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Examining Cultural Equity: Boston's Arts & Culture Sector

Marian Taylor Brown
*University of Massachusetts Boston*

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EXAMINING CULTURAL EQUITY: BOSTON’S ARTS & CULTURE SECTOR

A Dissertation Presented
by
MARIAN TAYLOR BROWN

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies, University of Massachusetts Boston,
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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Global Inclusion & Social Development Program
EXAMINING CULTURAL EQUITY: BOSTON’S ARTS & CULTURE SECTOR

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Approved as to style and content by:

________________________________
Valerie Karr, Assistant Professor
Chairperson of the Committee

________________________________
Benjamin Lichtenstein, Associate Professor
Member

________________________________
Barbara Lewis, Retired Associate Professor
Member

________________________________
Mia Perry, Senior Lecturer
University of Glasgow
Member

________________________________
Kaitlyn Siner-Cappas, Graduate Program Director
Global Inclusion and Social Development PhD Program

________________________________
Sheila Fesko, Associate Dean and Director
School for Global Inclusion and Social Development
There is a cultural equity gap within the United States’ arts and culture landscape, constituting unequal representation of various identities in the arts, including, race, disability, gender, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status.¹ These inequities reproduce within arts management, academia, artist sales, and donor and foundation demographics and priorities. With the objective of working toward creative justice in Boston’s arts and culture sector, this multiphase study employs transdisciplinary research using inductive, mixed-methods to learn: 1) current influencers’ understanding of the cultural equity gap; 2) current influencers’ motivations to eradicate the cultural equity gap; 3) how arts leaders with various marginalized identities conceptualize and operationalize leadership development for themselves; and 4) how arts leaders with various marginalized identities perceive barriers to access for positions of leadership in the arts and culture sector. These nuanced investigations support the foundational question: What are the social, emotional, economic, and cultural assets within Boston that can lead to creative justice and what reformation is still needed to achieve creative justice? Findings include attitudes and beliefs surrounding cultural equity, examination of historical and present-day oppressive structures, pipeline talent issues and opportunities, levers for change in building equity, and a call for culture shift.

*Keywords*: cultural equity, arts leadership, systems change, creative justice

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¹ In 2016, Americans for the Arts released a statement on cultural equity, thus becoming the adopted definition of cultural equity within the U.S. arts industry (Americans for the Arts, 2016).

² Current influencers are defined as leaders in the arts who hold institutional and decision-making power. This includes arts managers, educators, funders, board members, individual artists, universities, small nonprofits, large nonprofits, museums, foundations, for-profit companies, and government.

³ Arts leaders can be either emergent or established, including youths, who will assume leadership roles.

⁴ Various marginalized identities include people of color (POC), people with disabilities (PWD), female identifying (female), and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual (LGBTQIA+).
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Reflection, Credits, Dedication

Reflection. Examing Cultural Equity reflects the collective work and investigation of Arts Connect International’s (ACI) team, along with my academic inquiries and work from the fall of 2016 – spring 2020. Over the past four years, ACI’s administrative team, board members, community partners, and funders have committed to exploring the cultural equity gap with ACI. Their contributions and willingness to develop this body of knowledge show its importance and relevance to the arts and culture sector, as well as to their individual and collective commitments to this work.

I am proud that my doctoral dissertation research is participatory in design and I am humbled by the opportunity to work with an entire team of researchers and scholars contributing to this body of knowledge. Doctoral pursuits are more often singular than collective, and the questions centered in this work demand a systems approach, welcoming others, excitedly incorporating their ideas, values, and the lens through which they approach and analyze this work. Working with a research team for one’s dissertation challenges traditional ways of constructing knowledge within academia. The role that I play, and that the team of researchers play, vary amongst and within the phases and methods presented.

My committee’s insights, and their challenge of hegemonic norms through embracing Examining Cultural Equity, are also brave and essential to this dissertation’s success. This speaks to the values upheld by the School for Global Inclusion & Social Development (SGISD) at UMass Boston. Examining Cultural Equity would not be possible without the support and access afforded through both ACI and SGISD and the related people running,
propelling, and creating within both. Although I am the founding executive director of ACI, and the principle investigator behind *Examining Cultural Equity*, the work is collectively developed, executed, and analyzed. Ultimately, I do not believe that social justice work should ever be owned as intellectual property—nor do I believe it can ever be the work of one individual. First and foremost, the work embodied in this dissertation belongs to a social change movement and to the community, which I stand by firmly. I embody this as my responsibility in being a social-change and justice practitioner, artist, educator, researcher, and co-conspirator.

Throughout the design and execution of *Examining Cultural Equity*, participants and researchers’ perspectives and positionality are explored through an intersectional lens. Intersectionality, as coined by Crenshaw (1991), examines the intersection of where race and gender meet. It calls into question the experiences of women of color, in particular, examining their individual and shared experiences. These experiences are compared with those of other individuals and groups who may share one of those identities, e.g., white women or men of color. White women are marginalized due to their gender positionality yet hold racial privilege in their positionality as white. Similarly, men of color are marginalized due to their racial positionality yet hold gender privilege in their positionality as men. This introduces the idea of double marginalization, i.e., the concept that several forms of systemic oppression and marginalization can intersect to create a single form and experience of oppression.

Intersectionality expands the concept and dyad of privilege and oppression as polarizations to instead look at individuals simultaneously holding a multitude of aspects and
attributes of privilege and oppression, simultaneously. Although Crenshaw’s work started in gender and race, the concept of intersectionality has extended to now encompass several forms and positions of oppression, privilege, and power, extending to include age, disability, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, socioeconomic status, geography, citizenship status, religion, etc. (Crenshaw, 1991; Collins, 2015; Lorde, 1997; McCall, 2005; Young, 2009).

As an educated, disabled, queer white American cis-gendered upper middle-class woman living and working in Boston, I endeavor to be cognizant of how my identity affords me certain privileges, and how I profit off of said identity politics. This is particularly true in regard to my positionality as the founding director of ACI and my ability to navigate the arts and culture sector. Said positionality became apparent as we conducted Examining Cultural Equity, where at times my identity propelled the study, and at other times became a liability to the study itself. Although I identify as disabled and queer, the disabilities that I hold are hidden in the form of a chronic pain condition and learning disabilities, and my primary partner is male, so I have privilege as “passing” regarding both my sexual orientation and ability level. I was raised in a two-parent household, practice Buddhism, and live in a large metropolitan city. These aspects of my identity deeply inform the lens through which I see and interpret the world and contribute to my own implicit biases. If I am to support others in their journeys toward understanding and awakening to creative justice, I must always commit to doing the same for self, endeavoring throughout my life to build and uphold cultural humility (Trevalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998).
Implicit bias is rooted in unexamined privilege. If you tend not to notice certain inequities, chances are you are unaffected by them, or have been taught not to notice and draw attention to them. In other words, if you are part of the in-group whose community is reflected in Boston’s arts and culture sector, you are less likely to recognize or challenge the inequities presented in this dissertation, simply because you are less likely to be affected by them. Chances are you are actually actively benefiting from implicit structural privilege within said spaces, often unconsciously. This is how systemic oppression works and is perpetuated, i.e., through implicit bias and unexamined privilege, and through the enforcement of assimilatory practices established by an in-group as the “norm” (Moodian, 2011; Trevalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998).

Due to a lack of lived experiences surrounding discrimination, marginalization, and oppression tied to race, it can be difficult for white-identifying people to relate to the inequities that people of color (POC)-identifying arts leaders and artists face. This contrast might be even more stark when examining the experiences of female POC-identifying artists and arts leaders, particularly compared with those of white men. The in-group profits off of innate privileges and biases afforded to them based on social value systems and structures, which uphold and perpetuate inequities and current reproductions of power.

Having a team of researchers, educators, artists and practitioners work on this body of research was not only necessary given the breadth of the work but also for the authenticity of voice throughout to employ an intersectional justice lens. As I built out the teams working on Phase I and Phase II, I endeavored to be reflective and thoughtful around positionality and team composition. I was moved to see who was drawn to the work, and I learned a lot about
how to construct meaningful collaborative research work. I was also confronted, over and over again, with some of the embedded oppressive structures within academic and IRB sanctioned research as well as being forced to reflect on the extended time needed to do truly co-creative work.

By no means do I assert that the study was perfectly devised nor executed, or that I was an excellent project manager or principle investigator. What I can say, definitively, is that I tried my best within the systems and contexts that were present, and that I learned a lot about how to continue deconstructing oppressive systems and ideologies, both internally and externally, in praxis, research, and everyday life. I recognize, humbly and repeatedly, that this will be a life-long and iterative process. I am so deeply appreciative of every individual who has generously and patiently contributed to my learning in this process, and to the body of work that has become *Examining Cultural Equity*.

My overt goal with *Examining Cultural Equity* is that it becomes a bridging piece of work, one that provides tangible and meaningful research data that can be used in praxis, policy, and academia. The work challenges individuals to examine their implicit biases, with the hope that it will call them in, working to better understand the power structures we all participate within, including awareness of structural oppression and their roles within said systems, as well as their roles and responsibility moving forward in dismantling said systems.

Although the primary audience for *Examining Cultural Equity* is the arts and culture sector, I believe that the sociocultural and sociopolitical issues of equity examined translate across many fields and disciplines. Similarly, although the primary audience is Boston, I believe many of the findings are translatable, or at least relatable, across geography. The
various phases of the study, and the methods employed, as well as how they are analyzed and presented, correspond to the audiences that the research team intends to reach and are informed by the perspectives and voices shared. These choices are also informed by power differentials across the lines of race, age, and positions within the sector and amongst research participants themselves.

**Credits.** I have unending gratitude for my dissertation committee, including Dr. Valerie Karr, Dr. Benyamin Lichtenstein, Dr. Mia Perry and Dr. Barbara Lewis. Dr. Karr, my academic advisor and committee chair, provided profound insights and support through every step of this path, bringing her knowledge of systems change and her dedication to transdisciplinary research. Through this knowledge sharing she taught me how to pursue authentic, meaningful and transformational research. Secondary advisor, friend and committee member, Dr. Lichtenstein, modeled many life lessons surrounding emergence, entrepreneurship, healing and the pursuit of joy, all of which shone through in his commitment to learning and gratitude. Dr. Perry modeled critical inquiry, the pursuit of excellence, and commitment to community throughout our work together. Although separated by continents, Dr. Perry was present for the entire dissertation process, supporting me in actualizing my role as an artist-scholar throughout. Dr. Lewis contributed sage wisdom to the work, and to my development as an artist-scholar, rooted in her life and career as an artist-scholar in Boston. Dr. Lewis’ lived experiences, artistry and academic pursuits bring a nuanced level of understanding and insight to this body of work, which she generously shared with ACI’s Youth United Artists. A truly transdisciplinary committee, the through thread connecting us all is our shared commitment to equity.
I had the esteemed honor of working with multiple artist-scholar-educators as part of the research team. My perpetual gratitude and respect go out to: Hanako Brais, Allegra Fletcher, Stephen Hamilton, Dr. Jessica Fei, Joseph Quisol, Esther Kamau, Ny’lasia Brown, Jedidia Santana, Dashawn Borden, Jonathan Lopez, Alice Brito-Acevedo and Sumeya Aden.

There have been many times throughout the process of creating, conducting or analyzing Examining Cultural Equity that have been joyful and illuminating. There were also instances which had the potential to be, and at times were, triggering. The compassion, skill, tenacity, commitment and love that this research collective demonstrated throughout spoke highly to their care and investment in the work, and particularly in the stories being told and unearthed. I hope they are proud of the work we have collectively achieved, and I thank them for all they have done and continue to do.

Arts Connect International’s (ACI) community spans an international, and ever expanding, landscape. The ACI community made this work possible through a shared commitment to equity, a belief in the arts as catalysts for social change, and a core practice of unconditional love. In addition to the researchers named above, I would also like to recognize ACI’s artist-in-residence and board members for their contributions to this work: Basil Kincaid, Andrea Gordillo, Chanel Govreau, Hyppolite Ntigurirwa, Alva Mooses, André Mestre, Bes Young, Miho Tsujii, Alia Ali, Dr. Jennifer Bailey (& Savannah Bailey), David Brown, Shreyas Navare, Meena Malik, Richard Tiago Santiago, Kimberly Curhan and Quanice Floyd.

I would further like to recognize informal advisors who shaped this work significantly, including yet not limited to: Dr. Antonio Cuyler, Dr. Bill Henderson, Dr. Galia
Boneh, Dr. Lisa Wong, Dr. Rhoda Bernard, Dr. Viven Marcow Speiser, Dr. Mitchell Kossak, Dr. Raphaela Henze, Dr. Linda Nathan, Dr. Steven Seidel, Dr. Lauren Elmore, Nicole Agois, Aysha Upchurch, Ali Blake, Kati Kotrc Blair, Wilhelmina Peragine, Portia Abernathy Brown, Mia Branco, Charles Washburn, Rodney Likaku, Sharifa Abdulla, Mwizalero Nyirenda, Isabel Kumwembe, Helen Todd, Catherine Morris, Marsha Parrilla, Jim Grace, Cathy Edwards, Ruth Mercado, Jen Guillemin, Malia Lazu, Juwonni Cottle, Karthik Subramanian, Tran Vu, Lecolion Washington, Harold Steward, Karen Young, Kara Elliott-Ortega, Courtney Sharpe, Julia Ryan, Erdene Clark, Justin Kang, Amanda Shea, Anne Clark, Alison McNeil, Catherine Peterson, Victoria George, Audrey Seraphin and Kaisha Johnson.

All of the above leaders embody our shared work and mission of building equity and inclusion in, and through, the arts.

Many arts and culture sector partners have made this work possible, both in action and in research. In order for participants of the research phases to remain anonymous I will not list all the affiliated organizations and partners here, however, I want to thank all of ACI’s partners for their efforts in making Boston’s arts and culture sector or equitable. Recognition is due to our youth participatory action research (YPAR) partner, Boston Arts Academy, to our organizational, heart and mission partner, Open Door Arts, and to the Network for Arts Administrators of Color, out of ArtsBoston, for all of their efforts in making POC-arts leaders more visible, and supported, in Boston.

The School for Global Inclusion and Social Development, and the University of Massachusetts Boston more widely, have been incredible beacons of light on this journey. My colleagues have been guides of integrity and companionship. I would like to thank the
following faculty: Dr. Sheila Fesko, Dr. William Kiernan, Dr. Rajini Srikanth, Dr. Loan Dao, Dr. Jie Chen, Dr. Nada Ali, Dr. Jack Leavy, Dr. Sindiso Mnisi Weeks, Dr. Dolly Daftary, Dr. Meghan Kallman, Dr. Andrea Leverentz, Dr. Rosalyn Negron, Dr. Pacey Foster, Cindy Thomas, David Hoff, Sharon S. Wang, and Kaitlyn Siner.

I would like to thank all of the doctoral students and candidates I have walked this path with, for their friendship, commitment to learning and global inclusion, and for the community we continue to build together. This includes, yet is not limited to: Susan Telingator, Esther Kamau (& Makena Kamau), Kat Aronson-Ensign, Tracy Beard, April Jakubec, Krista Gedden, Prisca Tarimo, Esther Nganga, Uchenna Nwangwu, Odgerel Dashzeveg, Rayna Verbeck, Kostas Koutsioumpas, Ashley Lazarre, and Dr. Elena Taborda. Thanks are further due to my SSRC-Transdisciplinary Dissertation Development Fellowship cohort members: Sheetal Bachegowda, Erin Cournoyer, Adriana Rincon Villegas, Madeline Brodt, Hannah Brown, Gifty Debordes-Jackson, Teresa Schwarz, Catherine Tobin, Polly Cegielski, Krystal Kittle, and Dr. Nichole Weber.

When it comes to crediting family, I am at a loss for words. I am exceptionally lucky to have been born into this world as the daughter of Dr’s. Susan Taylor-Brown and Marc David Brown; and as the granddaughter of Buneye Brown, Ernest “Bud” Brown, Elizabeth “Danny” Taylor and Dr. Robert “Popop” Taylor, all of whom I am a direct reflection of. Collectively, they showed me what it means to build a life of meaning and purpose through their leadership and love.

My big brother, David Taylor Brown, has been my best friend since day one. My appreciation for his continual contribution is unending, he was my first business partner and
will forever be my favorite. David’s wife, Anna Christine Brown, and their sons, Robert Charles Brown and William Theodore Brown, bring so much life and love to all of us. I am eternally grateful to see and experience a renewed sense of awe in this world with them. Another light in my life, my life partner, Dr. Avanish Mishra, deserves heartfelt gratitude and recognition. Ava walked into my life during a particularly challenging time, amidst doctoral studies and a convergent health crisis, and has been a confidant and inspiration to me on a multiplicity of levels.

Gratitude is also due to my wonderful aunties, uncles, cousins and more, on the Taylor and Brown sides of my family, and beyond. Those who know me well know that I have a fluid concept of family, meaning that it is ever expanding, so in addition to my biological family named above, I also want to thank all of the friends who have become family. You know who you are, I am so grateful for all you have brought to this work, and I love you unconditionally.

Last, but not least, thanks are due to James Dryden for his editing prowess and work, I deeply appreciate his shaping and polishing of this dissertation. This work was made possible through the generous support of many funders, including: The Mayor’s Office of Arts & Culture, Boston Cultural Council, Foley Hoag Foundation, Shinnyo-en Foundation, Boston Pride Foundation, Andrew Mellon Foundation, UMass Boston Dissertation Development Fund, and the Living Closer Foundation. Support was also provided in the form of space donation by the Non-Profit Center, Third Sector New England, Bernstein Wealth Management, Pao Arts Center, the School for Global Inclusion and Social Development, and the Boston Chamber of Commerce through CityAwake.

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I am fortunate to be surrounded by many brilliant human beings deeply committed to making this world more equitable. I hope you see yourselves and your contributions shining through every page of this work. Thank you for your collective effort and intelligence, integrity, compassion and love.

Dedication. Examining Cultural Equity is dedicated to all of the artists and arts leaders committed to building creative justice in the arts and culture sector. This body of work is dedicated to the many voices who contributed and to the many voices whose stories are yet to be heard. This work is dedicated to the memory of Sara Marie Ferrarone, and Elizabeth “Betty” Elmer, honoring their deeply inclusive nature, women who strove to make the world more interconnected, just, and loving.

Collaborators

Comprising of research collaborators and committee members, Examining Cultural Equity engaged a truly diverse and transdisciplinary research team. The success of this research, and the accompanying praxis work, is due to the multiplicity of perspectives and voices contributed. Additionally, artistic collaborators breathe life and imagination into the dissertation through sharing their original artworks at the start of each chapter. Tables 1-3, below, shows each research collaborator, and committee members, affiliations and expertise as relevant to the study, as well as the artistic collaborators artist statements.
Table 1

Research Collaborators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Affiliation &amp; Expertise</th>
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</table>
| Hanako Brais          | School for Global Inclusion & Social Development | MA Candidate  
                      | Area of expertise relevant to study: anthropology, critical race theory, art for community activation, dance, acapella. |
| Allegra Fletcher      | Harvard Graduate School of Education | EdM  
                      | ACI | Director, 2019 – Current | Programming Fellow, 2018 – 2019  
                      | Areas of expertise relevant to study: education as liberation, arts education, arts for social activation and praxis, social justice art, music, performance. |
| Stephen Hamilton      | Independent Artist | Stephen Hamilton Studios  
                      | Areas of expertise relevant to study: arts education, arts for social activation and praxis, social justice art, African art history and aesthetic, visual arts, painting, and graphic design. |
| Jessica Fei           | Harvard Graduate School of Education | EdD  
                      | ACI | YPAR Research Consultant, 2018 – 2019  
                      | Area of expertise relevant to study: youth participatory action research (YPAR), arts-based research (ABR), arts education, fine arts, visual arts, photography. |
| Youth United Artists  | Various Boston Public High Schools  
                      | ACI | YUA Members 2018 – 2019  
| Joseph Quisol         | Harvard Graduate School of Education | EdM  
                      | ACI | Programming & Artist Fellow, 2017 – 2019  
                      | Areas of expertise relevant to study: arts education, arts for social activation and praxis, social justice art, music, music production, arts entrepreneurship. |
| Esther Kamau          | School for Global Inclusion & Social Development | PhD Candidate  
                      | ACI | Research Associate, 2017  
                      | Areas of expertise relevant to study: international development, public health, human rights. |
## Table 2

**Committee Members**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Affiliation &amp; Expertise</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| Valerie Karr       | Assistant Professor | School for Global Inclusion & Social Development, University of Massachusetts Boston  

*Area of expertise relevant to study:* systems change, international development, social innovation, social enterprise, youth inclusion, families and culture, photo voice, qualitative and quantitative research methods.|
| Benyamin Lichtenstein | Associate Professor | College of Management, University of Massachusetts Boston  

*Area of expertise relevant to study:* entrepreneurship, generative emergence, organizational transformation, leadership, quantitative methods.|
| Barbara Lewis       | Retired Associate Professor | College of Liberal Arts, University of Massachusetts Boston  

Retired Director | William Monroe Trotter Institute for the Study of Black History and Culture  

*Area of expertise relevant to study:* critical arts studies, arts leadership, arts equity, theatre.|
| Mia Perry           | Senior Lecturer | Community Development and Adult Education, University of Glasgow  

*Area of expertise relevant to study:* contemporary cultural practices, social arts and arts education, public and informal pedagogies. |
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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Artist Statement</th>
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| Chanel Matsunami Govreau | As a multidisciplinary artist, I explore the intersections of sexuality, queerness, and Japanese American identity. I use a wide range of materials and methods to engage these issues including self-portraiture, performance, costume, sculpture, dance, and printmaking.  
In my recent work, I reference traditional monsters of Japanese folklore, known as yokai, through a series of self-portraits. In this ongoing project I aim to embody the hidden and forgotten queer and female ancestors of my family by reimaging them as contemporary yokai creatures. Through this practice, I use my body to transform the often villainous and horrific portrayals of Japanese yokai monsters into aspirational female figures empowered with the magic, glamour and camp of their queer identities.  
My studio practice includes a combination of digital design, screen printing, and costume construction to create wearable sculpture pieces and full body armor. In my overlapping methods of sculptural costume and performance I look to include traditional Japanese aesthetics into an ever-evolving queer visual culture. |
| Stephen Hamilton       | Stephen Hamilton is an artist and arts educator living and working in Boston Massachusetts.  
Stephen’s work incorporates both Western and African techniques, blending figurative painting and drawing with resist dyeing, weaving, and woodcarving. Each image is a marriage between the aesthetic perspectives and artistry of both traditions. As a Black American trained in traditional west African artforms, Stephen treats the acts of weaving, dyeing, and woodcarving as ritualized acts of reclamation.  
He uses traditional techniques and materials native to West Africa to reclaim ancestral knowledge dissociated from Africans in the Americas, during the transatlantic slave trade. The work explores and heavily references the Black body in pre-colonial African art history, creating visual connections between the past and the present. This forms a body of work, which serves as a conceptual and visual bridge between the ancient and modern worlds. Through this, he explores elements of black identity through time and space on its own terms.  
Through visual comparison of shared philosophies and aesthetics amongst Black peoples, Stephen seeks to describe a complex and varied Black aesthetic. These visual and philosophical connections and cultural analyses form his visual language. The pieces created depict African thought and culture as equal to, yet unique from, its western analog. This work stands in stark contrast to the pervasive negative associations, which have become synonymous with Black culture. Stephen’s work, therefore, bridges dialogue between contemporary Black cultures and the ancient African world through an asset-based lens. |
I am a Vessel, a Vivid Dreamer, and a World Builder. My work is guided by our connection to ancestral courage, insight, and imagination in concert with contemporary awareness and observation.

My quest is to understand the wild tapestry of my own personal identity and cultural identity within the African Diaspora, contextualized by the scaffolding of my American experience. I practice self-exploration, historical investigation, and critical social questioning to cultivate healing on a personal and cultural level, towards the remedy of Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome.

Within my practice I promote empathy, curiosity, critical thought, and conversation. I observe how perception and prejudice impact one’s relationship to place, objects, people and their sense of belonging or displacement. My goal is to co-create healing sites that stimulate the ancestral memory of love as freedom within us, activating space to participate in shared liberation.

I create experiences, objects, and spaces for private, interpersonal and ancestral connection. I write, quilt, collage, make installations, photograph, perform, and invent games as avenues of questioning. My work is primarily comprised of culturally contextualized, found, or donated materials. I collect materials from people through social media as well as within my immediate surroundings. This methodology explores the seeming immateriality and physical/personal disconnection within online spaces while observing how waste is reflective of lived experience. I am currently most interested in the practice of Quilting as a way to collaborate with ancestral energy and as a method of empowerment. I find it imperative to nurture the evolution of my creative family traditions, honoring my predecessors while adapting the practice to address the questions and concerns of contemporary life.

My family is my driving motivation and primary artistic influence. Quilting as a practice is saturated on both sides of my family dating back over 100 years. My immediate influence as a quilter is Eugenia Kincaid, my grandmother on my father's side. She appears to me in dreams, guiding my hands as we collaborate on a spiritual level. I strongly believe that Quilting opens a portal for me to exist with all of my ancestors that maintained the practice and potentially beyond. Upholding family traditions in the face of oppression is essential within my healing process. Quilting within the black cultural tradition has always served as a revolutionary space of joy, courage, and community in direct contrast to social and financial subjugation. My stylistic approach is influenced by the innovations, practices, and cultural products of Black Americans, and West Africans. More specifically, I am interested in Black American folk and fine art, music, poetry, and family traditions.

Andrea Alejandra Gordillo Marquina identifies as a queer mestiza artist-educator-bridge-immigrant from Perú. Their particular lens on inclusion focuses on the link between representation of self and power in the public arena for migrants and displaced people, with a particular focus on adolescents, women, and LGBTQ communities. Their work strives to build bridges between communities they belong to and platforms for those communities to share stories to combat the "dominant narrative." Andrea received their BA in theatre from Emerson College, Ed.M. in arts in education from The Harvard Graduate School of Education and is a Ph.D. Candidate at UCLA.
Amanda Shea

Amanda is a multidisciplinary artist residing in Boston.

She has performed spoken word poetry at numerous venues throughout Boston, including the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Museum of Fine Arts and the Institute of Contemporary Art. She served as an official host for the 2018 and 2019 Boston Art & Music Soul Festival and the 2019 Arts Equity Summit.


In the summer of 2020 Shea plans to go on tour for the third time traveling to Africa. The “Awake” tour seeks to explore the role of art as both a revolutionary and spiritual tool for social justice and spiritual awakening in humans.

Amanda is an educator known for running youth workshops for spoken word poetry and public speaking throughout several schools in Boston.
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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Expanded</th>
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<tr>
<td>LGBTQIA+</td>
<td>Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POC</td>
<td>Person of color</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PWD</td>
<td>Person with a disability, or disabled person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACI</td>
<td>Arts Connect International</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AiR</td>
<td>Artist in residence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YPAR</td>
<td>Youth participatory action research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDIA</td>
<td>Equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SGISD</td>
<td>School for Global Inclusion and Social Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WOC</td>
<td>Women of color</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAPI</td>
<td>Asian American Pacific Islander</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAAC</td>
<td>Network for Arts Administrators of Color</td>
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### Key Terms List

<table>
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<th>Term</th>
<th>Operationalized</th>
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<tr>
<td>Arts Influencers</td>
<td><em>Arts influencers</em> are leaders in the arts and culture sector who hold institutional and decision-making power. This includes arts managers, educators, funders, board members, individual artists, universities, small nonprofits, large nonprofits, museums, foundations, for-profit companies, and government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts leaders with various marginalized identities (POC, PWD, female, and LGBTQIA+)</td>
<td>Marginalized identities include but are not limited to people of color (POC), people with disabilities (PWD), female identifying (female), and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual (LGBTQIA+). <em>Arts leaders with various marginalized identities</em> can be emergent, including youths, as well as established.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States Arts and Culture Landscape, and Boston Arts and Culture Landscape</td>
<td><em>U.S. arts and culture landscape</em> describes all the spaces and seats which arts influencers (i.e., the arts industry) occupy, taking a field-level perspective. <em>Boston arts and culture landscape</em> describes Massachusetts and the greater commonwealth. Boston’s arts landscape is therefore a micro-unit of analysis for the macro-unit of analysis, i.e., the United States.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts</td>
<td><em>Arts</em>, for purposes of this study, include all art forms. Because this study focuses on a field-level perspective of the arts and culture sectors, we welcome all art forms as a means to creative and cultural expression, including, but not limited to, dance, spoken word, literature, performance, theatre, visual arts, folk art, fiber arts, mixed-medium, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intersectional Justice</td>
<td><em>Intersectional justice</em> promotes that all forms of injustices are interconnected and that they should be addressed simultaneously (Center for Intersectional Justice, 2018).</td>
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<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Economy of the Arts (PEOTA)</td>
<td><em>PEOTA</em> examines the economic and cultural valuation of the arts. Economic valuation pertains to a capitalist structure, elucidating its monetary value. Cultural value pertains to the historical valuation of the art, i.e., what the art means and preserves in relationship to culture and ownership of history and narrative (Vidokle, 2013).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Equity in the Arts</td>
<td><em>Cultural equity in the arts</em>, as defined by Americans for the Arts (2016) statement on cultural equity, includes … embodying the values, policies, and practices that ensure all people, including, but not limited to, those who have been historically underrepresented based on race/ethnicity, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, socioeconomic status, geography, citizenship status, or religion and are represented in the development of arts policy; the support of artists; the nurturing of accessible, thriving venues for expression; and the fair distribution of programmatic, financial, and informational resources (Americans for the Arts, 2016). Note: This definition speaks more to the capitalist structure of the arts industry and is U.S. centric.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Equity Gap</td>
<td><em>Cultural equity gap</em> is used to describe the unequal balance of representation and power as well as in cultural production, of art and artistic practice, built upon the Americans for the Arts 2016 statement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equity</td>
<td><em>Equity</em>, for purposes of this study, refers to fair and impartial access to opportunities, representation, and the ability to convert said opportunity in the quest for self-determination and the upholding of human rights.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Contextualized</td>
<td><em>Community contextualized</em>, for purposes of this study, refers to initiatives, programming, and solutions that are community-based and community-driven.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory of Change</td>
<td><em>Theory of Change</em> is a specific type of methodology for planning, participation, and evaluation that is used in companies, philanthropy, not-for-profit and government sectors to promote social change. Theory of change defines long-term goals and then maps backward to identify necessary preconditions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative Justice</td>
<td><em>Creative Justice</em> encompasses four building blocks: 1) parity of participation; 2) diversity; 3) objective respect; and 4) reduction of harms (Banks, 2017).</td>
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION TO THE TOPIC
Artist: Chanel Matsunami Govreau, © 2020

Title: They Watch You Thrive


Artist description of the piece: In this self-portrait I embody the hopeful, staring gaze of my intersectional ancestry through a feminized cosplay of hyakume, a Japanese folklore creature known for its multiple eyes. Hanging soft sculptures extend from the crown of my head to form a cascading hair extension of sparkling eyeballs. The sculptures of teeth and synthetic hair pieces reference fukakuchi onna, a shapeshifting female yokai with multiple mouths hidden in her hair. Through the juxtaposition of spirited eyes and monstrous teeth, I contemplate ancestral expressions that offer both joy and fierce protection for its kindred.
Background, Rationale, and Research Questions

There is a “cultural equity gap” within the United States arts landscape, expressing an unequal representation of various identities in the arts, including, but not limited to race, disability, gender, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status (class). This gap arises from systemic inequities in access to the arts as well as access to positions of power.

In 2013, Americans for the Arts published a study on arts managers across the United States, finding that 86% of all respondents and 92% of CEOs self-identified as white, with 72% identifying as female (Americans for the Arts, 2013). In 2015, Grantmakers in the Arts published an exploratory demographic study of arts managers, finding that 78% of respondents self-identified as white, 77% as female, 12% as disabled, and 14% as part of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual (LBGTQIA+) community (Cuyler, 2015). Comparatively, 2016 U.S. census data report the national population as being 61% “white alone” and 50.8% female (U.S. Census Data, 2016); further, the 2010 U.S. census data report 19% of the U.S. population as disabled (U.S. Census Bureau Public Information Office, 2016); finally, a 2016 report by the Williams Institute showed 3.8% of the U.S. population as part of the LGBTQIA+ community (Same-Sex Couple and LGBT Demographic Data, 2016), seen in Table 4.
Table 4

Comparative Data of Arts Managers & General Population Demo.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Identifiers</th>
<th>Comparative Data</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>white identifying</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>white identifying CEOs</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>female identifying</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>disabled identifying</td>
<td>Not available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGBTQIA identifying</td>
<td>Not available</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: (Americans for the Arts, 2013; Cuyler, 2015, U.S. Census Data, 2016; U.S. Census Bureau Public Information Office, 2016; Same-Sex Couple and LGBT Demographic Data, 2016)

The above studies show an underrepresentation of nonwhite identifying, or person of color (POC) identifying, arts managers. Further, the Grantmakers in the Arts study shows an underrepresentation of people with disabilities (PWD) as arts managers. This data also indicates an overrepresentation of females and LGBTQIA+ identifying arts managers; it is, however, unclear if female and LGBTQIA+ identifying members hold positions of power within the industry, particularly at high levels of leadership. In other words, representation within the industry alone is not adequate for equality if an imbalance of power remains (Cuyler, 2015).

The inequities found within arts management, which is the focus of these studies, illuminate a small scope of the greater inequities within the arts, as seen and reproduced in academia, artist sales, and donor and foundation demographics and priorities. Recognizing inequities in access to the field, as well as to positions of power within the arts industry, Americans for the Arts published a statement on cultural equity in 2016, defining it as:
… embodying the values, policies, and practices that ensure that all people—including but not limited to those who have been historically underrepresented based on race/ethnicity, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, socioeconomic status, geography, citizenship status, or religion—are represented in the development of arts policy; the support of artists; the nurturing of accessible, thriving venues for expression; and the fair distribution of programmatic, financial, and informational resources (Americans for the Arts, 2016).

Releasing this statement on cultural equity was a seminal step for the field, as it named the various intersectional identities of historically underrepresented or historically marginalized and oppressed individuals and groups (Crenshaw, 1991; Collins, 2015; Lorde, 1997; McCall, 2005; Young, 2009). However, there is still a large gap in baseline demographic data in the arts as well as lack of understanding as to how these terms are conceptualized and operationalized within the arts and culture sector. Additionally, “historically underrepresented” is a covertly biased way of describing the inherent inequity embedded in the historically Eurocentric arts industry, one steeped in a deep history of discrimination and inaccessibility tied to colonialism and capitalist definitions of success and value (Blackwood, 2014; Lipsitz, 2006; Coates, 2017).

When addressing equity within the United States landscape, including, but not limited to, equity within the arts, it is impossible to escape the nation’s history of slavery, genocide, and oppression, leading to systemic and institutionalized racism, sexism, classism, xenophobia, ableism, and, more directly, the rise and valuation of patriarchal white supremacy as the founding blocks of this nation. This inequity is replicated across many sectors and industries, including, but not limited to, education, law, health, and identity politics (Lipsitz, 2006). The arts and culture sector reproduce congruent inequities across the field, seen in the representation of arts management, the accessibility of arts training, and the
structural components enforced through the distribution of arts funding, seen with individual donors, arts traders, and foundations. In turn, historically white, affluent, cis-gendered, able-bodied individuals, families, and institutions have been afforded the privilege of systemically defining value and how value is propositioned in the United States. This has further been enforced as a hegemonic capitalist definition of “high art” within markets, with some yet relatively little variance seen in global arts economies that participate outside of the capitalist structure (Bazealgette & Davey, 2013; Moore, 2004). Correspondingly, it is the same demographic of power that has therefore defined the “historically underrepresented” through the oppression and marginalization of said communities and individuals.

Although the Americans for the Arts’ statement on cultural equity, along with other well-intentioned programs, initiatives, and proclamations, is a promising step toward identifying these inequities, it falls short in addressing or fully naming the causes of said inequities and their role in systemic and institutionalized oppression. Further, what remains amiss is how to move from identification of said inequity to action in systemically addressing them, moving toward models of equity and justice.

Given the current production of privilege within the industry, the call to action becomes the following: 1) to deconstruct current power systems; 2) to promote, uplift, and foster counternarratives from and with artists and arts leaders across traditionally marginalized identities and communities; with the goal of 3) moving toward creative justice (Banks, 2017; Cuyler, 2019). This demands a systems approach for both investigation and remediation, calling for coordinated efforts across the field collectively working toward equity (Meadows, 2008; Stroh, 2015).
Accordingly, this research focuses on understanding attitudes and beliefs surrounding the “cultural equity gap” within the arts industry in Boston. With the objective of working toward creative justice, this project employs inductive, mixed-methods, and youth participatory action research (YPAR) to understand:

1) Current influencers’ understanding of the cultural equity gap;
2) Current influencers’ motivations to eradicate the cultural equity gap;
3) How arts and culture leaders of various marginalized identities (POC, PWD, female, LGBTQIA+) conceptualize and operationalize leadership development; and
4) How arts and culture leaders of various marginalized identities (POC, PWD, female, LGBTQIA+) perceive barriers to access regarding positions of leadership in the arts and culture sector.

These nuanced investigations support the foundational question: What are the social, emotional, economic, and cultural assets within Boston that can lead to creative justice, and what reformation is still needed to achieve creative justice?

This research calls into question who defines value as well as where the positions of power, or levers for change, truly reside (Meadows, 2008; Stroh, 2015). The research further investigates current structures in the arts and culture sector, while positioning for the emergence of new and reformed structures for both leadership and authority, one or many, that move away from assimilation into current power structures, to co-creating authentically diverse and equitable spaces that are co-owned and codefined. This incites a call for culture shift, one that is focused on an asset-based approach, valuing the inherent knowledge and cultural wealth within communities. Drawing on the rise of systems leadership and cultural humility, this research is positioned to become the foundation for discussion centering on systems’ thinking in addressing equity through a creative justice lens in Boston (Senge, Hamilton, & Kania, 2015; Moodian, 2011; Kools, Chimwaza, & Macha, 2015).
Boston Arts and Culture Landscape

In 2019, ArtsBoston released the *Arts Factor* report, examining the economic impact of Boston’s arts and culture sector. It showed that, in 2018, there was 2B+ of direct economic impact, 30K+ jobs created, with over 21M+ attendees at arts events, accounting for more attendees than Boston’s famed sports teams combined (ArtsBoston, 2019). These numbers advocate for the importance and vibrancy of the sector; however, who has ownership, voice, access, power, and opportunity both within and to the arts, remains in question.

The Boston Foundation published *Understanding Boston: How Boston and Other American Cities Support and Sustain the Arts* (Koo & Curtis, 2016). The foundation examined 10 comparison cities, and major findings included recognition that Boston has as much financial support, per capita, for the arts as beacons like New York City and San Francisco; however, distribution of funding in Boston is vastly different from that of the other cities. At present, there are 1,572 arts organizations in Boston. Of these, Boston’s 23 largest organizations 5 (1.46% of the overall arts orgs), spent nearly $690 million in 2012, i.e., more than 70% of the total expenses of all the city’s arts organizations. In other words, Boston is dominated by its large arts institutions to a degree that no other cities were, despite having the second-highest number of arts organizations per capita (Koo & Curtis, 2016).

Within Boston, institutional support for the arts and culture sector goes to large organizations in central neighborhoods, as central neighborhoods denote the more affluent

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5 Boston’s three largest arts organizations constitute 40% of the budget: Boston Symphony Orchestra, The Museum of Fine Arts, and WGBH, which mask a lack of resources in Boston’s cultural sector.
parts of Boston. Areas where there is a higher chance of driving audiences with capital support, and where the majority of large arts and culture institutions exist and produce events, such as Boston’s Theatre District (Koo & Curtis, 2016). Due to historical practices like red lining, which drove extreme economic and racial segregation in Boston, coupled with present-day housing inequities and insecurities, the term “central neighborhoods” can also equate to predominantly white neighborhoods. Boston is well known for being one of the most racially segregated cities in the United States, although Boston’s neighborhoods are becoming more diverse by the day, as seen in Fig. 1 (Edozie et al., 2019).

**Figure 1**

*Massachusetts’ growing racial diversity has been concentrated in Greater Boston*

![Map showing racial diversity in Massachusetts](image)

*Notes. Share of people of color, 1990 and 2017 (Edozie, et al., 2019).*

Funding for the arts in Boston primarily comes from individual donors, with the highest or second-highest median individual giving in each budget cohort across the cities studied. Although this individual gift-giving is undeniably generous and supportive of the ecosystem, it also points to the reality that funding for the arts in Boston is driven by a few
wealthy individuals, representative of one socioeconomic group (class). Correlations exist among white privilege, wealth, and philanthropic giving (Cuyler, 2019). Compared with other cities, Boston has few foundations making grants to the arts; further, what is granted goes to larger organizations. Additionally, Boston receives the lowest amount of government funding per capita among the comparison cities (Koo & Curtis, 2016).

With this funding distribution, unless an artist and/or arts organization has ties to significant individual donors and a consistent stream of revenue generation, it will be difficult to secure funding. In this landscape, starting a new organization or launching a career in the arts is a formidable task. This funding reality has a deep impact on the opportunity for sector innovation as well as the ability to build culturally inclusive arts leadership. When it comes to both innovation and equity, Boston has a lot to improve upon:

…Boston’s organizations have a lower rate of new work production than peers in other cities … they took pride in their ability to engage audiences, they also reported a concern that their dependence on earned revenue may drive them to make safe programmatic choices... less than half of Boston’s small and midsized organizations reported producing any new works (Koo & Curtis, 2016).

This lack of sector innovation, driven by financial constraints and instability, leaves little space for essential risk-taking, which is paradoxical to the arts. A society of innovation breeds innovation, and the same principal can be said for a society of stagnation. This aversion to risk-taking, coupled with documented data on the cultural equity gap, points to the deep challenges that call for leadership reform in Boston’s art arts and culture sector. Koo and Curtis (2016) name the impact on Boston’s values in the arts, driven by this type of funding allocation:
The absence of robust foundation and government involvement is as important as the missing dollars. In other cities, TDC observed philanthropic programs in place to drive toward particular outcomes that were not strongly supported by the marketplace of individual donors or ticket buyers, such as funding of small organizations, new or more *Avant Garde* artworks, or cultural equity. In contrast, Boston’s arts ecosystem is dominated by the choices of individual consumers. Donors give to their favorite organizations, and audience members buy tickets to programs that are compelling to them. Without a critical mass of players that are thinking at a systemic level, Boston has limited levers with which it can make change (Koo & Curtis, 2016).

In summation, the arts landscape in Boston is driven by elite, wealthy, predominately white individuals, reflecting their priorities and preferences. Knowing this reality is essential as addressing authentic leadership development in the arts, along with addressing the cultural equity gap, may very well not be a priority to, or may even be in direct opposition with the individual donors who currently steer the values and direction of the arts landscape. This calls for creative and innovative approaches to generate new funds and support the reallocation of current funds that are available from government and foundation entities. The landscape also calls attention to the need for more research, a deeper understanding of these systemic issues, and how they intersect.

There is further pressing urgency to address these inequities given the changing demographics of Boston as a city. In 2019, the Boston Foundation published *Changing Faces of Greater Boston*, centering work and perspectives from many of the University of Massachusetts’s preeminent scholars and institutes (Edozie et al., 2019). Of the many seminal findings in this report, the following stand out significantly: 1) Boston’s person of color (POC) population has increased by 65% since 1990; 2) key political, business, and civic institutions lag behind the region’s growing racial diversity, with only 14% of CEOs identifying as POC; and 3) although whites still make up the largest racial group, they are no
longer the majority, having declined from 59% in 1990 to 44% in 2017 (Edozie et al., 2019). The realities articulated throughout the report point to an inevitable shift in population, leadership, wealth generation, and overall demographics of Boston. Is Boston’s arts and culture landscape ready for the current and upcoming shifts?

Although the *Arts Factor* report shows a vibrant arts and culture ecosystem, who are the main consumers and producers of said art at present? Are the constituencies and audiences as diverse as Boston itself? Are the museums’ collections, theater productions, or musical offerings reflective of a diverse, expansive, and ever-evolving city? Moreover, what are the economic impacts for the arts and culture sector? Given that we know that individual donors drive the Boston arts and culture sector to a degree that other cities do not, reflecting their priorities and interests, how will those ticket sales and donations shift, dissipate, or strengthen with the increasing diversity of the city (Koo & Curtis, 2016)?

The potential for new audiences and new donors demands the sector examine its current practices around cultural equity and integrate strategic and coordinated efforts to engage all of Boston’s evolving population, both from a consumer and leadership perspective. If Boston continues to perpetuate stagnation and a lack of innovation based on its current funding trends, the sector risks becoming antiquated and losing its economic impact and viability. In other words, the case and necessity for diversity and equity are no longer a call to do what is right but rather what is necessary for sustainability.

Since Arts Connect International (ACI) was founded in 2014, and since data collection for *Examining Cultural Equity* started in 2017, there have been several initiatives and beacons of light illuminating important steps in addressing equity and innovation in the...
sector. To begin, there have been recognizable shifts in how equity is being discussed and addressed within Boston’s arts and culture sector.

The community findings report from Phase I of Examining Cultural Equity, released in January 2018, was downloaded over 10K times in 12 months, with language adoption from the report to describe the cultural equity gap showing up in a multitude of discussions about racial and accessibility injustices in Boston as well as published interviews and grant-funding documents. Between 2017 – 2019, three awards were developed to forefront work focused on increasing cultural equity, including the Mayor’s Office of Arts & Culture developing and distributing a “Model Equity Award,” WBUR’s ARTery25 awards creation, which honors millennials of color who have an impact on Boston’s arts and culture scene, and the Massachusetts’s Cultural Councils’ UP Award for universal participation, supporting arts organizations doing exceptional work in making the sector more accessible.

Further, grant makers like The Boston Foundation, the New England Foundation for the Arts, the Boston Cultural Council, the Massachusetts Cultural Council, the Mayor’s Office of Arts and Culture, and the Barr Foundation have actively changed their policies and procedures to incorporate equity frameworks and redistribution of funds with an equity lens, resulting in new grant policies, procedures, and programming strands. Several of said funders have also underwent, or are currently planning to go through, their own equity transformation processes.

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6 Program examples include: Live Arts Boston (TBF), Creative Cities (NEFA), Universal Participation (MCC), City of Boston Artist in Residence (MOAC), Radical Imagination for Racial Justice Regranting Program (Funded by Surdna Foundation, supported by MOAC and MassArt), the Public Art Accelerator (Funded by Joyce Linde, run by Now and There). It is worth noting that the Barr Foundation supports many of the above programs through partnership regranting initiatives, particularly with TBF and NEFA.
The Mayor’s Office of Arts and Culture hired new leadership in the form of promoting Kara Elliot-Ortego to the role of chief of arts & culture in August 2018. Kara has since hired several new team members and deeply expanded the office’s capacity to fund, and carry out, equity-based work. The Boston Foundation hired a new interim director of arts & culture, Eva Rosenberg, in September 2019, who has already shown a strong commitment to systems and equity-based philanthropy. The Barr Foundation hired a new senior program officer for arts & culture, Giles Li, in February 2020, a well-respected community organizer. Thus far, new leadership within the sector has indicated a renewed commitment to equity, demonstrated through new funding trends, structures and protocol. It is anticipated that leadership positions will continue to turn over as the baby boomer generation retires from the workforce. For example, Anita Walker, long time executive director of the Massachusetts Cultural Council, and Paul S Grogen, long time chief executive officer at The Boston Foundation, both announced their intended retirement dates this year.

Despite the formidable funding landscape as described above, sector innovation is on the rise with the development of new arts and culture organizations, many of which are aimed to address equity, e.g., ArtLifting (est. 2013), Brain Arts Organization (est. 2013), ACI (est. 2014), Now & There (re-est. 2015), BAMS Fest (est. 2015), the Front Porch Arts Collective (est. 2016) in residence at Central Square Theater, the Cross Cultural Collective (est. 2016), the Network for Arts Administrators of Color (NAAC) out of ArtsBoston (est. 2016), the CreateWell Fund (est. 2016), the Berklee Institute for Arts Education & Special Needs (est. 2017), Pao Arts Center (est. 2017), Dunamis (est. 2017), Abilities Dance (est. 2017), Transformative Culture Project (re-est. 2017), and the HipHopEx Lab (est. 2018) out
of the Harvard Graduate School of Education. These organizations and collectives join a well-developed cohort of arts and social justice organizations throughout the city.

The research presented in this dissertation, accordingly, reflects an in-process re-orientation of the field as it moves toward models of equity, with a constant reflection on Boston’s past, present, and future as it pertains to the arts and culture sector.

Arts Connect International

With the support of a collective of social-justice artists and multisectoral players, I founded Arts Connect International (ACI) in 2014, a Boston-based nonprofit committed to building equity in, and through, the arts. ACI was built on the belief that education and healthcare are human rights, and that artists come up with innovative solutions to pressing human rights issues that are culturally relevant, responsive, collective, and action oriented. ACI’s founding team believed that, through investing in artists using their work for social change and justice, human rights issues and violations could be creatively and holistically addressed through a community-contextualized lens. This, in turn, would prove efficacious in catalyzing social change around said human rights issues in the pursuit of equity.

ACI launched with an international artist-in-residence (AiR) program supporting emerging social justice artists to: 1) develop entrepreneurial skills applicable for the arts market, driving sustainability of their work; 2) build a community of social justice artists who could support one another; 3) provide paid employment as full-time artists, allowing emergent social justice artists to pursue their work; 4) foster cross-cultural exchange and collaboration, essential in addressing human rights globally; and 5) support artists in securing
and executing seminal shows, performances, and speaking engagements, in line with their work and mission(s) for the elevation and advancement of their careers.\textsuperscript{7}

During the AiR application process ACI asked social justice artists three core questions: 1) What is your social justice tool of choice (aka, what is your art form)? 2) Where do you want to grow and learn, in what country and community, and why? and 3) What are the human rights issues that wake you up first thing in the morning and prevent you from falling asleep at night? We received over 100 applications for three AiR spots annually.

Once selected, a skills gap analysis was conducted, informing how said AiRs were supported throughout their year-long residency. The AiR program started with a two-week-long intensive training institute in Boston, engaging over 30 arts and culture partners, followed by a nine-month-long international residency.\textsuperscript{8} Upon return from international residencies, artists were supported, as they grounded in their home communities, preparing to show and share the work they created, leveraging the work for education and advocacy.

The ultimate goal of the AiR program was for artists to have a transformational residency, i.e., a residency that provided the groundwork and footing to actualize the value of their work culturally and economically and to be empowered to continue doing said community-contextualized work holistically through addressing their financial, emotional and spiritual well-being. In sum, the AiR program aimed to be a holistsic leadership development pipeline program.

\textsuperscript{7} The model was informed by Global Health Corps upon founding, which I had participated in as a fellow in Malawi, 2013 – 2014, directly before launching ACI.
\textsuperscript{8} Nine-month international residency years 2014 – 2016, switched to a three-month international residency 2016 – 2017, where funding for said residency awards went from 30K p/artist to 10K p/artist.
This model ran for three cohorts between 2014 – 2017 proving effective on a multitude of fronts. Through this program, ACI was able to support 10 artists, distributing over 130K in direct funding to artists, with over 400K distributed through pro-bono support services and training. Residencies took place in Ghana, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Korea, Mexico, and the United States, covering topics like environmental justice, black aesthetics and empowerment, cultural appropriation and appreciation, generational trauma from genocide, and transnational migration. As the AiR program grew in numbers and in strength, ACI’s community-based model and grass-roots efforts became recognized. However, ACI as an organization, and ACI’s artists as driving members of said organization, were participating outside of the mainstream arts and culture sector. ACI actively chose to engage in praxis and work that was culturally valued but often outside of the capitalist economy. The end result was that the organization and its AiRs struggled for access to mainstream funding within the arts and culture landscape.

Many local foundations and groups were happy to engage with ACI’s AiRs and their work, discussing the importance of it, yet ultimately deciding not to fund the work. What ACI learned was that its priority of supporting social justice artists through this holistic leadership development model, who are predominantly artists of color, was not shared with the mainstream sector in Boston at that time. Correspondingly, ACI’s main source of funding during these formative start-up years was from individual donors.

Another aspect of the AiR program was codeveloping and coproducing community convenings and shows with ACI’s AiRs, which started to bridge the gap among ACI’s grassroots efforts, communities, and institutions. This manifested in events like, “Black Gods
“Live” at the National Center for Afro American Artists in Roxbury, featuring Boston-based artist Stephen Hamilton; “Environmental Justice” at Bernstein Wealth Management, featuring St. Louis-based artist Basil Kincaid; and “Be My Keeper” at Lesley University, featuring Rwandan-based artist Hyppolite Ntigirirwa.

When provided the chance to choose what spaces and communities to share their work in, ACI’s AiRs most frequently selected to be in community-contextualized spaces for shows and performances, often meaning that said shows were out of the mainstream arts sector. Supporting ACI’s AiRs in producing and sharing their work in said space was in deep alignment with the organization’s mission, i.e., striving to amplify the work of social justice artists addressing human rights through a community-contextualized lens. That said, work is not sustainable if it is not funded; thus, ACI’s administration and board of directors quickly recognized the limitations of working exclusively in the margins and solely in community-contextualized spaces. Said spaces were filled with cultural capital and wealth, yet were often limited in financial capital.

Through building and running ACI’s AiR program, it became evident that deeply rooted systemic inequities and injustices have to be addressed—not only so that ACI’s AiRs and other leaders of color will continue to succeed, but also to increase the accessibility of arts and culture for all. This upholds Article 27 of the Declaration of Human Rights, which states: “Everyone has the right to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in the scientific advancement and its benefits” (United Nations, 1948).
If ACI is going to actualize its mission authentically and survive as an organization, systems-level work had to become the charge. This demanded that ACI be willing to work with institutions and traditional powerholders on their practices of equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility (EDIA) in order to create macro-level changes in the sector. Without said powerholders’ buy-in on the importance of bridging the cultural equity gap, the impact of ACI’s work could only go so far.

The systems-level work, which has to be done, is an understandably daunting task for a small start-up nonprofit with limited institutional, financial, and personnel support. ACI also recognized the need to leave the comfort of running a singular program with a clear logic model and theory of change. Doing systems-level work demands that ACI embrace the identity of an “equity incubator,” allowing the organization and community to move through an open, iterative, and uncomfortable process, i.e., a process that involves exploring the roots of inequities, developing multi-stakeholder relationships and programming, in alignment with current influencers’ motivations, while simultaneously staying true to ACI’s POC-identifying arts leaders.

Needless to say, ACI took on this redesign of mission and programming with a healthy dose of naivety regarding the difficulty of the project ahead, i.e., the statistics of successfully completing the project were against both ACI as an organization and me as a burgeoning founder and director, yet we prepared to move forward. There were pivotal moments in creating the case for change. One such moment took place right after the U.S. presidential election in November 2016. This coincided with the completion of ACI’s third AiR cohort’s international placements, where the entire team gathered in Boston for a three-
week intensive. During the three-week intensive, ACI’s AiRs presented and spoke about their work at myriad local institutions, primarily academic, including Lesley University, Boston College, Boston University, Harvard University, UMass Boston, and Babson College. Setting up these speaking engagements for ACI’s AiRs, I believed that exposure for their work in these environments would prove beneficial. Further, I knew that elevating said conversations into such institutional spaces, where powerholders were present, would encourage attention paid to their policies and practices of equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility (EDIA).

The reason why we had access to these spaces in the first place was because there were key informants present at each institution who invited us to present, also attuned to an equity-based agenda, and acting as catalysts for the conversations to take place. The presence of these conversations, sparked through social justice artists and art, demanded attention to the counternarratives shared, those that have historically been underrepresented in these spaces, institutions, and their leadership. Although ACI’s goals for the artists and institutions were ultimately accomplished at these events, it also came at high emotional and social cost for our AiRs. Many AiRs described these engagements as culturally irrelevant and gentrifying, and some went as far as to say that the engagements were toxic and harmful.

This inexcusably negates ACI’s mission in its entirety, calling for the moral impetus to do the systems-level work to build more culturally relevant, diverse, inclusive, accessible, and equitable spaces and institutions in the arts and culture sector. Equitable spaces are those in which ACI’s AiRs, and other POC-identifying arts leaders and artists, can be seen, celebrated, and held as they do the essential work of addressing social justice and human rights issues.
The rubber hit the road, i.e., ACI had to find a way forward. ACI’s team had to consciously work in organizational and systems-level reform if ACI’s artists and arts leaders were to see the changes we collectively aspired to create, while consciously centering each person’s well-being and humanity in the process. So, where does one start upon deciding to radically change a system? For myself, I endeavored to listen more carefully and thoughtfully to our AiRs surrounding their experiences in these spaces and their experiences in the world at large. Through doing so, I began to ask a lot of questions, which now seem never ending.

Through the support of ACI’s board of directors and key mentors at UMass Boston, ACI’s community started to prepare for the long road ahead. In early 2017, ACI adopted a reformed mission statement and values, recognizing that we had to do the work internally if we were to inform anything externally. We developed our mission statement to read: “ACI partners with emerging arts leaders of color, and arts influencers who hold institutional power in the arts and culture sector, to collectively build equity, access, and inclusion through transformational leadership development.” With the reformation of our mission, we also rewrote our values into five key focus areas, and correspondingly reconceptualized our programming into four impact areas.

Our values read:

1) art is a human right and therefore must be accessible to all;
2) racism and marginalization, in any form, are a breach of human rights;
3) art serves as a conduit for cross-cultural understanding, deep and meaningful learning, creative expression, and community building, making it an adaptive tool for social change;
4) change must be fostered at a community-contextualized level to be effective and sustainable; and
5) systems of oppression permeate conscious and unconscious thought, making it imperative to support those already awoke, and those awakening, to collaboratively work toward equity.
Our programming impact areas are:
1) community convenings and community facing and driven programs, most recently manifesting in the Arts Equity Summit;
2) leadership development, fostered through our flagship Artist Training Institute, Youth United Artists, artist leader retreats, and artist-in-residence programs;
3) empirical research, which is community-based and driven, focused on cultural equity in the arts, examined over multiple years, employing mixed methods through multiple studies; and
4) systems strengthening, supported through ACI’s consulting, focused on building diversity, inclusion, accessibility, and equity in our arts and culture sector (Arts Connect International, 2019).

With the systems-level work ahead, my work as a Ph.D. student at UMass Boston, and as the founding director of ACI, became deeply enmeshed. I dove into authentic leadership development, cultural competence and humility, systems change theory, organizational dynamics and theory, intersectionality and transdisciplinary research as ways to both explore and propel systemic change. This inquiry became a clear call to begin field-level participatory action research, hence the birth of the multiphase study upon which this dissertation is built, *Examining Cultural Equity: Boston’s Arts & Culture Sector*.

Although the history of systemic oppression within Boston is deep-rooted, ongoing, and exceptionally problematic, there is hope and opportunity for new leadership, systemic reform, new systems, and new opportunities moving forward. Correspondingly, through this dissertation readers explore relevant literature in Chapter II; methodological design related to transdisciplinary research in Chapter III; results and findings from phases I and II of *Examining Cultural Equity* in Chapter IV; discussion about the research tied to systems change in Chapter V; and recommendations and implications moving forward in Chapter VI.
Throughout these chapters I invite readers to embrace the tensions embedded in social change and transdisciplinary research, one where the Boston’s arts and culture sector is examined, my own leadership is challenged and pushed, and ACI goes through massive evolution in response to the multifaceted and adaptive learning taking place.
Deprivation

We, can't breathe
Hands up, don't shoot
Please I have no weapon
Freeze
All I have is my voice
Chalk lines, Caution tape
We hail cabs that won't stop
Too dark, too late, they don't feel safe
Go to college obtain two degrees
Treated like second class citizens
No identity yet check the ethnicity box
Assumed labels, single mothers, deadbeat dads, welfare checks
Do you even have a job?
European names like Gregory and Amanda
Guarantee interviews
Looks of disappointment once they see you
We've been lied to, This country isn't ours
Go back home
Practice patriotism
Anger, stomach aches.
Bubbles like warm, shaken soda
Smile hide your pain. Stay in your lane.
Collared shirts. Ironed pants still get stained.
Proper English, urban dictionaries
Puppets not people, minstrel shows
Humans detained like animals
Jail cells reminiscent of animal cages
Unfair, unequal wages
No pride left, dead inside
We all just want to feel alive

Artist: Amanda Shea, © 2020

Title: Performance of Deprivation, 2020

Notes: Photo: Danny Reyes, taken at the Oberon, Boston, MA. Poem curtesy of the artist, all rights reserved.
Overview

This literature review serves as an introduction and framing to the political economy of the arts, creative justice, systems leadership, and systems change, collectively serving as the foundation for Examining Cultural Equity.

Political Economy of the Arts and Creative Justice

The arts are often thought of as a great equalizer and as one of the most poignant demonstrators, preservers, and celebrators of culture, making the arts inherently inclusive. What is often left out of this angelic view is the inherent difference between economic and cultural valuation, known as the political economy of the arts. Scholars analyzing the political economy of the arts have argued that art does not need to be economically viable or economically successful for it to be created nor for it to ultimately hold value (Bazealgette & Davey, 2013).

There are several economies where art is a currency in and of itself, particularly in the form of cultural capital, transcending the current structures of capitalism. Vidokle (2013) describes the political economy of the arts as

… more or less synonymous with “economy” in our contemporary lexicon…. Be it capitalist, feudal, or communist—along with all the regulations, laws, and conventions governing such distribution…In one of the first studies of the economy of art—John Ruskin laments the confusion regarding the interpretation of the word “economy,” emphasizing that economy does not automatically imply money, frugality, or expenditures, but rather taking care of a household and managing labor (Vidokle, 2013).
To this, one must ask: Are equity and inclusion obtainable when there is no economic value of the work? Further, what types of currency can be exchanged, and what is the impact of operating within a capitalist society?

A parallel question would be to ask if women can achieve equal rights without economic empowerment and independence. As long as someone is operating within a context where economics equate to power, as is evident within capitalism, the answer is no. However, one must be cognizant of not inflating the efficacy of power being defined solely through capital. Power can take many forms and many currencies; however, it is a driver in many societies, which is particularly evident within capitalist structures where mainstream art markets operate and out of which the arts and culture sector is born. Vidokle (2013) goes on to describe the various political economics that qualify the arts:

Historically, art and artists have existed both with and without a market. Important art was produced in socialist countries for most of the twentieth century, in the absence of an art market. Much of art production today occurs in places without a market for art, or in countries where a capitalist market system is not the dominant form of social and cultural organization. Art can clearly exist without a market, but artists fundamentally rely upon a certain economy in order to live and make art in the first place (Vidokle, 2013).

A poignant truth is articulated here: Even if artists and their art exist outside of the capitalist economy, they are still dependent on a certain economy in order to live. With this, one cannot help but understand the value and sustainability of the arts and, therefore, inclusion and equity in the arts, as being directly correlated with economic access and, therefore, capitalism in the context of the United States. The conclusion drawn is that economic inclusion and access to the arts are integral to one another. This challenges notions of equity in the arts, calling into question who has the right to define the value and terms of “success.”
For the purposes of Examining Cultural Equity, the political economy of the arts is employed to understand how market forces inform the production of art within the arts and culture sector, and how POC-identifying artists and arts leaders are often double-marginalized through historical oppression of their racial identity as POC, coupled with the economic devaluation of their work as social justice artists. Conversely, it is these same artists and arts leaders who have the most robust cultural capitol in the work they pursue.

Diversity of Artists in Major U.S. Museums, published in 2019, illuminates whose art is collected nationally and, therefore, economically valued by our major arts institutions (Topaz et al., 2019). Through examining the public online catalogs of 18 major U.S. museums, deploying a sample of 10K artist records comprising over 9K unique artists to crowdsourcing, and analyzing 45K responses, the authors inferred artist genders, ethnicities, geographic origins, and birth decades. Starkly, but not surprisingly, they found that, of the collections studied, 85% of artists are white and 87% are men (Topaz et al., 2019). In Boston, The Museum of Fine Arts collection showed a statistically significant lower percentage of female artists, at 8.2% (91.8% male), and a statistically significant lower percentage of white artists at 79.7% (20.3% identify as nonwhite) (Topaz et al., 2019). This study is groundbreaking for the field, as it demonstrates how race and gender have an impact on how likely a visual artist is to be reflected within a museum collection within the United States.

This speaks directly to the impact of an artists’ various identities on the statistical likelihood of being valued economically within the mainstream art world, driving whose culture is represented and how. Moreover, it shows a vast inequity into who has primacy and voice, creating a clear call for remediation. Although this study focuses solely on museum
collections and, therefore, on visual and mixed-media artists, it points to ubiquitous inequities rampant in a multitude of spaces across and throughout the arts and culture sector. The findings stand as a glaring example of the institutional and systemic racism and misogyny embedded within U.S. culture, reproduced through one of our greatest preservers of culture and history: art.

Building off of, or perhaps departing from, the political economy of the arts, Mark Banks (2017) coined the term “creative justice,” which employs three working concepts: 1) objective respect, which means to respect cultural objects and practices by evaluating them in terms of their own objective qualities; 2) parity of participation, offering a point of commensurability between different types of justice claims, supporting the legitimate cultural rights and statuses of persons; and 3) reduction of harms, which aim at reducing the physical and psychological harms and injuries inflicted by cultural work, based on assessments of objective conditions and their human effects (Banks, 2017). If cultural equity is the next step in unpacking the political economy of the arts, then creative justice is the step beyond cultural equity, as it gives an asset-based framework or guide for a field-level analysis and reformation, reflecting a restorative justice stance.

Creative justice provides a nuanced interplay between culture and economy, one that starts with the inherent understanding that the arts and culture sector is unequal and inequitable and that, as Cuyler (2019) states, “Humanity has suffered grave creative deficits as a result of creative inequities and injustices.” Cuyler built upon Banks’ work, defining creative justice as, “The manifestation of all people living creative and expressive lives on their own terms” (Cuyler, 2019). Cuyler further elaborates on the interplay among access,
diversity, equity, and inclusion and the creative justice framework, equating access to parity of participation, equity as objective respect, and inclusion as reduction of harms (Cuyler, 2019), asking, “Is it possible to disentangle Cultural Policy and Arts Management studies from its colonialist, hegemonic, imperialist, patriarchal, and white supremacist origins?” Further, I would ask, is it possible to promote authentic, community-contextualized transformational leadership models, which center on creative justice and systems leadership, creating a culture shift through the redistribution of power within the arts and culture sector?

For the purposes of Examining Cultural Equity, creative justice is utilized as a framework to explore and analyze the data collected, while moving toward a model for remediation, calling for systems-level change. Creative justice also provides a lens and framework through which to advocate for said equity work to take place, moving from a place of identification of inequities, as discussions on cultural equity tend to do, to action in building equity and restoring justice. I am also interested in the utility of creative justice in reforming current leadership pipeline programs in the arts and culture sector, engaging creative justice and systems leadership as a way to build equitable and contextualized leadership development models, for both academic and community-based settings.

**Leadership Studies and the Rise of Systems Leadership**

The majority of academic leadership studies are predicated on notions of “traditional success,” looking almost exclusively at corporate settings, which are predominantly run by white men, due in large part to systemic inequities of resources, which, in turn, are not an accurate reflection of ability. These leaders’ narratives and stories overflow the pages of the
Harvard Business Review, Organizational Dynamics, and other preeminent leadership and management journals, rooting back as far as the “great man theory” proposed by Thomas Carlyle in 1847 (Carlyle, 1993). In order to understand the rise of systems leadership and its place in Examining Cultural Equity, the building blocks of leadership literature are reviewed, including great man theory, trait and behavioral theories, participative leadership, situational leadership, contingency theory, transactional leadership, transformational leadership, adaptive leadership, and systems leadership (Stogdill, 1974; McCall & Lombardo, 1983; Merton, 1957; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1975; Blake & Mouton, 1961; Lewin, Llippit, & White, 1939; Linkert, 1967; Tannenbaum & Schmitt, 1958; Maier, 1963; Yuki, 1989; Hersey & Blanchard, 1999; Vroom & Yetton; 1973, Evans, 1970; House, 1971; Fiedler, 1964; Bass, 1985; Bass, 1990; Burns, 1978; Kouzes & Posner; 2002; Senge, Hamilton, & Kania, 2015).

Great man, trait, and behavioral theory. The great man theory posited that great men are born, not made (Carlyle, 1993). This theory was proven flawed with the rise of leaders like Adolf Hitler and Napoleon Bonaparte and has been reinforced today by contemporary leaders like Donald Trump, Vladimir Putin, and Moon Jae-in. In leadership texts, the great man theory boasts exemplars of almost exclusively white men, showing that the most desirable leaders are monolithic in gender and race. These exemplars demonstrate the systemically biased roots from which the theory evolved.

Following the great man theory came trait theory and behavioral theory. Trait theories emerged with the concept that people are born with genetic, or inherited traits, and that some traits are particularly suited to leadership. This indicates good leaders have the right combination of traits in order to both be seen as a leader and to develop their leadership
capacity over time (Stogdill, 1974; McCall & Lombardo, 1983; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991; Zaccaro, 2007). Offering an alternative to trait theory, behavioral theory emerged, where theorists posited that successful leadership is based on definable learnable behavior and is not inherent to an individual (Conger & Kanungo, 1987). Behavioral theory therefore challenged the monolithic leadership narrative embedded in both great man and trait theories. Concepts further expanded to include emergent traits, which could depend on heredity such as height and attractiveness, and effectiveness traits based on learning such as charisma, showing a blend of both trait and behavioral theories. These theories, in sum, are akin to the nature versus nurture discussion, with implications on the teachability of leadership.

**Participative and situational leadership models.** Developing past discussions of trait and behavioral theory, leadership models have become more sophisticated and organized. Participative leadership encompasses Lewin’s leadership styles, including autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire, and Likert’s leadership styles, including exploitative, benevolent, consultative, and participative (Lewin, Lippit, & White, 1939; Burnes, 2004; Likert, 1967). Underlying assumptions included that people are more committed to actions where they have been involved in the decisions, and that people are more collaborative and less competitive when they are working toward joint goals (Coch & French, 1948; Tennenbaum & Alport, 1956).

Participative leadership gives voice and primacy to the collective versus the individual as the knowledge holder and generator, which is honored today in systems leadership. Participative leadership affected how managers and management studies were taught through a collective vs. singular decision-making lens. However, how much autonomy
subordinates have and how much true authorship they have versus symbolic power are still dependent on the leader, so it remains top-down. The opening of power-sharing as a model of leadership is essential yet still ambiguous and hierarchical in these models, as it depends on an individual as the nexus point for decision-making and power-sharing.

Situational leadership encompasses Hersey and Blanchard’s situational leadership model, Vroom and Yetton’s normative model, and House’s path–goal theory of leadership, all of which operate under the assumption that the best action of the leader depends on a range of situational factors as the leaders respond to the task or situation at hand. Hershey and Blanchard suggest that leaders should adapt their leadership style based on the follower development style or maturity, including telling/directing, selling/coaching, participating/supporting, and delegating/observing (Hersey & Blanchard, 1999). Hershey and Blanchard’s model echoes some of the core principals of multiple intelligence theory, which is predicated on the idea that various learners need multiple types of stimulation for knowledge generation and retention (Gardner, 2006).

Vroom and Yetton’s normative model defined five different procedures for making decisions. Said decisions are based on the belief that decision acceptance and participation increase commitment and effectiveness of action as well as decision acceptance (Vroom & Yetton, 1973). Path–goal theory of leadership was developed to describe the ways that leaders can encourage and support followers in achieving the goals that have been set by making paths that should be clear and easy to follow, including clarifying the path, removing roadblocks, and increasing rewards along the route (Evans, 1970; House, 1971).
Situational theory posits that followers as well as leaders create situational environments, shedding light on the power that followers (or subordinates) have in the effectiveness of leadership and leaders. Situational theory goes as far as to say that a leader’s perception of the follower affects what they do, rather than the truth of the situation, putting the onus for relationship building and, therefore, success on the leader. Situational theory also calls for adaptive leadership, where various forms of leadership are called upon for a particular situation (Tannenbaum & Schmitt, 1958; Maier, 1963; Yuki, 1989).

**Contingency theory.** Moving past ideas of particular constructs of leadership and leader performance, contingency theories states that there is no single right way to lead because the internal and external dimensions of the environment require a leader to adapt to that particular situation, indicating that leaders do not change, only the dynamics and the environment change (Greenleaf, 1977). In other words, what may work as an effective leadership strategy in one situation may completely fail in another due to a multiplicity of factors. This is particularly important for theories of change management and the cross-sector effectiveness of leaders and leadership. A contemporary example of this can be seen with Julie Burros, who was hired as the chief of arts and culture for the city of Boston in December 2014 to lead a cultural planning process (City of Boston, 2014).

Prior to coming to Boston, Chief Burros ran a similar process as the director of cultural planning for the city of Chicago, a position she held for 14 years. She found great success with said methodology in Chicago yet, in Boston, found the process challenging to replicate, resultantly, she left her post as chief of arts and culture in under four years. There are many theories as to why Burro’s leadership and methodology were ultimately not
replicable, or perhaps adopted in Boston, and contingency theory gives a lens, or perhaps many lenses, through which to examine it.

Contingency theory introduces the idea of plurality of thought, showing that there is no one way of leading or organizing and that different situations call for different types of leadership or leaders. This also indicates that a leader’s success is dependent on his or her ability to adapt to the environment and task at hand. This paves the way for contemporary theories on group dynamics and leadership (Bass, 1997). Sub theories and applications of the contingency theory include Fiedler’s least-preferred coworker (LPC) theory, cognitive resource theory, and strategic contingencies theory (Fiedler, 1964; Fielder; 1967; Fiedler, 1986; Fiedler & Garcia, 1987; Hickson, 1971).

**Transactional leadership.** Ideating away from contextualized leadership, transactional leadership upholds the ideologies of heaven and hell, which point back to a behavioral methodology for leadership development. In other words, people are motivated by reward and punishment and social systems. In transactional leadership, the subordinate succeeds all power and decision-making to the boss or manager. The main limitation of transactional leadership is that it is based on a “rational man” who is motivated by money and simple rewards (Judge & Piccolo, 2004).

Despite transactional leadership’s clear flaws and bias, the theory is still actively utilized in management studies. One area of applicability is in the development of leader–member exchange theory, which describes how leaders in groups maintain their position through a series of tacit exchanges, creating an in-group and out-group through role-taking, role-making, and routinization (Gersten & Day, 1997; Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1975;
Graen & Cashman, 1975). The concepts embedded within in-group and out-group ideologies have been utilized in critical race theory and sociology to explain concepts of inclusion, exclusion, and bias. Said concepts are essential to *Examining Cultural Equity* in regard to developing culturally responsive and equitable leadership model(s) aimed to holistically support traditionally marginalized arts leaders (Dovidio, Gaertner, & Saguy, 2009).

**Transformational leadership.** Social change literature is filled with exemplars of the transformational leadership, based on the idea that people will follow a person who inspires them, and that a person with vision and passion can achieve great things through injecting enthusiasm and energy to her followers. At the core, transformational leaders are invested in others and want them to succeed. Transformational leaders develop a vision and then sell that vision, often correlating themselves with the vision itself, and they are tireless in their efforts. They will also find ways forward, often with multiple options, to actualize a vision showing reflexivity (Bass, 1985; Bass, 1990; Burns, 1978).

Although transformational leadership generally evokes a positive vision of what an effective leader should look like, one essential downfall is that just because she believes wholeheartedly in the vision and direction, this doesn’t always correlate to the leader being correct about the direction in which she is going; yet, a leader’s job is to project and protect said direction with conviction (Bass, 1985; Bass, 1990; Burns, 1978). Further, transformational leadership still celebrates and perpetuates the idea of a singular leader responsible for the vision and execution of a movement.

Transformational leadership leaves little room for celebration of the collective, or of community on the whole, which is ultimately where social change is driven from, making it
an odd bedfellow for social change movements. It puts too much power and responsibility with the individual. Much of Jim Collin’s Level 5 Leadership echoes the tenets of transformational leadership, with accolades and further definition through case study examples of new chief executive officers turning around failing companies, focused on humility and resolve as core tenets to success (Collins, 2006).

**Adaptive leadership.** Adaptive leadership assumes that all leaders are working within systems, acknowledging that present day challenges require reflexive, open, and iterative learning and leadership (Heifetz et al., 2009). Adaptive leadership is about the process of recognizing the systems people work within, examining how to disrupt said systems consciously, while simultaneously recognizing that change is difficult and that humans are naturally averse to change. Adaptive leadership is core to social justice, as it operates with the knowledge that leadership has to be about embracing difficult decisions, managing change, embracing messy paradoxes, and opening oneself to critique and blowback. This echoes core tenets of generative emergence, which states that “embracing disequilibrium is necessary for change and emergence to take place in organizational design and behavior” (Lichtenstein, 2014). Adaptative leadership as a practice and as a theory moves away from the “sexy” side of leadership and authority, instead positioning leaders to act from a space of moral impetus, in turn, providing space for the rise of culturally competent leadership and systems leadership (Moodian, 2009; Senge et al., 2015).

**Systems leadership.** Moving into leadership theory rooted in the collective, systems leadership emerged. System leaders, as defined by Senge, Hamilton, and Kania (2015), hold three core capabilities: 1) the ability to see the larger system; 2) the ability to foster reflection
and more generative conversations; and 3) shifting the collective focus from reactive problem solving to co-creating the future. These principles, together, allow for the rise of collective intelligence. They propose that,

…as these system leaders emerge, situations previously suffering from polarization and inertia become more open, and what were previously seen as intractable problems become perceived as opportunities for innovation. Short-term reactive problem solving becomes more balanced with long-term value creation. And organizational self-interest becomes re-contextualized, as people discover that their and their organization’s success depends on creating well-being within the larger systems of which they are a part (Senge, Hamilton, & Kania, 2015).

The perspectives presented in *The Rise of Systems Leadership* are essential, as they move the onus and narrative away from concepts of a singular leader to the coordinated efforts of an entire team of leaders. Perhaps for the first time in traditional leadership narratives, systems leadership recognizes and names that it takes coordinated efforts amongst many people to make collective action and collective impact possible.

Further, systems leadership points to the context and situation, which calls for the adaptation of effective and collaborative leadership. It is an important step away from the transformational leader, as it looks at more lateral leadership models and shares or diffuses traditional power structures amongst many people and groups. Systems leadership further challenges notions of the study of leadership as a field and the concepts of what a leader “looks like,” as has been studied and propagated within academia and practice.

The collective is more responsive and resilient than the individual. When a collective of leaders is present, the power of the singular leader is decentralized yet strengthened. Within systems leadership, there is more flexibility for leaders to step in and step out without vast alteration in the leadership formation. In this way, systems leadership is akin to a flock
of geese migrating north for the winter. Geese fly in a V-shaped formation, where there is a leader at the front of the V. Said leader takes on the most wind resistance and sets the course for the whole flock. What is unique about geese is that they rotate the leader, recognizing that one goose cannot break trail for the entire flight north, so they rely on shared and systems leadership as a way to navigate. When a goose is injured, two other geese will drop out of formation and stay with the injured goose until they either recover or perish. After that, they return to formation with their flock. No one is alone, either in flight or on the ground. In this way, systems leadership also echoes core tenets of emergent strategy (Brown, 2017).

Relating back to *Examining Cultural Equity*. Although progress has been made in leadership studies, and, admittedly, there are more diverse voices and theorists published in the twentieth century, the field cannot escape its roots and bias of patriarchal white supremacy. This history shapes how leaders are both conceptualized and actualized in practice in the United States, some of which is reproduced in the findings of *Examining Cultural Equity*. These roots of origin provoke questions around what authentic and culturally competent leadership looks like, and could look like, in an ever-globalized world, engaging systems leadership as a way forward in collective action. Systems leadership also produces space for questioning, exploring how identity and power inform individuals’ conceptualizations and internalizations of leadership, power, and oppression.

In *Examining Cultural Equity*, concepts of systems leadership inform how representation, access, and leadership are interconnected, and how said interconnection informs building creative justice in the arts and culture sector. If one does not see him or herself represented in positions of leadership and power, does it deter an emerging leader
from pursuing said positions? If an emergent leader sees one’s self represented in positions of leadership and power, does it become easier to pursue said positions?

When it comes to an individual’s rise to a position of leadership and power, what and who are the main influencers that support that individual’s development and path? Are there narratives of collective leadership versus singular leadership excelling in the arts and culture sector? Are the main determinants for success qualities of leadership (i.e., command, humility, creativity) or direct access (i.e., to money, education, career training, and opportunities) when examining pipeline issues? What and who informs one’s ability to move into positions of leadership and power and why? What aspects of self-determination and self-actualization play into assuming leadership roles, and what can be taught and fostered?

As the arts and culture sector seek to progress toward models of equity, what does it look like to support emergent leaders with traditionally marginalized identities? Concurrently, what does it look like to support systems leadership where all voices are honored and valued? This sharing of power, as well as reorientation around leadership, power, privilege, and voice, is essential for progress to take place in moving toward creative justice.

Systems leadership lends a lens through which to develop authentically diverse and competent leadership models, centered on the collective and on the movement. Systems change can further support adaptive and systems-oriented leaders in creating meaningful and sustainable social change.
**Systems Change to Examine Equity**

Systems leadership is deeply tied to systems change, collective action, and collective impact (Kania & Kramer, 2011; Meadows, 2008; Stroh, 2015). Systems change calls for the coordinated efforts of players across a field in order to create systemic shifts, challenging the boundaries of work and practice as well as the position of insider informants and coordinated actors across the field (Dacin, Dacin, & Trace, 2011; Ely & Myerson, 2000; Benson, 1997; Seo & Creed, 2002; Ziestma & Lawrence, 2010).

According to Stroh (2015), systems thinking motivates people to change because they discover their role in exacerbating the problems they want to solve. This is akin to La Piana’s (2011) concept of the nonprofit paradox, positioning that nonprofits perpetuate the exact social issues they seek to solve. In other words, being able to see a larger system and having shared understandings of complex problems enables collaboration amongst individuals and organizations that may otherwise be drawn to fixing one aspect of a system or systemic inequity.

Systems thinking also supports an essential perspective shift, with recognition that the current reality is the result of what the system participants have created, i.e., it is not something that exists outside of them, and that all participants are implicit in the perpetuation of said systems. Stroh notes:

> In searching for root causes, people typically assume that they are doing the best they can and that someone else is to blame – instead of recognizing, in the words of leadership expert Bill Torbet, that “if you are not aware of how you are part of the problem, you can’t be part of the solution.” By contrast, systems thinking enables people to identify high-leverage interventions based on deep insights into root causes that incorporate their own thinking and behavior (Stroh, 2015).
Systems thinking challenges the nonprofit sector to reconceptualize the role of organizations and programs, moving outside of a logic model with clear outcomes, to instead focusing on collective intelligence and coordination, which in praxis is often unclear, particularly at the onset of action.

Stroh (2015) lays out a four-stage process in *Systems Thinking for Social Change*, including 1) building a foundation for change; 2) seeing the current reality more clearly; 3) making an explicit choice about what is most important; and 4) bridging the gap between people’s aspirations and current state. This four-stage change process was built upon the creative tension model introduced by Peter Senge in the *The Fifth Discipline* (Stroh, 2015).

Building a foundation for change incorporates three steps: 1) engaging key stakeholders; 2) establishing common ground by creating an initial picture of what people want to achieve and where they are now; and 3) building capabilities with each other, including people’s ability to think systemically and hold productive conversations around difficult issues (Stroh, 2015).

Seeing the current reality more clearly involves: 1) identifying people to interview about the history of the current situation and clarifying what questions to ask; 2) organizing and beginning to improve the quality of information; 3) developing a preliminary systems analysis of how different factors interact over time to support or undermine achievement of the vision; 4) engaging people in developing their own analysis as much as possible; 5) surfacing mental models that influence how people behave; and 6) creating catalytic conversations that stimulate awareness, acceptance, and alternatives (Stroh, 2015).
Making an explicit choice about what is most important hinges on helping people to make explicit choices in favor of what they really want, being fully aware of both costs and benefits, including: 1) identifying the case for the status quo; 2) comparing this with the case for change; 3) creating solutions that achieve the benefits of both; and 4) making an explicit choice and bringing it to life through vision that illuminates what people feel called to do or deeply wish to create (Stroh, 2015).

Bridging the gap between people’s aspirations and current states supports people in bridging the gap between what they deeply care about and their current actions, building on their motivations and knowledge to create systemic and lasting change. This involves identifying leverage points and establishing a process for continuous learning and expanded engagement, including proposing and refining high-leverage interventions with community input and establishing a process for continuous learning and outreach.

It is important to note that this process is often circular versus linear and, as Stroh (2015) notes, “In this case, the shortest distance between two points is indeed a circle.” Similarly, transdisciplinary research follows a spiral methodology, looking at the circular and iterative nature of research focused on systems change. This makes systems change and transdisciplinary research complimentary, both in terms of processes and visualizations in creating actionable and sustainable change.

Throughout Examining Cultural Equity, concepts of systems change are applied to inform how a field-level analysis can be conducted within academic research, and how field-level shifts can be catalyzed along the intersection of research and praxis. This leads to a
thoughtful discussion on the state of Boston’s arts and culture sector, framed through systems change, employing creative justice as the measure of success.

Title: Dashawn Borden as Sundiata Keita, 2018

Artist description of the piece: The Founders Project re-imagines Boston Public School high school students as the legendary founders of the West and West-Central African ethnic groups, that are part of the ancestral base for the African diaspora. The pieces incorporate painting, weaving and sculpture traditions from each of the spotlighted ethnic groups and was installed in The Bruce C. Bolling Building in the fall of 2018. The project will contribute to a larger syllabus on West African cultural continuity in the African Diaspora designed for High School students.
Overview

This chapter serves as an introduction and framing to transdisciplinary research, researcher positionality, and the study design overview. Collectively these components serve as the foundation for *Examining Cultural Equity*. These components are further built upon through exploration of methods employed in phases I and II of *Examining Cultural Equity*.

Transdisciplinary Research

Transdisciplinary research complements creative justice and systems leadership as a research framework for exploring and furthering systems change for social justice (Leavy, 2011; Leavy, 2017; Ozer, 2017; Akom, 2009; Kirshner, 2010). Transdisciplinary approaches to research embrace messiness and paradoxes, which are often found useful in projects informed by intersectionality, as is the case with *Examining Cultural Equity* (Crenshaw, 1991; Leavy, 2011).

In the words of Leavy (2011), “Transdisciplinarity is a social-justice-oriented approach to research in which resources and expertise from multiple disciplines are integrated in order to holistically address a real-world issue or problem.” Transdisciplinary research practices are issue- or problem-centered and prioritize the problem at the center of the research over discipline-specific concerns, theories, or methods. Transdisciplinary research also follows responsive or iterative methodologies and requires innovation, creativity, and flexibility (Leavy, 2011).
As such, participatory and multidimensional research methods are often employed as design strategies. In making the case for the use of transdisciplinary research, Leavy (2011) states:

First, it (transdisciplinary research) has freed researchers from the limits of working with their disciplinary tools alone. This has fostered an enormous expansion of social research. Second, the ability to use additional tools and resources has allowed research questions to be asked from more diverse perspectives…Third, and perhaps most significantly, the transdisciplinarity of research methods has caused an erosion on the basis upon which disciplinary borders have historically been formed and maintained (Leavy, 2011).

The questions asked in *Examining Cultural Equity* are problem-centered, iterative, and multidimensional. The multiphase and multimethod design of *Examining Cultural Equity* shows its utility as reflexive and iterative, representing the perspectives and knowledge of many stakeholders throughout the process. The research team working on *Examining Cultural Equity* also represents a multitude of schools of knowledge and thought, including but not limited to art, education, organizational studies, anthropology, public health, theology, critical race theory, queer studies, and sociology. Similarly, the life paths of said research team members vary greatly across many intersectional dimensions of identity.

Disciplines reproduce shared and specific ways of knowledge generation. Multidisciplinarity involves collaboration between two or more disciplines without integration. Interdisciplinarity is the collaboration between two or more disciplines with varying levels of integration of concepts, theories, methods, and findings. Transdisciplinarity is the collaboration between two or more disciplines with high levels of integration causing the development of new conceptual, theoretical, and methodological frameworks (Leavy, 2011). Transdisciplinarity is relatively new, marking an emerging field of scholarship, which
can be understood as an attempt to bridge the academic world and the needs of different social bodies to address real-world issues and problems (Leavy, 2011; Hadorn et al., 2008; Hoffman-Reim et al., 2008).

Klein (2004) states: “Transdisciplinary vision, which replaces reduction with a new principle of relativity, is transcultural, transnational, and encompasses ethics, spirituality and creativity.” As an artist and social justice practitioner, no description of research methodologies has resonated so deeply. Across several texts on transdisciplinary research, the concept of a holistic approach to research is consistent, thus marking the core DNA of transdisciplinary research. Transdisciplinary research is born out of theories that demand cross-cutting solutions to pressing human rights issues, such as feminism, critical race theory, and queer theories. Said theories all share a commitment to exposing and eradicating inequalities as well as to access subjugated perspectives (Leavy, 2011).

Leavy (2011) organizes transdisciplinarity into six principles: 1) issue or problem centered; 2) holistic of synergistic research approach; 3) transcendence; 4) emergence; 5) innovation; and 6) flexibility. Issue- or problem-centered entails having a problem at the center of the research, which determines the use of disciplinary resources and guides methodology. Holistic or synergistic research approaches include the problem being considered holistically through iterative research processes, which produce integrated knowledge. Transcendence is when researchers build conceptual frameworks that transcend disciplinary perspectives in order to effectively address the research problem, such as creative justice. Emergence involves putting the problem at the center of the research, cultivating the emergence of new conceptual or methodological frameworks. Innovation
comes from researchers building new conceptual, methodological, and theoretical frameworks as needed. Flexibility is marked by an iterative research process that requires openness to new ideas and new insights (Leavy, 2011).

One of the greatest strengths of transdisciplinary research is its multifaceted impact amongst academia, the globalizing world, and the public. It is a framework that calls for innovation and social justice. Transdisciplinary research calls for a reflexive and thoughtful process that challenges researchers to evolve methodology. This evolution is reflected in *Examining Cultural Equity*, i.e., as each phase unfolded, the research team learned and revised accordingly. Even during analysis and final writing, that same iterative process was still taking place. Transdisciplinary research openly embraces the stickiness of the research process, remaining open to ways of knowing, seeing, and engaging as they evolve and present in real time, creating space for innovation and various ways of generating knowledge.

Choosing to be a transdisciplinary scholar means deep diving into multiple fields while being guided by the integrity and authenticity of the work, or problem, at hand. Propelled through transdisciplinary research, *Examining Cultural Equity* creates a bedrock for systemic thinking and change. The community findings report published alongside this dissertation act as a mirror to reflect current realities more clearly, calling for collective action so that the sector can move toward creative justice.

**Researcher Positionality**

My theoretical perspective as a researcher is firmly planted in transdisciplinary research. Postmodern, post-structural, and postcolonial theoretical perspectives all examine
how power informs the research process, all of which have contributed to the evolution of transdisciplinary research (Leavy, 2011). Within transdisciplinary research, there is debate as to if scholars fall within a constructivist, pragmatism, or critical theorist paradigm or perhaps a new paradigm yet to be penned. I have come to understand that said classification generally depends on the discipline in which one roots, yet for those of us who situate within many disciplines, knowledge generation demands a problem-centered and based approach.

Within this, my paradigm most closely aligns with pragmatism, where my ontology is driven by an understanding that reality is constantly renegotiated, debated, and situated within the contexts from which it originates. Further, I believe said realities are able to be measured and interpreted in a multiplicity of capacities, which is subject to the human experience and the identities we hold. Epistemologically, I believe that the best method is the one that solves the problem. Further, I believe that there are many ways to solve a problem, or complex intersecting problems. Methodological design generally focuses on mixed-methods, design-based research and participatory action research, employing a myriad of methods to arrive at a problem-driven research design and analysis.

Correspondingly, *Examining Cultural Equity* follows the classifications explored in Table 5, employing mixed methods, including a quantitative survey, focus groups, key informant interviews, youth participatory action research, and ethnographic field notes as a way to address cultural equity in the arts holistically.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paradigm</th>
<th>Ontology</th>
<th>Epistemology</th>
<th>Theoretical Perspective</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Methods</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pragmatism</td>
<td>What is reality?</td>
<td>How can I know reality?</td>
<td>Which Approach do you use to know something?</td>
<td>How do you go about finding out?</td>
<td>What techniques do you use to find out?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reality is constantly renegotiated, debated, interpreted in light of its usefulness in new unpredictable situations.</td>
<td>The best method is the one that solves the problem. Finding out is the means; change is the underlying aim.</td>
<td>Deweyan pragmatism (research through design)</td>
<td>Mixed methods Design-based research Action research</td>
<td>Qualitative interviews Observation Participant data Case study Life history Narrative Theme identification Data mining Expert review User ability testing Physical prototype Focus groups Arts-based research YPAR</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Table adapted from Patel (2015) who adapted it from Crotty (1998).
**Study Design and Overview**

*Examining Cultural Equity* involves two phases and was conducted between May 2017 – May 2019. Phase I focused on arts and culture influencers, along with the following sub questions: 1) Current influencers’ understanding of the cultural equity gap, and 2) Current influencers’ motivations to eradicate the cultural equity gap. Phase II focused on POC-identifying arts and culture leaders, along with the following sub questions: 1) How arts and culture leaders of various marginalized identities (POC, PWD, female, LGBTQIA+) conceptualize and operationalize leadership development for themselves, and 2) How arts and culture leaders of various marginalized identities (POC, PWD, female, LGBTQIA+) perceive barriers to access regarding positions of leadership in the arts and culture sector. The two phases share one overarching research question: What are the social, emotional, economic, and cultural assets within Boston that can lead to creative justice, and what reformation is still needed to achieve creative justice?

Phase I employed mixed-methods with a national survey $n = 332$ and Boston-based focus groups $n = 39$. Phase II employed Boston-based focus groups and key informant interviews $n = 28$ and a Boston-based youth participatory action research process $n = 6$. Collectively $n = 405$ participants were engaged across the two phases. Table 6 shows the phases, questions, methods, team members, and timeline for Phases I - II.
### Table 6

#### Examining Cultural Equity Overview

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phases</th>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Methods</th>
<th>Team</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phase I</td>
<td>Current influencers’ understanding of the cultural equity gap</td>
<td><strong>Mixed methods</strong>, including</td>
<td>PI: Marian Brown</td>
<td>IRB Granted:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>National survey</td>
<td>Assistant: Hanako Brais</td>
<td>May 19, 2017, Exempt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Current influencers’ motivations to eradicate the cultural equity gap</td>
<td>Focus groups</td>
<td>Associate: Esther Kamau</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Data Collection:</strong> June – Sept. 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Closed:</strong> N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase II</td>
<td>How arts and culture leaders of various marginalized identities conceptualize and operationalize leadership development for themselves</td>
<td><strong>Qualitative methods</strong>, including:</td>
<td>PI: Marian Brown</td>
<td>IRB Granted:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Focus groups and key informant interviews</td>
<td>Coordinator: Hanako Brais</td>
<td>May 31st, 2018, Expedited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>youth participatory action research (YPAR)</td>
<td>Consultant: Jessica Fei</td>
<td><strong>Data Collection:</strong> June 2018 – April 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Assistant: Joseph Quisol</td>
<td><strong>Phase Closed:</strong> May 28, 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How arts and culture leaders of various marginalized identities perceive barriers to access regarding positions of leadership in the arts and culture sector</td>
<td></td>
<td>YPAR mentor &amp; data analyst: Allegra Fletcher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>YPAR mentor: Stephen Hamilton</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>YPAR participants: Sumeya Aden, Jedidia Santana, Dashawn Borden, Ny’lasia Brown, Alice Acevedo-Brito, Jonathan Lopez</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overarching</td>
<td><strong>Overarching Question:</strong> What are the social, emotional, economic, and cultural assets within Boston that can lead to creative justice, and what reformation is still needed to achieve creative justice?</td>
<td><strong>Methods Overview:</strong> Quantitative national survey</td>
<td>Team members: Marian Brown, Hanako Brais, Allegra Fletcher, Joseph Quisol, Esther Kamau, Stephen Hamilton, Jessica Fei, YUA Members</td>
<td><strong>Study Duration:</strong> May 2017 – May 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Boston-based focus groups and key informant interviews</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>youth participatory action research</td>
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</table>

**Notes:**

- N/A: Not applicable
- **IRB Granted:** indicates the date the Institutional Review Board granted approval for the study.
- **Exempt:** indicates that the study was exempt from full IRB review.
- **Expedited:** indicates that the study was reviewed and approved through an expedited process.

**Team Members:**

- Marian Brown
- Hanako Brais
- Allegra Fletcher
- Joseph Quisol
- Esther Kamau
- Stephen Hamilton
- Jessica Fei
- YUA Members

**Data Collection:**

- June 2018 – April 2019

**Study Duration:**

- May 2017 – May 2019

**Closed:**

- N/A

**Exempt:**

- May 19, 2017

**Expedited:**

- May 31st, 2018

**N/A:**

- Closed: N/A
Phase I: Arts Influencer Study

**Rooting in praxis.** In the fall of 2016, when I entered my Ph.D. program, I was two years into running Arts Connect International (ACI). Based on ACI’s work, I developed the belief that arts and culture sector influencers, on the whole, are well intentioned yet problematic around issues of equity. This is the byproduct of systemic and institutionalized racism and patriarchal values, manifesting as microaggressions and implicit bias at best and overt discrimination and racism at worst.

When I started researching the arts and culture sector, locally and nationally, I was struck by the dearth of data available surrounding equity in the arts, including baseline demographic data about arts managers and arts educators. I started asking high-level funding leaders, informally, why there was a lack of data around these essential issues. Foundation staff often informed me it was too difficult or polarizing to ask their grantees said information, particularly for the larger arts organizations and institutions. I was discouraged by this response.

How can we address issues of equity if we lack trackable data surrounding representation in the sector? Then, it hit me: Maybe influencers aren’t actually as motivated to address equity as I formerly believed; perhaps they are content with the state of the sector. Further, perhaps their intentions, implicit, or explicit, are actually to maintain power as it currently resides.

**Purpose of the study and steps in systems change.** With the objective of building a movement toward equity, it is essential for ACI’s team to understand which influencers in the sector are committed to the same values and work for coalition-building. Without
influencers’ buy-in and support, reformation is simply unobtainable. This is particularly true when examined through the lens of systems change.

Correspondingly, Phase I’s research served two purposes: 1) provide published empirical data on attitudes and understandings of cultural equity in the arts and culture sector, to be used for policy and programmatic reform, and 2) to serve as a coalition-building mechanism, catalyzing a movement toward cultural equity by coordinating key informants committed to the same values. Phase I followed the first two steps in systems change: 1) building a foundation for change, and 2) supporting the seeing of the current reality more clearly (Stroh, 2015). Concurrently, Americans for the Arts (AFTA) released its statement on cultural equity in November 2016, providing the opportunity and perhaps invitation to explore these issues further. The AFTA statement also provided language that could be adopted nationally, building the foundation for understanding and knowledge exchange.

**Research team roles.** The specific roles played within the research process for each team member, including core advisors, can be found in Table 7.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Preparation</th>
<th>National Survey</th>
<th>Focus Groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marian Taylor Brown</td>
<td>Developed interview schedule and national survey schedule with guidance from committee members</td>
<td>Developed national survey in SurveyMonkey in preparation for dissemination</td>
<td>Co-developed protocol for recruitment of focus group participants and supported recruitment of focus group participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Investigator</td>
<td>Wrote and submitted IRB</td>
<td>Developed protocol for national survey dissemination, including examples of posts and tweets to be used</td>
<td>Facilitated focus groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assembled research team</td>
<td>Created Constant Contact email that went out on behalf of ACI for the national survey</td>
<td>Secured location for focus groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Secured funding for Phase I of the study through SSRC</td>
<td>Reached out to community partners to disseminate the national survey</td>
<td>Wrote focus group summaries, reviewed and triangulated with other research team members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tracked results from the national survey as they were in process</td>
<td>Sent follow-up thank you emails to focus group participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanako Brais</td>
<td>Joined Phase I of the study after the IRB had been submitted</td>
<td>Analyzed results from the national survey with support from committee members and other UMB faculty</td>
<td>Co-developed coding system for coding in NVivo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Assistant</td>
<td></td>
<td>Supported dissemination of national survey through ACI’s networks</td>
<td>Coded focus group data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cleaned national survey data as it came in, deleting incomplete entries as needed</td>
<td>Ran preview parties for focus group participants before the report was released</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Supported analysis of national survey data</td>
<td>Cowrote community findings report, first author</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

57
Wrote focus group summaries, reviewed and triangulated with other research team members

Transcribed focus group interviews for analysis

Codeveloped coding system for coding in NVivo

Coded focus group data

Cowrote community findings report, second author

Followed up with research participants when the report was released making sure they had a copy

Codeveloped protocol for recruitment of focus group participants

Supported recruitment of focus group participants

Took ethnographic field notes during focus groups

Wrote focus group summaries, reviewed and triangulated with other research team members

Esther Kamau
Research Associate

Joined Phase I of the study after the IRB had been submitted

Supported dissemination of national survey through ACI’s networks

Dr. Valerie Karr
Dr. Jie Chen
Dr. Benyamin Lichtenstein
Advisors to the Research

Dr. Lichtenstein supported the development of research questions, corresponding fellowship applications, and preparation of IRB protocol

Dr. Lichtenstein supported initial analysis of raw quantitative data

Dr. Lichtenstein supported scaffolding and training of Nvivo software, including support identifying essential codes and coding protocol

Dr. Karr supported SPSS quantitative data analysis, with support from Dr. Jie Chen who ran multivariant analysis
Essential to the success of the sample set and size for Phase I was ACI’s connection to, and reputation within, community. Having community buy-in, often through key informants who work in the sector, is essential for participatory action research to be effective. Having a culturally and discipline diverse team was essential—both in running the focus groups and in coming to understand and analyze the data.

Questions, methods, and recruitment. Phase I focused on two sub questions: 1) current influencers’ understanding of the cultural equity gap, and 2) current influencers’ motivations to eradicate the cultural equity gap. For the purposes of this study, influencers were defined as leaders in the arts world who hold institutional decision-making power. This includes arts managers, educators, funders, board members, individual artists, universities, small nonprofits, large nonprofits, museums, foundations, for-profit companies, and government.

Phase I employed a transdisciplinary mixed-methodological approach, resulting in qualitative and quantitative data. Mixed method research involves a team of researchers combining qualitative and quantitative viewpoints, data collection, analysis, and inferences techniques for the purpose of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration (Schoonenboom et al., 2017). Due to the nature of the questions being asked, and the power structures that reside in both the arts and culture sector, and amongst methodological approaches in traditional research, the methods were carefully chosen to provide multiple entry points for participants to share their lived experiences, perceptions, and opinions surrounding cultural equity. The choice of mixed methods also roots back to researcher identification as pragmatic, as positioned through a transdisciplinary lens.
**National survey.** The research team used SurveyMonkey to conduct the national survey, which was open to participants for three weeks in July 2017 and which received $n = 332$ complete responses. ACI distributed the survey electronically through its social media and, through asking community partners to disseminate it, providing sample tweets and posts. Additionally, the research team sent a Constant Contact email to ACI’s constituents, reaching 3K+ members. Participation was incentivized by offering a random drawing that rewarded three respondents with $100 each.

The quantitative national survey provided a practical way to engage multiple stakeholders in discussions on equity, with a broader reach than qualitative methods alone can provide. The survey asked participants if they currently work within the sector, in what capacity, what art form, for how many years, their geographical location, and their patronage of the arts. Demographic information around race, gender, and sexual identification was also collected. Said participant data were essential for later running multi-variant analyses to explore how positions within the field, and/or demographic identifiers, have an impact on perceptions and experiences surrounding cultural equity.

The majority of questions were close ended, yet some were open-ended, including 1) Please tell us about how you self-identify culturally, ethnically and nationally? 2) How do you see, or how have you experienced, the arts promoting equity, diversity, and inclusion? 3) Do you find the arts to be a tool for promoting inclusion, diversity, and equity? and 4) Is there anything else you would like to share with us? The remaining close-ended questions focused on attitudes, beliefs, and understanding surrounding cultural equity. Electronic consent was collected for all participants in order to take and complete the survey.
Focus groups. Recruitment of focus group participants was codeveloped by the research team for Phase I. The research team created a systems map for Boston’s arts and culture sector, focused on major foundations, universities, schools, museums, small nonprofits, large nonprofits, government and for-profit arts and culture organizations. The objective was to have as many perspectives represented as possible throughout the sector.

Three candidates were identified for each organization, ranked in order of position and/or title within their organization. In waves, researchers reached out to candidates within each organization, with the goal of having as many organizations represented as possible, with leaders occupying the highest title or position within each organization present. The focus groups took place over six weeks in the summer of 2017, bringing together $n = 39$ Boston arts influencers who represented 29 different organizations and institutions, spanning for-profits, universities, small nonprofits, large nonprofits, funders, government, sole proprietors, and museums. There were six focus groups, each lasting approx. 90 minutes.

ACI intentionally recruited organizations and leaders for the focus groups who are often underrepresented in power conversations, ensuring representation of both smaller community-contextualized organizations and POC-identifying arts leaders, along with standard power brokers (i.e., funders, government, etc.). ACI sent printed invitations via the mail, and follow-up correspondence took place via email. The focus groups did not have paid advertisement outside of the printed invitations but were incentivized with a random drawing rewarding two participants with $100. Written consent was obtained for all research participants.
Focus groups provided the chance to deep dive into the questions posed through the national survey and focused on Boston’s arts and culture sector through a semi structured interview schedule. The focus groups also allowed ACI’s team to build relationships with important influencers in the sector, acting as a catalyst for buy-in, an important step in systems change. Participants were also able to network with one another, providing community building.

**Analysis.** Quantitative data was input into SPSS software for statistical multivariant analysis. Employing a pairwise comparison, and multivariant analysis, three of the survey questions showed statistically significant findings, described in the results and findings chapter. The raw data from the focus groups was transcribed; then, over 150 pages of transcription were coded using NVivo software, employing emic coding with two researchers, thus ensuring intercoder reliability throughout. The findings from Phase I’s national survey and focus groups were published in a community finding report in January 2018, *Examining Cultural Equity in the Arts*, produced by ACI.

**Phase II: POC-identifying Arts Leaders Study**

**Rooting in praxis.** Accurate to the demographics of the sector, the dominant voice throughout Phase I was white and female. The demographic breakdown for the national survey was 72% white, 22% POC, 77% female, 20% male, and 1% gender nonconforming. The demographic breakdown for the focus groups were 67% white, 31% POC, 79% female, and 21% male. Given this representation, it was imperative to conduct a follow-up study, Phase II, focused on POC-identifying arts and culture leaders.
Although recruitment focused on POC-identifying arts and culture leaders as a primary form of identification, the identities of said leaders are intersectional. In addition to their identity as POC, they may also identify within other marginalized identities, including but not limited to, disability, gender, sexual orientation, class, etc. Arts leaders with various marginalized identities can be emergent, including youths, as well as established. When Phase I was developed, the need for Phase II was anticipated, recognizing that the focus on influencers in Phase I would likely result in less representation of traditionally marginalized identities. The questions and methods structured in Phase II are also directly reflective of ACI’s community-based work.

Researchers asked participants of Phase II to disclose demographic information surrounding disability status, sexual orientation, and gender identity. The research team recognized the need for further study focused on the perspectives of arts and culture leaders who identify as people with disabilities (PWD) and/or as part of the disability community in particular, as this demographic is underrepresented in the sector.

**Purpose of the study and steps in systems change.** Phase I focused on influencer buy-in and coalition building. Phase II focused on deep listening to POCs across the sector as well as identifying and/or meeting more POC-identifying arts leaders in Boston, which served as a coalition-building process. Phase II also expanded the traditional concept of “arts leader” to be inclusive of POC youths who are emerging into the field, honoring and valuing their contribution and lived experiences as generators of knowledge, artists, and researchers themselves.
Correspondingly, Phase II’s research served three primary purposes: 1) to deeply listen to, and honor, the narratives and lived experiences of POC-identifying artists and arts leaders in Boston, including established and youth leaders; 2) elevate narratives and lived experiences of POC-identifying artists and arts leaders in Boston, including established and youth leaders; and 3) provide published empirical data on attitudes and understandings of cultural equity in Boston’s arts and culture sector, to be used for policy and programmatic reform.

Building on Phase I, Phase II added to the first two steps in systems change: 1) building a foundation for change, and 2) supporting the seeing of the current reality more clearly (Stroh, 2015). Further, Phase II allowed space for engaging people in their own analysis, surfacing mental models and creating catalytic conversations. Phase II, correspondingly, brought the discussion of Examining Cultural Equity closer to the second half of the four steps in systems change, being able to 3) make an explicit case for change, and 4) bridging the gap, further explored in the discussion chapter.

Research team roles. The specific roles played within the research process for each team members can be found in Table 8.
Table 8

*Researcher Team Roles, Phase II*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Preparation</th>
<th>Focus Groups &amp; Key Informant Interviews</th>
<th>Your Participatory Action Research Process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marian Taylor Brown</td>
<td>Developed interview schedule and YPAR process outline with guidance from committee members and Dr. Jessica Fei</td>
<td>Co-developed protocol for recruitment of focus group participants and supported recruitment of focus group participants</td>
<td>Developed YPAR process outline, with input from community members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Investigator</td>
<td>Wrote and submitted IRB with revision from committee members and Hanako Brais</td>
<td>Took ethnographic field notes during focus groups</td>
<td>Cofacilitated YPAR research team meetings, identifying team goals</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assembled research team</td>
<td>Secured locations for focus groups</td>
<td>Supported YPAR youth recruitment process</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Responsible for securing funding for Phase II of the study</td>
<td>Wrote focus group summaries, reviewed and triangulated with other research team members</td>
<td>Codesigned YPAR fall training intensive</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Co-developed coding system for coding in NVivo</td>
<td>Supported YPAR fall training intensive however helpful, including taking graphic notes</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Coded focus group data</td>
<td>Supported YPAR weekly meetings however helpful, including taking graphic notes and leading trainings when asked to do so</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cowrote community findings report, first author</td>
<td>Supported YPAR spring intensive, however helpful, including taking graphic notes</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Showed up as a mentor/support to youth artists/researchers and research team however helpful throughout the process</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Supported youth artists/researchers prepare for their presentation at the AES 2019 Summit</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Developed Instagram story protocol for sharing youth work at AES 2019 Summit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanako Brais</td>
<td>Revised interview schedule and YPAR process outline</td>
<td>Codeveloped protocol for recruitment of focus group and KII participants</td>
<td>Supported the development of the YPAR team</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research &amp; Programming Assistant</td>
<td>Supported submission of IRB</td>
<td>Led logistical recruitment of focus group participants</td>
<td>Cofacilitated YPAR research team meetings, identifying team goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Supported fundraising efforts for Phase II</td>
<td>Organized food and materials for focus groups</td>
<td>Co-led YPAR youth recruitment and selection process</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Facilitated focus groups and KII’s</td>
<td>Supported YPAR fall training intensive, taking ethnographic field notes throughout</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sent follow-up thank you emails to focus group and KII participants</td>
<td>Supported YPAR weekly meetings however helpful, including taking ethnographic field notes weekly</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Wrote focus group summaries, reviewed and triangulated with other research team members</td>
<td>Supported YPAR spring intensive, however helpful, including taking ethnographic field notes</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Transcribed focus group interviews for analysis</td>
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<td>Codeveloped coding system for coding in NVivo</td>
<td>Showed up as a mentor/support to youth artists/researchers and research team however helpful throughout the process</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Coded focus group data</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cowrote community findings report, second author</td>
<td>Supported youth artists/researchers prepare for their presentation at the AES 2019 Summit</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Followed-up with research participants when the report was released, making sure they had a copy</td>
<td>Supported fundraising for Phase II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph Quisol</td>
<td>Joined Phase II of the study after the IRB had been submitted</td>
<td>Supported logistical recruitment of focus group participants</td>
<td>Supported the development of the YPAR team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programming &amp; Artist Fellow</td>
<td></td>
<td>Supported the organization of food and materials for focus groups</td>
<td>Cofacilitated YPAR Team meetings, identifying team goals</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Facilitated focus groups and KII’s</td>
<td>Co-led YPAR youth recruitment and selection process</td>
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<tr>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Activity Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jessica Fei</td>
<td>Took ethnographic field notes during focus groups</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wrote focus group summaries, reviewed and triangulated with other research team members</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Supported fundraising</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Consultant</td>
<td>Reviewed YPAR process outline N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stephen Hamilton</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lead Mentor</td>
<td>Cofacilitated YPAR research team meetings, identifying team goals</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Supported YPAR fall training intensive, cofacilitating throughout</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Showed up as a mentor support to youth artists/researchers and research team however helpful throughout the process</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Supported youth artists/researchers prepare for their presentation at the AES 2019 Summit</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Co-facilitated YPAR research team meetings, identifying team goals</td>
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<td>Supported YPAR fall training intensive, cofacilitating throughout</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Co-ran YPAR weekly meetings as lead mentor</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Co-ran YPAR spring intensive</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Showed up as a mentor/support to youth artists/researchers and research team however helpful throughout the process</td>
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<td>Supported youth artists/researchers prepare for their presentation at the AES 2019 Summit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Contributions</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allegra Fletcher</td>
<td>Programming Fellow, Promoted to Director</td>
<td>Co-developed coding system for coding in NVivo, Coded focus group data, Cowrote community findings report, third author, Co-ran YPAR weekly meetings as lead mentor, Showed up as a mentor/support to youth artists/researchers and research team however helpful throughout the process, Supported youth artists/researchers prepare for their presentation</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dashawn Borden</td>
<td></td>
<td>Co-ran YPAR spring intensive, Team of six youth-artist-researchers who comprised the Youth United Artists, Explored and studied social justice issues close to their hearts, Supported one another, and the adult mentorship team, in exploring said social justice issues, Participated in the summer institute, weekly meetings, and spring intensive, Developed and shared Instagram stories at AES 2019 Summit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jedidia Santana</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ny’lasia Brown</td>
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<td>Sumeya Aden</td>
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<td>Alice Acevedo-Britto</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jonathan Lopez</td>
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<tr>
<td>Youth United Artists</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Valerie Karr</td>
<td>Advisors to the Research</td>
<td>Advisors collectively supported the honing of research questions, and editing of IRB protocol through participation as dissertation committee members, Advisors supported, reviewed and edited study findings extensively, Advisors supported, reviewed and edited study design and findings extensively</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Benyamin Lichtenstein</td>
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<td>Dr. Barbara Lewis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Mia Perry</td>
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</table>
Essential to the success of the sample size for Phase II was ACI’s connection to and reputation within community. Having this type of community buy-in, often through key informants who work in the sector, is essential for participatory action research to be effective. Having a culturally and discipline diverse team was important—not only in running the research protocol but also in how the data was understood and analyzed.

**Questions, methods, and recruitment.** Phase II of the study focused on two core questions: 1) How arts leaders of various marginalized identities (POC, PWD, female, LGBTQIA+) conceptualize and operationalize leadership development for themselves, and 2) How arts leaders of various marginalized identities (POC, PWD, female, LGBTQIA+) perceive barriers to access for positions of leadership in the arts and culture sector. Phase II employed community-based participatory action research and a transdisciplinary methodological approach. The research produced qualitative findings through focus groups, key informant interviews, and a youth participatory action research (YPAR) process.

Given the sensitive nature of the research topic, and participants being asked to share their narratives and experiences of marginalization, it was imperative for methods to be thoughtfully designed and executed. Focus groups and key informant interviews were employed with established POC-identifying arts leaders, and a youth participatory action research (YPAR) process was employed with emerging, or youth, POC-identifying arts leaders.

Focus groups are used to find out why people feel the way that they do about something, or to figure out the right steps for people to go in making a decision (Bernard, 2011). Key informant interviews have a parallel purpose, and also create an opportunity for
participants who are more comfortable one on one, or whom are unable to join in a focus group discussion due to myriad reasons, to participate. The semi structured interview schedule used for both focus groups and key informant interviews was similar to Phase I and allowed for the conversations to navigate where it needed to go without restriction, yet with intention and focus. The research team was cognizant of positioning and power dynamics and chose researcher roles accordingly.

Focus groups were also chosen as they could become affinity-type spaces, where POC-identifying arts leaders saw themselves represented. This representation is important because; based on sector demographics, POC-identifying arts leaders are likely to have endured many professional spaces where they are not represented. Accordingly, they were likely to have had feelings and experiences of assimilation within predominately white spaces, which may or may not also include prior research. When the aim is to ascertain POC-identifying arts leaders views and lived experiences, representation is essential. Without representation present deference effect is likely to occur, where people tell you what you want to hear (Bernard, 2011).

In order to learn from youth POC-identifying arts leaders, a youth-led participatory action research process (YPAR) was employed. According to the YPAR hub (2019), YPAR is “an innovative approach to positive youth and community development based in social justice principles in which young people are trained to conduct systematic research to improve their lives, their communities, and the institutions intended to serve them.”

YPAR creates the opportunity for empowered, community-based, and youth-led knowledge production. Akom (2009) examined the intersection of critical race theory and
YPAR in an effort to provide a framework for self-determination, decolonization, and democratization. YPAR excavates knowledge at the bottom and at the margins, encouraging youths’ rights to investigate, question, ask, and contest policies and practices that reinforce injustice (Matsuda, 1995; Torres & Fine, 2006), and YPAR promotes liberatory principles and practices (Akom, 2009). In YPAR methodologies, the youths performing the research are not only the knowledge generators, but they own the knowledge produced as well. The YPAR process was enlightening, challenging, and beautiful on multiple levels.

**Focus groups and key informant interviews.** The focus groups and key informant interviews took place in the summer of 2018, with \( n = 28 \) arts leaders representing 26 unique organizations and institutions spanning universities, small nonprofits, large nonprofits, funders, sole proprietors, and museums. There were five in-person focus groups, each lasting approximately 90 minutes. Key informant interviews were conducted virtually and lasted approximately 60 minutes. Focus groups and key informant interviews followed a similar semi-structured interview schedule as per Phase I.

Participants were recruited within the Network for Arts Administrators of Color (NAAC), an affinity group based out of ArtsBoston, established in 2016. NAAC Boston welcomes self-identifying arts administrators of color such as Asian American, African American, Native American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander, Latin American, or multiracial individuals. The network is open to individuals working in a nonprofit or for-profit arts and culture organization in Greater Boston as well as freelancers and consultants (ArtsBoston, 2019).
NAAC’s membership list is publicly available on its website, including name, affiliation, and email contact information. As of May 2020, NAAC had more than 335 members listed. Three of the researchers who worked on Phase II are also NAAC Boston members. In the summer of 2018, recruitment emails were sent to 60 individuals listed on NACC Boston’s website, ensuring representation along the lines of gender, career level, and positions within the sector, with a goal of speaking with 25 arts leaders. The focus groups did not have paid advertisement; yet, participants were incentivized with a meal, either lunch or dinner, during the focus groups. Written consent was obtained for all research participants.

Youth participatory action research (YPAR). The YPAR process began in the spring of 2018, running from July 2018 – March 2019 with $n = 6$ youths from four Boston public schools, self-named the Youth United Artists. The youths participated in a week-long summer intensive, two-hour weekly meetings throughout the school year, a week-long spring intensive; further, they presented their research and arts-based findings and work at the 2019 Arts Equity Summit.

The YPAR project recruitment process was initiated with ACI’s community partner, Boston Arts Academy. Researchers held information tables during Boston Arts Academy’s lunch periods to speak with youths about the opportunity. Key teachers and administration personnel also disseminated information about the YPAR project to youths. Word of the program spread quickly, resulting in multiple inquiries from students outside of Boston Arts Academy. To accommodate the youths who were eager to apply and participate, adjustments to the IRB protocol, which was approved, allowed us to welcome students from an additional three Boston public schools.
Youths were offered $1,250 for participation in the program in exchange for 120 hours of participation. 40 hours were dedicated to training, and youths were provided meals each day of the week-long training, along with a $250 travel stipend. The remaining 80 hours were spent working on their respective projects, earning $1K each, i.e., $12.50 per hour. Youths ranged from sophomores to seniors, from 15 – 19 in age. Youths under 18 had assent as well as a consent forms signed to participate, and youths over 18 signed a consent form.

**Analysis.** The raw data from the focus groups and key informant interviews were transcribed; the over 215 pages of transcription were then coded using NVivo software, employing emic coding with three researchers, where two researchers were assigned to each case, thus ensuring intercoder reliability throughout. The findings from Phase II’s focus groups and key informant interviews were published in a community finding report in September 2019, *Moves Toward Equity: Perspectives from Arts Leaders of Color*, produced by ACI.

YPAR research findings are owned by the youth POC-identifying arts leaders. The YPAR process itself is owned and embodied by all six researchers–artists–practitioners who cocreated and co-ran the process in collaboration with the youths. With this, any publications on the YPAR process, or its findings, need to include representation and voice from the youths as well as the adult research collaborators. Should the research collective choose to publish findings in the future, analysis can be drawn from multi-method sources, including: youth applications, youth outgoing interviews, artistic artifacts created by the youths, youth findings presentation, including their Instagram stories, ethnographic field notes and recordings from weekly sessions, curriculum guides, and team meeting notes.
Correspondingly, for purposes of this dissertation, results and findings from Phase II pertain to the focus groups and key informant interviews. The following results and findings chapter examine core findings from both Phase I and Phase II, across the various methods employed. The discussions chapter then examines the findings in respect to systems change, creative justice and transdisciplinary research.

Title: *La Superare*
Phase I: Arts Influencer Study

National survey findings. The national survey provided insights from a sample size of \( n = 332 \) respondents. Of the respondents, 85% currently work in the arts, 15% previously worked in the arts, 43% work as arts managers, 25% as artists, 14% as curators, and 16% as arts educators. Additionally, 70% are from Massachusetts, 22% identify as people of color (POC), 77% identify as female, and 17% identify as part of the LGBTQIA+ community. Regarding experience, 35% have more than 15 years of experience, 15% have 10–15 years of experience, 25% have 5–10 years of experience, and 26% have less than five years of experience in the field, seen in Fig. 2.

Figure 2

Demographic Distribution of Survey Respondents

Notes. (Brown & Brais, 2018).
When asked if there is a cultural equity gap in the United States, 91% of respondents affirmed that there is a gap, and 90% of those respondents said it is important to work to close the cultural equity gap. Further, 92% of survey respondents cited that art is a tool for social change, with \( n = 204 \) respondents writing in descriptive information on how this has manifest in their own lives and work.

**Representation.** To obtain a baseline understanding of perceptions in the field, respondents rated representation of the following demographic categories on a five-point Likert scale, where 1 = no representation and 5 = over representation, for: a) people of color (POC); b) people with disabilities (PWD); c) women; d) lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA+) identifying; and e) diverse socioeconomic status (SES, or class). Using a pairwise comparison, the mean ordinal value for each variable was found to be statically significant, with \( p < .000 \) for each. This shows a clear hierarchy in how these five identities (variables) are seen within the field.

Findings indicate that all of the above categories lack representation in the arts, with PWD-identifying being the least visible (1.6), followed by people of diverse SES (1.9), POC-identifying (2.1), LGBTQIA+-identifying (2.4), and then women-identifying (2.7), seen in Fig. 3. For this question, a mean score of 3 would indicate equal representation; thus, all five identities were perceived as being underrepresented by respondents.
Areas of focus. The survey asked respondents to choose the most vital area of focus for reducing the cultural equity gap. This question was structured to reflect the priority areas set forth in the Americans for the Arts statement on cultural equity, which include race, socioeconomic status (class), gender, disability, LGBTQIA+, age, nationality, geography, and religion. Respondents’ first prioritized 1) race (211) and socioeconomic status (class) (194), followed by 2) gender (104) and disability (103), 3) LGBTQIA+ (45), age (37), nationality (33) and geography (31), then 4) religion (18), seen in Fig. 4. A pairwise comparison showed statistical significance amongst the four groupings, with \( p < .000 \) for each grouping.
Using a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA), significance was found between how POC-identifying and white-identifying respondents rated socioeconomic status (class), with white-identifying respondents rating socioeconomic status significantly higher, with \( p < .043 \). Additionally, LGBTQIA+-identifying respondents were 13% more likely to identify LGBTQIA+ equity as a focus area.

**Figure 4**

*Areas of Focus*

![Bar chart showing areas of focus](image)

Notes. (Brown & Brais, 2018).

**Levers for change.** Using another Likert five-point scale, respondents rated the perceived efficacy of nine levers for change (i.e., ways to build equity), where 1 = not effective and 5 = exceptionally effective. The survey randomized options to avoid bias. Respondents were asked about the following nine levers: increased access to education in the
arts; increased support in effective recruitment and retention of diverse; qualified candidates for positions; increased equitable funding (i.e., access to capital) in the arts; increased funding for entry-level positions in the arts; increased representation of marginalized communities within the arts; increased exposure for underrepresented communities; increased capacity of organizations and institutions to include and encompass all community members; increased access to gateway internships; and increased entrepreneurial training for emerging artists.

Tiers of priorities emerged, listed here from highest- to least-perceived efficacy: Tier 1: recruitment and retention (4.11), equitable distribution of funding (4.12), and education (4.03); Tier 2: representation (4.00), exposure (3.99), capacity of institutions (3.97), and increase to entry-level funding (3.97); Tier 3: gateway internships (3.73) and entrepreneurial training (3.66), seen in Fig. 5.

**Figure 5**

*Levers for Change Priority*

![Graph showing the priority levels of different levers for change.*](image)

*Notes.* (Brown & Brais, 2018).
Using a multivariable analysis of variance (MANOVA), data also suggest that the number of years worked in the field has a significant impact on the perceptions of efficacy for the following levers of change, including equitable distribution of funding, \( p < .052 \), organizational capacity, \( p < .039 \), recruitment and retention, \( p < .005 \) and representation, \( p < .047 \). Findings indicate that respondents who had spent less time in the field were overall more optimistic for the efficacy of the levers for change, with the exception of recruitment and retention, which was significantly lower, \( p < .035 \). Interestingly, there was a smaller divide in perceived efficacy of the various levers in the 15+ years of experience group.

**Figure 6**

*Years of Experience*

Notes. (Brown & Brais, 2018).

Further analysis, conducted through multiple t-tests, showed a difference around the most efficacious levers for change. POC-identifying respondents selected education, \( p < .025 \), and increased equitable funding, \( p < .016 \), as more efficacious than white-identifying
respondents. LGBTQIA+-identifying respondents chose access to gateway internships as more efficacious than straight-identifying respondents, \( p < .000 \). Female-identifying respondents ranked recruitment and retention significantly higher than male-identifying respondents, \( p < .049 \).

**Focus group findings.** The focus groups provided insights from \( n = 39 \) arts influencers. Of these influencers, 36% work in small nonprofits, 15% work for foundations, 13% work in museums, 10% work in large nonprofits, 10% work for the government, 8% work for universities, 5% are sole proprietors, and 3% work for for-profit companies; in addition, 31% identify as POC, and 79% identify as female, seen in Fig 7. Conversations were guided by a semi structured interview schedule, with two initial focus areas: barriers to access and levers for change. Language emerged as a pressing third area for analysis.

**Figure 7**

*Demographic Distribution of FG Participants*

Notes. (Brown & Brais, 2018).
Barriers to access. Examining barriers to access, three key themes emerged: 1) lack of representation; 2) inequity in funding and capital; and 3) inequity in educational access. These three barriers relate to one another in a domino effect, where one leads to the other.

Lack of representation. Lack of representation includes a lack of visibility within the workforce, visibility in top-level positions, both within organizations and on boards, visibility in hiring pools, diverse mentors and role models, diverse artists and museum collections, audience diversity, diversity in programs and program design, diversity amongst people pursuing arts degrees, and demographic data.

Representation matters because, if one does not see him or herself reflected in a space, it is difficult to imagine assuming a formal role or position there. As one arts influencer described, “The clear sign of when I (as a POC) tap out of the game…When I am not represented in these spaces, I know two things: first, that that space is not made for me, and, second, that I won’t have the support I need to be successful.” If a space, both physical and metaphorical, is not created with intersectional diversity and representation, or is built around priorities of a single demographic, it becomes an assimilatory instead of inclusive space, i.e., one that demands conformity in order to have a seat at the table.

Inequity in funding and capital. When discussing inequity within funding and capital on a macro level, the arts are described as marginalized and not seen as a priority compared with other fields, citing that jobs in the arts tend not to pay as well as other comparable fields. When it came to examine the distribution of resources, influencers cited that there are inequities related to government funding, within and to schools, and amongst small and large organizations in Boston. When referring to funding and payment for artists with disabilities,
there was concern about losing healthcare and disability benefits as related to payment for work. Further, social networks, in-person and virtual relationships, were seen as driving funding and capital access. This is incredibly important, particularly as it relates to obtaining executive management positions, which are largely focused on fundraising.

Discussions about valuation of the arts also came through, especially in relationship to how certain art forms, like hip hop and rap, are less likely to be monetarily supported by traditional nonprofits and government entities than other more Eurocentric art forms, e.g., ballet and opera. This investment in art forms shows a hegemonic valuation of culture, as it is tied to capital within the arts ecosystem. Last, there was a distinct thread of conversation surrounding unpaid internships within the arts as a ubiquitous and problematic practice. This was seen as deeply tied to recruitment and retention as well, where, if an individual cannot afford to work for free, it is nearly impossible for him or her to enter the field as an intern, which significantly reduces social capital and connections as well as credentialing.

**Inequity in educational access.** Tied to these barriers to access is access to education. Education was described as inaccessible due to cost and lack of opportunity, with participants citing inherent inequities from a young age with geographical and funding distribution amongst schools in Boston. This nods to structural problems in K–12 education, which extend through to advanced studies.

Influencers articulated that advanced degrees face structural problems, both in how they are created through a Eurocentric lens (i.e., in prioritization of art form) as well as in their applicability to the job market. There was a perceived disconnect between academic credentialing and job placement, particularly in relationship to pay scale. There was little to
no pay bump for advanced degrees; rather, advanced degrees were an assumed threshold for most positions. Given the cost of advanced degrees, influencers suggested this could present a barrier against access for a number of aspiring leaders. Influencers also discussed a lack of representation of mentorship and teachers. Further, there was explicit conversation about micro-aggressions within education, which played a large role in creating barriers to access. These three barriers to access are interconnected in a multiplicity of ways, with several reinforcing feedback loops creating a cycle of inaccessibility, as seen in Fig. 8 (Meadows, 2008; Stroh, 2015).

**Figure 8**

*Reinforcing Feedback Loops*

*Notes.* (Brown & Brais, 2018).
Levers for change. Levers for change examine potential areas to engage and actions to take in order to close the cultural equity gap. When discussing levers for change, influencers identified three main ways to spark positive change: 1) training of influencers; 2) increased representation; and 3) training of emergent leaders.

Training of influencers. Training of influencers entails effective diversity, equity, and inclusion training that can challenge organizations (particularly senior management and board members) to adopt best practices in cultural competence, cultural humility, and authentic inclusion. This includes raising awareness about the cultural equity gap in general, specifically around language and terminology, so as to avoid codification and micro-aggressions. This work is specific to individuals and organizations and should focus on their unique context as well as on the evolution of personal and intersectional identities.

Increased representation. Increased representation entails having more diverse and reflective leadership where decisions are being made, particularly at the highest levels. This includes diversification of boards and senior leadership across organizations. Increased representation of diverse mentors was also stated as efficacious, as was more visibility in programming. There is an overarching discourse of moving away from a deficit to asset-based lens, examining the contributions of communities and individuals as opposed to the things that are missing. This is a shift in espoused philanthropic values, which often create hierarchies between individuals and communities as those served and serving. An asset-based lens creates a more lateral leadership style, one that is shared and less hierarchical, leading to more inclusive and equitable structures and relationships.
Training of emergent leaders. Training of emergent leaders was discussed as an efficacious lever for change with gateway internships and access to social networks, both of which are seen as components to higher levels of leadership later in one’s career. For artists, there is discussion of developing more entrepreneurial skill sets and examining business models for success. A shift was also described in moving away from formal education credentialing due to cost and time, thus creating the need for increased informal training opportunities. Further, it was stated that learning different skills, such as management skills, should be embedded in arts degrees. POC-identifying arts influencers in the focus groups also spoke about being ready to take on the higher-level positions, that they were trained thoroughly, but that there was a lack of turnover within the industry to occupy said positions.

Language. Although the research team did not set out to examine language, throughout the focus groups, it became apparent that this area requires attention, as influencers rely on coded and ambiguous language. This poses a problem because ambiguity creates difficulty in building understanding, which manifests in a lack of specificity in who is being addressed and included or excluded. For example, “culture” was often used to describe race, and “urban” and “inner city” were used to describe race and socioeconomic status. Further, there was great variance in understanding of the cultural equity gap and cultural equity as a concept.

During focus groups, influencers were directly asked to define diversity, equity, and inclusion. There were wide-ranging definitions of these words, which provided for rich interpretation, and yet little congruence in understanding of what the terms actually mean. When referring to the disability community, it was incredibly difficult to understand who was
actually included within this defined group. Further, intersectionality, as a term, was used consistently but often out of context, i.e., failing to reference identity. It is therefore apparent that this space requires focus when working on trainings with the influencer population.

**Figure 9**

*Graphic of barriers to access, levers for change, and language*

*Notes. (Brown & Brais, 2018).*

**Phase II: POC-identifying Arts Leaders Study**

**Focus groups and key informant interviews.** The focus groups and key informant interviews provided insights from $n = 28$ POC-identifying arts leaders, representing 26 unique organizations and institutions spanning universities, small nonprofits, large nonprofits, funders, sole proprietors, and museums. Racially, 37.5% of participants identify as Black/African, 25% identify as Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI), 16.7% identify as Latin/LatinX, and 16.7% identify as multiracial, seen in Fig. 10; further, 10.7% of participants identify as persons with a disability (PWD), 32% as LGBTQIA+, 82% as female, and 3.6% as nonbinary.
Focus groups and key informant interviews followed a similar interview schedule from Phase I, providing the opportunity for comparative analysis. Similar to Phase I, Phase II examined barriers to access and levers for change. It is important to note that Phase II’s focus groups started with the backdrop of Phase I already established, and as such, participants began with an understanding that the cultural equity gap exists within the arts and culture sector, rooted in their lived experiences as POC, many of whom are women of color (WOC).

Participants generously shared their lived experiences, with a strong call for culture shift, a re-framing of both barriers to access and levers for change. Further, Phase II brought up a celebration of intentional resistance and resilience, both within and outside, the arts and culture sector.
Unheard (not untold) stories (barriers to access re-mixed). POC-identifying arts leaders shared their lived and observed experience of cultural equity, with common stories that are often told yet remain unheard and unaddressed within the sector. These narratives included conversations on power, representation, capital, and pipelines.

Power. The United States has inherited a sociopolitical reality that has positioned the dominant race as white, leading to the reproduction of racial inequities within the arts and culture sector. In this way, white privilege is reproduced due to implicit biases and assumed superiority. Artists and POC-identifying arts leaders are often measured against a white,
Eurocentric standard which they inherently cannot meet without concealing, hiding, or denying their identities as POC. This builds a society that perpetuates racial dominance and subservience through assimilation into current power structures. As discussed during focus groups, the reality of white supremacy is felt by POC, both on an individual basis through their lived experiences and on a structural and institutional level. Participants referred most frequently to these experiences in relation to representation, capital, and pipelines.

*Representation.* When asked if there is adequate racial representation in the arts landscape, participants responded that the sector consists predominantly of white people, with an underrepresentation of POC across the board. This includes small percentages of POC-identifying staff, board of directors, audiences, populations served by the organizations, and artists participating in and presenting artwork. Additionally, visual art collections and performance productions, including dance and theater, predominantly present a white or Eurocentric narrative.

One participant noted that she manages a collection of artworks for her organization. However, the artworks are predominantly by white artists, reproducing the Eurocentric narrative of the arts and culture sector. Another participant noted that this underrepresentation leads to assumptions about audiences for events, stating, “If you have a majority Black group, it would be framed as ‘this is a Black event’… but if it’s all white and a couple of people of color, it doesn’t have to be noted as any form of ethnicity or racial group.” Another participant noted, “White folks can represent everyone, but people of color can only represent themselves.” The limited representation of POC within arts and culture organizations becomes an even larger issue, while examining leadership positions, including
executive leadership and governing boards. Given that POC are often not occupying decision-making positions within organizations at this higher level of leadership, their voice is not given adequate weight.

Within the representation of POC that does exist in the sector, the aforementioned representation is often problematic. Most commonly, participants gave examples of representation that are tokenizing, othering, and play into racial tropes and stereotypes. Tokenism is akin to window-dressing, a symbolic effort toward diversity that pretends to give an advantage to those who have been historically marginalized. Othering establishes an individual or group identity as inherently different by juxtaposing said individual or group against the dominant group. POCs are also made to play into racial tropes and stereotypes.

*Capital.* When it came to capital, two forms were discussed in depth: financial and social. Funding priorities in Boston are dictated by its patronage and donors. Funding is therefore contingent on knowing how to navigate the landscape, requiring both social and financial capital, including knowing funders, having social networks to gain access to individual donors, and grant-writing skills.

The arts are known for having market rate salaries that are well below those of other industries, a product of funder investment, along with valuation of the arts and labor within the arts and culture field itself. This underfunding and devaluation of labor has a direct impact on the compensation that arts leaders receive for the work they do. Participants noted poor compensation and lack of benefits as a detriment to entering or staying in the arts and culture sector; further, many shared that they either thought about leaving, were planning on leaving, or had never planned on entering the sector for these reasons.
Issues of compensation are compounded by increased stress due to lack of capacity of arts and culture organizations. Often, staff is required to do the work of multiple positions as a result of funding capacity and the work that must get done to sustain an organization. The field cannot redistribute what is not there. As such, participants called in foundations and government, calling for more capital support behind the arts and distributed toward general operating funds, so that the sector is not as dependent on individual donors. Further, labor in the arts needs to be valued and compensated fairly in order to uphold values of inclusion, diversity, and equity.

Funding was also discussed as an inherent inequity surrounding motherhood. Many female-identifying participants discussed the impact of trying to raise a family on their salary, pointing to the reality that one has to have a partner or independent and inherited wealth in order to both have a family and stay within the field. This indicates that the salaries offered in the arts and culture sectors are not sustainable for single-parent households. One participant noted that, in order to create her organization, she had to give up her dream of having children. Another participant noted that she was fired from her job after getting pregnant, a life-altering event that transformed her career.

Ultimately, when talking about financial capital and social capital, both forms become interconnected access points to leadership. Access to financial capital requires social capital and vice versa, creating another reinforcing feedback loop. The persons with financial capital have decision-making power, as they ultimately say what and whom gets funded. If one does not have the social capital to access said people with financial capital, their chances of getting funded becomes significantly reduced. High levels of leadership within arts and
culture organizations almost always demand strong fundraising and management skills. As such, access to capital plays an important role in accessing leadership and the power to influence the sector.

Pipelines. Pipelines embody the idea that there are multiple access points into the arts (i.e., family, education, social capital, financial capital, early exposure, etc.), leading to a more formal leadership pipeline, where one is first a participant within the arts, then a patron, then an activator (art maker), then an educator, or a manager, eventually becoming a thought leader. It should be noted that one does not always have to move all the way through the pipeline into the position of thought leader or influencer. One can have a meaningful relationship with the arts through being a participant or patron, and it may not be a goal to become an influencer. Further, one can occupy many positions at the same time, such as being a patron, artist, and thought leader, seen in Fig. 12.

Figure 12
Arts & Culture Access Pipeline
Participants in this study are in a place where their careers are within the arts and culture sector; they are activators (artists), managers, and thought leaders, or they are on the trajectory to assume said leadership positions and roles. For many POC-identifying arts leaders, the system of pipelines that is currently in place is inadequate in supporting their successful pathways toward leadership. Pipeline issues become apparent when we recount individuals’ experiences getting pushed up against power structures that prevent them from accessing higher leadership positions.

*Education in pipelines.* Participants advocated for the importance of education and the investment in youth as early access points in the pipeline. When discussing their own paths into the arts and culture sector, participants noted the importance of access to the arts during their childhood, i.e., exposure to the arts from a young age. This is tied to education and access to arts-based education during formative years. If high-quality and relevant art education cannot be accessed either in school or through community programs, young people are unlikely to conceive of a future in the arts. When it comes to pursuing higher-education degrees in the arts, tuition is costly. Yet degrees factor into job application requirements. Many arts leaders discussed how their educational contacts during their undergraduate and graduate studies were instrumental in navigating to, and landing, their first positions within the arts and culture sector.

Importantly, participants noted that educational credentialing is often not enough to access higher-level positions in the sector. Due to implicit bias that leads people to assume one’s capability, even with a master’s degree, the credentials of POC-identifying arts leaders are not properly valued and given weight. Supplementary to formal education, arts leaders
discussed the role of nonprofits and community programming in supporting early exposure, as well as the importance of scholarships and fellowships to pursue a career in the field.

There were also multiple discussions on the need for ongoing training and support in higher-level leadership positions. This includes support in building networks, recognizing that social capital often leads to financial capital, which is a core component of holding and sustaining higher-level leadership positions. Within this, systems-level training could be beneficial, particularly for incoming or emergent POC-identifying arts leaders.

*Mentorship in pipelines.* POC-identifying arts leaders called for more mentorship, from and by other POC-identifying arts leaders as well as by leaders who hold multiple positions and identities in the field. Participants indicated that said mentorship would support them in seeing themselves in those leadership positions while supporting their learning in a nurturing environment. Tied to mentorship, family came up as another important theme for initial access to the arts and culture field. Discussions took place on the importance of care providers (parents, aunties, grandparents, and other chosen family members) supporting early and frequent exposure to various art forms and cultural opportunities. This included narratives around family, encouraging young artists to create and to practice their craft, even if the family itself did not hold an “artistic practice.”
Notes. (Brown, Brais & Fletcher, 2019).

Call for culture shift (levers for change re-mixed). POC-identifying arts leaders called for a culture shift, moving past cosmetic changes to the existing structures and systems. This includes, but is not limited to, open conversations, equity training, and power shifts within the sector.

Open conversations. Organizations ideally are safe spaces where people are listened to, where they can speak up without fear of verbal, relational or financial loss, or isolation. Unfortunately, the ability to bring one’s whole self to the workplace, without code-switching or enduring microaggressions, was not the norm for the POC-identifying arts leaders we spoke to.
In linguistics, code-switching occurs when a speaker alternates between two or more languages or language varieties in the context of a single conversation. Multilinguals, speakers of more than one language, sometimes use elements of multiple languages when conversing with each other. In the context of culture, language refers not only to words but also to cultural behaviors and structures. Code-switching therefore has extended to also encompass the idea of changing one’s actions or ways of being to accommodate a dominant culture. POC-identifying arts leaders spoke to how code-switching affects them in their respective work environments, sharing,

In one day, I go from community programming, to speaking with my colleagues, to speaking with funders. I have to think about how I conduct myself in each of these contexts… For me, code-switching is a necessary skill set for my job, and it’s exhausting. It should really be in the job description itself!

I think of code-switching like education. Different learners need different ways to access knowledge. The only difference is that I have to code switch in my job because I’m not white, and this space wasn’t built for me. To participate in their classroom, I have to run with them, not the other way around.

[In my organization] we talk about the importance of not code switching at work and bringing your whole authentic self to wherever you are. And that is culture shift. I can see that certainly is the demographics in our staffing, and what that’s doing. I’m like, ‘Yes. Let’s do it’.

In many cases, code-switching is done for self-preservation and to avoid misunderstandings, microaggressions, and discrimination. This often leads to assimilation. Open conversations can support POC-identifying arts leaders in sharing this emotional labor with their colleagues, such that entire organizations take responsibility for understanding multicultural teams rather than enforcing assimilation into dominant cultures.
Microaggressions are a statement, action, or incident regarded as an instance of indirect, subtle, or unintentional discrimination against members of a marginalized group such as a racial or ethnic minority. Microaggressions are experienced more often than not by POC-identifying arts leaders and accumulate over time. This creates emotional labor and work, putting the onus on said leaders to address the aggressions or to make the active choice not to. POC-identifying arts leaders spoke to how microaggressions affect them in their respective work environments, sharing,

As they hired me, in my last interview, the Board Chair looked me in the eye and told me, “We don’t see color here, you’ll be just fine”.

When discussing a promotion, one of the executives asked me if I could navigate white spaces with my blackness. This came from another woman of color, which just shows her internalized oppression and how highly we’ve all been taught to value whiteness.

Let’s be real for a moment, telling me I’m articulate is not a compliment, it’s rooted in assumptions and biases about how I am supposed to speak.

When I present my dance composition, rooted in my cultural heritage, do not come and tell me about the tribes of my lands, or the week you spent there on vacation. I am an expert of my own ancestral knowledge and human experience, take a seat.

There is a price for internalizing the oppression of microaggressions, choosing not to speak out against them, and making the choice to address them as well. The latter often involves having to educate others, predominantly white colleagues, about how microaggressions are toxic and how they have an impact on POC. This is where the call for equity training at every level of the organization comes into play.
Equity training. Participants noted that educators or staff in programming positions are often asked to go to equity trainings. POC-identifying arts leaders alternatively spoke of the need for leaders at all levels of an organization, particularly executives and board members, to be integral in said training. Further, many noted the importance of ongoing training, recognizing that these trainings are not “one and done” events. Equity training is critical in moving toward open conversations and shifting cultures of organizations to allow POC-identifying arts leaders to bring their full, authentic selves to their workspaces. Similarly, it is important that the staff and leadership of organizations reflect the communities they are partnering with. Brochures, websites, and programming content should send a consistent message that local and marginalized communities’ matter. Their voices must be present in making the decisions that have an impact on them.

Shifting Power. Often the process of diversification means that a shift in power must occur. Participants noted that many times white influencers do not leave their positions unless they retire or accept an attractive offer elsewhere. This leaves little room for a newer generation of artists and arts leaders to actualize their skillsets; further, many powerful POC-identifying arts leaders leave the sector or change organizations when it is clear that there is no hope for the advancement and development of their careers. Participants noted that, while this shift can be difficult, they challenge white arts and culture influencers to be willing to shift. Participants challenged influencers to hire POC candidates who might need a bit more training, recognizing that, for such candidates, lack of social and/or fiscal capital can be connected to generations of systemic inequity. The work of diversity and shifting power must be intentional.
This also refers to prior conversations on pipelines in connection to the importance of education and mentorship. Additionally, in shifting power, organizations and funders alike must be willing to fund a shift toward equity by allocating dollars toward strategic planning, board development and diversification, equitable hiring campaigns, leadership training, equity training, and other critical work. POC-identifying arts leaders noted that the arts and culture sector must recognize that POC are not just the people “we serve.” Many POC have money, access, and other resources and can be recruited for competitive and diverse boards. The sector must address these implicit biases, changing the ways in which it interacts with various individuals and communities of color. POC-identifying arts leaders further spoke to the exhaustion felt by having to constantly prove that the work they do is valuable, and that the arts have value in society. In the end, participants want conversations that lead to action and action that leads to change.
I’m concerned about the current script that positions our entire existence in [opposition] to Eurocentric colonizers’ existence. We know who we are. We know our dance. We know our artists. We know our poets. We know our writers. And what we need is the resources to grow and build the capacity and the scale of the work. So I sit here as a maker, an entrepreneur, and an administrator.”

Notes. (Brown, Brais & Fletcher, 2019).

Resilience and resistance. The POC-identifying arts leaders were quick to note that the language used to talk about diversity, inclusion, and equity is often deficit-based. One participant questioned—and rightly so—the framing of the questions we asked, which identified a “cultural equity gap” and “lack of representation” of POC-identifying arts leaders. In fact, there is a multitude of POC-identifying arts leaders who are doing important work. Even in the face of all the challenges that emerge in navigating a white and Eurocentric arts landscape, POC-identifying arts leaders demonstrated their resilience as creative innovators and entrepreneurs. These leaders are resisting current structures that do
not allow them to actualize their full visions. They resist these oppressive structures by creating their own art communities on their own terms. This is how creative innovation and entrepreneurship can be defined as resistance.

Resistance comes in many forms, including the physical spaces that arts leaders choose to occupy, the networks they intentionally engage, and the new organizations and/or collectives they build from the ground up. One of the participants explained her decision to change her performance venue to a low-income, historically marginalized neighborhood. Initially, this decision was questioned by those around her, asking if this change would draw a large enough crowd. However, she was met with success, drawing a full audience. Finally, a significant portion of the POC-identifying arts leaders expressed that they started their own organizations, collectives, and projects to find a sense of authenticity for themselves within the arts and culture sector. These initiatives included programs both within and outside existing structures, spanning entrepreneurial and intrapreneurial endeavors.

At present, the structures within the arts and culture landscape are not set up to support POC-identifying arts leaders with profound, radical, and creative ideas that call for an equitable arts landscape. Shifting the ethos of capital distribution is essential in working toward equity and supporting the artists who are calling for and actualizing said change. The sector, and its leaders, need to recognize the agency POC-identifying arts leaders have, allowing them to define what success means. Fundamentally, this requires that the sector allows POC to assume power and ownership over their own narratives and voice.

Title: Spirit in Transformation, 2016 – 2019
Meaning Making

The two phases constituting *Examining Cultural Equity* provide rich data from which to better understand the challenges currently facing Boston’s arts and culture sector on its journey to equity, while also identifying and reflecting on assets within the sector which can lead to creative justice.

Phase I included a national survey and Boston-based focus groups with local influencers. The two sub questions include 1) current influencers’ understanding of the cultural equity gap, and 2) current influencers’ motivations to eradicate the cultural equity gap. Phase II included Boston-based focus groups with local POC-identifying arts leaders. The two sub questions include 3) how arts leaders with various marginalized identities (POC, PWD, female, LGBTQIA+) conceptualize and operationalize leadership development for themselves, and 4) how arts leaders with various marginalized identities (POC, PWD, female, LGBTQIA+) perceive barriers to access for positions of leadership.

**Phase I: National survey.** The national survey in Phase I found that equity needs to be addressed within the arts and culture sector. The perceived efficacy of specific tactics to achieve equity, and the barriers to access, depended on how long someone has been in the field as well as his/her identification across lines of gender, race, and sexual orientation. In the aggregate, the greatest perceived underrepresentation within the arts and culture sector was POC and PWD. Further, the strongest perceived levers for change were recruitment and retention, equitable distribution of funding, and education.

There was a surprising disconnect between how disability was identified, as it was identified as the least represented within the arts landscape, and yet is fourth in areas of
prioritization for focus in closing the cultural equity gap (see Figs. 4 and 5). This appears to be potential cognitive dissonance amongst respondents, self-prioritization, or is perhaps indicative of trending exposure to social issues.

Demographic data in arts management studies, compared with general population data, show a vast underrepresentation of both POC and PWD-identifying arts leaders, and an overrepresentation of LGBTQIA+ and female-identifying arts leaders (see Table 4). The data from the national survey therefore show congruence in underrepresentation of both POC and PWD-identifying arts leaders, yet divergence around representation of LGBTQIA+ and female-identifying arts leaders (see Fig. 3), which were also perceived as underrepresented.

**Phase I: Focus groups.** It is clear that influencers are aware that there is a cultural equity gap, and that these influencers can easily identify gaps from multiple perspectives. However, when it comes to addressing the gap, the sector is less consistent on corrective action. There was variation in suggested levers for change based on race, institution, and experience level of the influencers interviewed. Influencers seem overwhelmed by the system-wide changes that need to occur and seem wanting for actionable steps and accountability measures to motivate and guide their progress.

Across the focus groups, funding and funders were brought up in every discussion, as was the importance of reporting board and staff demographics to funders. This also instigates funders to act, allocating funding based on the diversity and inclusion practices of an organization. This research points toward influencers pushing beyond the mindset of solely having diverse representation in an organization, to a mindset of co-building an equitable and inclusive environment that is sustainable and welcoming for a wider set of community
members. Last, unpaid internships within the industry came across as a systemic inequity in every group, creating a clear call to action for immediate remediation.

Throughout Phase I, the largest call to action was in moving the locus away from being solely on the individual and his/her training to, instead, focusing on deep-rooted and systemic organizational reform for addressing the cultural equity gap. This places the onus on the influencers within the arts industry to “do the work,” and it is difficult work that challenges the hegemonic power structures, which are deeply rooted. Further, Phase I demonstrated that, across the arts and culture sector, influencers care deeply about taking actionable steps toward change, even if they are not sure exactly what steps to take.

**Phase II: Focus groups and key informant interviews.** Through the generous sharing of lived experiences by POC-identifying arts leaders, Phase II dove deeper into questions of cultural equity in Boston’s arts and culture sector. POC-identifying arts leaders explored barriers to access, with narratives examining power, representation, capital, and pipelines. Within this, pipeline access issues were discussed extensively, calling for increased support of early childhood exposure to the arts, arts education K–12, as well as higher education, and mentorship opportunities for POC-identifying arts leaders.

Participants shared their visions for leadership and how they conceptualize leadership for themselves. This came up in the sharing of their culture stories, along with naming mentors, family members, teachers, co-workers, children, and more who have shaped them and their paths. Within this, POC-identifying arts leaders provide the opportunity to re-conceptualize the current hierarchal structure of leadership, calling for a more circular, community-based, and systems-oriented approach to leadership.
The largest call to action came in the form of a culture shift. Within that culture shift, participants called for open conversations, addressing microaggressions and implicit bias, equity training, shifting power through the conscious development of equitable practices, and through investing in POC-identifying arts leaders. Last but not least, participants reminded the research team to celebrate resistance and to acknowledge the wealth of knowledge and leadership already present amongst POC-identifying arts leaders in Boston.

**Findings summary.** In summation, *Examining Cultural Equity’s* data answered the four sub questions posed. In aggregate, data showed a lack of consensus as of how to bring about systems change toward creative justice, yet there is buy-in on the importance of doing so, particularly for POC and PWD-identifying arts leaders. Congruent across phases and methods was a call to focus on institutional and systemic inequity, with recognition that the systems in which the arts and culture sector participates is not independent from the nonprofit sector at large nor wider capitalist structures within the United States. As such, movements toward equity need to focus on both the macro and micro if shifts are to be actionable and sustainable. The macro entails being aware of the interconnected nature of systems and how they interact, and the micro looks at both the organizational and individual level for change.

Within this, participants of *Examining Cultural Equity* offered many ideas on the manifestation of change, including addressing representation, funding reallocation and distribution, educational access, capacities of institutions, anti-racist and anti-ableist trainings, or equity trainings more broadly, the use of affinity spaces, consensus building on language used, leadership development, mentorship, and shifting of power, manifesting in a culture shift.
Bridging the Gap on Systems Change

*Examining Cultural Equity* was structured with a systems-change orientation. In addition to examining the findings of the study, it is important to see which of Stroh’s (2015) four-stage process in *Systems Thinking for Social Change* was followed and accomplished. This informs the next steps for both the research and praxis work ahead.

*Examining Cultural Equity* served to 1) build a foundation for change and 2) support the seeing of the current reality more clearly, the first two steps in systems change (Stroh, 2015). Through the two phases, ACI’s research team was able to build a foundation for change by engaging key stakeholders, thus establishing ground for creating the initial picture of what people want to achieve toward equity. The networking amongst participants aided in building capabilities and connections with each other, addressing these issues from a systemic level. This took place during focus groups themselves and also during preview parties and report release parties over a 2.5-year period.

After building a foundation for change, we dove into step two, which involved seeing the current reality more clearly. We had to establish people to interview about the history of systemic inequities in the arts and culture sector, clarifying which questions to ask and how to ask them, which we started in Phase I and built upon in Phase II. We began to improve the quality of information available and shared through disseminating the findings from Phase I and Phase II in two community-based reports, *Examining Cultural Equity* and *Moves Toward Equity: Perspectives from Arts Leaders of Color*. In turn, this built a clearer picture of how different factors interact over time, and how said inequities manifest in the sector.
In addition to preview parties and report release parties, ACI developed a new strand of programming, called the Arts Equity Summit, a three-day convening bringing together over 1K participants for discussion and action on equity. The themes for the inaugural 2019 Summit were pulled from the first community findings report, and the themes for the 2020 Summit were pulled from the second findings report. This programming further supports the surfacing of mental models and gives space for catalytic conversations to take place, supporting action. It also puts the research directly into action in a tangible way, making it more accessible. A local hip-hop artist and educator, and the founder of Harvard’s HipHopEx Lab, Aysha Upchurch, created a performance piece responding to the findings from Phase II, to be debuted at the 2020 Summit. Similarly, a local theater group named Red Sage Stories used playback theater to examine the report’s findings. In this way, several activities support and strengthen the research and its reach, aiding in systems change.

When it comes to the next two steps in systems change, i.e., 3) making an explicit choice about what is most important and 4) bridging the gap, there is still much work to be done. Although Phase I and Phase II started to discuss the case for the status quo, and the case for change, getting to solutions to achieve the benefits of both, and then making the choice to bring it to life, is still to be actualized. I believe this is where systems leadership and collective impact should be employed in developing the next steps, examined through an asset-based framework.

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9 Which can be found on ACI’s YouTube channel via: https://bit.ly/AES2020MTE
10 Viewable via HowlRound Theater Commons archive of the livestream, found here: https://bit.ly/AES2020FriNight
Bridging the gap between people’s aspirations and current states will further require trackable and measurable units of progress. This involves developing a process for continuous learning and expanded engagement. This process is often circular, and I am confident that several circles of evolution can take place simultaneously. In other words, I believe in the power of micro changes to inform the macro. Systems change takes time.

The individual and organizational efforts being made must be recognized and celebrated as the movement continues to build. ACI’s logo is made up of continuous circles intersecting and overlapping, indicative that this iterative growth and building ideology is embedded in the DNA of the work itself. In order to move the work forward with intention, and to accomplish the remaining steps in systems change, it is sage to explore assets, constructing plans to celebrate and leverage said assets, building toward creative justice.

Exploring Assets

Throughout the course of Examining Cultural Equity, I shifted my fundamental overarching question. My original question read: “What is the social, emotional, economic, and cultural cost of institutional and systemic oppression for emergent arts leaders within the context of the political economy of the arts?” My question now reads: “What are the social, emotional, economic, and cultural assets within Boston that can lead to creative justice, and what reformation is still needed to achieve creative justice?” The asset-based reframing of my core question came after exploring creative justice, recognizing that the dialogue provided through the political economy of the arts, and in the majority of equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility (EDIA) work, is inherently deficit-based.
In *Creative Justice: Cultural Industries, Work and Inequality* (2017), Mark Banks presents the four building blocks of creative justice as 1) parity of participation; 2) diversity; 3) objective respect; and 4) reduction of harms. In *The Role of Foundations in Achieving Creative Justice* (2019), Cuyler further summarizes these concepts, defining creative justice as “The manifestation of all people living creative and expressive lives on their own terms.” It will take the entire arts and culture sector’s coordinated efforts to actualize this vision of creative justice. It requires the field to move past preliminary engagements with justice to create and follow through on actual and clear steps for systems change. Within these steps, it is vitally important to be aware of, and leverage, assets to achieve said change so that it is community-contextualized and sustainable.

The following analysis, and suggested next steps, are based on the findings from *Examining Cultural Equity*, as well as my professional experience in the arts and culture sector in Boston. My hope is that, through answering the four sub questions posed in Phases I and II above, others will be able to join in the knowledge creation to collectively answer the overarching question with me through a creative justice lens. I wonder what it would look like to workshop this overarching question at a town-hall-style meeting or to make it a core focus of a future Arts Equity Summit. Perhaps it could become an interview schedule in and of itself for further research.

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11 1) Current influencers’ understanding of the cultural equity gap; 2) current influencers’ motivations to eradicate the cultural equity gap; 3) how arts leaders with various marginalized identities (POC, PWD, female, LGBTQIA+) conceptualize and operationalize leadership development for themselves; and 4) how arts leaders with various marginalized identities (POC, PWD, female, LGBTQIA+) perceive barriers to access for positions of leadership in the arts and culture sector.
My hope is that the assets named below only continue to grow, becoming a starting point for future conversations. I offer these thoughts on assets, along with my thoughts on how to continue building assets in the sector, as a way to consciously build equity with a systems-change orientation. With this in mind, I openly and excitedly invite others into the process and conversation of imagining and action, yourself included.

I define the various assets as 1) social assets are the collectivist, or community-based, effects that exist within the unity of analysis, in this case Boston’s arts and culture sector; 2) emotional assets describe the supports and scaffolding, which promote emotional well-being, and the fulfillment of self-determination, for arts leaders in Boston’s arts and culture sector; 3) economic assets refer to the capital funding available within Boston’s arts and culture sector, specifically for culturally relevant and inclusive programming as well as EDIA work; and 4) cultural assets refer to the history, art, and artifacts of cultural significance that exist within Boston’s arts and culture sector. I assert that these assets are fundamental to achieving creative justice, as they are the bedrock leading to the manifestation of all people living creative and expressive lives on their own terms. As such, creative justice is at the center of the cultural equity flower, where the petals are social, emotional, economic, and cultural assets (Fig. 15).
Social assets. Social assets are the collectivist, or community-based, effects that exist within Boston’s arts and culture sector. All phases of *Examining Cultural Equity* shone light on individuals and collectives that are movement-makers, disruptors, and builders in Boston. Boston’s arts and culture sector is rich in social assets, with innovative organizations and individuals offering new ways of conceptualizing the past, present, and future.

Catalysts include, but are not limited to, the organizations found in Table 9, spanning non-profits, for-profits, social enterprises, universities, and unincorporated organizations. Funding catalysts further include the government entities and foundations found in Table 10.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization Name</th>
<th>Structure</th>
<th>Focus</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abilities Dance</td>
<td>Non-Profit</td>
<td>Dance + Intersectional Justice</td>
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<tr>
<td>Artists for Humanity</td>
<td>Non-Profit</td>
<td>Youth Dev. + Socially Engaged Art</td>
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<tr>
<td>ArtLifting</td>
<td>For-Profit</td>
<td>Art Sales + Disability</td>
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<td>Arts &amp; Business Council of Greater Boston</td>
<td>Non-Profit</td>
<td>Arts Service Organization</td>
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<td>ArtsEmerson</td>
<td>Non-Profit</td>
<td>Theater Company + Racial Equity</td>
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<td>BAMS Fest</td>
<td>Non-Profit</td>
<td>Socially Engaged Arts + Racial Equity</td>
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<td>Berklee Inst. for Arts Ed &amp; Special Needs</td>
<td>Higher Ed</td>
<td>Higher Ed + Disability Inclusion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Boston Arts Academy</td>
<td>K-12</td>
<td>Youth Dev. + Socially Engaged Arts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brain Arts Org</td>
<td>Non-Profit</td>
<td>Emerging + Socially Engaged Arts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Castle of our Skins</td>
<td>Non-Profit</td>
<td>Music + Youth Dev. + Racial Equity</td>
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<td>CompanyOne Theatre</td>
<td>Non-Profit</td>
<td>Theater + Racial Equity</td>
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<td>Conservatory Lab Charter School</td>
<td>K-12</td>
<td>Youth Dev. + Socially Engaged Arts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Danza Organica</td>
<td>Non-Profit</td>
<td>Dance Company + Intersectional Justice</td>
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<td>Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative</td>
<td>Non-Profit</td>
<td>Community Task Force</td>
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<td>Design Studio for Social Innovation</td>
<td>Non-Profit</td>
<td>Community Based Organization</td>
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<td>Dunamis</td>
<td>Unincorp.</td>
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<td>Front Porch Arts Collective</td>
<td>Unincorp.</td>
<td>Theater Company + Racial Equity</td>
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<td>Henderson School for Inclusion</td>
<td>K-12</td>
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<td>Resource Commons</td>
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<td>HipHopEx Lab</td>
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<td>Improbable Players</td>
<td>Non-Profit</td>
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<td>MassLeap</td>
<td>Non-Profit</td>
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<td>Medicine Wheel Productions</td>
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<tr>
<td>National Center for Afro-American Artists</td>
<td>Non-Profit</td>
<td>Museum + Art + Racial Equity</td>
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<td>Network for Arts Administrators of Color</td>
<td>Non-Profit</td>
<td>Arts Service Organization</td>
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<td>Now &amp; There</td>
<td>Non-Profit</td>
<td>Public + Socially Engaged Arts</td>
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<td>Open Door Arts</td>
<td>Non-Profit</td>
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<td>Pao Arts Center</td>
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<td>Community Services + Reclamation</td>
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<td>StageSource</td>
<td>Non-Profit</td>
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<td>The Genki Spark</td>
<td>Non-Profit</td>
<td>Perf. + Racial Equity + Advocacy</td>
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<td>The Record Co.</td>
<td>Non-Profit</td>
<td>Equitable Music Production</td>
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<td>The Theater Offensive</td>
<td>Non-Profit</td>
<td>Theater + Intersectional Justice</td>
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<td>Transformative Culture Project</td>
<td>Non-Profit</td>
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<td>Non-Profit</td>
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<tr>
<td>William M. Trotter Institute</td>
<td>Higher Ed</td>
<td>Art + Higher Education + Racial Equity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zumix</td>
<td>Non-Profit</td>
<td>Youth Dev. + Socially Engaged Arts</td>
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All of these organizations and collectives are working on aspects of equity within and through their work, centering creatives in the process. Continued and strengthened investment, through capacity-building and capital in these organizations, will propel conversations on equity, coupled with continual and increased investment in social-justice artists. However, these investments alone are not enough and would simply serve as a Band-Aid for the systems-change work that desperately needs to take place.

To propel coordinated systems change, in addition to direct funding support, I believe one of the best investments would be to develop a sustained learning cohort model amongst the organizations and collectives named above. Funders have tried similar learning cohorts in the past in various capacities; yet, they are exclusive by virtue of focusing only on their grantees, and/or they are conditional because participants are receiving funding. Said cohorts have also traditionally focused on mid- to large-size organizations, which few of the above organizations qualify as. In order for the process to be authentically inclusive and equitable, it needs a different social fabric or fiber outside of just funders convening.
Kania and Kramer (2011) advocate that a separate independent organization focused on the process(es) of systems change should coordinate the course toward collective action. To do so takes a sincere investment from community actors and funders as well as having the key independent organization and/or leaders to do so. Bringing together a learning cohort would make it possible for the sector to move past the initial stages for systems change, making an explicit choice about what is most important, and being fully aware of both the costs and benefits (Stroh, 2015). This, in turn, would start bridging the gap between what sector leaders deeply care about and their current actions, building on their motivations and knowledge to create systemic and lasting change (Stroh, 2015). It would also clarify goals and strategies for the sector in working toward equity, which were explored but not solidified through Examining Cultural Equity. Within this, trackable markers of success could be collectively formulated.

This cohort learning model would last a year at minimum, with an ongoing check-in process, with a more efficacious model spanning three to five years. This cohort learning model could benefit from multiple leaders and constituents from each organization, bringing various perspectives and voices to the discussion. This would help mitigate leader fatigue and proactively anticipates sector turnover, instilling a shared or collective leadership model versus focusing on an individual leader, as is traditional with executive directors and chief executive officers.

This type of model could be replicated nationally, in partnership with arts and culture organizations in each community, including civic government. Ideally, cohort members would receive unrestricted funding to create or further equity-based programming and
training models that are specific to their home communities, extending the reach and impact of the work, as well as the learning taking place. This could become the driving discussion threads, or case studies, for community programming like the Arts Equity Summit in the future, which then becomes a workshopping space to drive actionable change.

As it stands, few organizations have the funding to allocate toward EDIA work, so another key ingredient would be a large outside funder who is willing to invest in building equity in the sector through establishment of collective action, most likely governmental funding from the National Endowment for the Arts, American for the Arts, or through an independent funder, e.g., the Andrew Mellon Foundation, Bloomberg Philanthropies, Via Art Fund, Surdna Foundation, etc. When it comes to social assets in the arts and culture sector, Boston is top-notch; it’s just a question of how to leverage the social assets and movement-makers to align toward achieving the goals of equity and creative justice.

The idea of a cohort learning model is akin to ACI’s artist-in-residence model regarding community development and support, further hosting conversations and think tanks similar to ACI’s current community programming and education. That said, the cohort-learning format would allow for a more in-depth dive and shared sector ownership of the discussions and actions taking place. Once this is established several different strands of programming could develop as a result of the questions explored and collective action established. This could include the development of a POC-centered arts management and arts education fellowship program with existing organizations, a POC artist-innovator lab to

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12 Which could even drive a three-year arts management PhD program that is similar to an EdLD program, focused at the intersection of praxis and leadership.
incubate new ideas, or the development of sector-wide affinity groups that are well resourced. The possibilities are expansive.

**Emotional assets.** Emotional assets describe the support and scaffolding which promote emotional well-being and the fulfillment of self-determination for arts leaders in Boston’s arts and culture sector. Phase II of *Examining Cultural Equity* was particularly helpful in exploring the emotional assets in existence. Numerous POC-identifying arts leaders described how influential community support systems are in maintaining and building emotional assets and well-being. This included other arts and culture managers and artists, as well as familial support, mentorship, and training. When reflecting on supportive work environments, POC-identifying arts leaders spoke to the efficacy of healthy and open dialogue in creating nurturing workspaces. POC-identifying arts leaders spoke to the creative and emotional freedom that can come from creating new spaces for culturally relevant work, nurtured through entrepreneurial ventures.

To expand Boston’s emotional assets in the arts and culture sector, white sector members can engage in EDIA trainings, affinity learning groups, and co-conspirators can support antiracist policies and procedures in their workplaces. In turn, this will lift some of the emotional burden POC-identifying arts leaders described experiencing, which comes with having to educate their white colleagues and audiences/consumers of art. The sector can support affinity groups as well as funding for training and advancement of POC-identifying arts leaders. Many POC-identifying arts leaders also described the need for arts opportunities in early childhood as well as pipeline training and mentorship support. In turn, this will support POC-identifying arts leaders in gaining access to, and then succeeding in, influence
roles in the sector. These levers for change will drive inclusion and accessibility in the sector, in turn building on the sector’s emotional assets and diversity.

**Economic assets.** Economic assets refer to the capital funding available within Boston’s arts and culture sector, specifically for culturally relevant programming, and EDIA work. Boston’s arts and culture sector boasts a vibrant ecosystem; that said, funding is inequitable in how it is earned and distributed, making this one of the weaker assets for Boston, whereas it has the potential to be ones of its strongest.

With this, I believe that the strongest lever for change is the redistribution of funding, including the restructuring of funding protocols. Some foundations have already started this process and are making progressive headway. When it comes to funding culturally specific work, I believe that the New England Foundation for the Arts is one of the most progressive leaders in the city, with its touring grants and Creative Cities program. It also has a diverse programming staff, which lead these efforts and are actively working to diversify its board and senior leadership. I believe that the Mayor's Office of Arts and Culture is also taking bold steps to restructure its funding protocols through an equity lens, building off of the Cultural Planning Process it ran in 2016.

What appears entirely missing, at this time, are funds for capacity-building focused on EDIA work, including internal training, board diversification, and hiring restructuring. Larger organizations are often able to reallocate funds to do this work from their already existing budget; however, small to midsized organizations report finding it difficult, if not impossible, to do so. As the sector works to diversify its leadership, EDIA training is an essential complement to address implicit bias, microaggressions, and discrimination.
Effective EDIA work requires a continual investment of both time and financial resources, which is often not acknowledged. It is likely to become even more challenging to pursue and secure funding for said work in the wake of COVID-19, at least until the economy recovers and more relief funding is infused into the sector.

**Cultural assets.** Cultural assets refer to the history, art, and artifacts of cultural significance, which exist within Boston’s arts and culture sector. Boston has incredible wealth in its cultural assets, particularly amongst its museums’ collections. One particular cultural gem, which captures the history and contemporary landscape of Black artistry in Boston, is the National Center of Afro-American Artists. Two public universities, which lead in supporting diversity of cultural assets and knowledge, are MassArt and UMass Boston. In February 2020 MassArt opened a new contemporary museum that is committed to being free to the public, and to promoting creatives of color. Additionally, Boston’s cultural districts are an incredible cultural asset, including the Roxbury Cultural District, Latin Quarter Cultural District, Fenway Cultural District, and Boston Literary Cultural District.

Large institutional museums like the Museum of Fine Arts (MFA) and the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum (ISGM) have restructured their programming to be more inclusive of cultural narratives and assets, hosting Indigenous People’s Day, Juneteenth, Diwali Festivals and other culturally specific holidays, including days of remembrance and celebrations. The Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) hosted the 2019 Arts Equity Summit keynote and is now supporting cross-cutting contemporary artists and conversations via public forums.
To continue progressing toward equity, museums must further evaluate and diversify their collections, paying reparations, and/or returning work to the indigenous artists and the lands from which they were stolen. Having diverse curatorial teams will further support holistic education and narratives surrounding present and future exhibitions. Further, diverse art historians are desperately needed to support the growing diversity of the global arts market.

One direct area of growth for Boston comes in its historical monuments. Projects like artist Steve Locke’s “Slave Auction Block Memorial,” which was put on hold earlier this year due to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People’s (NAACP) opposition, would foster and support counternarratives that have traditionally been suppressed and oppressed in Boston. There is a national movement afoot to remove problematic memorials across the United States; further, the Mayor’s Office of Arts & Culture conducted an internal study of Boston’s monuments in the summer of 2019 and was committed to generously support Locke’s proposal before it was withdrawn. I am curious to see what actions they intend to take, or intend to support, in furthering this restorative work in Boston.

Why now? As discussed throughout this dissertation, Boston’s arts and culture sector has a unique opportunity to further catalyze equity in this moment. There is already a movement afoot, shown through innovative leadership, new organizations and programming, knowledge and data generation, and advocacy and accountability measures, all of which have developed over the last decade since I entered the field.
As I conclude this dissertation, in May 2020, our global community is facing a public health pandemic, COVID-19. The impact of the disease has been devastating across global economies, nations, states, communities, sectors and homes. The arts and culture sector are amongst those most devastated, with catastrophic losses for independent contractors, artists and educators working in the sector. The pandemic hit Boston in mid-March, and by the end of March Massachusetts’s arts and culture sector had already lost 55M in earned revenue (Massachusetts Cultural Council, 2020). This pales in comparison to the national arts and culture sector loss of 5.5B, sustained by mid-May 2020 (Americans for the Arts, 2020).

Friends and colleagues within the sector have lost, or are in the process of losing, their jobs. Most work paycheck to paycheck, making it impossible for them to pay rent, and/or afford food and keep their households afloat. With the loss of jobs often comes the loss of health insurance, a terrifying reality that many Americans are facing at present. What we’re seeing in the arts and culture sector is a microcosm of what is happening globally.

With instability, and exogenous shocks also comes the opportunity for co-creation, innovation and emergence. As the sector works to heal, and then rebuild, how will we ensure that equity stays at the forefront? How can we employ collective action to ensure that media coverage, funding, and policy are equitable? In response to these questions, Karthik Subramanian (CompanyOne), Harold Steward (The Theater Offensive) and I started organizing a movement titled #culturalsalvation.

#culturalsalvation is a co-created and co-developed collective aimed to catalyze equity in the arts and culture sector, with a focus on media, policy, funding and community, organized through principles of emergent strategy, cultural equity, collective action and
creative justice. The movement is focused on MA-based arts leaders who identify as POC and/or as part of the disability community/disabled, and/or whose work sits at the intersection of art, cultural equity and social justice. Further, there is a focus on small to mid-sized cultural organizations given that the majority of POC-led organizations fall within this cohort size and are particularly vulnerable in this pivotal movement due to restricted or limited cash flow, restricted or non-existent lines of credit, and potentially limited access to foundational resources and leadership due to exclusion from larger budget funding cohorts.

The first group meeting for #culturalsalvation was held at the end of March where over thirty leaders joined us to explore the organizing principles, with the second scheduled for the end of May. Since the first call, many individuals and organizations have stepped forward to continue the conversation. Developed in response to emergent strategy, we designed a “flock” leadership formation, which we are in the process of disseminating and refining. Essential to the #culturalsalvation movement is to thoughtfully and intentionally move at the speed of trust (Brown, 2017). As we weather the storm together, I am confident that we will hold the sector, and one another, accountable.

**Moving forward.** Collectively, the social, emotional, economic, and cultural assets within Boston’s arts and culture landscape give me hope that, as a city, Boston will continue moving toward creative justice. Another piece of advocacy that I think will greatly aid in this work is the dissemination of creative justice as a framework to reconceptualize the current conversations on cultural equity and EDIA work more broadly. Given that the term was born in academic research in 2017, it may take time for its adoption in praxis. However, I believe
it will prove efficacious in supporting a more authentically inclusive equity movement in the
arts. I am interested in its utility in both formal and informal education settings.

In sum, I put forth the following list as condensed suggestions on how to move
towards equity, developed through a decade of praxis, multiple years of research, and
countless conversations with leaders in the field who are challenging hegemonic norms: 1) develop a sustained learning cohort model, including leadership development and community programming, 2) white sector members can engage in EDIA trainings, affinity learning groups, and co-conspirators can support anti-racist and anti-ableist policies and procedures, 3) support affinity groups, as well as funding for training and advancement of POC-identifying arts leaders, including the development of youth POC-identifying arts leaders, 4) redistribution of funding, including the restructuring of funding protocols, 5) direct funds for capacity building focused on EDIA work, including internal training, board diversification, and hiring and organizational restructuring, 6) museums can consciously further diversify their collections through new acquisitions, pay reparations, and/or return work to the indigenous artists and the lands from which they were stolen, 7) hire diverse curatorial and executive teams, which will further support holistic education and narratives surrounding present and future exhibitions and programming in cultural institutions, 8) support POC-identifying artists in creating new monuments and works that are culturally relevant, 9) remove problematic monuments and works that no longer hold historical relevance and/or are inequitable, and 10) increase dissemination and education around creative justice as a framework to reconceptualize the current conversations on cultural equity, and EDIA broadly.

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The findings throughout *Examining Cultural Equity* support us, as members of the arts and culture sector, in holding up a mirror to reflect our attitudes, perceptions, and biases as an industry in addressing cultural equity. It is of the utmost importance that unjust systems and practices be disrupted and dismantled, and it takes everyone to do so. Systems-level reform is the charge, with culture shift as the foci, and creative justice as the goal.

In order for us to achieve creative justice we must fully understand the interconnected nature of our sector and wider society, with recognition of shared liberation and bondage. When one suffers, we all suffer. When voices are no longer silenced, healing can take place, giving space for justice work to begin. Creative justice provides a way of thinking and acting which centers self-determination, self-actualization, creative innovation, and equity. The invitation is to leverage the power and privilege we all have—be it education, class, race, gender, ability, sexual orientation, or otherwise—to build and sustain equity.
**Artist:** Marian Taylor Brown, © 2020

**Title:** Melting Precision on Black Pepper Porch & Imagination Blankets Reimagined, 2009 – 2020.

**Artist description of the pieces:** As this dissertation comes to a close, I am in the nascent stages of a year-long arts and healing community project, Breaking Open. I am choosing to publish the first two pieces of a larger series, Melting Precision on Black Pepper Porch & Imagination Blankets Reimagined. Similar to the dissertation presented in this work, the act of healing is never complete.

*Breaking Open* started on March 1st, 2020. The objective was to walk every day at sunrise and sunset with another being, to set intentions, and to dive into the act and premise of healing with one another. This accompanied an ultimate goal of walking 100 miles with forty-five unique individuals. I was able to complete the first ten days of the project, and corresponding walks, before I was quarantined due to COVID-19 exposure.

Now it is very unclear when I, or anyone for that matter, will resume walking alongside loved ones in physical space. That said, the energy and lessons emanating from the first ten days of the walk are holding me dearly, deeply and profoundly during this time of social distancing. With this, creation must continue. With this, I am not alone.

The paper featured in this series is made out of recycled clothing, created from my childhood imagination blankets and “fabrics of meaning” from my familial lineage. Several sheets of paper are from my undergraduate senior thesis, which showed in 2009.

As this paper is evolving (repurposed), so is my concept of identity within this research and work. May this evolution represent endless curiosity and a continued dedication to learning, community, art, equity and unconditional love.
Summary of Findings

In aggregate, data showed a lack of consensus as of how to bring about systems change towards creative justice yet demonstrated that there is buy-in on the importance of doing so, particularly for POC-and PWD-identifying arts leaders. Congruent across phases and methods was a call to focus on institutional and systemic inequity, with recognition that the systems in which the arts and culture sector participates is not independent from the nonprofit sector at large, nor wider capitalist structures within the United States. As such, movements toward equity need to focus on both the macro and micro if shifts are to be actionable and sustainable. The macro entails being aware of the interconnected nature of systems and how they interact, and the micro looks at both the organizational and individual level for change.

Within this, participants of Examining Cultural Equity offered many ideas on the manifestation of change, including addressing representation, funding reallocation and distribution, educational access, capacities of institutions, anti-racist and anti-ableist trainings, equity trainings more broadly, the use of affinity spaces, consensus-building on language used, leadership development, mentorship, and shifting of power. Collectively, these components will manifest in a culture shift.

Building upon these recommendations, I put forth the following list as condensed suggestions on how move toward equity: 1) develop a sustained learning cohort model, including leadership development and community programming, 2) white sector members can engage in EDIA trainings, affinity learning groups, and co-conspirators can support anti-racist and anti-ableist policies and procedures, 3) support affinity groups, as well as funding
for training and advancement of POC-identifying arts leaders, including the development of youth POC-identifying arts leaders, 4) redistribution of funding, including the restructuring of funding protocols, 5) direct funds for capacity building focused on EDIA work, including internal training, board diversification, and hiring and organizational restructuring, 6) museums can consciously further diversify their collections through new acquisitions, pay reparations, and/or return work to the indigenous artists and the lands from which they were stolen, 7) hire diverse curatorial and executive teams, which will further support holistic education and narratives surrounding present and future exhibitions and programming in cultural institutions, 8) support POC-identifying artists in creating new monuments and works that are culturally relevant, 9) remove problematic monuments and works that no longer hold historical relevance and/or are inequitable, and 10) increase dissemination and education around creative justice as a framework to reconceptualize the current conversations on cultural equity, and EDIA broadly.

The findings throughout Examining Cultural Equity support members of the arts and culture sector in holding up a mirror to reflect attitudes, perceptions, and biases in addressing cultural equity. The findings from Examining Cultural Equity, although not generalizable, are translatable across sectors, industries and geographies. The stories told and narratives examined are Boston-based, yet the lessons they provide are generously universal as practices of humanity. It is of the utmost importance that unjust systems and practices be disrupted and dismantled, and it takes everyone to make this happen. Generations of oppression, trauma and violations of human rights are not to be forgotten with forward moving progress, but rather, they are to be acknowledged, with truths strengthened, as
lessons for the present and future as we move towards equity and justice. Our lives are interconnected; our liberation and bondage are tied together. The invitation is to leverage the power and privilege we all have—be it education, class, race, gender, ability, sexual orientation, nationality, geography, religion or otherwise—to build and sustain equity.

**Limitations of the Study**

In Phase I, regrettably, we did not ask survey nor focus group participants to disclose if they identify as PWD, which is essential for understanding representation within the arts landscape from an intersectional lens. The research team will be highly cognizant of doing so in future studies. In Phase II, data collection was based solely in Boston, whereas Phase I’s qualitative data was based in Boston; yet, the quantitative data was nationally based. It would be interesting to see the study replicated across multiple cities nationally and countries internationally. Although there are through threads that are likely to be congruent across communities, the findings may not be wholly generalizable. The research team further acknowledges the importance of conducting another study focused solely on the perspectives of those who identify as having a disability and/or are disabled (PWD), as this study is not generalizable across different aspects of traditionally marginalized or oppressed identities.

**Continued Questions and Inquiries**

Upon completion of *Examining Cultural Equity*, I am increasingly curious as to the social, emotional, economic, and cultural assets within various communities, nationally and
globally, which can lead to creative justice. I wonder about the transferability of creative justice within a human rights framework and international development more broadly.

I believe that part of the quest for creative justice will take bringing voices together from global communities to redefine what success and value look like, and are, within the arts and culture landscape. I wonder about arts management programs and how creative justice can be used as a tool to prepare the next generation of leaders to actualize their work through an asset-based and equity-forward lens. I also wonder about community leadership-development programs that center cultural assets and build off of already existing structures of support. I then wonder what deeper investment in these assets will bring about for the field in a longitudinal capacity.

Within Boston’s ecosystem, I wonder if the sector will push for systems-level change demanding equity, or if it will be a conglomeration of singular efforts that drive a dispersed impact. I wonder which leaders, organizations, funders, artists, and universities will be able to push an equity agenda forward and which, if any, could drive collective impact. I further wonder if the sector will ever fully name and own institutional and systemic racism and oppression as a cause of present-day inequities.

I have hope for Boston, the nation, and our global world that this work will continue to bring about change. I am optimistic that I will see an impact of that change within my lifetime. I am also realistic that equity and creative justice work will be a life-long charge, and I am proud to commit my life to this work. I am cognizant that racial, disability, economic, climate, health, education, and gender equity and justice are deeply
interconnected, and that this work runs alongside much larger movements focused on restorative and creative justice.

With this, I promise as a practitioner, artist, educator, researcher and innovator to stay fervently committed to interconnected justice movements in the pursuit of equity, including but not limited to the arts. I am grateful for all who have contributed to this work and to all the humans who tirelessly continue to do this work on a daily basis. All of these efforts are recognized and held with deep gratitude.

At the close of this dissertation, the research questions and praxis work I have been dedicated to will remain constant, yet I will endeavor to change my position within the sector, challenging myself to re-evaluate the efficacy of various levers for change, my own positionality and power, and the institutional change and innovation that I believe in and want to contribute to. Within this, I wonder about ACI’s next steps, as well as my own.

With this next step I am unwavering in my support of ACI’s leadership, including our board of directors and artist community, trusting implicitly in our ability to actualize our shared mission despite the adversities faced. Applying theory directly into action is a great way to test its utility, and the practice of building ACI and Examining Cultural Equity has provided a beautiful studio in which to co-create and ideate with others.

A community of innovation breeds innovation, and a community of shared leadership and systems leadership honors and elevates various leaders throughout its tenure. Like the geese who fly South, it is my turn to take a break from the wind, and to allow the strongest flyers to lead the flock for a while. I trust that those at the helm will bring the flock safely through migration and that we will collectively know when it is time to ground.
For now, my hope is that the flock may continue to fly with courage, laughter, and love in the pursuit of cultural equity and creative justice, wherever the wind takes us all on this journey and evolution. May the strong and adverse weather associated with COVID-19 pacify with time, and may there be sunnier days ahead for all.
A APPENDIX

RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW SCHEDULE -- PHASE I
Expected duration: 1hr – 1.5hours

Disclosure statement to be read to focus group:
The objective of this focus group is to have a conversation surrounding leadership demographics in the contemporary art world, with a particular focus on the ‘cultural equity gap’. Americans for the Arts has defined cultural equity as, “embodying the values, policies, and practices that ensure that all people—including but not limited to those who have been historically underrepresented based on race/ethnicity, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, socioeconomic status, geography, citizenship status, or religion—are represented in the development of arts policy; the support of artists; the nurturing of accessible, thriving venues for expression; and the fair distribution of programmatic, financial, and informational resources.” I will ask a series of questions to better understand and capture your thoughts on leadership in the contemporary art world, with a focus on how you collectively think about equity in the arts, particularly in our home context here in Boston.

Responding to all of the questions is completely voluntary, you do not have to answer any question you prefer not to, and the conversation is expected to last approximately one hour. The conversation will be recorded and later transcribed. Research assistants will take ethnographic field notes to augment the transcripts. This research is conducted by doctoral students that University of Massachusetts Boston, and is overseen by faculty from the School for Global Inclusion and Social Development, and the School of Management. We intend to publish findings in order to advance sector-wide research and practice surrounding the cultural equity gap. When quoted in reports, presentations, and publications, a pseudonym will be used for all participants unless permission is expressly sought and granted.

Do you have any questions or concerns before we get started?

I will use a set of guideline questions to stimulate our exploration of this topic but we are not limited to these. You are invited to share your perspectives. Thank you.

I will use a set of guideline questions to stimulate our exploration of this topic, but we are not limited to these. You are invited to share your perspectives. Thank you.

1) Prior to this conversation, had you heard of the term ‘cultural equity’?
   a. If so, what does it mean to you?
   b. Do you believe that there is a ‘cultural equity gap’ in our arts landscape in Boston? Can you share examples of the gaps?
2) Is there an adequate representation of leaders of color in our arts landscape?
   a. If no, do you think this is an issue just in Boston, or is it field wide?
   b. What are some of the barriers to recruiting, and retaining, talented and diverse staff?

3) Is there an adequate representation of leaders with disabilities in our arts landscape?
   a. If no, do you think this is an issue just in Boston, or is it field wide?
   b. What are some of the barriers to recruiting, and retaining, talented and diverse staff?

4) When you think about your own work, what aspects of the ‘cultural equity gap’ is your organization and/or team working to improve?
   a. What are you learning as you do this work?
   b. Does your team have specific diversity and inclusion goals?
   c. Does your team have explicit wording, such as a statement on diversity and inclusion?

5) Which areas of the ‘cultural equity gap’ is your organization effectively addressing?
   a. What do you think has made this work successful?

6) Which aspects of the ‘cultural equity gap’ are difficult to address?
   a. What are some of the barriers that make this difficult?

7) Is there anything else you wish we had asked that we didn’t? Anything else you’d like to tell us?
FOCUS GROUP / KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW SCHEDULE -- PHASE II
Expected duration: 1hr – 1.5hours

Disclosure statement to be read to focus group and/or individuals:
The objective of this focus group / interview is to have a conversation surrounding leadership in the contemporary art world, with a particular focus on ‘cultural equity’. Americans for the Arts has defined cultural equity as, “embodying the values, policies, and practices that ensure that all people—including but not limited to those who have been historically underrepresented based on race/ethnicity, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, socioeconomic status, geography, citizenship status, or religion—are represented in the development of arts policy; the support of artists; the nurturing of accessible, thriving venues for expression; and the fair distribution of programmatic, financial, and informational resources.” I will ask a series of questions to better understand and capture your thoughts on leadership in the contemporary art world, with a focus on how you collectively think about equity in the arts, particularly in our home context here in Boston. Responding to all of the questions is completely voluntary, you do not have to answer any question you prefer not to, and the conversation is expected to last approximately one hour. The conversation will be recorded and later transcribed. Research assistants will take ethnographic field notes to augment the transcripts. This research is conducted by doctoral and master’s students at University of Massachusetts Boston and is overseen by faculty from the School for Global Inclusion and Social Development, and the School of Management. We intend to publish findings in order to advance sector-wide research and practice surrounding the cultural equity gap. When quoted in reports, presentations, and publications, a pseudonym will be used for all participants.

Do you have any questions or concerns before we get started?

I will use a set of guideline questions to stimulate our exploration of this topic, but we are not limited to these. You are invited to share your perspectives. Thank you.

1) Prior to this conversation, had you heard of the term ‘cultural equity’?
   a. If so, what does it mean to you?
   b. Do you believe that there is a ‘cultural equity gap’ in our arts landscape in Boston? Can you share examples of the gaps?

2) Is there an adequate representation of leaders of color in our arts landscape?
   a. If no, do you think this is an issue just in Boston, or is it field wide?
   b. What are some of the barriers to recruiting, and retaining, talented and diverse staff?

3) Is there an adequate representation of leaders with disabilities in our arts landscape?
   a. If no, do you think this is an issue just in Boston, or is it field wide?
b. What are some of the barriers to recruiting, and retaining, talented and diverse staff?

4) When you think about arts leaders, who do you think of? Who comes to mind?
   a. Do you think of yourself as an arts leader?
      i. When did you start to think of yourself as a leader?
      ii. Did you give yourself the title of leader, or did someone else give it to you?
   b. Who are some of the arts leaders of color here in Boston that you think of?
   c. Who are some of the arts leaders with disabilities that you think of?

5) Do you think being a leader is innate, developed, or both?
   a. Why?
   b. How?
   c. Examples?

6) What are some of the barriers to access for emerging arts leaders of color?
   a. What about arts leaders with disabilities?

7) What are actionable steps we can take in closing this gap?

8) Is there anything else you wish we had asked that we didn’t? Anything else you’d like to tell us?
NATIONAL SURVEY SCHEDULE
Electronic survey
Expected duration: 15 – 30 minutes

Questions, starting on the next electronic page after disclosure and consent:

Section 1: Background information:
1. Do you currently work in the arts?
   a. If answered yes:
      i. In what capacity (note: please pick one that most directly reflects your current work and how you identify):
         1. Manager (if selected, drop down menu choices appear)
            a. Non-profit
            b. For profit
            c. Limited Liability Corporation
         2. Educator (if selected, drop down menu choices appear)
            a. Teaching artist
            b. Professor
            c. K-12 educator
            d. Adult educator
            e. Museum educator
            f. Other
               i. Please specify (short answer box provided)
         3. Curator (if selected, drop down menu choices appear)
            a. Museum
            b. Trading house (e.g. Christy’s)
            c. Personal Curator (private collections)
               i. Gallery
         4. Art Sales (if selected, drop down menu choices appear)
            a. Gallery
            b. Online Marketing
            c. Artist discovery
            d. Other (if selected, sub question appears)
               i. Please specify (short answer box provided)
         5. Artist (if selected, drop down menu choices appear)
            a. Theatre artist
            b. Dancer
            c. Poet
            d. Visual Artist
            e. Mixed Media Artist
               i. Other (if selected, sub question appears)
                  1. Please specify (short answer box provided)
6. How many years have you been working in the industry?  
(multiple choice, pick one)  
   a. 0 – 5 years  
   b. 5 – 10 years  
   c. 10 – 15 years  
   d. 15+ years  

7. What is the geographical focus of your work in the arts?  
(multiple choice, may select multiple answers)  
   a. New York  
   b. Massachusetts  
   c. Illinois  
   d. Missouri  
   e. Washington  
   f. Outside the US (International) (if selected, sub question  
      appears)  
      i. Please specify which country (short answer box  
         provided)  
   g. Another state (if selected, sub question appears)  
      i. Please specify which state (short answer box provided)  

b. If answered no:  
   i. Have you previously worked in the arts?  
      1. If answered yes:  
      a. For how long? (multiple choice, participants pick one)  
         i. 0 – 5 years  
         ii. 5 – 10 years  
         iii. 10 – 15 years  
         iv. 15+ years  
      b. In what capacity? (multiple choice, participants may  
         select multiple answers  
         i. Management  
         ii. Education  
         iii. Curation  
         iv. Trading & Sales  
         v. Professional Artist  
         vi. Other  
            1. Please specify (written answer)  

2. Are you a patron of the arts?  
   a. If answered yes:  
      i. What arts do you patron? (may select multiple answers)  
         1. Theatre  
         2. Dance  
         3. Music
4. Visual Arts
5. Community Arts
6. Spoken word poetry
7. Not Applicable

3. Demographic information:
   a. Do you identify as an arts leader? (multiple choice, must select one)
      i. Yes
      ii. No
   b. Do you identify as a person of color? (multiple choice, must select one)
      i. If answered yes, sub question:
          1. If you feel comfortable disclosing more information, please tell us about how you self-identify culturally and ethnically (short answer):
          ii. If answered no, go to the next question.
          iii. Prefer not to answer
   c. What gender demographic best describes how you self-identify? (multiple choice, must select one):
      i. Gender non-conforming
      ii. Male
      iii. Female
      iv. Prefer not to answer
   d. Do you identify as part of the LGBTQ community? (multiple choice, must select one).
      i. Yes
      ii. No
      iii. Prefer not to answer

Section 2: Exploring the ‘cultural equity gap’:
1. Please answer the following questions on a 1-10 scale, where 1 = least and 10 is the most.
   a. Prior to this survey, how familiar were you with the term ‘cultural equity gap’?
   b. In the US, to what degree do you believe there is adequate representation of leaders of color in the arts?
   c. In the US, to what degree do you believe there is adequate representation of leaders who identify as having a disability in the arts?
   d. In the US, to what degree do you believe there is adequate representation of female leaders in the arts?
   e. In the US, to what degree do you believe there is adequate representation of LGBTQ identifying leaders in the arts?
f. In the US, to what degree do you believe there is adequate representation of various socio-economic statuses, or classes, represented in arts leadership?
g. In the US, how important do you think it is for the arts industry to work on closing the ‘cultural equity gap’?

2. As an individual, what are the top three areas of inclusion, diversity and equity that you focus on?
   a. Gender / gender identity
   b. Racial / ethnicity
   c. Age
   d. Sexual orientation
   e. Disability rights equity
   f. Socio economic status / class
   g. Geography
   h. Citizenship status
   i. Religion
   j. N.A. (does not apply)
k. Why did you choose these options?
   i. Please specify (written answer)

3. What aspects of inclusion, diversity and equity do you think the arts industry most needs to focus on to close the ‘cultural equity gap’ (choose up to three)?
   a. Gender / gender identity
   b. Racial / ethnicity
   c. Age
   d. Sexual orientation
   e. Disability rights equity
   f. Socio economic status / class
   g. Geography
   h. Citizenship status
   i. Religion
   j. N.A. (does not apply)

4. Why did you choose these options?
   a. Please specify (written answer)

5. On a scale of 1-10, 1 indicating not relevant, and 10 being most relevant, how much do the following barriers effect closing the cultural equity gap?
   a. Unequal opportunity to education in the arts.
   b. Unequal opportunity to internships that provide a gateway to jobs in the arts (most internships are unpaid).
   c. Lack of funding for, or underfunding, of entry level positions in the arts.
   d. Lack of representation of marginalized communities in the arts, causing a leadership gap.
   e. Lack of entrepreneurial training for emerging artists.
f. Lack of exposure opportunities for certain communities (i.e. access to museums, etc.).
g. Arts organizations and institutions built by, and for, one specific audience, now having difficulty expanding to include and encompass all community members.
h. Recruitment and retention of qualified candidates to work in the arts.
i. Funding, i.e. access to capital, is inequitable in the arts.
j. Undertones of implicit and explicit bias by dominant cultures and communities in all aspects of the arts.

6. Do you find the arts to be a tool for promoting inclusion, diversity and equity? (multiple choice, must select one)
   a. Yes, or no
      i. Why? Please specify (written answer)

7. Anything else you would like to share with us? (written answer)

Section 3: Closing
Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts with us today. If you have any questions or concerns, you can email or call the principle investigator. If you would like to stay up to date with information and findings from the study, you can visit: www.artsconnectinternational.org and sign up for our newsletter on the homepage. You’ll also be able to see how this study fits into our larger mission as we work towards equity.
REFERENCES


