



The Role of the Arts During Covid-19: Gendered Expressions of Resilience & Empowerment

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This Doctoral Thesis, *The Role of the Arts During COVID-19: Gendered Expressions of Resilience and Empowerment*, presented by Amanda Taffy, and Submitted to the Faculty of The Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Public Health, has been read and approved by:

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Empowerment

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A Doctoral Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of
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Abstract

The Coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) underscores many structural challenges within the U.S. that propagate inequality and health disparities experienced by women and communities of color; the pandemic has also intensified public distrust, social discord, and trauma. More than ever, the American landscape necessitates innovative public health approaches to mitigate inequality and mental health challenges.

Robust data exists on the public health benefits conferred from the arts, including re-building trust and building social cohesion. This study sought to understand the role of the arts and female artists during the pandemic to improve public health and social justice. Fifty female participants, primarily artists, were interviewed to understand:

- 1) how to leverage the arts to advance public health and social justice;
- 2) the impact of COVID-19 on female artists' lives and livelihoods; and
- 3) how to support female artists, particularly innovators committed to promoting public health or social justice.

The study's results reveal that female artists play a critical role through their ideals, diverse stories, and critiques. Their adaptive leadership skills also confer significant benefits to society; they can creatively identify, address and resolve challenges. Thus, artists can innovatively partner with public health practitioners and communities to address and resolve formidable challenges that our nation faces.

While COVID-19 had significant consequences on female artists' lives and livelihoods, many demonstrated their ability to adapt and increase their resilience (and

support individuals around them to do the same). Many artists shifted their work to online platforms to support communities and audiences experiencing isolation during the pandemic. However, artists need more support to promote public health or social justice.

Experts primarily from the arts elaborated on the diverse and creative ways the arts can promote public health and social justice. Despite challenges, many experts remained committed to their audiences, consumers, and students through institutional support. Experts also provided strategies and recommendations to support the arts and the female artists who creatively and compassionately seek to address and resolve society's challenges.

Covid-19 has underscored public health practitioners need to engage with diverse stakeholders, including female artist-changemakers, to identify, address, and reconcile challenges. The role of female artists, particularly changemakers, should be expanded in the public health field. America's natural resource, her artists, can help us achieve a healthier and more just society.

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Chapter 1- Setting the Stage for the Arts

Art is the basis of our deepest humanity, and it's through that we articulate our deepest concerns, our deepest beliefs and our most profound ideas about who we are. And not only are... amazing young artists dealing with notions of social justice as the core of the work, they're also extraordinary artists of invention (Lee, S., 2019, 31:28).



Art 1. Spirit, S. (2020). Activism, NYC.

1.1 The Need to Reimagine Public Health

The Coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) underscores many structural challenges within the U.S. that propagate inequality and health disparities experienced by women and communities of color; the pandemic has also intensified public distrust, social discord, and trauma. More than ever, the American landscape necessitates innovative public health approaches to mitigate inequality and trauma and re-build trust and social cohesion (U.N. Population Fund, 2020; Maxwell, 2020; Gallup, 2020). While deleterious social and economic effects persist, our country remains in an advantageous position to mount a rigorous public health paradigm to respond to the pandemic effectively.

Innovating and strengthening relationships with diverse partners, including artists, will advance an American recovery while elevating cultural understanding, norms, and values

(Sonkin, 2019). Artists from a broad range of disciplines and diverse backgrounds may serve as stewards to advance a public health response that addresses current social, political, and health challenges. Indeed, artists increasingly “play critical roles as community leaders, giving shape to community identity and voice to community concerns and aspirations” (Center for Cultural Innovation, 2016, p. 3). While defining what constitutes arts is challenging, there are five well-recognized categories:

- 1). Cultural arts (museums, galleries, community events)
- 2). Visual arts (painting, photography, sculpture)
- 3). Performing arts (dance, music, theater, and film)
- 4). Literature; and
- 5). Digital and electronic arts (graphics, animations) (Davies et al., 2012).

Art modalities serve as “an essential part of the cultural and social evolution of human beings” (Camic, 2008, p. 289). The arts can construct emotional engagement opportunities, cognitive stimulation, and social interaction, enabling and driving outcomes that support health and well-being (Fancourt & Finn, 2019). They provide opportunities for self-expression, regulate emotions, and reduce stress (Juslin, 2013; Fancourt & Finn, 2019). Given the ability to mitigate mental health challenges, the arts reduce stress-induced chronic diseases (Steptoe et al., 2012).

From the earliest stages of the pandemic, artists worldwide were intervening to engage and inspire the public. In an essay to the Guardian, the Italian writer and filmmaker Francesca Melandri shared the pandemic’s trajectory for billions worldwide:

I am writing to you from Italy, which means I am writing from your future. We are now where you will be in a few days. The epidemic's charts show us all entwined in a parallel dance...Those who invite you to see this mess as an opportunity for planetary renewal

will help you to put things in a larger perspective... You will not understand if witnessing the birth of a new world is more a grandiose or a miserable affair (Melandri, 2020).

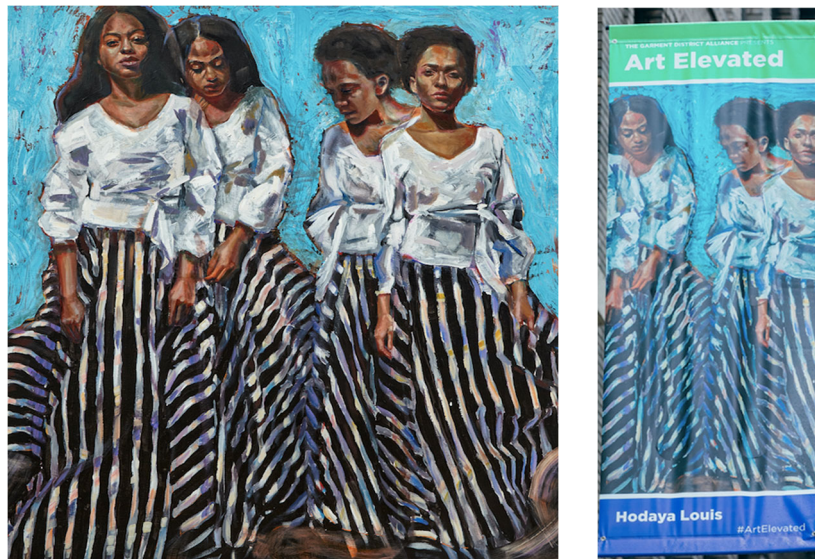


Art 2. Stoddard, C. S. (2020). COVID-19 work inspired by a client.

1.2 The Case for the Arts

COVID-19 has altered the American landscape and transformed the world order inspiring artists throughout the world to advance cultural understanding and mitigate inequality. Hardly a novel role, artists have made critical contributions from the beginning of humanity. However, the pandemic has magnified civil discord and distrust, necessitating a greater creative intervention to address, facilitate and resolve ongoing conflicts. The role of female artists, particularly changemakers, should be expanded in the public health field. Striking empirical evidence makes a compelling case for the significant deployment of the arts to save, enrich, and engage Americans (Stuckey & Nobel, 2010; Fancourt & Finn, 2019; Sonke et al., 2009). More than ever, a reimagination of public health needs to incorporate the significance of the life of the mind by “enriching the mind through the creative and cultural activity...and mitigate the negative effects of social disadvantage” (All-Part Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing Inquiry Report, 2017, Forward). The arts foster relationships with marginalized groups, lead to increased

self-esteem, resilience, and empowerment (Kelly et al., 2017). They provide critical mechanisms to “support well-being, create social connection, spark and sustain movements, communicate differences and transform systems and cultures” (Sonke et al., 2019, p. 7). Community art improves social inclusion, trust, cooperation, tolerance, and respect (Secker et al., 2007). They aid in community investment (Markusen & Gadwa, 2010; Schupbach & Ball, 2016).



Art 3. Louis, H. (2018). Highlighting her heritage to empower women. Selected for the Art Elevated Campaign, NYC.

1.3 Female Artists' Contributions

In the landmark 1971 essay, *Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?* Linda Nochlin concluded:

The question of women's equality in art as in any other realm devolves not upon the relative benevolence or ill-will of individual men, nor the self-confidence or abjectness of individual women, but rather on the very nature of our institutional structures themselves and the view of reality which they impose on the human beings who are part of them (Nochlin, 1970, p. 6).

Nearly half a century later, Ms. Nochlin's theory holds true. Structural challenges within museums and many platforms continue to diminish female artists' contributions (Halperin &

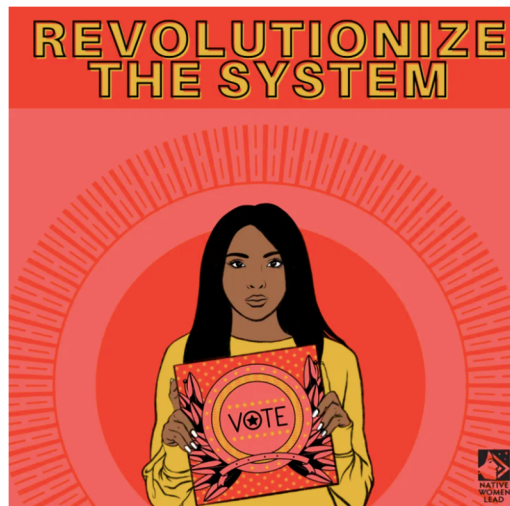
Burns, 2019). In a recent study, researchers found only 11% of all work acquired by prominent museums (from 2008 to 2018) included work by female artists; only 3.3% were African-American artists (Halperin & Burns, 2019). Additionally, men remain in top management positions at the majority of prominent art institutions. The lack of research on female artists or their contributions further underscores the disparities (Cameron et al., 2017). Despite the formidable obstacles female artists navigate or because of them, they demonstrate a resiliency to create and engage in universally impactful dialogue (Coon, 2019). Female artists' critical contributions during COVID-19 to support a range of communities and their unique vision and experiences warrant further study.

1.4 The Impact of COVID-19 on the Arts & Female Artists

According to a recent survey conducted by the Americans for the Arts, nearly 80% of public art funds or community cultural centers were attempting to mitigate the harm of social distancing and quarantine by delivering art to boost morale (Americans for the Arts, 2020). However, the pandemic's impact on the artistic process from its creation to its access remains a challenge (UNESCO, 2020). Moreover, in the U.S. alone, nonprofit arts and cultural organizations have incurred an estimated \$14.1 billion loss (Americans for the Arts, 2020).

COVID-19 merits greater research to understand the disproportionate hazards uniquely sustained by female artists whose critical contributions have been historically and systemically overlooked (Eley, 2016; Guerilla Girls, 2020). While there is a literature gap on the pandemic's impact on female artists, a recent survey by the Americans for the Arts reveals that 94% of artists are experiencing severe financial losses; nearly 60% surveyed were female artists (Americans for the Arts, 2020 Survey). The pandemic has amplified barriers faced by female artists, many of

whom play a vital role in promoting public health. All the while, they labor in a system fraught with unequal opportunities for women (UNESCO, 2020).



Art 4. Bowen, V. (2020). Native Women Lead Campaign to encourage voting.

1.5 Study Aims

1. What are the role of the arts and female artists during the COVID-19 pandemic? And how has COVID-19 impacted the arts and female artists' lives and livelihoods? Interviews with twenty-two female artists in New York City will generate hypotheses.

2. What are innovative ways to partner with artists to advance social justice & public health? Ten Featured Artists will narrate how they deploy a range of artistic tools. Artwork by featured artists is included, giving readers a unique experience.

3. What are innovative ways to leverage the arts to promote public health and social justice? Furthermore, how can we mitigate the pandemic's impact on female artists' lives and livelihoods? Artists and experts will provide strategies and recommendations.

1.6 Framework

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the U.S. Department of Health recommend health programs incorporate a social-ecological framework. According to this

framework, a range of forces influence individual health behaviors and outcomes at both the macro and micro levels (Sallis et al., 2008; Stokols,1992). The range of forces and dynamics includes intrapersonal, interpersonal, community, and public policy (McLeroy et al.,1988). Professionals should identify factors influencing health at all levels and develop actionable responses to each factor to promote health (Stokols, 1996).This framework will operationalize strategies and recommendations to leverage the arts and support female artists.

1.7 Leveraging the Arts for a Healthier & Just America

In Chapter 2, the arts and female artists’ powerful impact on public health and social justice will be discussed in greater detail. This study intends to provide a pathway for individual expression and collective dialogue for a more just, healthier, and beautiful world.



Art 5. Famulari, S. (2012). Green Line: Garden Party Series.

Chapter 2: The Case for the Arts

Lending expression to others is central to my art practice. I believe there are limitations in focusing on personal aesthetics of beauty and believe there is more value in community-based projects (N. DeLane, personal communication, October 4, 2020).



Art 6. DeLane, N. (2017). Coif City, Interviews of 200 Women.

2.1 Social Justice, Inequality and COVID-19

More than a decade ago, the WHO declared, “Social injustice is killing people on a grand scale” (WHO Commission on Social Determinants of Health, 2008, p. 40). Social justice rests on the notion that humans deserve equal rights and opportunities, including good health; in the absence of social justice, inequities in power and distribution result in poor health outcomes (American Public Health Association, 2021).

Robust data highlights structural inequalities inscribed within various economic, social, and health domains of the U.S. that likely subject women and communities of color to the harshest consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic (Stanford Center on Poverty & Inequality, 2020). Additionally, social determinants the “conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age, and the wider sets of forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life” may also adversely impact individuals and communities (WHO website, 2021). We must also address other factors driving poor health outcomes, including distrust of the health system. In a recent

survey, 51% of Americans surveyed claimed they had a great deal of confidence in the medical system (Gallup Poll, 2020); this significantly increased from the previous two years, when 36% reported that confidence (Gallup Poll, 2020). The disregard of regulations and recommendations intended to mitigate COVID-19 underscores persistent distrust, as does public apprehension of the vaccine by some consumers (Hamel et al, 2020). Adverse mental health outcomes, including collective trauma associated with isolation and social discord, also warrant deliberate and creative public health responses.

The current wave of public health also recognizes that health should be viewed holistically with creative responses that promote well-being (Davies et al., 2014). COVID-19 amplifies the need for an overhaul in public health to “reframe thinking about mental health, social exclusion and inequalities in health” (Lang & Rayner, 2012, p. 2).

2.2 The Need for Public Health Innovation

As “agents of social change,” artists can promote public health (Fancourt & Finn, 2019; Bastien, 2009). An artist can be considered a “person who catalyzes innovation processes through radically different and refreshing approaches in relation to a given issue and context” (Barnard et al., 2015, p.1). As innovators, artists provide a “compelling public value proposition” (Cels, 2012). Artists can address and resolve imminent public health issues by engaging and facilitating dialogue; they also serve as mediators between residents and public health professionals (Sonke et al., 2017; Ruthvin, 2016).



Art 7. Famulari, S. (2019). Engaging Urban Greening Exhibit, Flowers at the Smithsonian Institute.

Indeed, artists mitigate the impact of social determinants and inequality at various stages (All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health, and Wellbeing, 2017). They increasingly revitalize communities and economies by displaying diverse cultural backgrounds while using land and buildings in novel ways; their interventions support businesses, neighborhoods, regions, and public health (All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health, and Wellbeing, 2017).

2.3 The Impact of Art

Community-based arts and art education as integral to communities' healthy development slowly gained traction in the 20th century. One of the most notable applications of the arts into social science research culminated in large-scale theatrical production in Boston in 1910, which helped citizens engage on how to move the city forward (Ewell, 2011). Harvard-educated playwright Percy MacKaye believed that civic theater could examine realities with the community as the protagonist (MacKaye, 1910).

Throughout the world, artists engage and empower individuals and communities with various creative modes (Sonke, 2018). The impact of art on public health seems most effective when individuals and communities are actively engaged in its creation or production (Racicot-Matta C et al., 2016). For example, they can activate populations' empowerment process over

personal health matters or build trust in a community over public health issues (McConnell, 1982; Roberts et al., 2017). Artists helped a community collectively address mental health concerns (Chung et al., 2009). During the Ebola epidemic, music, murals, and theater communicated virus-related messages in West Africa (Sonke & Pesata, 2015). Storytelling for children helped dispel misinformation about vaccines. (Shelby & Story, 2013).



Art 8. Louis, H. (2020). The Wheat Bearers, Inspired by COVID-19, subtle shades & commonalities among women.

The arts foster prosocial behavior and social cohesion (Fancourt & Finn, 2019; Weinstein et al., 2015). They can increase literacy, empathy, and inclusion (Twardzicki, 2008). They build social capital while reducing social isolation and loneliness, particularly for rural area residents. (Poscia et al., 2018; MacLeod et al., 2016; Bourdie, 1986; Putnam, 2000). In musical collaborations, improved social bonding and individual oxytocin levels have been noted (Weinstein et al., 2015; Fancourt et al., 2016; Kreutz, 2014). Music can promote understanding while reducing prejudice and discrimination (Greitemeyer & Schwab, 2014; Clark & Vuoskoski, 2015). In sum, the arts hold potent powers for individuals and communities to experience empowerment and healing (Stuckey & Nobel, 2010).



