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Authoring Self and Redefining Luck: Pathways to Arts Degrees and Professions for College Students of Color

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Approval of the Dissertation Committee

This dissertation has been duly read, reviewed, and critiqued by the Committee listed below, which hereby approves the manuscript of Shirlie Mae Mamaril Choe as fulfilling the scope and quality of requirements for meriting the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education, with a concentration in Higher Education / Student Affairs.

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Abstract

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Educators and researchers have consistently championed the value of arts education in helping to foster greater creativity and innovative thought in students. Despite the apparent social value of arts and creativity, there is a growing negative public perception of the utility of arts education and degrees in the competitive job market. In addition to decreases in arts education funding at the elementary and secondary school levels, the proportion of students pursuing arts-related majors have decreased over the years. This is unsurprising since media outlets like the *U.S. News & World Report* regularly highlight the top majors for students to pursue as the ones that would bring the "greatest job prospects" or "highest salaries." These majors are almost always in the fields of business and healthcare, or science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM)— and not in arts—leading to an overall devaluation of postsecondary arts education and degrees. Moreover, according to the National Center for Education Statistics 2018 report, data disaggregated by race revealed that a vast majority of students who majored in arts-related fields identified as White (62%) compared to students of color (32%). Reports of institutionalized racism and classism embedded in the admissions process to art programs may contribute to the marginalization of students of color and those from working-class backgrounds.

This study addresses the disparities in K-20 arts education and careers by examining the educational and professional narratives of students of color majoring in arts. The study aims

to highlight the ways in which students of color successfully navigate the arts by establishing a strong self-identity that helps them recognize valuable opportunities for educational and career advancement. More importantly, the study also addresses the role those oppressive systems, such as racism, play within the educational and professional pathways of aspiring artists of color.

Dedication

To my mother and first teacher, Teresita Peralta Mamaril.

Acknowledgements

Three years ago, I made the painful decision to abandon my approved dissertation proposal to embark on a new journey. It was scary. But my PhD journey had taken a series of starts and stops, and I needed to make the change. For most of my school years, I've fluctuated from humanities to social science, skirting around the arts, wading in the shallow end of creativity, but never fully diving in. But with less and less value placed on arts, humanities, or anything that will not yield in a well-paid STEM job, I felt that my "marginal" interests could no longer remain on the periphery of my own life. Fortunately, I was not alone, and my support network rallied around me.

It's reassuring to know that I've always been surrounded by artists. My mom is a dancer, and she is the heart and soul of this dissertation. My sister, now a high school counselor, followed in our mom's footsteps. To this day, she continues to bring the gift of dance to her students through her school's Polynesian Dance Company. My youngest sister and brother, though still in the beginnings of career journeys, are two of the most creative people I know. My family members are my biggest cheerleaders.

My dearest friends (and chosen family) are also talented visual artists, poets, storytellers, and musicians. Jacob, Julie, Cheryl, Jennifer, Joanne, Brandy, and Robin have been instrumental in keeping me motivated and inspired. And George, who will always have my friendship, stood by me throughout this adventure.

I'm also a part of an amazing research sisterhood. Juanita, Christine, Anais, and Dorothy have been my lifeline. They have been there for me when I was ready to give up. And their approach to research, writing, and synthesizing literature and data is academic artistry at its finest.

I've also been encouraged by my thesis advisees, whose own research and passions inspired me to finish, even when all I wanted to do was give up. They held me up to a higher standard than I had for myself.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

A search of news related to arts education in the mainstream media reveals increasing budget cuts resulting in the loss of resources, teachers, or cuts in whole programs (Emma, 2019; Hambeck, 2016; Mahnken, 2017). Arts education seems to have been devalued over the years, compared to traditional academic disciplines like math or science (See & Kokotsaki, 2016). Yet, educators and researchers alike consistently have shown the value of arts in helping foster greater creativity and innovative thought (Robelen, 2011). For example, a study by Winner and Hetland (2008) found that arts programs often teach critical thinking skills that may not be found in other disciplines. These skills include "visual-spatial abilities, reflection, self-criticism, and the willingness to experiment and learn from mistakes" (Winner & Hetland, 2008, p. 29). Such creative thinking processes are important not only to self-development, but to the development of future innovators throughout many industries including the arts, science and technology, healthcare, business, and athletics.

Although the overall amount of baccalaureate degrees awarded has increased over the years (1,485,242 in 2005-06 to 1,894,934 in 2014-15), the proportion of students pursuing arts related majors upon entering postsecondary institutions are decreasing. According to the most recent available data, in 2005-06 5.6% of all baccalaureate degrees conferred were in the visual and performing arts, and in 2014-15 that percentage dropped to 5.0% (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016). The decrease in proportion of arts students compared with other majors is unsurprising as media outlets like the U.S. News & World Report regularly highlight the top majors for students to pursue as the ones that would bring the "greatest job prospects" or "highest salaries"—these majors are almost always in the field of business, healthcare, or science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) and not in arts (Colino, 2018; Somers & Moody, 2019). The effect has been the overall devaluation and negative perception of post-secondary arts education and degrees compared to STEM-related degrees (White, 2016). Moreover, data disaggregated by race reveal that a vast majority of students who majored in

arts-related fields identified as White (62%) compared to students of color (32%)[1] (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). Minoritized students, particularly students of color from working class backgrounds, also reported feeling rejected or out of place in arts due to a "deeply embedded, institutionalized class and ethnically biased notion of a highly idealized student against whom they measure applicants" (Newman, 2009). Given these issues, what would drive a student, particularly a student of color, to commit to a field that appears to have little support for them and limited job prospects?

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to address disparities in K-20 arts education and professions by examining and constructing narratives of students of color majoring in the arts through the theoretical lenses of self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2008, 2014) and planned happenstance (Mitchell, Levin, & Krumboltz, 1999). Successfully navigating educational pathways may include learning to recognize opportunities based on a strong foundation of self-identity. Having a strong internal foundation and ability to recognize both planned and unplanned opportunities is particularly important in the arts field because supportive resources and pathways to success may not always be as clearly delineated as they are perceived in "traditional career-oriented" fields like business, healthcare, or STEM.

Research Questions

The research questions guiding this study are rooted in the theories of self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2007, 2008, 2014) and planned happenstance (Mitchell et al., 1999). Drawing from student development literature, self-authorship is a meaning-making process by which a person establishes her, his, or their internal foundation of beliefs, values, and loyalties (Baxter Magolda & King, 2007; Kegan, 1994). Planned happenstance is a career development concept that recognizes the role of chance opportunities and the skills required to capitalize on those opportunities in an individual's career planning process. Together, self-authorship and planned

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[1] The remaining 6% were identified as non-resident students.

happenstance may provide insight into the academic and career trajectories of students of color majoring in arts. The research questions are as follows:

1) What is the role of self-authorship in helping students of color majoring in arts advance their educational and career trajectory?

    a. In what ways do students of color majoring in arts exhibit self-authorship?

    b. How do they enact self-authorship with respect to educational and career trajectories?

2) What is the role of planned happenstance in helping students of color majoring in arts advance their educational and career trajectory?

    a. How do students of color perceive planned and unplanned events that may impact their major choice and career decision making?

    b. What do they believe help or hinder their ability to take advantage of opportunities?

Theoretical Rationale

This study utilized self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2007, 2008, 2014), planned happenstance (Mitchell et al., 1999), and critical race theory (CRT) to explore the educational and career trajectories of students of color majoring in arts. Specifically, self-authorship and planned happenstance allowed me to examine how students develop cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal competencies to navigate challenges and opportunities on their educational and career path. These two frameworks focused on individual student development. Therefore, applying a critical lens using CRT ensured that the role of institutional structures and systemic oppression were not lost in the analysis of their experiences.

Self-Authorship

Baxter Magolda defines self-authorship as "the internal capacity to define one's beliefs, identity, and social relationships (Baxter Magolda, 2008, p. 269). Self-authorship occurs within

the intersection of three dimensions: 1) the cognitive[2] dimension focuses on meaning making

and the understanding of self, 2) the interpersonal dimension focuses on how the individual

sees oneself in relation to others, and 3) the intrapersonal dimension focuses on the ability to

listen and learn from others without losing oneself (King & Baxter Magolda, 2004; L. D. Patton et

al., 2016). When applying self-authorship to educational and career development, self-

authorship provides the individual with a strong sense of self that enables one to navigate

societal expectations and others' perspectives of career success. Self-authorship may also

provide the needed confidence to adapt to challenges.

The four phases to developing self-authorship describes an individual's movement from

having one's identity defined by external factors to establishing an internal definition of self (L.

D. Patton et al., 2016). Movement through the phases reflects the development of a better

sense of self and clearer direction for personal and professional goals.

1) Following the Formulas. In this phase, an external authority (e.g., parents, teachers,

mentors, peers, etc.) decides the educational and/or career path that a student

should follow. Students will typically not assert their own identities, allowing others to

define their sense of self. Career decisions and planning are based on others'

expectations, and the student is often focused on identifying what is perceived to be

the "right path" or the best "formula for success" (L. D. Patton et al., 2016).

2) Crossroads. As students enter the crossroads phase, they may experience conflicts

between previous plans set by others and their own burgeoning interests and

desires. This phase may be marked by an increased sense of self and questioning of

current realities. Students in the crossroads may move towards "a clearer sense of

direction and more self-confidence" (L. D. Patton et al., 2016, p. 367).

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[2] Here Baxter Magolda focuses more on the idea of meaning making and epistemology when referring to the term cognitive rather than a psychological process (King & Baxter Magolda, 2004)

3) Becoming the author of one's life. Emerging from Crossroads with a clearer sense of self, individuals are able to make their own choices and to stand by those decisions. They also have greater self-awareness in relation to others and affirm that any commitment they make must honor both the self and others (L. D. Patton et al., 2016). This phase is marked by deep self-reflection and the establishment of a stronger self-concept.

4) Internal foundation. When individuals reach this fourth phase, they have developed a greater sense of who they are, established a strong internal belief system, and gained a deepened understanding of "the mutuality of their relationships" (L. D. Patton et al., 2016, p. 368). In other words, by achieving self-authorship, the individual is able to integrate the cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal dimensions of self. Self-authorship allows a person to simultaneous recognize the role of external influences without getting lost in other people's plans and decisions.

Baxter Magolda contends that while one may begin the journey towards self-authorship during the college years, college does not always support students' development of self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2008; L. D. Patton et al., 2016). In fact, self-authorship typically becomes solidified in a person's 30s after entering a profession (Baxter Magolda, 2008). Baxter Magolda argues that post-secondary institutions do not provide students with the opportunity to experience challenges to their sense of self; instead they are provided with various plans and options that lead to success. This prescribed process may deny students the opportunity to develop self-authored ways of knowing (Pizzolato, 2003). However, Baxter Magolda's research sample was primarily White students and from the same selective, public, midwestern institution; her study did not take into account differences in major and/or career goals. Therefore, their experiences may not be generalizable to all students. Yet, self-authorship may still provide a useful framework for understanding the experiences of marginalized students as long as researchers and practitioners keep in mind that their path may look different from those

in Baxter Magolda's original studies (Abes & Jones, 2004; Pizzolato, 2003; Torres & Hernandez, 2007).

Planned Happenstance

Planned happenstance (Mitchell et al., 1999) developed partially from Krumboltz's (1979) social learning theory of career decision making. In the social learning theory of career decision making, Krumboltz posited that career planning, counseling, and decision making should not be considered a one-time occurrence, but rather it is an ongoing learning process. Through this process, an individual develops the skills, beliefs, values, habits, and personal attributes to be responsive to life's challenges and opportunities. In this situation, a student who has not chosen a major or a career path is not someone who is indecisive. Instead, this person should be viewed as someone who is open-minded to multiple career possibilities. Planned happenstance builds upon this theory by noting that the role of career counselors also includes helping students capitalize on various planned and unplanned opportunities during their career decision making (Mitchell et al., 1999).

Planned happenstance includes two key concepts: "(a) Exploration generates chance opportunities for increasing quality of life, and (b) skills enable people to seize opportunities" (Mitchell et al., 1999, p. 18). In other words, although the theory highlights "chance opportunities," career development is not based on luck. While there may be unplanned opportunities that create career options, planned happenstance recognizes "that for career possibilities to be realized, people must take action" (Mitchell et al., 1999, p. 18). In order to maximize a student's ability to take advantage of both planned and unplanned events, Mitchell, Levin, and Krumboltz (1999) recommend the development of five key skills:

1. Curiosity: exploring new learning opportunities
2. Persistence: exerting effort despite setbacks
3. Flexibility: changing attitudes and circumstances
4. Optimism: viewing new opportunities as possible and attainable

5. RiskTaking [*sic*]: taking action in the face of uncertain outcomes (Mitchell et al.,

    1999, p. 18)

Career counselors and educators can help students develop these skills that will enable them to

recognize opportunities that can advance their educational, career, and life goals.

Through planned happenstance, any opportunity, including those that some may

perceive as occurring by chance, provides a learning experience and contains lessons for future

actions. By assessing past successes, students are taught to see how they can overcome

potential roadblocks to action. Researchers applying planned happenstance and social learning

theory of career decision-making critique one of the common misconceptions of traditional

career counseling: that it is a "rational process of 'true reasoning'" without room for chance

encounters (Krumboltz, 1998, p. 391). Yet, within the planned happenstance framework is the

belief that such encounters do not occur by luck. Rather, the theory emphasizes the learning

process, flexibility, and open-mindedness to help students recognize various career and life

possibilities. Within planned happenstance students are not limited by the mindset of

characteristic matching (e.g., matching individual characteristics to specific occupations),

instead they are taught to focus on a fluid process of exploration in educational and professional

development.

Integrating Self-Authorship and Planned Happenstance

Researchers have noted that having a strong "sense of personal meaning and social

mattering through their identity" can help students develop the curiosity to recognize the career

advantages of planned and unplanned events (Nix et al., 2015; Peila-Shuster, 2016, p. 64).

Further, Peila-Shuster (2016) posits that having a "deepened sense of identity" can help

students decide whether or not to pursue different possibilities (p. 64). By integrating these two

concepts, I examined how self-authorship helped to foster a sense of self that allows students to

enact planned happenstance to pursue different academic and career trajectories.

As previously mentioned, self-authorship occurs at the intersection of cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal dimensions (Baxter Magolda, 2008). Through the interactions of understanding the self (cognitive), relating to others (interpersonal), and how they view the self in relation to others (intrapersonal) a student may be able to build the five key skills that support planned happenstance: curiosity, persistence, flexibility, optimism, and risk taking (Baxter Magolda, 2007; Mitchell et al., 1999). For example, in one study of self-authorship, one participant described her process of developing self-authorship as enabling her to be open to "emotional risks" and to develop the flexibility to acknowledge the impact of different events that allowed her to navigate challenges (Baxter Magolda, 2008, p. 278). This process allowed the participant to move forward in her self-development and career trajectory.

The process of simultaneously developing self-authorship and planned happenstance to support academic and career pathways can be visualized as follows:
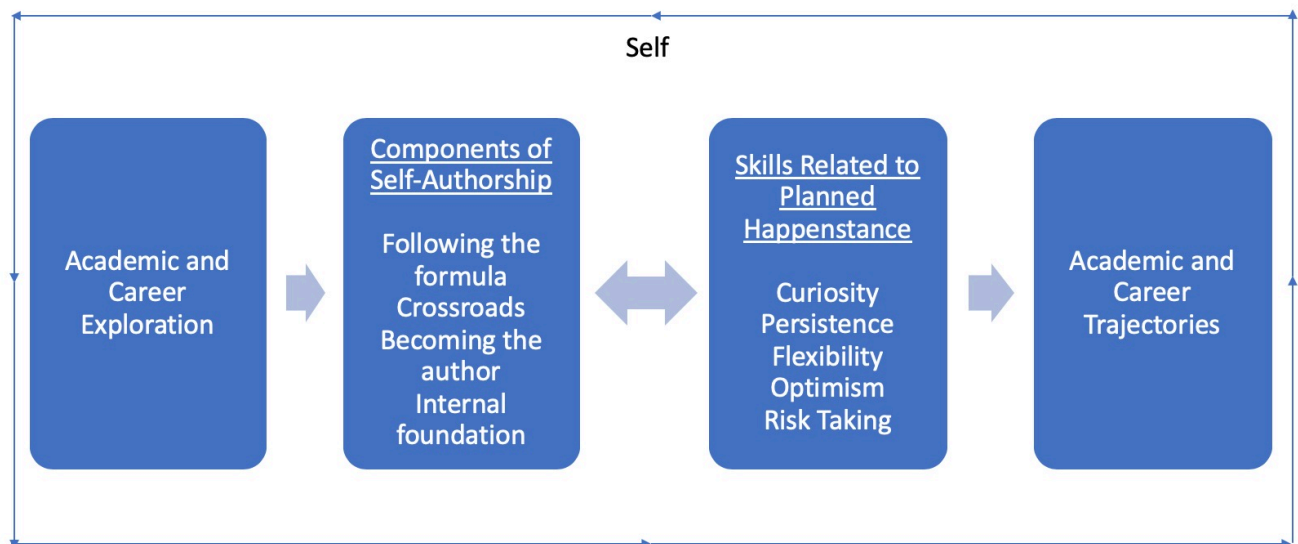
Figure 1 Integrating Self-Authorship and Planned Happenstance.

This figure represents the integration of self-authorship and planned happenstance, based on the works of Baxter Magolda (2007, 2008, 2014) and Mitchell, Levin, and Krumboltz (1999) to advance academic and career trajectories.

Applying a Critical Lens to Self-Authorship and Planned Happenstance

Baxter Magolda's theory of self-authorship has been embraced in student development research and practice because it considers students holistically, recognizes that development is integrated across domains, and is rooted in a constructivist-developmental theory (Abes & Hernández, 2016). However, research on the applicability of self-authorship on marginalized populations such as students of color (Pizzolato, 2005, 2007a; Torres & Hernandez, 2007) or students from LGBTQ+ communities (Abes & Jones, 2004) often focused "on individuals more so than the oppressive contexts in which individuals are situated" (Abes & Hernandez, 2016, p. 99). Results from research on self-authorship involving marginalized populations has led to critiques that the theory is grounded in individualism and does not challenge oppressive systems. While recognizing the role of individual agency in student development is important, as an epistemological approach self-authorship needs to be inclusive of multiple ways of knowing and validate knowledge developed through community building and relational processes (Abes & Hernández, 2016).

Moreover, research on marginalized student populations, such as students of color or LGBTQ+ identified students, found that they tended to develop a sense of self-authorship much sooner. Abes and Hernández (2016) stated that "oppressive contexts require marginalized students to develop an awareness of multiple perspectives and see oneself as knower" (p. 102). For example, in a study of Latino students and self-authorship, Torres and Hernández (2007) found that recognizing and understanding racism plays a strong role in the development of Latino students' self-authorship. Therefore, environmental factors such as experiencing marginalization may actually advance the development of self-authorship during the college years. Based on these findings, it is important to further understand the role of self-authorship among marginalized populations such as students of color.

Similar to critiques of self-authorship, some applications of planned happenstance may place sole responsibility for opportunities on the individual without recognition of the role those

oppressive systems, such as racism, play in availability and access to planned and unplanned events. Currently, there are limited studies specifically on planned happenstance and experiences of undergraduate students of color. While there are some studies that address the application of planned happenstance (as well as later iteration Happenstance Learning Theory) in international contexts (e.g., Korea, Lithuania, Malaysia), these articles do not address the social context of race that is salient to the educational experiences of students of color in the U.S. (Kindsiko & Baruch, 2019; J. H. Lee et al., 2017; Valickas et al., 2019).

However, limited studies have recognized the role of structural barriers in the application of planned happenstance in the career development of students. Hirschi (2010) affirms the importance of "integrat[ing] career preparation and chance events in theory and practice" particularly in understanding the experiences of students from marginalized communities (p. 39). In his study of school-to-work transition among Swiss students in vocational education and high schools, he found that chance events were perceived to play a stronger role in school-to-work transitions among those identified as "structurally handicapped" such as students from immigrant backgrounds or from schools with only basic scholastic environments (Hirschi, 2010, p. 46). He suggested that students from underprivileged backgrounds may perceive having less control over career development due to "environmental, social, and structural restrictions and discriminations" (Hirschi, 2010, p. 46). Based on this finding, students could be encouraged to recognize planned and unplanned encounters as a way of countering structural barriers.

Based on these critiques, this study utilized CRT to take into account the defining role of different systems of oppression in the experiences of students of color as they traverse educational and career pathways in the arts. These social, historical, and/or political contexts recognize the difficulties associated with the development of self in marginalized spaces where students of color may experience challenges to their expression of self, based on unequal representations of power (Abes & Hernández, 2016). This intentional acknowledgment of

systems of oppression in self-development may allow students of color to more confidently recognize advantageous opportunities in their academic and career trajectories.

Originating from the legal field, CRT was used to challenge the perception of race-neutrality and objectivity in laws and practices of the United States (Bernal, 2002; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 1998). Other dominant ideologies rooted in racism, such as colorblindness and meritocracy, are shown to disadvantage minoritized and marginalized communities in favor of the White ruling class. Originally, CRT operated under five key tenets (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017):

1. The permanence and pervasiveness of racism: an explicit acknowledgement that racism is embedded in American culture, structures, and legal codes.

2. Whiteness as property and privilege: recognition of how the history of race and racism in the United States has led to the legal alignment of "whiteness" with having the same privileges and benefits of those holding other types of property (e.g., entitlement to land possession or voting rights).

3. Interest-convergence: in a system where Whites uphold decision-making power, the laws, policies, or programs aimed at benefiting communities of color will only be passed if they benefit Whites as well (e.g., affirmative action).

4. Intersectionality: the intentional lens that recognized that racism does not operate in a vacuum, but intersects with classism, sexism, heterosexism, and other systems of oppression to shape collective societal and individual experiences.

5. Counter-storytelling: the acknowledgment that oppressed and marginalized populations have valid stories and knowledge to contribute that can counter dominant narratives on power and privilege.

CRT later found its way into educational research as a framework for analyzing and challenging the ways that educational systems, policies, and practices uphold dominant paradigms on race, class, gender, sexuality, and other social systems that may operate to

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further disadvantage students of color. Solórzano and colleagues (Solórzano et al., 2000; Solórzano & Villalpando, 1998; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) later outlined five tenets that specifically applied in an educational research context:

1. Challenging dominant paradigms by critiquing liberal ideologies such as colorblindness and meritocracy. This approach exposes deficit-informed practices and research, and instead it highlights the importance of culturally and linguistically relevant ways of knowing.

2. Centering race and its intersectionality with other forms of subordination at the heart of educational research.

3. Emphasizing the role and importance of experiential knowledge as a valid and strengths-based approach to data collection, counter storytelling, and knowledge building.

4. The importance of transdisciplinary approaches in enabling researchers to draw from various disciplines such as ethnic studies or women's studies to open up new methodological, pedagogical, and epistemological approaches.

5. Commitment to social justice and the legacy of resistance to systems of oppression.

Based on these defining elements, CRT emerges as a key to analyzing the identity and career development of students of color from diverse intersectional backgrounds. CRT also allows researchers to acknowledge the limitations of current student and career development theories in understanding the impact of systems of oppression on the identity development of students of color across disciplines.

This integration of self-authorship and planned happenstance with critical race theory is represented as follows:
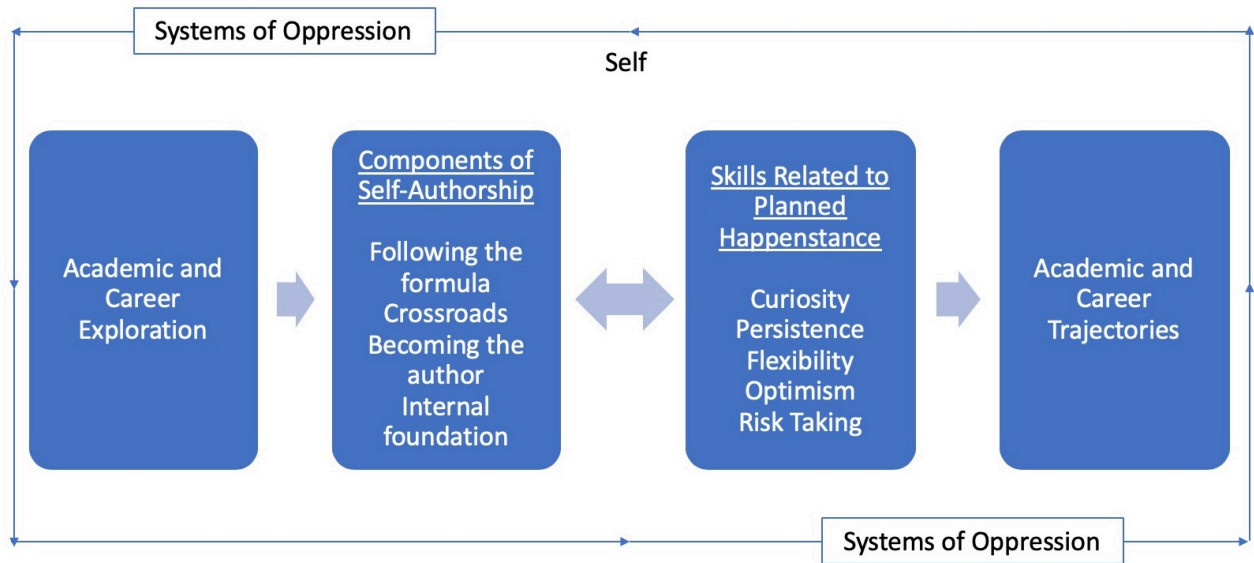
Figure 2 A Personal and Career Identity Development Model for Students of Color (Choe, 2021).

This figure represents the application of a critical lens to the integrated framework of self-authorship and planned happenstance. In this framework, academic and career exploration triggers the simultaneous process of self-authorship and planned happenstance, which continually inform each other. As a student develops self-authorship and enacts planned happenstance, she, he, or they advance along the academic and career trajectory. Instrumental to this process is the application of a critical lens informed by Critical Race Theory that recognizes the role of systems of oppression such as racism, in the process of integrating self-authorship and planned happenstance (Bernal, 2002; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Solórzano et al., 2000). This new framework is informed by the works of Baxter Magolda (2007, 2008, 2014), Mitchell, Levin, and Krumboltz (1999), and Abes and Hernández (2016).

Background on Challenges to Arts Higher Education and Work

While there are numerous definitions and labels for individual arts practices, a broad definition of arts include, but are not limited to "visual arts, music, drama, creative writing, film, television, and the emerging technological arts" (Darby & Catterall, 1994, p. 299). Arts in all its forms has been argued as integral to educational, social, and cultural growth, as well as to the promotion of achievement, engagement, and persistence in students (Darby & Catterall, 1994). Post-secondary education in the arts, specifically the acquisition of the Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) degree, teaches students "foundational competencies, knowledge, and skills for MFA studies or [professional] practice in a specific arts discipline" (White, 2016, p. 56). Other reasons

for pursuing an arts degree may include a desire for training from specific professional artists, having one's artistic identity and talent affirmed and validated, to meet licensure requirements for teaching or practice, to have access to a social and professional network of artists, and many others. Unfortunately, negative public perception of the utility of arts degrees in the competitive job market may deter students and their families from wanting to pursue the arts, even if there is an internal motivation or passion for the field.

Another challenge facing aspiring arts students in their pursuit of artistic careers is the lack of public understanding of who artists are in the workplace and how they should be compensated (Bain, 2005). Without a clear vision of the role of artists in the workplace, their labor "tends to remain largely undervalued, and predominantly subsidized by the artists themselves through secondary employment in other occupations" (Bain, 2005, p. 26). Knowing that adequately compensated jobs in arts may be difficult to obtain may lead some parents to discourage their college-going children from pursuing an arts degree. Not surprisingly, based on this continued lack of public understanding of artistic professions, there have been few studies in recent years that have focused on the educational and career development of art students (Alper & Wassall, 2006; Bennett, 2009; Carey, 2015; Daniel, 2010; White, 2016). In fact, many of these studies are not even based in the United States, which may affirm the continued devaluation of the arts in the US.

Significance of the Study

Research on career development primarily focuses on the impact of career choice. Although they come from different orientations, career theorists primarily look at what combination of individual characteristics or personal traits lead a person to choose a career that is perceived to be most appropriate for them (Holland, 1997; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994; Sharf, 1997; Super, 1990). These matching variables may be based on internal and/or external factors that are influenced by a person's perception of self and current life circumstances (Super, 1990). Major career development theories also focus on the importance of having

knowledge of various careers and fields (Bledsoe & Owens, 2014). When applied in an advising or counseling setting, career development becomes a deliberate process of using trait matching and familiarity with known careers to identify achievable milestones that lead a student to the ultimate professional career goal. However, individuals from underrepresented communities or immigrant groups may not be aware of the breadth of career options available to them, especially if they did not have previous exposure to those careers. For example, because Filipino Americans are often stereotyped into healthcare careers, they may have limited knowledge of other career choices, such as those related to arts.

Moreover, these theories primarily emphasize the individual's role in the career decision-making process and do not take into account the collectivist principles and ways of knowing held by many communities of color (Leong, 1997; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Smith, 1999). Leong also criticized the lack of cultural validity in traditional career choices. Other critics argued that cultural and environmental contexts, in addition to individual agency, must be taken into account when analyzing people's career decision-making process (Bingham & Ward, 1997; Leong, 1997; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). For instance, while external motivations such as earnings potential may influence career choices, studies on students of color emphasize family or parental influence as a primary factor in choosing career and educational paths (Fisher & Padmawidjaja, 1999; Rivera et al., 2007; Song & Glick, 2004; Tang et al., 1999). Lastly, many career and student development theories do not explicitly recognize the impact of structural systems of oppression in the academic and career experiences of undergraduates. Instead, environmental and contextual factors such as race, gender, or class are often used as descriptive variables of individuals without any further analysis (Abes & Hernández, 2016; Brown, 2002; Wilson & Hutchison, 2014).

Therefore, this study will contribute to the limited research on the educational and career trajectories of students of color majoring in arts. Understanding their needs may help encourage more students of color to pursue artistic professions. Additionally, this study may broaden the

application of student development theories (i.e., self-authorship) and career theories (i.e., planned happenstance) to understanding the role of systems oppression, such as racism, in the experiences of students of color in arts. Ultimately, this study may provide valuable information to future career counselors, educators, and parents on how to best advise aspiring artists of color.

Researcher Positionality

The arts have been a part of my life for as far back as I can remember. I was fortunate to have a robust arts program integrated into my elementary school education. I was exposed to opera, dance, musical theater, painting, and woodblock printing. Growing up on a U.S. military base in Japan, comics (in the form of manga) and animation (in the form of anime) were also regular parts of my budding arts aesthetic. I developed a deep love of reading and storytelling through these various mediums.

When I moved to California at the end of sixth grade, these opportunities diminished as schools emphasized traditional academic subjects such as reading, writing, and arithmetic. Fortunately, my high school housed the School for Creative and Performing Arts (SCPA). Though I was not officially part of the program, I was able to take advantage of some art and performance classes in my limited elective schedule. I, myself, had been admitted to the college preparatory magnet program rather than SCPA. Because my high school housed these two magnet programs, I happily maintained one foot in the artistic world that I loved. However, aside from working actors in SCPA, many of my peers and I did not believe that the arts could be a viable career path. Additionally, specific career guidance into arts professions were not readily available outside of going to an art school. SCPA students that were interested in also exploring college goals seemed like they were discouraged from artistic pursuits in favor of traditional academic routes.

As an undergrad, I was fortunate to discover the interdisciplinary field of Asian American Studies. Through the major, I was able to meld my interests in literary critique, theater arts, social welfare, and nonprofit work. Asian American Studies showed me where arts, humanities, social sciences, and critical theories intersected. I developed a scholarly interest in academic and career pathways to success for students of color and the impact of sociocultural, historical, and political contexts on their experiences. My interdisciplinary interests and training forged by academic identity and helped me maintain the value of arts as part of my foundational core.

Even as I pursue a professional trajectory in academia, I continue to foster my creative writing and maintain relationships with my community of artists. From the experiences of my artistic peers, I observed that success in the arts was not dependent on a 'god-given' innate talent or aptitude, though many were always well praised for their "natural abilities." Rather, it was their consistent hard work and strong belief in self that enabled them to improve and succeed. These artists also developed key friendships and professional relationships along the way that helped them access, sometimes unexpected, opportunities. Additionally, many exhibited resilience as they encountered personal and professional challenges, such as instances of discrimination, on their chosen career path. I found myself fascinated by their stories of how they navigated both challenges and opportunities to their careers, which led me to develop this study.

Definition of Terms

Art-related fields and/or majors	Any field or major related to creative, performing, or literary arts. Includes, but not limited to: crafts/craft design, folk art and artisanry; dance; design and applied arts; drama/theater arts and stagecraft; film/video and photographic arts; fine and studio art; music; arts, entertainment, and media management; community/environmental/socially-engaged art; creative

	placemaking; arts education; literary arts; media arts; museums; or other forms of visual, performing, or creative arts (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.; National Endowment for the Arts, n.d.).
Graduating senior	A postsecondary student in their final year of study leading to a baccalaureate degree (e.g., BA or BFA).
Career decision-making	The process by which an individual chooses a career or career path based on information about self, career environments, available career alternatives, and other internal or external factors (Chen & Zhou, 2018).
Career development	Though definitions of career development differ, a common perspective is that it is a lifelong process of constructing a career identity for the purposes of forging a satisfying personal and professional life (Savickas, 2002; Super, 1980).
Identity	Defined as "a self-structure—an internal, self-constructed, dynamic organization of drives, abilities, beliefs, and individual history" (Marcia, 1980, p. 159).
Artist identity	The way that a person conceptualizes herself or himself as an artist. Based on the "artistic self-concept," which is defined as "identification as an artist" and exhibiting "professional aspirations" in the field of arts (Burleson et al., 2005, p. 114).
Career identity	Meijers defines career identity as the way an individual characterizes herself, himself, or themselves as related to work

	and career based on personal motivations, values, and meanings (as cited by Bridgstock, 2013).

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Identifying literature to support this study was a challenging process. Few studies examined the combination of college students of color, arts, and career development that are emphasized in this study. Therefore, this literature review focuses on key concepts that touch on the following areas: 1) research on art students and artistic development and 2) career development, history, theories, identity, and barriers. By dividing the literature review into these two main sections, I am able to provide background on what it means for students of color in the arts to embark on the journey of self-authorship and to enact planned happenstance as part of their developmental process.

Research on Art Students and Artistic Development

An initial search on college art students of color and career development yielded almost no studies. In fact, only one study, a dissertation on the career development of Asian American female visual artists, appeared in searches (S. Lee, 2013). Though the study did focus on career development of artists of color (specifically Asian Americans), the participants were recent college graduates identified as being in the early career phase of their professions. There was also a qualitative dissertation on the career decision-making experiences of college students in the visual arts; however, this study did not include analyses specific to race or ethnicity (Cooley, 2007). The researcher of that study did highlight that the sample of eight participants was ethnically diverse, and she recommended that future studies explore the possible influence of ethnicity and gender in relation to career decision-making.

Other studies involving art students focused on three primary areas: 1) personality, abilities, and interests of art students, 2) tracing overall artistic development, and 3) developing

an "artist" identity. This section covers the key literature in these three areas and concludes by reiterating the rationale for focusing a study specifically on students of color majoring in arts.

Personality, Abilities, and Interests of Art Students

Early studies on art majors and vocations focused on identifying the relationship between the psychological factors of abilities, vocational interests, and personality variables using quantitative measures (Lowman et al., 1985). In fact, the primary concern of early academic and career studies (from 1945 through the 1980s) was to match abilities and interests to predict vocational outcomes (Bachtold, 1973; Barrett, 1945; Barton & Cattell, 1972; Lowman et al., 1985). Researchers in these early studies used a series of battery tests to measure abilities and match them to interests and/or skills. The most common instruments used to measure artistic ability were the Meier's Test of Art Judgment (Meier, 1940) and the Seashore Measures of Musical Talent (Seashore et al., 1956). A key goal of many of the studies was to ascertain whether personality profiles of successful professionals in the field would match their younger counterparts in college (Bachtold, 1973; Barrett, 1945; Barton & Cattell, 1972). With this approach, researchers hoped to identify potentially successful students to guide into corresponding majors. For example, Bachtold (1973) found that achievement-oriented college women (in psychology, science, art, and English) showed many of the characteristics that distinguished high performing professional women in their fields. Despite this finding, researchers could not predict how well students would actually do in the field or if they would enter the profession at all. These studies merely showed a match in characteristics between students and professionals. Therefore, these studies did very little in terms of identifying and guiding potential professionals into specific fields.

Interestingly, none of these early studies focused specifically on arts majors, but rather used the arts as a means of comparison to the actual population of interest such as psychology students or college students overall. This lack of focus on art students made it difficult to get a sense of the specific abilities, interests, or personalities these studies may have attributed to

arts students. Additionally, all the studies that included art majors in the sample tended to focus primarily on women's educational and vocational interests. Some of the studies claimed that the focus on women was due to the fact that there were limited studies on the vocational interests of women (Bachtold, 1973; Barrett, 1945; Barton & Cattell, 1972), and one study specifically noted that "sex constitutes a major source of variability in abilities" (Lowman et al., 1985, p. 301). However, without corresponding research that included men's experiences in art, it was difficult to assess whether women's experiences in art were unique or representative of artists overall. Race was also not specified in these studies, which may indicate that the studies were not representative of a diverse sample/population. Based on the time frame of when these studies were conducted, it may be assumed that all or the majority of the participants were White women. Therefore, it could not be assessed if young female students of color would have matched the so-called characteristics of successful women in their fields.

Nearly 75 years later, researchers are still trying to predict the personality traits that relate to artistic interests and abilities. From the 1990s to present day, studies on artists and art students continue to examine the relationship between personality, cognitive styles, and artistic aptitude or abilities (Afhami & Mohammadi-Zarghan, 2018; Chamberlain et al., 2015; Feist, 1991, 1998; Fergusson, 1992; Furnham et al., 2011; Furnham & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2004; Haller & Courvoisier, 2010; McManus et al., 2010; Myszkowski et al., 2014). Researchers also continue to make comparisons between domains such as the Haller and Courvoisier (2010) study comparing visual art students, music students, and psychology students. A search of "art" and "art students" from the 1990s to the present also tended to bias in favor of visual arts, specifically in the areas of painting or drawing (Chamberlain et al., 2015; McManus et al., 2010; Myszkowski et al., 2014; Zimmerman, 2006). Interestingly, many of these studies were located outside of the United States (Afhami & Mohammadi-Zarghan, 2018; Chamberlain et al., 2015; Furnham & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2004; Haller & Courvoisier, 2010; McManus et al., 2010;

Myszkowski et al., 2014), affirming the lack of attention paid to art students in American research studies.

Tracing Artistic Development

The other type of research on artists stemmed from psychological studies of creativity development, as well as studies on gifted and talented youth. Key among these studies was the goal of understanding the "creative child." Some researchers have connected the idea of an exceptionally creative child with giftedness (Siegler & Kotovsky, 1992; Simonton, 1999a). Studies conducted by these researchers primarily focused on identifying the ways that early and later creative productivity may predict accomplishments and eminence in artistic talent domains (Cassandro & Simonton, 2010; Simonton, 1999b; Sternberg, Jarvin, & Grigorenko, 2011; Subotnik & Jarvin, 2005). They also examined the environmental influences on development including education, the role of family, mentors, and peers, and overall skills building. While these studies are not specifically about identity and career development, creativity development is a closely related concept.

Educational Influences on Artistic Development

The role of teachers and curriculum has a substantial influence on students' learning and development. Supervised practice under the guidance of experienced, qualified experts and with the support of families during early and later school years was found to be particularly important (Bloom, 1985a; Sloboda et al., 1996). Studies of high-achieving teenagers and eminent individuals found that the ideal teacher is not only able to disseminate information, but is also an expert in the field (Bloom, 1985a; Csikszentmihalyi et al., 1993). Unfortunately, some researchers have noted that most teachers are not active practitioners and rarely consider a child's long-term professional development in the specific talent field (Bloom & Sosniak, 1981). Teachers can play an invaluable role in talent development by further introducing students to resources and activities related to the domain. For art students, in particular, teachers may

provide not only formal instruction in the talent domain but exposure to galleries or the art scene (Bloom, 1985a). These are all part of activities that support artistic development.

Regrettably, quality arts instruction is often not available in the early years of school; in fact, arts education in general has seen a decline over the years (Bloom, 1985a; Freedman, 2010). For example, a study of eminent sculptors found that early learning environment for budding artists was often a mixed experience (Bloom, 1985a). Although art classes were available at the elementary school and some high schools, the quality was questionable. It was not until the later years, during college and graduate school, that sculptors reported receiving quality art training.

The Role of Family, Mentors, and Peers

Studies have also shown that parents may be heavily involved in talent development, especially in the early years, when children spend the majority of their time at home. Supportive parents provide unconditional assistance and often devote vast amounts of their own time, energy, and financial resources to fostering their children's talent (Bloom, 1985a; D. Gould et al., 2002; Witte et al., 2015). In a seminal study of highly successful individuals, Bloom and his research team (1985a) found that home environments of creative individuals were greatly supportive of the arts. Award-winning sculptors described receiving "approval and attention from adults for their own work" (Bloom, 1985a, p. 97). Parents or other relatives also served as early role models or informal teachers within the talent domain.

As the child ages, mentors (both formal and informal) may take on a greater role in their development (Allen et al., 2006; Chao et al., 1992; Noe, 1988). Formal mentoring programs for gifted and talented students can also provide access to critical career development information, which can greatly help with exploration of opportunities in the talent domain (Subotnik, Edmiston, Cook, & Ross, 2010). For example, a study of the visual artist Jon Allen highlighted the influence of mentors on his cognitive, artistic, and social emotional development (Ambrose

et al., 1994). Studies like the one on Jon Allen may also provide undergraduate students with greater insight to educational and career development of professional artists.

Creativity and talent development literature also highlight the important role of peers in facilitating commitment and success in specific talent domains (Kamin et al., 2007; S.-Y. Lee, 2002; Oreck et al., 2000; Patrick et al., 1999). While peers typically play more influential roles during adolescence, artists found that peers took on increasing importance in the later years as they found others who were also interested in art. Sculptors in one study reported that fellow art students, especially in graduate school, provided friendly competition and pushed them to do their best work (Bloom, 1985a). Unfortunately, some young artists in the early stages of their talent development, particularly urban youth in underserved communities, may report a lack of peer support or social stigma against their talent (Oreck et al., 2000). Finding like-minded peers in their later years may help to reinforce students' identities as artists and serve as sources of comfort and inspiration.

Skills Building

Because of the strong emphasis on later creative achievement in creativity and talent development, many studies focus heavily on the concept of investing time as a way to build skills. Studies of highly accomplished individuals often identify the amount of time spent nurturing key skills as a common factor in their path to greatness (Goertzel et al., 2004). For example, acclaimed American dancer Isadora Duncan was said to begin teaching her unique modern dance form at the age of seven, and by 10-years-old, was teaching dance full-time. By her adulthood, Duncan had amassed over 10 years of professional dance and teaching experiencing (Goertzel et al., 2004). This length of time to expertise is not uncommon. Other researchers have found that reaching mastery level in a domain takes an average of 10,000 hours or approximately 10 years (Ericsson & Charness, 1994; Kaufman & Kaufman, 2007). In fact, Kaufman and Kaufman (2007) affirmed the application of the "10-year rule" not only for the attainment of expertise, but also to achieve eminence in a creative domain.

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Though there are a plethora of studies on creativity development and achievement, few of these studies focused on the experiences of college art students (Fergusson, 1992). Some studies on creativity included college students as their sample, but they did not necessarily focus on just art students (Afhami & Mohammadi-Zarghan, 2018; Feist, 1991; Furnham et al., 2011; Furnham & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2004; Haller & Courvoisier, 2010). Nor did these studies on creativity focus specifically on artistic development. There has not been a study on artistic development that include college arts students since the longitudinal study conducted by Getzels & Csikszentmihalyi (1976) in the 1960s and 1970s. This study on creative artistic development looked at identifying potential artists, describing the creative process, and chronicling the lives of art students who became professional artists. However, the Getzels and Csikszentmihalyi did not necessarily address the educational and career decision-making processes and pathways into artistic professions. Therefore, this study will contribute to this gap in the literature.

Developing the "Artists" Identity

A common idea often addressed in research on identity development is self-concept. It is defined as "an organized structure of perceptions of one's characteristics and abilities, perceptions of oneself in relation to others and the environment, and values associated with these perceptions" (Trusty & Oliva, 1994, p. 23). A key component of self-concept is self-esteem, or one's measure of self-worth. Generally, in education, positive perceptions of self-concept and self-esteem are often associated with academic performance, as well as cognitive and affective skills (Trusty & Oliva, 1994). Moreover, enhanced self-concept is just one non-academic and non-artistic outcome of arts education. Other outcomes include cognitive development, language, acquisition, trust and cooperation, empathy, critical thinking ability, and social skills. For marginalized students, the positive relationship between self-concept and arts may also encourage personal self-acceptance, increased self-awareness and awareness of

others, and greater self-expression. These outcomes may serve to enhance or reinforce a student's budding artistic identity.

The "artistic self-concept" is further defined as "identification as an artist" and exhibiting "professional aspirations" (Burleson et al., 2005, p. 114). The act of exploring career options is particularly important during adolescence, which helps to develop artistic career goals. In addition to career exploration, the artistic identity may be developed as a response to comparisons with peers. Burleson, Leach, and Harrington found that social comparisons with highly talented peers can negatively or positively impact artistic self-concept. Students in creative and high-achieving settings may be inspired by their peers, view their peers as being similar to themselves (thereby, reinforcing their own skills and abilities), or feel intimidated by their peers. Ultimately, a student identifies as an artist when she or he purposefully makes a self-investment in a chosen domain (e.g., takes classes or invests in resources), "considers art a central and important part of one's self-concept," and is positively motivated by the chosen domain (Burleson et al., 2005, p. 114).

In addition to the impact of peers on self-concept, early recognition of a child's creative skills (particularly between the ages of one and 14) also influences development of an artistic identity (Albertson, 2011). This recognition may come in the form of "attention and support (either verbal, action or material)" from parents, teachers, as well as peers (Albertson, 2011, p. 48). Other researchers have found that difficult experiences in the early years also seemed to influence how an artists' identity develops (Albertson, 2011; Goertzel et al., 2004). Albertson (2011) speculated that the connection with "pain and art" may be due to the fact that for some students, art served as an outlet and provided a connection to a "sympathetic adult" who could further support them (p. 57). Developing a strong sense of artistic identity may eventually lead the adolescent to continue pursuing a postsecondary education and a career in arts.

Why Study Art Students of Color?

According to the latest available figures (2016-2017 academic year), just over 30% of the 91,262 students who majored in visual and performing arts identified as students of color (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). When disaggregated by race, one can see the full picture of underrepresentation of different racial groups: 8% Black students, 13% Latino students, 7% Asian and Pacific Islander Students, less than 1% Native American or Native Alaskan students, and 4% identified two or more races. An additional 6% of students identified as non-residents (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). Why are these figures important? Why is it important to understand the experiences of students of color majoring in arts?

The lack of visibility of students (and later professionals) of color in the arts impacts the ability to have diverse perspectives embedded into the dominant discourse, typically seen as "masculinist, Eurocentric, White, heteropatriarchical, able-ist, [and] bourgeois" (Boyd Acuff, 2018, p. 201). Furthermore, according to the Patricia Collins, "visibility should not be mistaken for access, equality or empowerment. Rather, all scholars who oppose injustices must be attentive to the political economy of the production and consumption of knowledge itself" (as cited in Boyd Acuff, 2018, p. 202). Scholars and artists alike have called for increased attention paid to the needs of students of color in the arts citing that just because students of color may be present in "White-dominated spaces" does not mean they have equality in voice, representation, or opportunities (Boyd Acuff, 2018, p. 202; El-Amin & Cohen, 2018). Employing critical lenses such as Black Feminist Theory, critical race theory, post-structural and post-colonial theories, indigenous methodologies, and disability justice recognize the systems of oppression that may constrain the educational and professional pathways of students of color (Abes & Hernández, 2016; Boyd Acuff, 2018; El-Amin & Cohen, 2018; Keifer-Boyd et al., 2018; Minthorn & Marsh, 2016; Smith, 1999). Additionally, the common thread among these approaches is the recognition that forms of oppression are intersected.

The challenge of representation and inclusion is also reflected in studies outside of the U.S. context. A study of post-secondary arts programs in the United Kingdom showed "implicit, institutionalized, disciplinary, and racialized perspectives of what counts as legitimate forms of experience and knowledge" (Burke & McManus, 2011, p. 208). For example, a Black female student from a lower-income neighborhood who cites hip-hop as one of her key design influences may not be seen as a serious art student compared to a White male student from an upper-middle class neighborhood who cites contemporary artists and designers who have attained significant critical attention as his inspirations. Racial and class biases have a detrimental impact on admissions of students of color and students from low-income communities into art schools and programs in the U.K. (Burke & McManus, 2011).

This racial, class, and gendered bias in the U.K. art scene is mirrored in some of the experiences of artists and students in the United States. For decades, art and educational researchers have addressed issues of identity, representation, and inclusion primarily through seeking ways of recognizing the contributions of artists of color on the American art landscape (Noriega, 1998). A key critique has been the separation of works by racially or ethnically minoritized individuals (e.g., "African American Art) rather than highlighting the works of artists of color as primary examples of a specific type of art. Exhibits, shows, or collections that label "minority art" as a separate genre miss the opportunity to highlight works of artists of color as legitimate within established genres and mediums such as avant-garde, postmodern, illustration, video games, etc. This sense of alienation may trickle down to the experiences of students of color who may enter art spaces and feel invisible because they do not see artists who represent who they are or their experiences. Unfortunately, rendering communities of color as invisible creates a "distorted narrative about who is and can be" an artist (El-Amin & Cohen, 2018, p. 8). Therefore, fostering a sense of belonging in art education is important because of the historic erasure of people of color in the arts.

Recent studies have begun to tackle the issue of inclusion in classrooms and public spaces (Keifer-Boyd et al., 2018; Minthorn & Marsh, 2016; Ruokonen & Eldridge, 2017; Schroeder-Arce, 2014; White, 2018b). These studies have critiqued both the use of art in educational settings, as well as the role of art education itself. For example, studies have highlighted the use of art (e.g., photography or dance) to address issues of bias within institutions (Minthorn & Marsh, 2016; White, 2018b). Arts-based intervention strategies in anti-bias curriculum created and led by artists of color affirm the importance of including perspectives outside of dominant ideologies. