRB.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite the best intent, unforeseen circumstances or events may arise during the research. If an unexpected situation or adverse event happens during your investigation, please notify the IRB as soon as possible. We will ask for a complete written explanation of the event and your written response. Other actions also may be required depending on the nature of the event. Details regarding the timeframe in which adverse events must be reported to the IRB and documenting the adverse event can be found in the Pepperdine University Protection of Human Participants in Research: Policies and Procedures Manual at community.pepperdine.edu/irb.

Please refer to the protocol number denoted above in all communication or correspondence related to your application and this approval. Should you have additional questions or require clarification of the contents of this letter, please contact the IRB Office. On behalf of the IRB, I wish you success in this scholarly pursuit.

Sincerely,

Judy Ho, Ph.D., IRB Chair

cc: Mrs. Katy Carr, Assistant Provost for Research

Pepperdine University 24255 Pacific Coast Highway Malibu, CA 90263 TEL: 310-506-4000

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APPENDIX D

Informed Consent

PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY

Graduate School of Education and Psychology

INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

The Power of Artistic Activism

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Julio Hanson, a doctoral student in the Graduate School of Education at Pepperdine University. You have been carefully selected because of your participation in artistic expressions that have addressed societal issues. You are also recognized for your exemplary practices and contributions to your field. Your participation is voluntary. You should read the information below and ask questions about anything that you do not understand, before deciding whether to participate. Please take as much time as you need to read the consent form. You may also decide to discuss participation with your family or friends. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form. You will also be given a copy of this form for your records.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to understand your successes and challenges as an artistic activist. This study will also seek to understand your perception from the point of view as a member of one or more under-represented groups including women, people of color, or the LGBTQIA community. Your recommendations will also help build the capacity of other artistic activists in creating content for positive social transformation through the arts.

STUDY PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in an interview that will last approximately 1-hour (60 minutes).

The following interview protocol will be used:

Characteristics of Artistic Activists **Interview Protocol**

Ice breaker: Tell me a little about your career.

Questions:

1. How do you define and measure your success as an artistic activist?
2. What are some examples of your success as an artistic activist?
3. What challenges have you faced when using the arts to address societal issues?
4. Does being a member of an underrepresented group pose any disadvantages to you using the arts to address societal issues?

5. Has using the arts to address societal issues come at an expense or cost to your personal or professional life?
6. What strategies did you use to lead you through your challenges to your successes?
7. What lessons have you learned?
8. If you could have done something differently, what would that have been?
9. What advice would you give to future generations of artistic activists?

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

The potential and foreseeable risks associated with participation in this study include are no more than minimum risks involved in day-to-day activities. Though risks are not anticipated, interviewee may include fatigue or discomfort.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

While there are no direct benefits to the study participants, there are several anticipated benefits to society which include:

1. The compilation of results of the study will be beneficial to artistic communities at large.
2. Findings of the study will shed light and inform other and aspiring artistic activists on best practices of using art to transform society.
3. Members of underrepresented groups will have strategies to create content to represent their community.

In addition, upon your request, a completed copy of this study will be provided to you.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Based on your selection below, I will keep your records for this study *anonymous* or *confidential* as far as permitted by law. However, if I am required to do so by law, I may be required to disclose information collected about you.

I would like to ask you if you would agree with one of the following to arrangements:

_____ I agree to permit the researcher to use my name,
 (please initial) professional affiliation and the name of my organization.
 I understand that prior to submission of this research for publication; I will receive a copy of the manuscript and review it for two weeks. I may then request revisions to any quotes/information directly attributed to me. If the researcher cannot accommodate my request, the researcher will then delete my name, professional affiliation, name of my organization, and any other pertinent identifying information related to me and simply refer to me by a pseudonym and my organization as a “generic organization”, e.g., Dr. Jones, President of medium size community college.

_____ I agree to permit the researchers to refer to me
(please initial) only by a pseudonym from a “generic organization.” I understand my identity and the name of my organization will be kept confidential at all times and in all circumstances any research based on this interview is presented.

The data will be stored on a password protected computer in my office and my place of residence. The data will be stored for three to five years, after which it will be permanently destroyed.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

Your participation is voluntary. Your refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study.

ALTERNATIVES TO FULL PARTICIPATION

The alternative to participation in the study is not participating or completing only the items which you feel comfortable. Should you choose this alternative, your relationship with your employer and clients will not be affected whether you participate or not in this study.

INVESTIGATOR’S CONTACT INFORMATION

I understand that the investigator is willing to answer any inquiries I may have concerning the research herein described. I understand that I may contact Julio Hanson at julio.hanson@pepperdine.edu if I have any other questions or concerns about this research. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, contact Dr. Judy Ho, Chairperson of the Graduate & Professional School Institutional Review Board (GPS IRB) at Pepperdine University, via email at gpsirb@pepperdine.edu or at 310-568-5753.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT – IRB CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions, concerns or complaints about your rights as a research participant or research in general please contact Dr. Judy Ho, Chairperson of the Graduate & Professional School Institutional Review Board at Pepperdine University 6100 Center Drive Suite 500 Los Angeles, CA 90045, 310-568-5753 or gpsirb@pepperdine.edu.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

I have read the information provided above. I have been given a chance to ask questions. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

AUDIO/VIDEO/PHOTOGRAPHS

I also ask that we may make an audio-recording of the interview. If you agree to such recording, the audio file will be destroyed within 3 weeks of recording, during which it will be transcribed. Transcription will take place by the member of the research team who conducts the actual interview. Under no circumstances will the recording be released to a third party.

- I agree to be audio-recorded.*
- I do not want to be audio-recorded.*

Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I have explained the research to the participants and answered all of his/her questions. In my judgment the participants are knowingly, willingly and intelligently agreeing to participate in this study. They have the legal capacity to give informed consent to participate in this research study and all of the various components. They also have been informed participation is voluntarily and that they may discontinue their participation in the study at any time, for any reason.

Julio Hanson
Name of Person Obtaining Consent

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

Date