Art 9. Semeel, G. (2020). Masked Up Exponentially.

2.4 Artists in Public Spaces

An installation recently erected in a public space merits a greater discussion of community inclusion, gender equality amid the vitalized Black Lives Matter Movement and the centennial anniversary of the 19th Amendment. The Women's Rights Pioneer Monument unveiled on August 26, 2020, honors the activists who fought to ratify the 19th Amendment. It is the first female sculpture in Central Park's 167-year history honoring real women. Monumental Women, the visionaries behind the statute, wanted to increase recognition of women's contributions through a nationwide campaign that includes monuments of female trailblazers (Monumental Women, 2020). In 2011, the Smithsonian Art Museum reported only 8% of the 5,000 plus outdoor sculptures depicted women (McGreevy, 2020).

The monument's creative process was a learning moment for the ages: Sojourner Truth, a leading suffragist, and human rights activist, was initially not part of the monument. Instead, quotes from suffragists of color were in a scroll viewed by the figures of Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. This omission fueled white women's narrative leading the movement, overlooking Black female suffragists' prominent role (McGreevy, 2020). However, the organizers ignited a debate that ultimately seated Ms. Truth at the table. Given the ongoing debates regarding confederate monuments, artists can interface with the public to create and

facilitate dialogue to address and reconcile social issues such as inclusion and equality. Additionally, the need for local and municipal governments to engage the public with facilitators, including artists should also be considered.



Art 10. Bergmann, M. (2020). Women's Rights Pioneers, Central Park.

2.5 Female Artists: Agents of Change

Throughout history, female artists contributed to society's advancement. Hildegard of Bingen, a German Benedictine nun, philosopher, and composer born around 1098, was sought out by popes and kings (Lerman, 1995). She connected her music to spiritual health and healing (Medieval Music, 2015). Recently, twenty female artists were credited for permanently altering the art world (Marsh & Widing, 2020). Some notable Americans include Augusta Savage, the Harlem Renaissance sculptor, Betye Saar, the contemporary artist whose most famous work is the Liberation of Aunt Jemima. Adrian Piper, a trailblazer in responding to gender and race norms, most notably, My Calling (Card) #1. And Judy Chicago, The Dinner Party's creator, an iconic feminist centerpiece (Marsh & Widing, 2020).

Ta is an Arabic grammatical suffix that indicates the female gender. The image celebrates the power and beauty of Arab women. The Arabic calligraphy is a The Quranic verse from the "book of women." It says: They ask you about women, say: God will tell you about them (Al-Mansour, 2010).



Art 11. Al-Mansour, H. (2010). T for Feminine.

Feminist critique has increasingly challenged historical art periodization, though much work remains to credit female artists for their contributions. One notable group, the Guerilla Girls challenge systemic and institutional practices. Activated by a museum's "international exhibit" in 1984, these female artists protested that out of 169 artists, only 13 were women, and 8 were artists of color (Guerilla Girls, 2020). Nearly three decades later, the Guerilla Girls remain active, questioning museums' funding, racism, and sexism (Guerilla Girls, 2020).

2.6 The American Landscape: Inequality & Health Outcomes

Women have more limited access to and less control over resources and over their bodies and lives, than do men (Phillips, 2005).

COVID-19 has demonstrated that public health practitioners and government bodies can no longer afford to proceed with business as usual and expect improved health outcomes. Long-standing inequality and inequity in social determinants of health, particularly sexism, discrimination, and hazardous occupations, increase the risks of inferior health and premature

death (WHO, 2010; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2020). American women are laboring under considerable risks, and unequal pay in both the public and private domains by providing essential services to mitigate the pandemic's impact on public health and family members; the Zika and the Ebola outbreaks provide critical context (Davies & Bennett, 2016). Specifically, women experienced higher infection rates as essential workers and endured extraordinary financial burdens as primary caregivers (UNFPA, 2020).



Art 12. Spirit, S. (2017). Activism, NYC.

Since the passage of the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964, women struggle with the second generation of sex discrimination at work, or structural bias, which is less blatant and more challenging to remedy (Sturm, 2001). They suffer from the gender wage gap and are more likely to work without pay, especially regarding caregiving responsibilities (National Partnership for Women and Families, 2020). COVID-19 has underscored the complex interplay between gender, labor, and work-family challenges; women with children suffer higher unemployment rates than males (Bateman & Ross, 2020). Additionally, women may likely forgo necessary medical care during the pandemic, given financial and caregiving concerns (Allsbrook, 2020).

The current public health paradigm improvised at various government levels reminds us that equality under the law rarely translates into equality in fact, in the absence of specific provisions or protections for vulnerable groups (Quebec Government, 2005). Inequality

highlighted by the killings of unarmed women and men of color, parties to a flawed justice system remains a significant public health challenge.



Art 13. Spirit, S. (2020). Activism, NYC.

While these killings are hardly uncommon for communities of color, social media now vividly captures the brutality. Reminding us that the justice system succumbs to individuals' passions and frequently reflects the concept of “popular justice” instead of the dispassionate rule of law that should work to advance due process (Walker, 1980). Inequalities are a powerful determinant of health, leading to poorer health outcomes, conflict, and violence (Wilkinson, 2005). Preliminary data also suggests higher morbidity and mortality rates for communities of color from COVID-19 (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2020; Stokes et al., 2020; Killerby et al., 2020).

2.7 Distrust: A Significant Public Health Challenge

[There is] a widespread perception that institutions-both public and private-are not acting in the interests of the people they serve pervades the thinking of communities across the globe (Smith & Cruickshank, 2017).

Inequality and long-standing disparities have given rise to another public health hazard distrust of institutions. While trust remains central in all relationships, it is particularly challenging with vulnerable populations, who rank trust in health providers among the lowest (Long & Bart 2017). Given these challenges, the medical profession embraced trust as a

cornerstone for patient-physician relationships (American Board of Internal Medicine, ABIM website). Additionally, numerous studies in the Journal of American Medical Association confirm the importance of [re]building trust in healthcare (Birkhauer et al., 2017). In the absence of trust, lower treatment compliance rates and poorer health outcomes follow (Safran et al., 1998).

To rebuild trust, collaborations with diverse partners are essential. Diversified backgrounds create distinct values and methods for problem engagement (Lee et al., 2020). For example, female scientists devote more research to understanding sex-differentiated health outcomes (Rosser, 2002; Mazure & Jones, 2015; Ashpole et al., 2017). In the business sector, diversity fosters innovation and complex problem-solving (McLeod et al., 1996; Higgs et al., 2005; Hewlett et al., 2013). To improve public health outcomes, practitioners need to understand the distrust harbored by many consumers; partnering with diverse and innovative artists can help achieve these outcomes.

[Baby Sees ABCs] the series and the book were crowdfunded with the support of 83 people who chose which animals represent each letter and who also provided many of the first names which are embedded in the images. We exist as part of a larger community connected by language and [the]...ability to work together (Seemel, G., 2021).



Art 14. Seemel, G. (2020). Picture from Baby Sees ABCs book.

2.8 Addressing Collective Trauma & Mental Health Challenges

COVID-19 has also posed many other challenges that we may not fully understand for some time. Some experts believe that many individuals and communities are experiencing collective trauma (M. Castelloe, personal communication, October 2, 2020; Turmaud, 2020). This is known as a traumatic experience shared by groups and can impact social norms (Turmaud, 2020; Chang, 2017; Erikson, 1976).

Quarantine and physical isolation limited the spread of infectious diseases; the strategies to curtail COVID-19 through lockdowns, curfews, quarantine, and other restrictions are not unique. However, this pandemic has caused a disruption, like none before (Usher et al, 2020). Specifically, adverse outcomes associated with social isolation, including mental health challenges and trauma, can be pronounced (Hawryluck et al., 2004; Brooks et al., 2020; Desclaux et al., 2017). Additionally, mental health issues can persist; after SARS, many continued to avoid social contact and did not return to work (Marjanovic et al., 2007). Isolation reduces a neighborhood's growth and collective action for change (Alspach, 2013). While we will not wholly understand the pandemic's impact, data exists on the need to mitigate mental health issues.

2.9 Art & Health Policy

Major health institutions increasingly recognize the significance of the arts and culture in health policy (Parkinson & White, 2013). In 1981, the World Health Organization (WHO) developed the Strategy for Health for All, which considered local culture a critical measure of health (Hancock, 1983). In 2019, the WHO published a scoping review of 3,000 studies highlighting the impact of art in advancing critical public health issues, including equality, social

cohesion, and trust; the findings support cross-sectoral collaborations with the arts (Fancourt & Finn, 2019). The U.K. also conducted an in-depth analysis of the arts to fully integrate it into the national health system (All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing, 2017).

Currently, Dr. Daisy Fancourt of the University College London leads the COVID-19 Social Study to understand the impact of art on mental health. Data suggests that adults who spend approximately 30 minutes daily consuming art during the pandemic have reported greater life satisfaction and lower anxiety and depression rates (Bloomberg Philanthropies, 2020).

2.10 The Future of Art in the U.S. Health System

The U.S. health system has long recognized the importance of the arts in health and community development; however, it remains underutilized. Given this chasm, a national initiative led by the University of Florida, Creating Healthy Communities, was launched in 2017 to advance arts in the public health system through cross-sectoral collaborations (Center for Arts in Medicine, 2021). ArtPlace America, a new initiative, collaborates with foundations, federal agencies, and financial institutions to advance public health art by providing city funding. Additionally, EpiArts Lab is an epidemiological study to understand the effects of art engagement on public health within the United States (Center for Arts in Medicine, 2021).

However, “evidence is only one part of what swings policy decisions-political will and capacity are important too”(Commission on Social Determinants, WHO, 2008, p. 30). The U.S. health system has failed to integrate a preventative health model; however, this is slowly changing (Goldbard,2018). Catalyzing and supporting local and municipal governments across the nation serves as the best approach. Health bodies should incorporate “a realist approach by looking at what works, for whom, and in which circumstances...[and use that] to aid reflective

practice and inform the development of future activities” (All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing, 2017, p. 5).



Art 15. Al-Mansour, H. (2016). She Thinks She Makes Art.

2.11 Leveraging the Arts: Women Who Championed Art in Public Policy

In 1934, at the Convention of the Federation of Arts, Eleanor Roosevelt, gave a speech entitled, *The New Governmental Interest in the Art* that outlined her vision and desire for a government-sponsored art world. She believed “the great power of the artist [is] the power to make people hear and understand, through music and literature, or to paint something which ordinary people feel but cannot reveal” (Roosevelt, 1934). Against the Great Depression’s backdrop, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) was created in 1935 (Cahill,1973).

Heralded as one of the New Deal’s most notable achievements, the WPA employed 40,000 artists. More broadly, the program’s top-down development approach impacted 6 million Americans through “some understanding of the significance of art in the life of the community” (Cahill, 1973, p. 39). For example, in Harlem, the WPA supported Black Artists in weaving their important history (Finkelstein, 1990). In L.A., a fire chief linked the Federal Theatre project's work in mitigating delinquency (Ewell, 2011). This period also marked the shift in community

development funding from private funders to the federal government. The program resulted in the proliferation of art institutions, programs, and programs (Cahill, 1973).

Congress squashed funding of the WPA within a decade. Nonetheless, the arts-based community development evolution progressed with a report, *The Arts and Your Town*, by Virginia Lee Commer, which set the arts council stage (Givans, 1982). Today, approximately 4,500 local arts agencies or arts councils collectively ensure a necessary presence of the arts and vital work for artists (Americans for the Arts, 2016). Progressive artists and visionaries led the energized rise of arts councils throughout the nation to advance cultural understanding and mitigate inequality (Davis-Dubois, 1943).

Featured Artist Vanessa Bowen [designed the slogan] to start a dialogue about Trump's presidential campaign slogan...and to raise awareness for America's indigenous populations (Bowen, V., 2016)



Art 16. Bowen, V. (2016). Slogan.

Perhaps the stoutest champion of the arts was Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis. Her vision, and a series of President Kennedy's policies led to the formation of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) in 1966 (Schlesinger, 1962, 1988). The NEA remains charged with supporting America's culture and arts sectors.

In 1977, Congress enacted the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) to ameliorate community poverty. More than \$200 million were dispersed to community development organizations, making CETA the most extensive federal arts program in history

(Goldbard,1993). This funding ignited a “generation of socially conscious artists” whose work overlapped with public service and community development (Cleveland, 2001). Through community development projects, many artists are public health actors. For example, artists in Minnesota collaborated with residents to improve public housing. In New Mexico, artists designed a park to build cultural resilience. In Los Angeles, artists partnered to design anti-displacement strategies for residents impacted by rising housing costs (Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, 2019).

Given this critical work, foundations, including the Rockefeller, support community-based arts programs (Sidford, 2011). Through the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), the Ford Foundation also supports community development. The formation of the Americans for the Arts emerged from the National Assembly of Local Arts Agencies and the Community Arts Councils. President Regan significantly curtailed federal support to local communities; consequently, local and municipal drivers managed control over community arts and development (James Irvine Foundation, 2006). This paved the way for an explosion of collaborative arts-based programs (Givans,1982; Markusen & Gadwa, 2010).

Michelle Obama was another proponent of the arts; the Obama administration expanded public/private partnerships between arts groups and schools and created an “artist corps” to train young artists to work in local schools. The administration also increased funding to the NEA (Muzrat World Foundation, 2020). Following the 2020 election, President Joe Biden made an encouraging nod to the arts with the video, 1983 work *Art is...* by New York City-based artist Lorraine O'Grady; he had Americans across the nation hold frames to acknowledge them (Horton, 2020).

2.12 The Role of Artists During COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic altered the American landscape and transformed the world order inspiring artists in a sweeping fashion to depict diverse messages of hope, caution, and pain. Hardly a novel role, artists have critically memorialized expressions from the beginning of humanity. During the pandemic, artists have played a range of roles by tailoring public health messages, providing virtual performances to improve morale, and educating the public with COVID-19 messages; many activate the empowerment process (WHO, 2020).



Art 17. Stoddard, C. S. (2020). Peacock & Floral Garden created to brighten an adult home during the pandemic.

Artists are increasingly undertaking activism. Brooklyn-based artist Hank Willis Thomas whose provocative works include “ALL Li es Matter,” co-leads the social movement Four Freedoms. A 50-State Initiative that “increases creative civic engagement, discourse, and direct action...[to] expand what participation in a democracy looks like and reshape the conversation about politics” (For Freedoms, 2020).

While artists generously supported communities, flaws within art institutions were magnified. During the Summer of 2020, the Whitney Museum planned to honor artists’ work during the pandemic and the Black Lives Matter Movement. However, several artists

representing Black, indigenous, and people of color accused the museum of improper compensation and failure to secure permission for the exhibit; ultimately, the exhibit was cancelled. The museum's curator issued an apology letter (Ulaby, 2020). The appropriation of artists, particularly artists of color or female artists, must be considered when leveraging artists' work, and partnerships must incorporate respect.

2.13 Impact of the Arts: Public Perceptions & Economics

For nearly four decades, the National Endowment for the Arts' Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (SPPA) researches adult engagement in the arts, the reasons for engagement, and perceptions of community art availability (NEA, 2020). The Arts Endowment also sponsors the General Social Survey (GSS), which records visual and performing art attendance data. The key findings from SPPA and GSS confirm the literature data; namely, the arts are prosocial as evidenced by the primary reason people engage or consume the arts, namely, the opportunity to socialize. Respondents also indicated opportunities to celebrate culture, a pathway for understanding and empathy. Considerations when designing art interventions also include challenges or barriers to the arts, lack of time to engage, and costs.

In 2018, Americans for the Arts surveyed over 3,000 Americans about the arts' perceptions and attitudes in America (Americans for the Arts Survey, 2018). This survey affirms the powerful impact and value of art, when accessible, and as an educational necessity for children. Additional key findings include the arts providing meaning to life, adding value to a community and economy, and unifying diverse communities (regardless of age or ethnicity). However, access is not equal because of finances.

In addition to the range of health and social benefits conferred by the arts, local, state, and federal economies are also greatly enriched by the arts and culture industries. According to

the Bureau of Economic Analysis, a division of the U.S. Department of Commerce, the arts contributed nearly \$878 billion to the U.S. economy in 2017, the third-largest contributor to the U.S. GDP after healthcare and trade, and before construction (U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2017). Before the pandemic, the industry was growing faster than the rest of the U.S. economy. (U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2017; Florida, 2019).

2.14 The Impact of COVID on Arts & Artists

The creative economy is experiencing great financial loss. In a recent study, the Brookings Institute estimates that nearly 2.7 million jobs (nearly 1/3 of all jobs in the arts) and more than \$150 Billion for services and goods in the creative industry (9%) of annual sales during the four months from April 1 to July 31, 2020, were lost (Florida & Seman, 2020). The performing and fine arts have suffered a nearly 50% loss of jobs. Through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act, Congress appropriated \$75 million to the NEA. In March 2021, President Biden allocated an additional \$135 million to the arts endowment (Carter, 2021). In an ongoing survey by the Americans for the Arts, more than 27,000 surveyed artists reported their challenges during the pandemic; 57% of the respondents surveyed were female. Black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) have sustained more losses, reporting higher unemployment rates than whites (69% v. 60%) (Americans for the Arts, 2020). Additionally, the vast majority of artists surveyed (77%) are trying to support their community's needs. Most artists (66%) are laboring without any compensation. See Appendix A for Table 2.1- Challenges faced by artists. Table 2.2-Artist's most useful resources. Table 2.3-Challenges experienced by artists before the pandemic. The pandemic's raised unique challenges for surveyed artists (e.g., unemployment, loss of financial resources); however, the pre-pandemic challenges also reflected financial insecurity (e.g., lost revenue, lack of health insurance, food insecurity) (Americans for

the Arts, 2020 Table 2.1 v. Table 2.3). Table 2.3 also highlights marked discrimination artists experienced (50%) and being taken advantage of and not compensated (47%).

2.15 Social Ecological Model (SEM) Framework

SEM promotes public health and mitigates health challenges at four levels. See Figure 1. Proposed interventions should address and mitigate each level of the force; specifically, interventions should address and mitigate challenges at the individual, interpersonal, community, and societal level to promote health and prevent disease (McLeroy et al., 1988). See Table 1. The need to promote health also includes approaching each level holistically and empowering individuals and communities (Rootman et al., 2001).

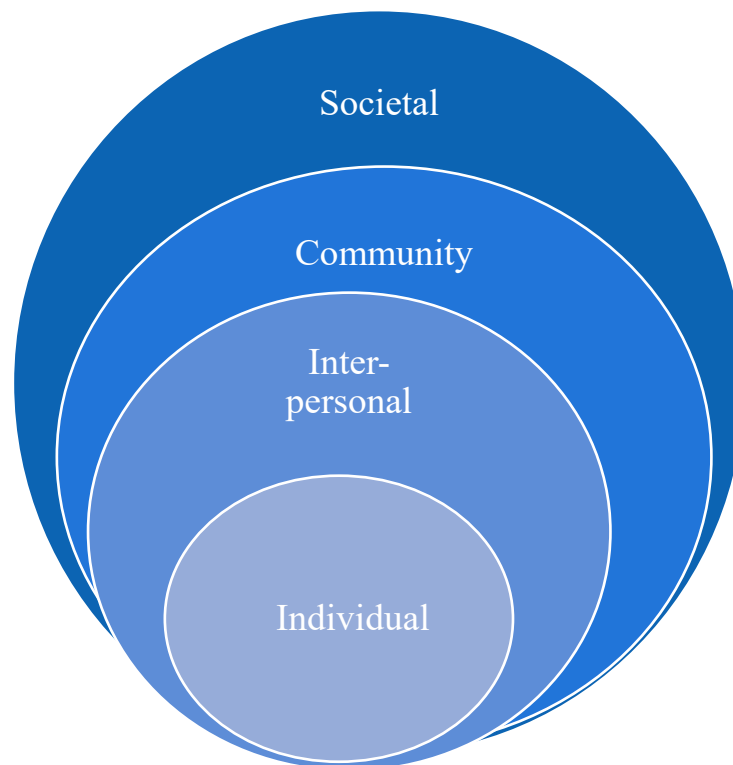


Figure 1 SEM Model (Adapted from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020).

SEM LEVEL	DESCRIPTION
Individual	Individuals' qualities/characteristics (e.g., gender, race, socio-economic status) influence behavior, attitudes, and actions.
Interpersonal	An individual's social and support systems (personal and professional) influence behaviors, attitudes, and actions.
Community	Relationships among leaders, institutions, and businesses that impact/influence a community and individual behavior, etc....
Societal/Policy	Local, state, and national policies that impact health services, communities, and individuals.

Table 1: SEM Description (Adapted from CDC, SEM Model, 2020)

In the subsequent three chapters, female artists and experts will discuss arts' benefits and female artists' visions, processes, and roles. Furthermore, the challenges ushered or magnified by the pandemic impacting the arts or artists will be underscored.

Finally, the study's aims will incorporate strategies and recommendations outlined in two SEM Frameworks in Chapter 6, that will leverage the arts and support female artists-changemakers.

Chapter 3: Study Design and Results

Artists are the purveyors of truth in America....That is my truth (S. Spirit, personal communication, October 12, 2020).

The author worked with the host organization, FXB Center for Health & Human Rights, from July 2020 to March 2020 and conducted research and data collection remotely. This study adopted a qualitative method approach. First, a google search was conducted on artists' interventions to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 and artists' commitment to public health or social justice. A literature review included art history, the impact of the arts on health and the economy, and art activism. Serving as a discussant on the Boston Institute of Contemporary Art Forum: Racism, Public Health and Contemporary Art conferred valuable insights. Further, this author created and moderated a webinar entitled, Leveraging the Arts for a Healthy & Just America. The primary goal was to underscore public health practitioners' need to collaborate with diverse partners to identify and understand a community's challenges and respond with creative problem-solving solutions.

Since this is the first known qualitative study on female artists' perspectives during COVID-19, this study is exploratory and generated hypotheses and information among artists on their ideals, goals, challenges, and experiences. Additionally, qualitative data was considered the most appropriate design study to achieve this research's primary objectives. Namely, 1) how to leverage the arts to advance public health and social justice; and 2) to understand how to support female artists, particularly innovators interested in promoting public health or social justice. Further, this study design enabled a wealth of qualitative data to understand artists' processes and perspectives (including leadership and vision) during COVID-19. All participant interviews started with a discussion of art's benefits. Central to participants' notion was the arts' scope, function, and goals to benefit public health.

3.1 Data Sampling and Collection, Three Participant Categories

Tailored semi-structured interview guides explored concepts for three categories of female participants while allowing room to develop conversations (Patton, 2001):

- I. Category 1 Deidentified Artists responded to a study advertisement to discuss the impact of art on society and self and the effects of COVID-19 on their lives and livelihoods.
- II. Category 2 Featured artists were selected for their creative work to advance public health and social justice during COVID-19. They innovatively expanded arts' benefits on public health or social justice (see Chapter 4).
- III. Selected Experts discussed how to leverage the arts to improve public health and social justice and support female artists' lives and livelihoods (see Chapter 5).

Category I, deidentified artists responded to posted advertisements in New York Foundation for the Arts (NYFA, a non-profit committed to artists and art organizations) and Craig's List (NYC), "Seeking Female Artists (aged 30-50), to Discuss the Impact of COVID-19 on their lives and livelihoods." The New York Foundation for the Arts listing lasted nearly three weeks, whereas Craig's List lasted one week; thus, the vast majority of artists were recruited from NYFA. Additionally, some artists forwarded this author's contact information to social and professional networks to encourage others to participate; thus, snowball sampling was another method deployed. Snow-balling sampling provided some of the best interviews given that artists were recommended by those who previously underwent interviews. Artists were selected based on a first-come-first-serve basis. All artists received an emailed invitation to the interview along with a consent form. Subsequently, they would then email to confirm a date and time for the

interview. Artists interviewed via telephone or zoom. With permission from the artist, zoom sessions were recorded. Artists in Category I received a gift card.

Before the start of an interview, participants provided oral consent. Participants remained deidentified, given the sensitive nature of the information. Specifically, artists discussed their experiences, lives, and livelihoods during Covid-19. Artists self-verified eligibility before the start of the interview (one artist admitted that she was turning 30 in March 2021), and they resided in the NYC Metropolitan Area. Additionally, the vast majority of the artists who submitted to interviews had professional links attached to their emails, enabling this author to review their works (though this was not required). Interviews lasted from 25 to 90 minutes. Artists represented all recognized arts categories: cultural, visual, performing, literature, and digital arts. However, the primary types of art practice included visual and performing arts. The determined sample size was based on information saturation; specifically, recruitment for participants ended when interviews no longer generated new data.

For Category 2, ten featured artists were selected, given their visibility in the public or national domain for their work around public health or social justice. Some have been featured in the Smithsonian Institute, Architectural Digest, the Rolling Stones, and national media outlets and museums worldwide. These artists received an invitation via email to interview and signed a consent form to participate. At the start of the interview, this researcher also obtained oral consent. Each interview lasted 60 to 90 minutes between September 2020 to October 2020. Female artists' opportunity to narrate their stories (with some parameters) is one way to lend expression to a historically neglected group that has contributed critical works throughout history. The critical messages imparted in creative work are contributions within this thesis and may also help engage the reader in a unique experience.

This researcher was vested in applying procedural justice, treating participants with respect and dignity (Tyler, 2012). While artists vary in practices, all deliberately mitigate social inequality. Given their unique personal or professional experiences, all featured artists can be considered formidable partners in public health or social justice.

For Category 3: A range of selected experts primarily from the arts provided strategies to promote public health or social justice through the arts. Additionally, experts made recommendations to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on public health and female artists. Ten experts and two focus groups consisting of eight members from the New York Society of Women Artists (NYSWA) participated in interviews. Experts were selected based on work in public health, public policy, the arts, and women's issues and invited to participate via email along with the option of participating anonymously. Despite attempts to recruit experts in public policy or public health, this author only secured one health expert. I can only speculate as to the reasons for the lack of responses from policy experts.

Artists also made generous introductions to experts for this researcher. Experts who remained identified signed consent forms; additionally, all experts provided consent at the start of the interview. Experts were also memorialized in their words for their insights, experiences, and innovative strategies. Given that experts primarily consisted of artists, this thesis provided more innovative ways to support public health and practical ways to support female artists. However, the lack of public health and policy experts limited understanding of barriers to the effective implementation of the arts into health policy and why artists have not been tapped as a great resource to advance public health.

3.2 Ethical Considerations

Participants in all three categories shared candid information about personal and professional struggles (previous and current). Moreover, the pandemic might have made artists and experts more vulnerable. Given the sensitive nature of comments made that could potentially jeopardize an artist's anonymity, life, or livelihood, this researcher redacted transcripts generated from Harvard Zoom or declined to memorialize material on paper. Specifically, artists discussed challenges with governments, employers, families that may adversely impact them. While the absence of this information may affect the qualitative data's rigor, the participant's well-being remained paramount, and information was excluded given the study's nature and purpose.

This researcher also wanted to lend female artists-experts a voice, exemplifying the depth of talent and vision by a historically and systemically undervalued group of women. Given their long, fraught challenges within the art world, many artists committed their lives and practices to make this a more just world. For their efforts, they are long overdue recognition.

3.3 Thematic Analysis Process

Thematic analysis was employed for “identifying, analyzing, organizing, describing and reporting themes found” with the data set (Nowell et al. 2017, p. 3; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Boyatzis, 1998). This researcher made judgments and decisions about coding, themes, and contextualizing the data (Starks & Trinidad, 2007; Nowell et al., 2017).

Interviews occurred over the phone or Harvard Zoom. The thought process was to make the subject as comfortable as possible—however, this researcher soon learned that telephone conversations often left data out, given background noise or the inability to record the conversation. Ten interviews occurred over the phone; handwritten notes contemporaneously memorialized as the respondent spoke and typed immediately after the interview. The focus on “just writing accurate data” might have diminished the evocation of richer data. Most interviews

occurred over Zoom, where most conversations were recorded and automatically transcribed. This researcher comes from a civil rights background;¹ it was hard not to feel protective of the participants, especially in light of their vulnerability.

Consequently, some comments considered potentially harmful were redacted. Some artists shared challenging experiences, and this researcher did not always delve further into those remarks, given the study's scope and the concern that it might cause more harm to the participant, including emotional distress. Additionally, there may have been response bias from the participants specifically, they may have said things believing this is what the researcher wanted to hear. The vast majority of female participants were located in the New York City Metropolitan Area, and further studies are needed to claim generalizability as to the study's findings. New York City is generally considered a tough place to live and work and may attract and retain a particular personality type.

This exploratory study elicited valuable data on artists' thoughts, insights, and processes despite study limitations. The steps outlined should enable a researcher to replicate the study and verify the findings based on the available transcripts. Category I artists, Category II artists, and Category III experts (primarily artists) shared common themes. However, the scope of the categories varied. For Category II and III participants, the questions and analysis were primarily focused on innovative ways the arts could be leveraged and artists' skills; Category III participants also discussed recommendations and strategies to support female artists.

- Phase 1: For each interview, this researcher went line by line and wrote bullets (codes) of what was learned or gleaned from each interview in detail.

¹ Before entering the DrPH program, this author was employed as an attorney for the Appellate Division (MHLS) 2nd Department in New York City

- Phase 2: Themes were developed and summarized from the codes or qualitative analysis. Codes were categorized under themes. An excel sheet captured and headlined all the themes from each of the twenty-two interviews. Memorable quotes that encapsulated a theme were memorialized.
- Phase 3: Each code captured in Phase 1 was placed under a headline/theme with the random number assigned to the participant whose comments fit into that theme.
- Phase 4: After themes were assigned a number from the participant's interview that fit into this category, this researcher returned to participant's original interview to ensure that every comment fit into a theme and verify an interviewee's coded comments/bullets.

An ongoing survey by the Americans for the Arts enabled artists to self-report the pandemic's impact on their lives. This survey provided initial data regarding the economic and financial hardships that female artists were experiencing. However, this researcher was not aware of how artists perceived the arts or how COVID impacted their processes or practices. As interviews progressed, data became richer, and the challenges associated with institutions and various social justice movements were magnified.

3.4 Category I Deidentified Female Artists

In this category, twenty-two female artists participated deidentified to preserve their privacy. Artists' demographics include: nine were married, one was widowed, one was divorced, and 11 were unmarried (though some were in partnerships). Four had children (and cited childcare as the primary challenge during COVID). One-third of artists were women of color. See Table 2. Their primary practices included the visual and performing arts. However, most artists worked across many fields at some point; three identify as multi-disciplinarians, See Table 3.

Demographics-Category 1	Number of Artists (Percentage)
Total Number of Participants	22 (100%)
Identified as a White Woman	14 (64%)
Identified as a Woman of Color or Bi-racial	6 (27%)
Born outside the US	2 (9%)
Single	11 (50%)
Married	9 (40%)
Widowed	1 (5%)
Divorced	1 (5%)
Without Children	18 (82%)
With Children	4 (18%)

Table 2: Category 1 – Deidentified Female Artists’ Demographics. Source: Author.

Art Practice & Engagement	Number of female artists’ primary source of engagement
Cultural arts (museums, galleries, community events)	0
Visual arts (painting, photography, sculpture)	10
Performing arts (dance, music, theater, and film)	8
Literature	0
Digital and electronic arts (graphics, animations).	0
Multi-Disciplinarian Artists	3

Table 3: Category 1- Art Practices & Engagement. Source: Author.

3.5 Contextualizing Data: Category I Artists

Robust empirical data underscored health benefits associated with the arts; surveys provided data on artists' challenges during the pandemic. However, this researcher did not know how artists perceived their practices, processes, or roles. Moreover, questions regarding arts' impact were meant as icebreakers to help artists feel comfortable; ultimately, it invoked rich data. Many spoke with great passion and focus for their field. These themes can be considered "Benefits" to self (the artist) or society. Benefits contributed to artists' resilience and enabled many of them to remain committed to a challenging field fraught with uncertainties.

Artists deliberately engage in a field where there are considerable struggles; many artists shared that this was not a field for the faint-hearted or weak. Consequently, many artists labor in interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary ways to support themselves. They perpetually grapple with the unknown, especially concerning financial support. Some artists mitigate this by working in steady jobs. However, most find creative ways to adapt to their environment. Amid interminable uncertainty, artists more adeptly work to process complex landscapes and many help those around them to follow suit.

In response to questions, themes also captured the impact of COVID-19 on artists' lives or the art world. While the pandemic impacted most artists mentally and financially, it also galvanized their work. Most worked through their pain to process what was happening, while others felt liberated and started producing more work or more focused work. Many artists expressed that COVID-19 made them more reflective and afforded them time to address challenges they had been facing in their fields. Emerging themes from this category are labeled "artists response to COVID." Artists' resilience and overall response to the pandemic demonstrate an ability to operate complex landscapes. Finally, the last category includes support

that artists found helpful, labeled relief from COVID-19. Four categories have been enumerated Based on questions poised to deidentified female participants. See Figure 2. Twenty themes emerged from the four categories. See Figure 3.



Figure 2: Four categories regarding deidentified artists' responses. Source: Author.

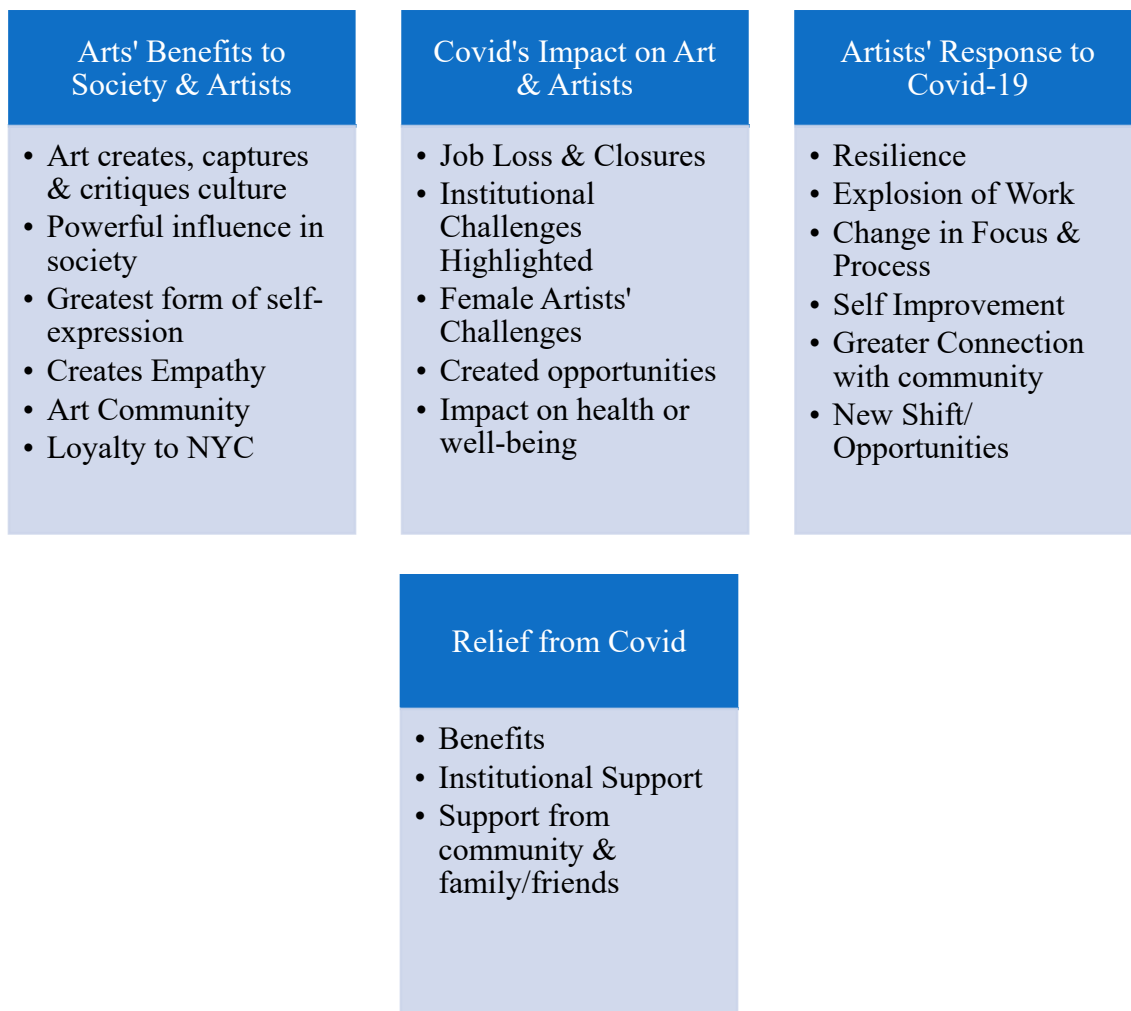


Figure 3: Twenty themes captured within the four categories. Source: Author.

3.6 Results: Category 1 Data: Arts' Benefits to society or the artist

Theme 1: Art Creates, Captures, or Critiques Culture

Artists always have the responsibility to respond to their lived experiences...and [have been] doing work around themes of equity, representation, and social justice for a long time (Artist, Personal Communication, 2020).

Artists serve as educators, story creators, communicators who impart diverse perspectives, facilitators of unique experiences, and key holders to new worlds. Some believe the arts serve as a mirror for society, to see and understand itself more vividly. Many artists feel a responsibility to depict the times or challenge social norms. Some also want to ensure inclusivity “representation is important for everyone, and ...art is the clearest path to seeing representation...and for others to see that representation” (Artist, Personal Communication, 2020). For many, art acknowledges diverse narratives and experiences.

Theme 2: Art as a powerful influence in society

The [arts] helped inspire me when I was growing up. They enabled me to dream about a world that was not part of my reality. If I can give that dream or exposure to someone else, it is powerful (Artist, Personal Communication, 2020).

Artists enrich the economy, enhance and beautify communities, and promote public health. On an individual level, they captivate, inspire, and remind us we are not alone. Artists understand the arts' potent impact and want to increase art exposure for society. However, this influence was mediated by artists' humility, self-doubt, or a sense of impostor syndrome, which may have resulted from the loss of employment or limited jobs during COVID-19. Regardless of the milestones achieved by female artists, many expressed their self-doubts. Additionally, many artists expressed anger or discontent that art remains undervalued or underfunded in the US despite its sizeable economic impact, especially compared to the arts' generous funding in Europe and Canada.

Theme 3: The greatest form of self-expression and corollary benefits

Art alleviates trauma, it heals people or heals me, regulates my emotions, grounds me, helps me be more resilient or more adaptable (Artist, Personal Communication, 2020).

Many artists chose to pursue a career or livelihood in the arts since they believe it is the most extraordinary self-expression. This feature benefits themselves and society. Many artists discussed how the arts enable them to process, translate, and critique the world.

This anchor enables the regulation of emotions pragmatically and productively, adding to an artists' sense of purpose and duty. Consequently, some feel more vested in helping individuals and communities also process the landscape. Artists also shared that art engagement healed them or helped them become more resilient, especially during the pandemic's novel and challenging circumstances. Moreover, they sought ways to help support those around them, primarily by providing virtual exhibits or performances.

Theme 4: Creates empathy & artists' desire to memorialize or highlight society's ailments

[Films] help individuals decide whether they want to be a better person. I do not necessarily think that individuals who hold dangerous assumptions are dangerous. I think a lot of people want to be good, but their understanding of what that means is based on hearsay. And I think that is why it's a gift to clearly and accurately portray one's story. We have not worked hard enough to understand one another or empathize with each other (Artist, Personal Communication, 2020).

Art is considered an empathy vessel, a connection for humans to the world.

Art practice enables a deliberate, conscientious appreciation of the human condition and its challenges. An artists' empathetic imagination transports a visceral experience to those around them. Empathy also helps artists process, translate, and critique the world and helps broader society do the same. This may also influence artists to feel compelled to push the envelope

or raise awareness of various social issues, especially to understand or highlight marginalized stakeholders' plight. Instead of shifting blame to others, many artists help society identify its challenges or face its uncomfortable truths and can experience the rising heat that accompanies difficult conversations (Heifetz et al., 2009). Many artists practice adaptive leadership or the ability to engage in adaptive work, which includes "holding people through a sustained period of disequilibrium, invent or discover [what] will help [others] thrive anew" (Heifetz et al., 2009, Glossary).

Many interviewees discussed a responsibility to incorporate messages of justice, public health, or equality through their art. Moreover, artists believe that art can serve as a platform to underscore gender/racial inequality or as an equalizer to make things more just. Empathy may also account for the cohesive network among artists in their community. Many expressed an appreciation for fellow artists and their practices, especially during COVID-19.

Theme 5: Art as a Community

I am happy to see how socially engaged my peers are through their work or with their bodies [protests and] also disseminating information online. And I hope this is something that sticks. But the magic of going to an opening in NY is meeting people, and that has gone, but in its place are intimate experiences with artists showing limited exhibits (Artist, Personal Communication, 2020).

Artists before them serve as powerful reminders of their potential to create meaningful work, and for some, this community served as an integral part of their identity. Many narrated a history filled with sacrifices and contributions made by fellow artists to enrich society and its culture. Some artists entered the field given their comfort or commonality with artists and the art world. Unlike many professions, art appears to have a

built-in appreciation for previous creative works. Additionally, many expressed the importance of networking within their community to secure employment or leverage works through collaborations with artists. Artists also expressed a deep appreciation and admiration for colleagues' work and how that kept them going during challenging times, including the COVID-19 pandemic. However, artists also noted that COVID limited exhibits including fewer in-person art shows and timed exhibits. Many artists eagerly anticipate viewing fellow artists' work following the pandemic.

Theme 6: Artists expressed a love/loyalty to NYC and the culture

I feel a sense of loyalty to NY. I am not someone who leaves a situation just because it is difficult (Artist, Personal Communication, 2020).

Despite the hardships and high cost of living, many artists expressed great loyalty to the Big Apple, their community. They felt New York's cultural scene and art community made it the cultural mecca of America. Many artists believed that New York cared about artists and citizens in general, and some also expressed satisfaction with the governor's response to the pandemic. Specifically, artists' expressed gratitude for health insurance and the COVID rules, even though it adversely impacted their livelihoods.

3.7 Category 2 Data: COVID's Impact on Art & Artists' Lives

Theme 1: Job Loss & Closures

The vast majority of artists lost their jobs. While many artists were self-employed, they were unable to secure work. Most filed for unemployment benefits at some point during the pandemic. Artists also discussed the impact of galleries, theaters, schools, and other closures and the loss of opportunities and workspaces related to that.

Theme 2: Institutional Challenges of the Art World

The reconfiguring of the whole structure and organizations [within the art world] and how they run...is very important. And I think that is very positive that has come out of all of this (Artist, Personal Communication, 2020).

Artists discussed the challenges of working with art institutions generally run by white men. Some also pointed out how institutions were now reckoning with questionable practices. Additionally, some artists' activists addressed the art community's challenges and other significant societal challenges. Artists also shared the pandemic's silver linings, including opportunities to cut out the medium (galleries from the equation) to showcase or sell work virtually, reducing institutional reliance. Increasingly, artists turned to virtual platforms to exhibit work and performances. Many discussed greater opportunities for female artists, people of color, and artists worldwide to be seen, heard, and exhibit so long as they have access to the internet. Additionally, artists were pleased that audiences worldwide had greater access to consume the arts, and many were attempting to provide online content.

Theme 3: The Challenges of a Female Artist

I am working in a medium that is historically and inherently sexist. Creating critiques within it highlights the sexism that has affected women's representation and identity and highlights how this seemingly benign cultural tradition has impacted our civil rights (Artist, Personal Communication, 2020).

Female artists continue to experience discrimination (men dominate leadership in art institutions and male artists continue to receive more credit for their work). Many felt that they were not taken seriously or undervalued. Some also discussed the need to learn to negotiate and draft contracts because of previously unpaid services. Artists challenged gender bias within their field and questioned whether male artists experienced the same pitfalls. During COVID, some artists temporarily paused to reflect on their past dealings with men in the art world and how to move forward strategically and receive credit (typically, financial). Given their lack of formal

leadership in art institutions, many female artists navigate an uneven playing field by creatively responding to the challenges by learning and adjusting the skill sets necessary for survival.

Female artists demonstrate an informal leadership skill set that uniquely positions them to help society make changes. Moreover, their professional struggles within the art world force many women to balance many harsh realities and help others also navigate a complex world.

Theme 4: COVID-19 had impacted health or well-being

No matter how educated or affluent, or even wealthy a couple is ... whenever they go through a life event... they revert to traditional roles... [the pandemic has been], a hard adjustment (Artist, Personal Communication, 2020).

Many artists indicated that they were struggling emotionally, with feelings of self-doubt or imposter syndrome magnified during the pandemic. Many also reported a decline in physical health. However, some artists indicated they were taking better care of their physical well-being. Artists who had children (albeit only 4) indicated that childcare was their most significant challenge during the pandemic; however, this was not the only challenge they cited.

Theme 5: Created Opportunities

Closures of galleries, and museums created greater access to the arts by shifting online. The pandemic opened the art world/art residencies to people worldwide to display work, so long as an individual has access to the internet; consequently, the art world experienced a major online content shift. The pandemic also provided more opportunities for worldwide audiences to view the arts. However, some artists also indicated that the virtual experience was not as enjoyable, and they coveted the limited in-person openings.

3.8 Category 3 Data: Artists' Response to COVID-19

Theme 1: Resilience

COVID freed me in a way. I started to trust myself more (Artist Interview, Personal Communication, 2020).

The pandemic's challenges made some artists feel more resilient. Some artists realized they were tougher than previously believed. Some artists created work to process what was happening to them and felt strengthened by that process.

Theme 2: Explosion of new creations by artists

Some artists said from the outset that the pandemic inspired them to create more artwork or to process what is happening in the world around them. Some started taking more novel risks, while others felt more focused and needed to channel their emotions.

Theme 3: Changes in focus and process

Some found greater comfort in the tactile skill of creating work and shared how their isolation caused them to appreciate what it meant to touch things during the pandemic. Consequently, some artists became more deliberate and thoughtful about created works with their hands, given the novel concerns raised by germs during the pandemic.

Theme 4: Self Improvement

Many artists devoted more time to research or learn their trade, take classes online, learn new skills. The absence of a "job" enabled them to pursue novel interests and experiences another example of artists' resilience under challenging circumstances to adapt.

Theme 5: Connecting more with community

Many artists collaborated with diverse partners in the arts to produce online content. They sought out collaborations with diverse partners (artists from other fields and categories) to create unique content to optimize the possibility to capture the audience's attention.

Theme 6: Provided new opportunities for artists to shift content online & Innovation

The pandemic has also provided audiences with the opportunity to view the arts if they have access to the internet. Artists had more opportunities to interact with one another and art consumers as well. Many took time to learn how to adapt to this new modality of art consumption to shift online content for audiences.

3.9 Category 4 Data: Relief from COVID-19

Theme 1: Unemployment benefits

Most artists secured these benefits during the pandemic and expressed the impact of this financial support. For many artists, this was the most important source of income. However, some artists continued to struggle with rent, studio spaces, and other obligations.

Theme 2: Institutional Support

Grants and residencies though few and far between, were also impactful for artists. Artists discussed how some museums provided them free workspace while audiences watched them creating work. A few artists discussed securing grants to support their work during the pandemic as revitalizing. One artist expressed appreciation for housing from an art residency.

Theme 3: Support from the art community/family/friends provided a great deal of comfort.

Artists discussed how calls from family members and friends helped them through isolation. Some relied on family and friends' generosity for emotional support, housing, and income during the pandemic. Also, other artists' works provided comfort and hope.

3.10 Summary

Deidentified female artists provided formidable data on the arts' powerful benefits for public health and social justice. Through their practices, artists transform societies through their ideals, diverse stories, and critiques. They captivate, inspire, and remind us we are not alone. Artists' adaptive leadership skills also confer significant benefits to society. Many discussed

empathetic practices to highlight and understand diverse narratives and representations. Artists deploy a range of creative tools to process a complex landscape, and many remain committed to helping others do the same. Given female artists' unique professional and personal experiences, many can identify and reconcile challenges within a community.

COVID-19 had significant consequences on female artists' lives and livelihoods. Most struggled with job loss. However, many demonstrated their ability to adapt and increase their resilience (and support individuals around them to do the same). Specifically, many artists focused on new work or novel creative risks; some addressed persistent challenges (including gender bias). Many used their time to professionally or personally develop and reconcile challenges in their lives. Female artists shifted their work to online platforms to support communities and audiences experiencing isolation during the pandemic. However, artists need more support (mainly financial) and acknowledgment to promote public health or social justice in the long term.

Chapter 4 - Featured Artists as Changemakers

[Artists] are a vital part of every community in the U.S., contributing in multiple ways to the quality of our daily lives and our economic and social well-being... They inspire novel thoughts, beauty, and meaning that shape our perceptions of the world and connect us to...common humanity (Center for Cultural Innovation, 2016, p.3).

4.1 Category Two Participants: Ten Featured Artists

The creative ways the ten featured artists capture narratives, create stories, or critique society optimize public engagement and constructive dialogue. As partners in public health, artists can help identify, address and reconcile the most pressing public health issues and do so in more compassionate and less jarring approaches. As the artist, Nadia DeLane, articulated, “art is not intrusive, but rather it can provide a call to action.” Moreover, every artist explicitly incorporates notions of social justice in her work to mitigate inequality. “I want [society] to know that all humans are equal” (Interview with Hend Al-Mansour). Every featured artist is a social innovator whose vision, goals, and art practice attempt to improve society (Cels et al., 2012). Through her practice, each artist is 1) meeting a social need, 2) preparing their art to engage beneficiaries deliberately, and 3) transforming public health or social justice potentially (TEPSIE Doing Social Innovation, 2014). See Figure 4.

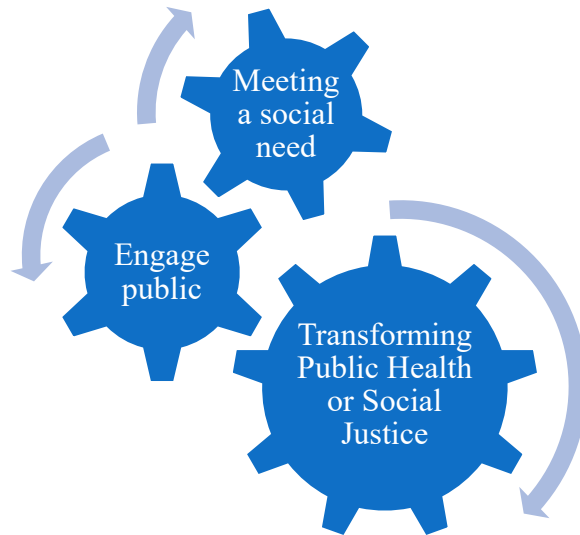


Figure 4: Artists as Social Innovators (Adapted from TEPSIE, 2014)

4.2 Three Major Categories of Data Captured Among Featured Artists

Though each featured artist is highly individualistic and demonstrates a range of artistic expression, they also possess similar characteristics. Based on questions posed, three primary categories were identified regarding featured artists’ practices to potentially transform public health or social justice. Three major categories captured featured artists’ responses, See Figure 5. Sixteen Themes emerged from these three categories, See Figure 6.



Figure 5: Three Categories Captured Featured Artists’ Responses. Source: Author.

Backgrounds & Experiences that Shape or Influence Art Practice	Artists' Vision & Adaptive Leadership Skills	Practices that confer Potential Public health Benefits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience with Inequality • Understanding of Arts' potent impact • Navigating the unknown 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative • Ensure proper representation • Deploy creative ways to engage • Curiosity • Keen listening skills • Adaptive Capacity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring Accurate Portrayals • Expanding Art Access • Igniting Dialogue & Empathy • Empowering Communities • Building Healthier Communities • Creating a More Just World • Healing Trauma

Figure 6: Sixteen Themes captured within the three categories. Source: Author.

4.3 Category One Data: Artists' Background & Experiences that Shape or Influence Art Practice: Three themes

Artists' backgrounds and experiences influenced their practices; many needed to articulate a vision for a healthier and more just world, given personal challenges with inequality. Artists' ability to navigate the unknown through their work positioned them to help others do the same. Lastly, they appreciate the arts' powerful impact on self-expression, the ability to process the landscape and help others do the same. This set captured three major themes.

Theme 1: Experience with Inequality- A Driving Force behind Featured Artists work

The most prevalent theme included personal experiences with inequality, generally gender; however, some artists also discussed racial or religious inequality. Some artists discussed the impact of observing their parents navigate discriminatory or oppressive systems. These experiences influenced their work's direction, with some artists feeling a need to make this world more accessible and equal for groups that have been marginalized or experiencing

discrimination. Additionally, many artists exhibit or showcase strong female narratives and women of color in their practices.

Theme 2: Navigating the Unknown

Some artists also shared their other struggles with the “starving artist” concept of financial insecurity. Some discussed taking more creative risks during COVID-19, entering into other art mediums, or collaborating with more artists. Covid-19 offered emancipatory opportunities for artists, many of whom eagerly accepted. Nearly all artists discussed the importance of remaining flexible and taking risks to experiment with their work. Most featured artists are multi-disciplinarians or have been at some point during their careers. For artists engaged in public art or public dialogue, there was a deliberate approach in responding to criticism, especially when it was not considered constructive. While artists remain open to public responses or criticisms, some also compartmentalize them to minimize harm to themselves. Perhaps most importantly, the artists’ ability or experience with navigating the unknown may enable her to help others navigate it.

Theme 3: An Understanding/Appreciation of the Potent Impact of the Arts

Every featured artist understood the potent power of art and leveraged her work for the public benefit. Many participated at some level during the pandemic to provide support, hope, or healing. For example, many artists created and provided a range of artistic content online for audiences, including plays and curatorial exhibits. One artist interviewed her neighbors in person to hear their thoughts about a local artist. Artists were forthright and deliberate about their commitment to making things more just for individuals or groups experiencing discrimination or other forms of inequality. Some artists also used their practices to help heal or mitigate some of the harm of feeling oppressed. Some deploy art to evoke feelings or as a coping mechanism—

whatever the artist deems necessary (e.g., calmness, peace, justice, and joy were all cited) for herself and the world. In some instances, the artist attempts to help others process, especially if she needs to process a complex landscape.

4.4 Category Two Data: Featured Artists' Vision & Adaptive Leadership Skills (Adapted from Adaptive Leadership, Heifetz et al., 2009)

Theme 1: Collaborative

Through her work, the featured artist attempts to ignite or facilitate dialogue while creatively problem solving how to help a wary population engage, address, and resolve social challenges that impact public health or social justice. Many featured artists also discussed the importance of personal or professional collaborations to optimize dialogue, inclusion, and creativity.

Theme 2: Ensure Proper Representation

Each artist also wanted to ensure a proper or accurate representation of all stakeholders in a given society and lend expression to underrepresented voices, narratives, or portrayals. Some featured artists intervened at the start of the pandemic to lend expression to communities of color, while others adapted their work to address inequality and heal populations. Artists were also trying to empower and build members of various groups while building a broader cultural understanding of these communities' plight.

Theme 3: Deploy Creative Ways to Engage

Artists' transdisciplinary practices help them approach challenges in creative ways; none operate in environments that make them “less able to adapt to new realities” (Heifetz et al., 53). They use various mediums to raise questions, lend expression, heal people, create empathy, and

build social cohesion. Additionally, artists can also deploy multiple mediums at once (e.g., music and art installations) to adeptly bring attention to these narratives or voices.

Theme 4 Curiosity & Theme 5 Keen Listening Skills

All featured artists deploy adaptive leadership skills by engaging with great curiosity, keen listening skills, and finding creative ways to engage with various stakeholders. They creatively amplify stakeholders' perspectives with little or no formal authority. Artists also use courage, curiosity, creativity, and compassion in practice to address, reconcile and highlight challenges.

Theme 6 Adaptive Capacity

Artists' visions, skills, and practices make a compelling case for why they can collaborate as adept partners to understand a community's needs. They courageously work within communities to understand the significant challenges for stakeholders. Female artists' unique personal and professional experiences position them to understand, process, and evaluate community engagement. They possess adaptive capacity, defined as “the resilience of people ...to engage in problem-defining and problem-solving work in the midst of adaptive pressures and the resulting disequilibrium” (Heifetz et al., 2009, Glossary). The skills, vision, and experience of every artist in this category positions her to catalyze change, and each artist is a resource that warrants greater merit for consideration as a partner in public health.

4.5 Category Three Data: Practices that Confer Public Health Benefits

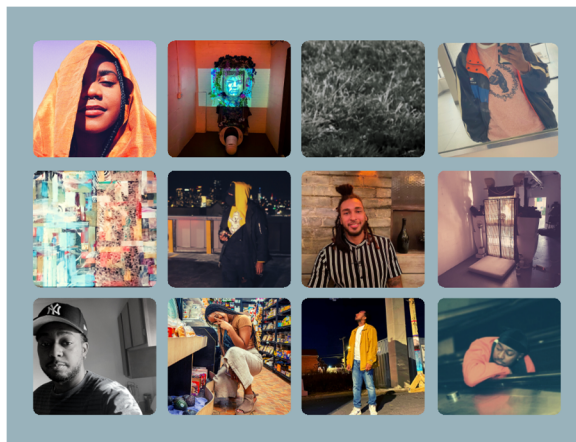
Lending Voice to Featured Artists: Interview Excerpts

In this data set, viewers interpret critical messages incorporating public health or social justice through female artists' words and artwork.

Theme 1: Ensuring Accurate Portrayals & Lending Expression

Nadia DeLane, Co-Director of Visual Muze at the West Harlem Art Fund, intervened early on during the pandemic to memorialize the quarantine experiences of residents of NYC.

As a storyteller, I produce more connections to combat loneliness. I want people to feel a sense of relatability. I do not want people to feel isolated, which is at the core of our social problem. **These projects are also meant to generate conversations.** Friends and family members who have listened to the [audio series] stories have shared that [it] makes them feel less alone, less isolated. **For whatever that's worth, it provides comfort...this specifically gives voice to people of color in quarantine who have particular health concerns** coming from the neighborhoods where they come from and dealing with the various things they have to deal with. **My art practice is a real authentic curiosity about the groups, communities, and people I claim to care about** (N. DeLane, personal communication, October 4 and 25, 2020).



Art 18. DeLane, N. (2020) Memory Opus during COVID-19.

Theme 2: Expanding Art Access

Besides lending people voices in various human rights movements, including Black Lives Matter and the Women's March, the photographer Savannah Spirit also co-curated the exhibit, the Confidence Game.

[The Confidence Game is] about the con man or the con woman. It's about the snake oil salesman and the fraudster, and it is the state of affairs that we're in... it's online, only because of COVID, but **I love doing online shows because it allows everyone in the**

world to see it, who wants to see it. We have people of color in the show...there is a collective of female artists that call out museum boards. **I can only help with my art to push it, but then society has to be responsible enough to look inward and go, here's where it needs to change.** And I think that is starting to happen. We're still epic. We're still fighting against that, as women artist (S. Spirit, personal communication, October 12, 2020).

Theme 3: Igniting, Facilitating Dialogue & Empathy

Gwenn Seemel harnesses the power of the arts to create dialogue and empathy. Ms. Seemel's Empathetic Magic collection provides two portraits of an individual, one to reflect what they look like when minimizing her/himself and the other to portray when one reveals her/himself. Ms. Seemel explains the necessity of creative approaches to foster or facilitate dialogue.

I do think that art is more about questions than answers. It is always more about fostering conversation and getting other people to say things rather than saying this is the way. Artists come in through the side door...[we] cannot come in directly... there is just no structure, setup...we are...trying to keep a finger on the pulse of the conversation. **My focus on public health, which is always to promote art as not just a good in the world but a necessity. I wish I had made empathetic magic for different worlds, but it is also shaped by the world that I made it for** (G. Seemel, personal communication, October 13, 2020).



Art 19. Seemel, G. (2017). Nikki and Moe Fitting In and Standing Out.

Meredith Bergmann, the sculpturer, discussed her commitment to civil rights and how that influences her work. She also provided some thoughtful opinions about controversial monuments that provide a great opportunity for public dialogue:

I do not think art can directly change anything, but it can provoke, and it can inspire, and it can cause people to question, it can ask questions. And that is really what I want my work to do to make people think about what they are looking at... but also think about what else they have seen and to try to imagine what they would like to see or what they might see in a different future. **In that way it could help change the world.** As far as... direct portraits of people, **I think that people who have been ignored who are important from history or even from our present-day having them portrayed in a sculpture gives them a majesty,** gives them a weight and it can help a lot. (In response to a question about controversial monuments): **I think municipalities have to recognize... a commission or something. ...a panel of local artists or experts, they have to involve local museums and... grassroots organizations...to come together immediately and start talking.** They [should] try to use it as an opportunity for locally funded or may be federally funded arts...these are great opportunities for people to experiment with interventions on monuments. (M. Bergmann, personal communication, October 3, 2020).



Art 20. Bergmann, M. (2013). Ruth Bader Ginsburg 2.

Theme 4: Empowering Individuals & Communities

Hodaya Louis' work is rooted in a multi-cultural narrative where she grew up aware of inequality and racism. She is keen on creating accurate portrayals of women in art. Ms. Louis is also trying to help people heal through her work.

[My mother's] dark skin is beautiful, and **I know there are not enough women of color represented, and it is something natural for me to do. And it can be very empowering.** I want people to be able to relate to my work. **In my abstract work, I am able to evoke emotional feelings from it.** And sometimes you are able to feel calm, or somber or soothed by art. **A choice of the artist is to invoke a feeling.** I want to feel calm and I think you should feel calm. I channeled my energy to something brave. Whenever I portray groups of women, there will be good energy there, something in the air. This group of women are also more unidentified [by their skin tones]. You choose what you want them to be in a way. **Any person can find themselves in the portrait. It is relatable to many types of individuals, which has a soothing effect. Art is a unifying experience** (H. Louis, personal communication, September 28, 2020).

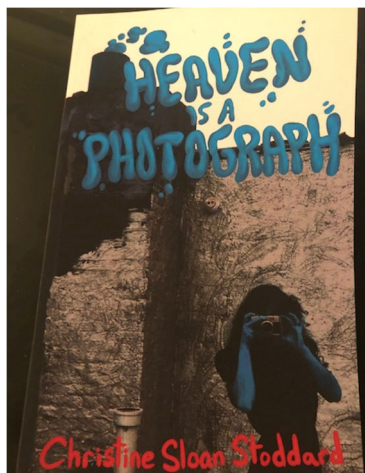


Art 21. Louis, H. (2020). Resting

Christine Stoddard, a Salvadorean-American, multi-disciplinarian artist, works in a range of fields and capacities. In her work with adults with developmental disabilities, Ms. Stoddard

pointed out that this group does not have many opportunities to socialize. Thus, making her art practice more compelling during the pandemic. During her practice, she noted a young man that would offer limited interactions. She also noted that his artwork tended to be COVID-related. Consequently, Ms. Stoddard started making COVID-19 paintings to engage with her client.

I would much rather everybody have access to art as a form of creative expression, possibly as a form of therapy. I think it's important that we have those different modes of expression available to us because people think in different ways and we should encourage different kinds of thinking. And I think a lot of students, especially students who do not come from a very narrow kind of background in this country...feel discouraged when they cannot articulate themselves. **I want to be a fixer; I want to connect people....that is something that I often do in my practice anyway because many of my projects are collaborative** (C.S. Stoddard, personal communication, October 4, 2020).



Art 22. Stoddard, C. (2020) Heaven is a Photograph book.

Theme 5: Building Healthier Communities

Vanessa Bowen's tailored indigenous public health message to Native Americans promotes health and resilience among communities that are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 (Bryan, 2021). Ms. Bowen is helping Native Americans identify the challenges (e.g. public

health) within the community in hopes of facilitating change or responding to the pandemic in a constructive way. Her work also addresses gender inequality and racism.

I usually find it a lot easier to (communicate) visually... and it's important to have the [proper] representation. It does way more work than our language does [and] more effectively.... Identifiers and artwork speak to the person who is part of that culture and who is familiar with that culture. **I have a strong belief that building community is my number one** (V. Bowen, personal communication, October 14, 2020).



Art 23. Bowen, V. (2020). COVID-19 Message for the Navajo Tribe.

Theme 6: Creating a more just world & mitigate inequality

Through depictions of women, the Arab-American Artist Hend Al-Mansour attempts:

To change the society and be more like an activist artist...to say things that woman [elsewhere] cannot say [or things] that I could not say [previously]. Art is very non-threatening...you can have images that say something that you do not need to say...or explain...and it can be understood. So maybe it will prepare people for... debate or more conscious understanding or discussion later, but first, it will introduce the idea, for example, if I have God represented as a woman... You have this exposure..., even though the idea is not put in words [and]...It's easier, I think for people to understand the ideas. [The inspiration to do this work]...comes from [the]...need to talk about

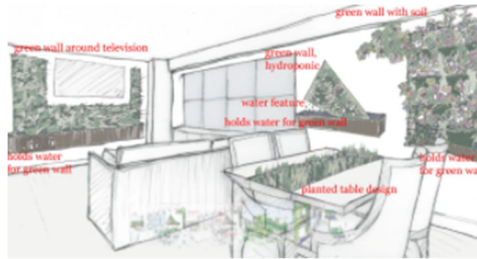
social justice. I feel I was oppressed or women are oppressed and we need to...talk (H. Al-Mansour, personal communication, October 20, 2020).



Art 24. Al-Mansour, H. (2011). Story of a Woman.

The greening artist Stevie Famulari “explores looking at innovative approaches using plant materials in unique settings [and] ...to enrich people’s minds and the spaces they live and work with” (Famulari, 2020). In her recent book, Green Up! Ms. Famulari helps us understand the importance of designing healthier living and working spaces.

I like my work to be accessible and approachable. [In my class] I had students understand the barriers others face in our landscape. [Though], we have a legal Americans with Disabilities Act ... I have my students in wheelchairs for five hours once a semester....to see what that slope...and what that legality of that gravel...really feels like. **Some [artists] respond to culture, and some create culture...they are on the outskirts they dance on that edge of what it is and what it can be... I’m going to focus on what it can be.** Now we can say that the topic of [my] second book [Green Up!] responds to COVID and does, in a way, but it also responds on what we can do with design. **I would rather create a world than respond to the world. Healing landscapes that depict the growth and change of plants** (S. Famulari, personal communication, October 4, 2020).



Art 25. Famulari, S. (2019). Images of loft apartment from Green Up Book!

Theme 7: Understanding Shared Loss & Healing Collective Trauma

In the film, Vamik's Room,² Director Dr. Molly S. Castelloe uses her background in psychoanalysis and theatre to help people understand shared trauma's historical aspect.

I see the arts as a stimulant for discourse around group trauma, and they have the power to help us work through trauma. We can educate the public about the experiences and emotional dynamics that have been passed on through generations, based on...shared trauma [experienced] by slavery in the US or with survivors of the Jewish Holocaust. For example, monuments such as lynching memorials...or holocaust memorials are **public art works that facilitate dialogue...difficult ideas about leadership, politics and how we govern. We need to facilitate discussions around how these monuments should be contextualized and where they belong.** Where should Confederate monuments be located and how should we frame them in ...today's cultural context ...[of] the Civil Rights Era...George Floyd and Black Lives Matter? We know...monuments invoke... emotions for different people. As an artist I want to help build **creative frameworks for cultural dialogues and individuals' ability to speak to and about those differences and antagonisms of acting out in violent ways.** Covid accentuates our dynamic around splitting and the division of good and bad. When the reality of the situations is more nuanced and complex to think about. We need someone with the ability to help us mourn. We have so much loss and death...[with the] pandemic. We should be reaching out to grassroots organizations to help people around mental health and public health issues.

² The film airs on PBS on September 21, 2021 (World Peace Day) under a different title, Blind Trust, a title from Dr. Volkan's book about large groups and leaders during a crisis (Dr. M. Castelloe, personal communication, March 9, 2021).

That's what the film speaks to. **I'd like to continue to show [Vamik's Room] and discuss the ideas around it. I think one role of the arts is to help persons come to terms with their losses.** And create an environment for an adaptive mourning process to take place and to help individuals imagine a generative future and ways they can get through shared crises and not feel alone in it (M. Castelloe, personal communication, October 2, 2020, and March 8, 2021).

Thematic Analysis - Public Health Benefits Conferred from Artists

Theme 1: Ensuring accurate portrayals or lending expression to diverse stakeholders

Artists' created opportunities to help individuals express themselves or encourage individual engagement in the arts. Nadia DeLane's interviews enabled Harlem residents to narrate their own stories at a critical time when NYC was the epicenter of the pandemic. Christine Stoddard continued her creative work with developmentally disabled clients, understanding that the pandemic's increased stressors made it even more critical to do so. Opportunities to engage in self-expression may ultimately reduce stress (Juslin, 2013; Fancourt & Garnett et al., 2019). Moreover, the prevention or control of stress may reduce the impact of stress-induced chronic diseases (Stephoe et al., 2012).

Theme 2: Expanding art access

The powerful impact of the arts on broader society compels many artists to ensure greater access to the arts. For example, Hodaya Louis volunteers to teach art to high school female students. Artist, Savannah Spirit, curates exhibits online and collaborates with diverse artists to appeal and to encourage more attendance and participation, especially during COVID-19. She believed one of the pandemic's silver linings was the ability to increase art access, so long as people had access to the internet. Greater art access may lead to cultural convergence and influence people in many ways by what they observe or experience and ultimately create more

empathy and understanding towards the plight of those around them. It may also allow individuals to find meaning in their lives through a form of shared expression (Dissanayake, 1988).

Theme 3: Igniting, Facilitating Dialogue & Empathy

Art in public spaces promotes social cohesion and increases safer, healthier environments (Fancourt & Finn, 2019; Coggan et al., 2008). Many artists whose work lives within public spaces, parks, museums, or film (including Meredith Bergmann, Molly S. Castelloe, and Stevie Famulari) provide greater public dialogue opportunities on issues involving inequality, trauma, and accessibility. Social interaction can reduce loneliness and discrimination while increasing social capital (Boss et al., 2015; Steptoe et al., 2013; Pascoe, 2009). Additionally, in *Empathetic Magic*, Gwenn Seemel asks the public to consider what happens when identities are concealed and revealed. She captures the striking differences with side-by-side art images of someone revealing/concealing their identity. Ultimately, these art practices, including community or public art, can serve as an impetus for improving social dialogue, inclusion, trust, cooperation, tolerance, and respect (Spandler et al., 2007).

Theme 4: Empowering Individuals and Communities

While some artists articulated the need to empower individuals or communities (Interviews with Hend Al-Mansour, Hodaya Louis, Savannah Spirit), some artists tacitly work towards the goal. For example, Christine Sloan Stoddard wants to ensure that all people can communicate and not only through an exclusive traditional language. Nadia DeLane's intervention to memorialize NYC residents' experiences reduces loneliness and empowers interviewees and the community they inhabit. Vanessa Bowen's artwork often features a strong Native American woman who encourages voting, equal pay, and other tribal-targeted messages.

Featured artists' goals (whether explicit or implicit) have merit; the arts can empower and build capacity within individuals and communities (Beresford, 2002). Moreover, empowering individuals can produce positive clinical and health outcomes (Rappaport, 1981 and 1987; Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988).

Theme 5: Building Healthier Communities

Stevie Famulari creates healing landscapes to improve mental and physical well-being. She recently published *Green Up* to encourage plant usage for “healthier work and living environments” (Famulari, 2020, preface). Vanessa Bowen’s strategic COVID-19 messages for the Navajo tribal community promote and build a healthier community, one hard-hit by the pandemic. Her messages encouraging compliance with COVID-19 safety measures can promote healthier behavior among the tribal community. Gwenn Seemel encourages mask wearing for both children and adults with heroes/heroines with masks.

Many featured artists also have the potential to build healthier communities with their art practices. For example, artists lending expression to individuals and groups who typically may not have experienced this opportunity, especially during COVID-19, may increase their resilience and relatability, decrease loneliness; and for broader society, this may build empathy. Additionally, art that increases curiosity ignites dialogue, more meaningful exchanges, and social cohesion may also serve as building blocks for a healthier community.

Theme 6: Creating a More Just World/ Mitigate Inequality

All featured artists are working to advance social justice, the most dominant theme throughout the interviews. Artists were attempting to mitigate inequality stemming from various aspects, including gender, race, economic, or disability. A range of creative tools were deployed to engage broader society in addressing, questioning, and understanding art. For example,

through her practice, HEND Al-Mansour wants the audience to understand that everyone is born equal, and her depictions reflect that value. She believes that art provides a safe space to create a dialogue about the plight of women. Her strong female narratives may also empower women, leading to more resilience. Meredith Bergmann creates sculptors that often feature female trailblazers, long over-due for recognition in various movements. Through her work, she intends to redress historical inequality by reminding the public of women's achievements and contributions to American society. Robust data confirms that the arts can reduce social inequities and improve health determinants (Fancourt & Finn, 2019), leading to a healthier and more just world.

Theme 7: Understanding Shared Loss & Healing Trauma

Studies have also suggested that art engagement may reduce trauma and increase resilience among holocaust survivors (Diamond & Shira, 2018). The arts may also improve the processing and meaning of the traumatic event (Hass-Cohen N. et al., 2018). Through the film, *Vamik's Room*, Director Dr. Molly S. Castelloe hopes that society will understand and process the meaning of shared trauma and collectively heal significant losses. She believes that art can provide a meaningful forum to discuss a broad range of issues that need to be processed and resolved, including controversial monuments and statutes. Based on her experience with controversial statutes, Meredith Bergmann also believes they offer opportunities for collective dialogues as well as excellent teaching moments. She would like local governments and commissions to devote more resources to facilitate discussions with the community. If properly facilitated, these forums can help broaden understanding, create empathy and lead to social inclusion and social cohesion. Many opportunities afforded by featured artists to engage in art,

by lending expression to others or raising/facilitating critical dialogue or reminding people they are not alone in their experiences also help ignite the healing process.

The seven themes' potential impact or value can be further categorized at three levels: individual, community, and public health levels. See Figure 7.

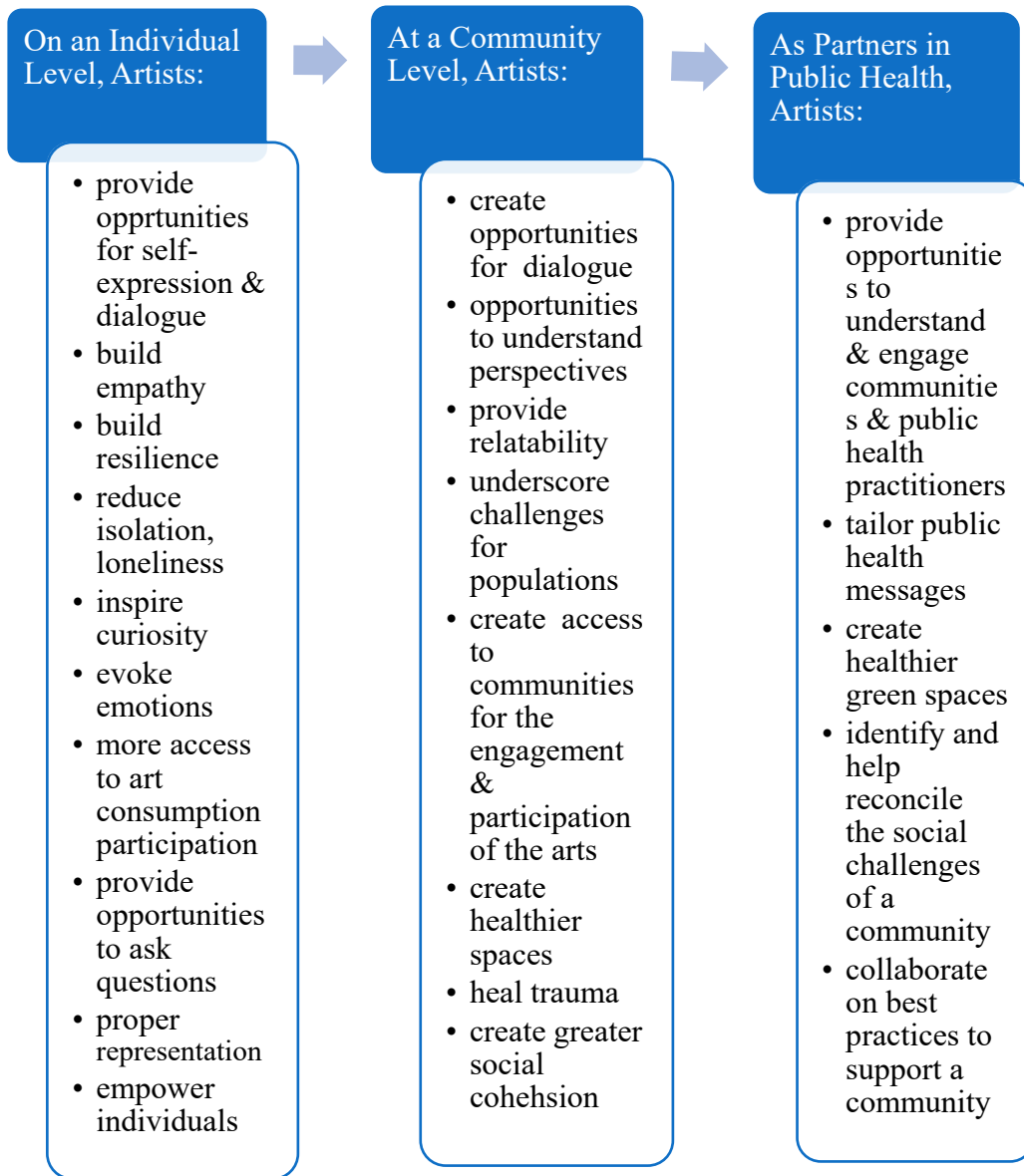


Figure 7, Featured Artists' Potential Impact or Value on Three Levels. Source: Author.

4.6 Featured Artists' Engagement, Skills, and their Visions & Goals

Each artist discussed the range of creative tools and actions deployed to create a healthier or more just society. Featured artists' practices and skills set have been summarized and encapsulated in **Table 4.1. See Appendix B.**

4.7 Summary: The Case for Artists as Formidable Partners in Public Health

Featured artists' practices, leadership, and vision make a compelling case for their great potential to serve as formidable partners in promoting public health and social justice. Personal experience and recognition of the impact of inequality make artists keenly more sensitive and vested in helping broader society understand that experience. Their visions and adaptive leadership skills make their practices extraordinary. Each artist possesses a great range of creative processes to captivate and engage diverse audiences, with great potential to penetrate a community's hearts and minds. Artists deploy different modes to capture and critique inherent challenges within society; all featured artists create platforms to build or strengthen community cohesion, heal individuals and communities. Artists are an integral part of the American recovery response. Specifically, they can:

- 1) facilitate dialogue among key stakeholders, identify a community's challenges and help reconcile a community's needs
- 2) help mitigate social health determinants and improve health outcomes
- 3) build resilience and empower individuals and communities; and
- 4) promote public health and social justice.

Public health practitioners need to consider the most effective ways to partner with female artists to promote public health and social justice. Specifically, featured artists

courageously problem-define and problem-solve, especially during the disequilibrium created or exacerbated by COVID-19 (Heifetz et al., 2009).

Artists can engage diverse communities by deploying a range of creative tools while exercising independent judgment, with the ability to help others process in real-time. They understand the complexity of human emotions and the range of stakeholder's interests, concerns, and fears. Through their practices, artists can help communities identify challenges and conflicts that devalue public health and social justice. They can also help community members address and mediate conflicts and challenges (Heifetz et al., 2009).

Artists can also help reflect on a community's progress and experiment with a range of creative interventions. They are accustomed to gauging results and can monitor a program or intervention's progress (or lack thereof); they frequently do this in the public domain and do not shy away from controversial, provocative engagement or results. As many artists shared, this field is not for the faint-hearted; artists operate with many unknowns. Many discussed how their practice makes them more resilient and open to various outcomes. Thus, artists remain engaged with the opposition; they do not respond to conflict or challenges with binary approaches but rather engage dissenting voices and experiment with novel responses (Heifetz et al., 2009). Many are accustomed to criticism and find ways to compartmentalize or adapt-some artists even court provocation to raise attention to the causes or issues they champion. Perhaps more importantly, artists can navigate complex environments with pragmatic responses and help others do the same. They can maintain a steady holding environment and frequently do so for those around them. Artists continuously reflect, learn and adapt to achieve favorable public health and social justice outcomes.

CHAPTER 5: Expert Interviews

Art requires imagination, and justice does as well. They are both about seeing something that is not there and then working to make it so (Duvernay A., 2020).

5.1 CATEGORY III Participants, Experts: Two Primary Category Sets

Expert interviews generated two category sets. See Figure 8. Under the first set, leveraging the arts to promote public health or advance social justice, four themes were gleaned. The second set of data included strategies or recommendations to support female artists with two primary themes raised. See Figure 9.



Figure 8: Two category sets generated from Expert Interviews. Source: Author.

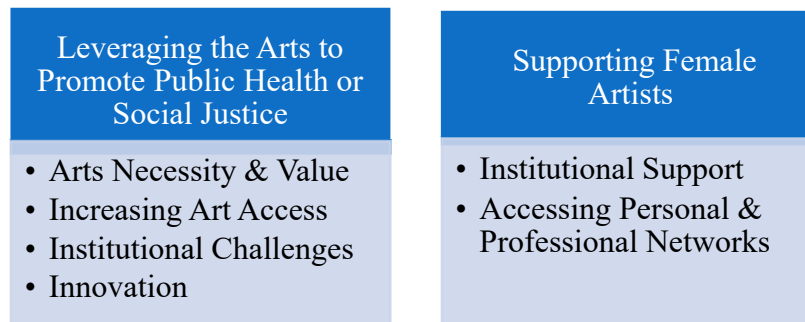


Figure 9: Themes from Leveraging the Arts to Promote Public Health & Social Justice & Themes generated from Supporting Female Artists. Source: Author.

5.2 Category 1 Data: Leveraging the Arts to Promote Public Health and Social Justice

Theme 1: Arts' Necessity & Value

Experts understood the arts' influential role in society to promote public health or advance social justice. Four experts shared how different art practices could benefit the public through meaningful dialogue, expression, and empathy in innovative ways. Additionally, five experts discussed adaptive leadership skills they deploy in identifying challenges and supporting

communities. Many experts experiment and work to resolve challenges around them, even in the absence of formal authority. Finally, a couple of artist-experts also shared how translating or interpreting personal experiences or processes may benefit the public by igniting an opportunity for dialogue with diverse perspectives.

Ms. Leah Poller (Sculptor & Former Art Representative) discussed the importance of dialogue to jumpstart empathy:

We need to talk. [Hear] each other's stories, your natural capacity for empathy and understanding. We have just been dehumanized in every respect...the arts are [a] very important kickstart to going back to being human (L. Poller, personal communication, October 27, 2020).

Ms. Nicole Serra (Co-Director, The Park Avenue Youth Theatre) discussed the importance of sharing diverse perspectives:

[The] human need to connect is so important and ...we want to create a sharing. I think one of the most important roles of the artist is the ability to tell stories in different ways. I worked at a medium-security adult men's prison [and] did my thesis in a rehabilitative jail center. [Prisoners] created their play, and ...they did...different issues involving reentry and...in front of the other men in the prison, and...it was suicide....they all ended horribly. They started back at the beginning with all of the men in the prison...and they problem-solve together. You bring people into the audience [and they] become part of the play....and learn a little bit more about characters as opposed to watching them from a stage (N. Serra, personal communication, November 24, 2020).

Ms. Denise Hughes (Director of Education, MCC Theater) discussed the importance of speaking to youth:

I feel like the age of really listening is getting younger and younger. I think we have lost that as a culture... it's [about] compassion, respect, [and] also accountability. How do we hold each other accountable and, in many ways, like restorative justice ...[to] do it in a way that does not cancel someone? I think it is our job now more than ever... to figure out that conversation as a community (D. Hughes, personal communication, November 12, 2020).

Ms. Francoise Voranger (Co-Creator, Hybrid Movement Company) discussed adaptive leadership:

Artists lead by example in a way...[not] suggesting authority but inclusivity. I am going to translate the process. There is enough space to disagree and agree. Diversity of this range of expressions is important³ (F. Voranger, personal communication, November 20, 2020).

Ms. Maureen Renahan-Krinsley (Artist, Instructor and Former Art Therapist) also discussed artists' adaptive leadership skills:

Crisis happens, and artists react. Often artists are leaders—their reactivity leads to changes. It takes organizers to target the groups you want to facilitate and start a dialogue with. Murals are a powerful way to do this. Street art is evocative and political. In order for artists...to facilitate it we need funding. Social programs helped artists become leaders⁴ (M. Renahan-Krinsley, personal communication, October 27, 2020).

Ms. Sheila Kriemelman (Artist and Former Professor) discussed artists' responses to their environment:

The good and bad aspects of a long life lived with great feeling is that many of us are faced with seemingly unbearable burdens, most artists incorporate these challenges into their art. I have always used painting to move from denial to rage to abject sadness to acceptanceNow I do it consciously...Whatever is happening in my life is always eventually expressed in my work. This will happen with COVID (S. Kriemelman, personal communication, November 5, 2020).

Theme 2: Increasing art access during COVID

Many experts committed to helping audiences engage in the arts, especially given the pandemic's unique stressors, including isolation. Four experts found ways to shift content-on line or provide alternative ways to help others access the arts. Experts also devoted more resources to

³ Ms. Voranger implicitly understands adaptive leadership or the need to help people navigate challenging circumstances, even in the absence of formal authority, as she experiments with solutions to resolve challenges (Heifetz et al., 2009)

⁴ Ms. Renahan-Krinsley also references the leadership skills artists successfully undertake to resolve challenges. She was likely referring to the WPA program.

populations in greatest need of art engagement, including those socio-economically impacted or hard hit by the pandemic. Experts discussed some of the challenges associated with the rapid online shift acknowledging that it may not confer the same experience as in person, particularly the socializing component. One expert also raised the need to increase access to the arts and demystify the arts as an institution. While all experts discussed the need to support communities and individuals during isolation, some also highlighted the funding realities. Accessibility to the arts for broader society requires federal, state and local, and private funding to support programs that include capital and revenue.

Dr. Louise Mirrer (President and CEO, the New York Historical Society) discussed the benefits and challenges of online events:

Programming [for families and children] is...wonderful, and it... works best when it's offered at no charge. Everything [is working] except the fact that we derive no revenue ... people have very limited resources...that is the main stumbling block (L. Mirrer, personal communication, November 3, 2020).

Ms. Serra highlighted the importance of shifting content online for students:

[Our] group shifted its content to online to continue to work with students and have found that it is an important outlet, particularly for students whose backgrounds make them vulnerable to the consequences of the pandemic. Sometimes [students] experiment with new identities in...our theater space and they are able to start fresh and engage themselves (N. Serra, personal communication, November 24, 2020).

Ms. Hughes discussed the importance of tailoring art programs:

Leveraging the arts...[is] about building community...and bridging the gap, not just about the art itself, and how do we take the art, level it up and meet the people, that is where I think the power of this work is ... I am looking into drama therapy programs because I think people are going to need that healing...[after the pandemic] (D. Hughes, personal communication, November 12, 2020).

Dr. Rubina Waheed (Psychiatrist in NYC) discussed cost-effective, safe ways to support community art engagement:

I work in a low-income community, and public murals bring all of us together to create something that beautifies the area and unites us and we adhere to proper social distancing. This is one way to help a community come together (R. Waheed, personal communication, November 4, 2020).

Ms. Poller discussed artists' roles and the need to make art more accessible to the public:

Artists are willing to be hypersensitive and confront [the challenges of our society]. Education will be key. The importance of the arts and need to provide greater access to Americans so that it starts a dialogue. The arts are incapable of separating money and culture. They have such an exaggerated commercial element we co opt-in and everything and turn it into a financial configuration which then leads us by the nose; you have a hierarchy in the art world that has nothing to do with the way artists live...When I had my gallery, my biggest challenge was to convert non-art people into art people, show them how to look at art, give them the experience, talk to them about it. I think that is another part of the educational process until we begin to think of artists as a natural resource (L. Poller, personal communication, October 27, 2020).

Ms. Siena Porta (Artist and Former Professor) discussed the need for children to access the arts and for the funding of art programs:

The arts have to start in preschool. And children need to be exposed to the arts. NIH funded decentralized grant programs [would be great]...because.... [we] don't usually get a chance to do Public Art (S. Porta, personal communication, October 27, 2020).

Ms. Renahan-Krinsley discussed previous programs that supported artists and the public:

We need a program like the Works Progress Administration to support artists –work on public arts projects...and to support the community (M. Renahan-Krinsley, personal communication, October 27, 2020).

Theme 3: Institutional Challenges & Limitations

Data highlights persistent challenges within the arts. Two experts focused on the art field & institutions, citing racial and gender inequality and the need to resolve them. One expert stressed the importance of acknowledging limitations when collaborating with a community.

Dr. Mirrer stressed the importance of crediting women for their contributions:

We were insistent on helping people to consider women as part of the main American narrative..., even though 50% of the population is female (L. Mirrer, personal communication, November 3, 2020).

Ms. Hughes discussed the on-going challenges for artists of color and the responsibility of artists to address that collectively:

You may understand [the] arts---but you do not understand the arts for people of color.⁵ There is a belief that the arts level us....it does not...I think we have a tremendous responsibility as artists to reflect what we see ...and what it can be and to present that to people...and to have people join in...that needs to be a communal process (D. Hughes, personal communication, November 12, 2020).

Ms. Serra enters spaces sensitive to various dynamics:

I am working...from a trauma-informed lens...and we are not like by no means counselors or therapists...but if you want to be able to hold a space within a particular community, you need ...to recognize when trauma is coming up (N. Serra, personal communication, November 24, 2020).

Theme 4: Innovation to Promote Public Health or Advance Social Justice

Experts adeptly provided a range of innovative projects and programs that could leverage the arts to promote public or social justice. All experts identified a need within a community and then experimented or took creative risks to address these needs. At least two experts collaborated with a community to assess its needs.

Dr. Mirrer discussed a couple of ways the NY Historical Society supports the community:

We developed a center for women's history [here].... because we were insistent on helping people to consider women as part of the main American narrative. We [also] had a wonderful program...with people who suffered from Alzheimer's and their caregivers to use the museum's quiet day so no distractions....people had had a chance to interact with our art and with educators who were specially trained to give them this

⁵ While there is limited data on Artists of color, recent studies reveal they receive less recognition for their contributions and are disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 (Halperin, J & Burns, C, 2019) & (Americans for the Arts COVID Survey, 2020)

experience; and then we had workshops for them to make art. The museum can be a great place to invite people...to be inspired. And then to be invited to express themselves (L. Mirrer, personal communication, November 3, 2020).

Ms. Serra has used the theater to help a community identify and work to resolve its challenges:

[In theater], there are a set of tools....that allow you...to go into communities and work alongside these communities to help them identify issues that they want to explore or...address. One of the things that excite me about applied theater is that it's using different formats to brainstorm. What... or how the community can address [these issues come]from within the community...[to]learn about the community [and its challenges or needs]. [For example, putting on a play where] there is a clear- cut protagonist that's going through these obstacles and they always fail at the end of the story...[and having a facilitator engage the audience to ask] was that inevitable or were there things that happened that this person could have different choices they made that that could have led to a different ending? An incredible facilitator [once] ...said to me, the holy grail of being a leader facilitator...[is] authenticity, transparency, and curiosity (N. Serra, personal communication, November 24, 2020).

Ms. Hughes discussed the importance of helping meet students where they are and preparing them for where they go:

Our biggest goal is meeting people where they are, and ...All of our programs are very writing heavy,students write their work. It is not about them learning to do a scene by checkoff. It is about what did they have to say to the world. [In] their own words, ...own work, ... own dances, sometimes their own songs and raps. That was like a really big pivot, but [for] the Ambassadors program [our director] was very open to my reimagining and making it a pre-professional development program, not just where students learn what it takes to put up their production, but what I wanted to...[accomplish] from my own experiences [is to help students identify] what are your core values...? And to protect and prepare them since it is predominantly Black, indigenous, Latinx, Asian Americans [and], what does that mean when you walk into white institutions and what happens when you do not know...what [are] your hard boundaries (D. Hughes, personal communication, November 12, 2020)?

Ms. Voranger discussed ways the arts can help teams identify some of their challenges and work to improve them:

In the past, I have worked with corporations on team building through flying trapeze courses. These teams were fascinating ---patriarchy was often strong. One or two women were viewed so differently on these teams. Flying trapeze has a cause/effect that is so apparent because teamwork is essential; everyone has to work together to make it work. Moreover, those [dynamics] are very visible. If [the team] successfully works on catching the member, after a few months, many will remark that productivity has increased, the way they talk to each other has changed. But individuals who have power struggles with one another or lack of communication always result in failures (F. Voranger, personal communication, November 20, 2020).

Ms. Poller shared how artists interfaced with the public during the pandemic and ignited a discussion:

In Harlem, [a group of artists] decided we needed to do something to externalize our conversation...we found an empty wall, and we did an evening projection of artwork, and all the artists were present and interacted with whoever was there. [It] was on a busy street on a Saturday night. People were out and about, and we found it to be so satisfying that we want to repeat it twice a year, no matter what...it was very effective, and it opened up all kinds of dialogue, and we met all kinds of people who would never have seen that work (L. Poller, personal communication, October 27, 2020).

Ms. Kriemelman discussed the potent impact of the arts in education, to heal people:

I created this summer institute about the healing power of art...the goal of the course was to give teachers the confidence to teach students to use art as a means of expressing anger, sadness, loneliness, alienation, and rage. The objective... was to show teachers how to create a safe, supportive, collaborative environment in the classroom...and to see these activities as essential for facilitating the release of feelings around loaded issues (S. Kriemelman, personal communication, November 5, 2020).

Ms. Renahan-Krinsley discussed the importance of continuing art engagement with vulnerable children:

A group I am involved in with, Silvermine—serves underserved neighborhoods. While ...social distancing [they are] completing murals with kids (M. Renahan-Krinsley, personal communication, October 27, 2020).

5.3: Category Two Data: Supporting Female Artists

Theme 1: Institutional Support

One expert from an institution underscored the need to support female artists by featuring their work on display and sharing their stories.

Dr. Mirrer continued to highlight the work of female trailblazers during the pandemic:

We [the NY Historical Society] used our courtyard to display the photographs of Kay Hickman, a ...Brooklyn based photographer, an excellent photographer, but I would say... [not] as widely known as she deserves to be... together with an activist Kevin Powell [she] went around the five boroughs of New York photographing during the height of the pandemic (L. Mirrer, personal communication, November 3, 2020).

Theme 2: Accessing Personal & Professional Networks

Experts focused on female artists' need to identify personal and professional networks and use them for support and collaborations. Four experts discussed ways that benefited their creative practices, including collaborations with artists, steady employment outside of the arts, expanding personal and professional networks to include unionization and professional associations with female artists.

Ms. Sarah Katz discussed the impact of running a business independent from her art practice:

Running a business gave me a great deal of confidence...it left my art in a place where...I did not have to ask it to make money (S. Katz, personal communication, October 29, 2020).

Dr. Waheed wants women, given their disproportionate caregiving responsibilities to find time to care for themselves:

Women need to find ways to increase their social interaction [e.g., zoom]. It is essential to take the time to connect with family and friends. You have to take care of yourself

before you can help others. Supporting each other and identifying support systems (R. Waheed, personal communication, November 4, 2020).

Ms. Porta discussed the importance of finding important networks within the arts:

If you want to stay in [the arts], you are going to have to deal with the commercial...Find a way around it, find out about unionization for artists (S. Porta, personal communication, October 27, 2020).

Ms. Kriemelman also discussed important networks for female artists:

This sense of sorority....New York Society Women Artists...[is] all about the work and all about...exhibiting, and...organizing with this big show (S. Kriemelman, personal communication, November 5, 2020).

5.4 Two focus groups: the New York Society of Women Artists (NYSWA) discussed the best ways to leverage the arts and mitigate the pandemic's impact on female artists. This researcher emailed the NYWSA for an interview, and ultimately, we agreed to hold two focus groups. Eight deidentified members participated. Additionally, five members sat down for one-to-one interviews. Founded in 1925, the NYWSA “devoted itself to avant-garde women artists” (NYSWA Website, 2020). The group boasts many trailblazers in their field, including women who worked with the Federal Arts Project during the New Deal, Guggenheim Fellows, and the Prix de Rome. In honor of the centennial anniversary of the 19th Amendment, the NYWSA exhibited Female Gender Identity and Equality at <http://www.newyorksocietyofwomenartists.com/shows>. The two focus groups discussed topics that captured three major themes.

Theme 1: Arts Necessity & Value

Participating members discussed the necessity of the arts for themselves as well as broader society. Members created art to express themselves and to regulate their emotions or “keep me sane.” During COVID-19, some artist-experts use this time to “create more happy pieces” and

take more risks. Members also discussed a range of ways that art confers benefits on society, including the arts as a way to facilitate dialogue, support at-risk youth, and art therapy programs. Members also discussed artists' social activism. "I think it is a brilliant thing.... I think they are these people (who) have been important through history; they have advanced us, they have brought consciousness to issues" (NYSWA Focus Group, Personal Communication, November 2020). Another artist raised the cost for an artist's activism especially during the current times.

And we are at a time that it is almost like....McCarthyism. When Trump first got elected, I had a friend who did a Trump tombstone, put it in Central Park. He was not putting a death threat out, but he was making a statement, and he did get arrested. Where do you draw the line...How far is too far? And you know, that's a judgment call. Yet people throughout history have done this. And I think it's important if you feel, you know, passionate about it and strong enough about it to let your voice be heard (NYSWA Focus Group, Personal Communication, November 2020).

Throughout this study, artists shed light on the most pertinent issues and challenges that require society's attention and resolution.

Theme 2: Increasing Art Access

The focus group also discussed the need to make art more accessible for audiences, including increasing public art and funding to drive these initiatives. The various options range from creative engagement in the arts (e.g., public murals, art education) and ways that may enable greater access to the arts or its consumption, including funding, or as a way to increase dialogue or to highlight social issues, See Figure 10.



Figure 10: Increase art access. Source: Author.

Theme 3: Supporting Female Artists

The focus group cited crediting female artists for their contributions and learning more about the artist's life and process and buying female artwork. Members also discussed the importance of collaborating with other female artists, recommending each other to networks and institutions, and relying more on social media to promote works than galleries. Some also felt having a side job that did not rely on art provided them support and independence. Finally, some members discussed the importance of policy support at higher government levels to leverage artists' roles and the impact of art with a program similar to the WPA, See Figure 11.

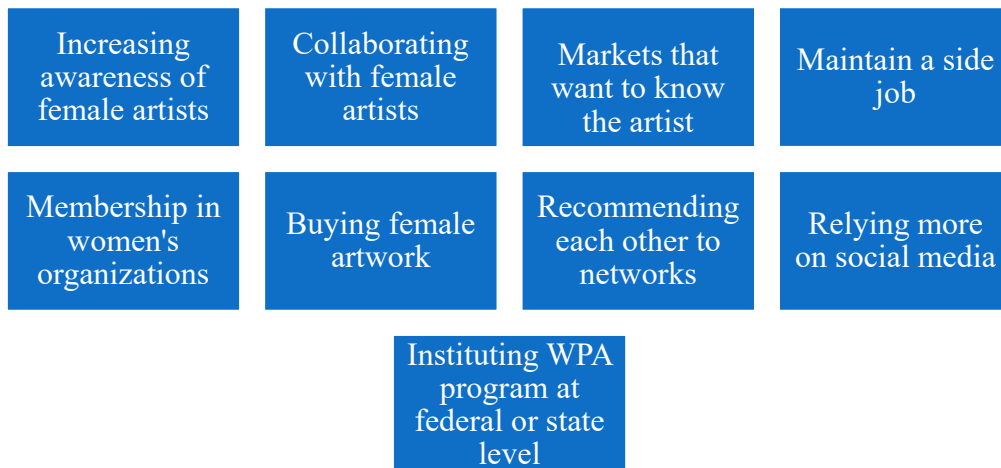


Figure 11: Supporting Female Artists. Source: Author.

5.5 Common Themes Among All Participants

Experts provided strategies and recommendations to support the arts, and the female artists who creatively and ambitiously seek to address and resolve society's challenges. Their

personal and professional experiences reflect practical approaches and recommendations to leverage the arts and support female artists.

Experts innovatively discussed ways that the arts can help promote public health and social justice. Additionally, experts from the theater and dance companies and major institutions adapted their programming to meet audiences and consumers where they were located during the pandemic. Despite financial and technical challenges, experts in the arts remained committed to their audiences, consumers, and students. Many believed that the arts, particularly youth, were lifelines, especially during the pandemic's harshest impact in New York City.

Experts, particularly from the NYSWA, also discussed the importance of collaborating with other female artists in unions or women's groups and becoming independent of any medium but instead relying more on social media to feature or publicize work. Experts (through their own practices and leadership skills) underscored female artists' compelling features, namely, their adaptive leadership skills.

Artists within this study frequently engage in three key activities, including 1) observing the complex environment around them; 2) processing or interpreting what is happening and 3) designing necessary interventions for these challenges (Heifetz et al., 2009). Experts deliberately and methodically responded to the pandemic by designing interventions to support the communities they inhabit and work within. Many also shifted their work to online platforms and relied less on the typical mediums, including galleries. Experts found silver linings to the pandemic and quickly found innovative ways to support themselves and their communities.

Experts reflect many of the themes captured in the other categories of artists; they understand that accurate representation of stakeholders remains vital in understanding complex environments, and many remain committed to supporting communities.

Artists in Categories 1-3 share common themes, including understanding arts' powerful impact on individuals & society. Moreover, artists discussed the importance of greater public access and engagement in the arts during Covid-19, especially for vulnerable communities. Many artists and experts discussed the tremendous impact of COVID-19 on the arts and artists (both negative and positive) and the need for various forms of support to ensure that artists can pursue their work and support the public. There was also an acknowledgment that female artists and artists of color face unique challenges necessitating creative support. Artists provided strategies and recommendations to leverage the arts and mitigate the pandemic's impact on female artists at an individual and higher policy level. Specifically, female artists need more recognition from the art world and the institutions that set prices for their works. They also believe more acknowledgment of female artists' processes, works, and contributions to society remains critical. However, artists and experts are also shifting the power from institutions (e.g., galleries and other art platforms) and taking control over their narratives and practices. Many believe the pandemic has helped loosen the dependence on galleries to generate publicity and pricing for their works; instead, many artists increasingly rely on social media.

Finally, artists and experts respond pragmatically to the challenges around them. Artists have long captured society's truths, critiqued the society, and intervened with a range of creative problem-solving techniques, qualities that make them formidable problem-identifiers and problem resolvers in relevant public health and social justice matters.

Chapter 6 Conclusions & Recommendations

6.1 Project Aims & Summary

Covid-19 has magnified alarming disparities inscribed within various economic, social, and health domains of the U.S. that subject women and communities of color to the pandemic's harshest consequences. Additionally, Americans are grappling with distrust, rage, isolation, and corollary mental health challenges. More than ever, public health practitioners must innovate and strengthen partnerships with diverse community members who can promote an American recovery. Robust empirical data exists on the arts' potent role to promote public health and advance social justice. This study sought to understand the role of the arts and artists during COVID-19. Three categories of participants (deidentified artists, featured artists, and experts) primarily from New York City discussed how the arts and artists support public health and social justice and ways to support female artists, many significantly impacted by COVID-19.

The first category of artists discussed the impact of the arts on society, the pandemic's impact on art, their lives and livelihoods, and the most valuable relief from COVID-19. Interviews from this category served as building blocks for this study; artists create, capture or critique society and facilitate dialogue. While most artists in this category struggled with the pandemic's financial and social consequences, they continued to engage in their practices with creative risks and adapted to new norms. Some also considered challenges in their practice and took time for further professional development.

Featured artists encapsulate our society's harrowing and painful truths and inspire us to envision a world with improved health and justice. Their artwork was also featured to underscore the ability to captivate and engage audiences on a range of critical matters. Featured artists discussed their roles, processes, visions, and leadership to advance art's impact on public health

or social justice. They are keenly sensitive to the range of societal challenges, including social determinants that impact public health; many shared personal experiences with the inequality that shapes or influences their work. Further, artists' range of adaptive leadership skills enables them to identify and work to resolve society's most significant challenges. Their practices can advance public health or social justice.

The last category of participants, experts (primarily artists), discussed innovative ways to leverage the arts to promote public health and social justice. They also shared strategies to mitigate the pandemic's impact on female artists. Inevitably, experts also discussed significant challenges in leveraging the arts. While a renewed optimism exists in leveraging the arts and mitigating the pandemic's impact, the fragmented response to the pandemic over the past year reminds us of the necessity to incorporate a bottom-top approach to leverage the arts and promote public health, focusing on the groups most vulnerable to COVID-19's impact.

6.2 Framing Recommendations to Leverage the Arts

This study incorporated the social-ecological framework for public health practitioners to innovate and strengthen relationships with art and cultural centers and artists to promote public health. See Table 5, *Leveraging the Arts for a Healthier & Just Society*. This study also used the social-ecological framework to analyze ways to mitigate the pandemic's impact on female artists-changemakers. See Table 6, *Supporting Female Artists*.

To effectively implement this framework's bottom-up approach, a tailored analysis will need to be conducted for each community to understand its challenges and needs as art interventions are designed, implemented, and evaluated. Additionally, a target population (e.g., neighborhoods with the greatest needs) within the community must be identified. This thesis incorporated the challenges and strategies identified by research and participants' interviews.

However, given the inherent data limitations, it would be prudent to assess a community's specific environment before proposing an art intervention. (Adapted from Fancourt, *Implementing and Evaluating Interventions*, 2017).

- 1) Assess the state of health in a community by looking at the scientific data and listening to residents. Target a population in need (e.g., a neighborhood that has sustained significant losses from COVID -19).
- 2) Assess the arts and cultural assets of any given community (public health resources, and the arts—including female artist-changemakers, libraries, schools, community centers, religious groups with potential room for growth, innovation, and partnership).
- 3) Identify and recruit partners in the arts, particularly female artist-changemakers skilled in community engagement, to understand collaborative opportunities for public health messaging, campaigns, interventions, and treatments. Assess funding opportunities.
- 4) Develop public health interventions based on empirically sound art interventions with artists and buy-in from the community (members from the target population).
- 5) Pilot a community art intervention (designed with artist(s) and residents), monitor and evaluate the pilot's objectives and goals periodically.

Some of the most potent or innovative partnerships with artists to build resilience & empower communities include:

- 1) Increase educational access to the arts for children and their families as a vital outlet to express and regulate emotions.
- 2) Help individuals and communities increase art engagement through public and virtual exhibits to build social cohesion and decrease social isolation (e.g., public murals, public gardens, and concerts).

- 3) Increase art-therapy access to populations to mitigate trauma and mental health challenges (innovating or increasing prescriptions to the arts for therapeutic engagement)
- 4) Engage dialogue with drama and plays, where the community serves as the protagonist. Alternatively, use monuments, statues, and art to engage and facilitate dialogue.
- 5) Local officials should seek state, federal support, grant funding, individual philanthropy, and community support. For example, the New York Community Trust allocated generous funding to artistic non-profits to continue educational programming for students with professional artists (Aridi, 2020). Additionally, ArtPlace, a national partnership consisting of foundations, federal agencies, and the largest US banks, is a new investment model revitalizing cities and towns throughout the nation (Bloomberg Philanthropies, 2021).

6.3. Supporting Female Artists & Mitigating the Pandemic's Impact

The primary recommendations to support female artists and mitigate the pandemic's impact include:

- 1) Identify female artists, particularly change-makers skilled in community engagement, and invite them to partner in public health.
- 2) Leverage the role of female artists as partners in art therapy, educational programs, and facilitators in monuments and other public settings to identify, facilitate, and mediate community discussions and challenges
- 3) Identify resources and networks for female artists, increase support to artists through funding, networks, affordable housing (and asking them most helpful support).
- 4) Publicize female artists' contributions throughout *her-story* (publishing stories, promoting their works and achievements in newspapers, libraries, museums, and schools)

5) Supporting female artists through public recognition, grants, and funding.

Table 5: Leveraging the Arts for a Healthier & Just Society (SEM Framework, Adapted from CDC)

Social-Ecological LEVEL	CHALLENGES	STRATEGIES
Individual Level	<p>Inequality (Gender/Race)</p> <p>COVID-19</p> <p>Job loss</p> <p>Isolation/ mental health challenges</p> <p>Distrust</p> <p>Rage</p> <p>Illness/ Death</p>	<p>Enable individual opportunity to express concerns</p> <p>Understand individuals' needs</p> <p>Work with diverse community partners</p> <p>Consider perceptions of population</p> <p>Understand available resources</p> <p>Innovate, integrate, or strengthen arts-based programs that support individual needs</p>
Interpersonal Relationships	<p>Support systems questionable/vary during isolation</p> <p>School systems off/on</p> <p>People are working remotely</p>	<p>Identify social support systems/networks</p> <p>Innovate or strengthen relationships</p> <p>Encourage people to check in on family, friends, neighbors</p>
Community (settings which hold relationships)	<p>Social connectedness varies</p> <p>Resources in any community depend on income levels</p> <p>Neighborhood organization levels vary</p> <p>Limited economic opportunities</p> <p>Lack of recreational opportunities/ activities during lock-down</p>	<p>Identify the community's greatest needs (and tailoring art interventions)</p> <p>Innovate and strengthen diverse partnerships partners (e.g., ArtPlace in New Orleans redeveloped a campus into an arts and education center with affordable housing for low-income artists)</p> <p>Consider successful art programs</p> <p>Hire artists and fund programs that facilitate dialogue (murals, theater)</p>

Table 5 (continued)

Social-Ecological LEVEL	CHALLENGES	STRATEGIES
		<p>Hire artists and fund programs that facilitate dialogue (murals, theater)</p> <p>Provide art residencies to artists for public health or social justice work</p> <p>Identify & apply to grants and foundations for support art/artists at the community level (e.g., a Public Art Challenge, American Cities Initiative, mayors were invited to apply for up to \$1 million in funding for “public art projects” (Bloomberg Philanthropies website)</p> <p>Design community art programs that enable social distancing</p> <p>Monitor & Evaluate programs</p>
Societal Factors (MACRO)	<p>Culture of intolerance, hate</p> <p>Divisive rhetoric at the highest levels of government</p> <p>Health policies/responses to COVID have been fragmented</p> <p>Distrust</p> <p>Economic Policies</p> <p>Educational Policies</p> <p>Address Gender wage gap; wage gap for people of color</p>	<p>Mitigate mental health challenges/trauma/inequality by funding programs</p> <p>Fund programs that increase artists and improve communities (WPA)</p> <p>Ensure greater financial support for individuals with little or no income</p> <p>Support national institutions/groups that fund local and community arts: ArtPlace, a nationwide initiative National Endowment for the Arts,</p> <p>Advocate for the incorporation of the Arts in Healthy People 2040 (Sonke, 2019)</p>

Social-Ecological LEVEL	CHALLENGES	STRATEGIES
Female Artists	Inequality (Gender/Race) COVID-19 Isolation/ mental health challenges Distrust Rage Job Losses/ Economic hardship Illness/ Deaths Collective trauma	Identify resources available for females (familial, social and professional) Interventions that will enable artists to receive financial and emotional support
Interpersonal Relationships	Support systems questionable/vary during isolation Many school systems have closed People are working remotely	Innovate or strengthen relationships that prove to be beneficial Identify social support systems/networks especially within the arts that may prove helpful to female artists
Community (settings which hold relationships)	Residents' social connectedness vary Resources in any community depend on income levels. Neighborhood organization varies Limited economic opportunities Lack of opportunities/ activities during lock-down	Unions, female artist organizations & collaborations, Recognition/ Publicity of artists' stories and contributions within schools, libraries, local art centers (museums, cultural organizations) Affordable Housing for artists contributing to local development & economies Partnerships with schools, public health departments, libraries, religious groups, and arts and cultural centers Increased Institutional Support
Societal Factors	Gender wage gap; wage gap for people of color Equality under the law has not translated into equality in fact	Increase grant support for female artists Increase financial support for artists through Covid bill National Day Care

Table 6: Supporting Female Artists (SEM Framework, Adapted from CDC)

6.4 Future Recommendations

While this exploratory study developed ideas, testing with surveys on a grander scale for validity and reliability is recommended. Specifically, understanding female artists' perceptions of their roles in society, experiences, and unique challenges. Additionally, insights from experts

at local and state levels (e.g., policymakers including public health) may provide more insights and address the challenges of funding or implementing art programming in general, especially during the pandemic. Current studies at the interface of public health and art initiated by Jill Sonkin and Dr. Daisy Fancourt should be closely monitored. Identifying and replicating art programs found beneficial during COVID-19 remains essential. Moreover, designing or replicating optimal art programs in the pandemic's aftermath that mitigate mental health challenges and social inequality should be a priority.

Lastly, every community faces unique challenges; however, the pandemic has underscored public health practitioners' need to engage with diverse stakeholders to identify, address, and reconcile challenges. Practitioners will also need help to build and rebuild trust with stakeholders. One of the most strategic and impactful ways is to partner with local female artists-changemakers who have significant experience engaging with diverse groups while identifying and reconciling challenges for a community. Artists can innovate or strengthen art programs with public health partners and work with communities to address and resolve some of the most significant challenges our nation faces. Perhaps most importantly, America's natural resource, her artists, can help us achieve a healthier and more just America.

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
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Appendix A

Chapter 2

% Artists Surveyed	Challenges Since the Pandemic
63%	Fully unemployed
95%	Loss of income
62%	Drastic Decrease in creative work that generated income
40%	Drastic Decrease in Personal Creative Projects
49%	Lost non-creative jobs
67%	Unable to access resources (supplies, space) for creative work
50%	Applied for unemployment
85%	Not unionized
70%	Applying for relief from grants
78%	No Financial Recovery Plan
66 %	Had full health insurance
68%	Lack of creative productivity in personal art attributable to stress, depression
40%	Lack of creative productivity in personal due to family/social responsibilities

Table 2.1 (Adapted from the Americans for the Arts, 2020 COVID Survey)

Rank	Most Helpful Things To Artists During Pandemic
1	Unemployment Insurance
2	Food/Housing Assistance
3	No interest business loans/forgivable loans

Table 2.2 (Adapted from the Americans for the Arts, 2020 COVID Survey)

% Artists Surveyed	Challenges Before pandemic
60%	Experienced Chronic troubled sleep/tiredness
50%	Been discriminated against
47%	Lost revenue/opportunities because of unfair agreements/taken advantage of
50%	Not visiting a doctor due to lack of insurance/lack of money
47%	Experienced food insecurity

Table 2.3 (Adapted from the Americans for the Arts, 2020 COVID Survey)

Appendix B

Chapter 4

TABLE 4.1 Featured Artists' Engagement, Skills and their Visions & Goals

Artist	Art Engagement & Social Need	Skills	Engage Beneficiaries
Nadia DeLane	Visual Artist, Storyteller; collaborates with musicians & artists	Active Curiosity Emotive communicator	Lends expression to communities of color through stories Captures & addresses community challenges shares stories & generate dialogue with broader society mitigate inequality
Vanessa Bowen	Graphic Artist; collaborates with artists	Creating & sharing beauty; showing proper representation Simplified messages	Promote public health Portray accurate representation Build community Captures & addresses social challenges Mitigate inequality
Savannah Spirit	Photographer, Curator	Documents human rights movements that invoke gender, racial and economic disparities	Lend expression to women & people of color. Have society look at itself more clearly (and ask questions) Captures & addresses social challenges Make art more accessible Mitigate inequality
Hodaya Louis	Fine artist, videographer	Portray the beauty of women of color Make work relatability Evoke emotions	Portray women of color Empower women/girls Unify people Create empathy Heal people Captures & addresses social challenges Mitigate inequality
Gwenn Seemel	Portraiture, Author	Reveal/ show the range of identities public health messages Create/generate questions for art	Promote public health Captures & addresses social challenges Create empathy/curiosity Heal people Mitigate inequality
Christine Stoddard	Artist, filmmaker, writer and theatre-maker	Features strong female narratives; art is a language to express self and communicate Shared expression and dialogue.	Art as a mode of expression A way to promote expression & dialogue Relates to people through art Empower women, communities of color, disabled people Captures & addresses social challenges Mitigate inequality

TABLE 4.1, Continued Featured Artists' Engagement, Skills, Visions & Goals			
Hend Al-Mansour ■	Fine Artist, videographer	Portrays strong females and females in Islam	Art as a mode of expression Empower women Art as a healing technique Capture & address social challenges Promote social justice Mitigate Inequality
Stevie Famulari	The Green Artist, author, professor	Creates landscapes Helps students understand landscape challenges Portrays strong female narratives	Designing/ Creating Landscapes to promote health Art as an adaptation to meet people's needs Art as a healing technique Captures & addresses social challenges Promote equality Mitigate Inequality
Meredith Bergmann	Sculptor, poet & essayist	Creates Sculptors that Honor women	Art as way to capture and address social challenges Inspire people Creates Curiosity Engages/Facilitates Dialogue Mitigate inequality
Molly Castelloe	Professor, filmmaker, author	Created film that Helps people understand shared trauma, historical trauma	Art as a way to address historical and current social challenges Art as a healing technique; help people deal with their losses Art as way to see a better future Mitigate trauma, inequality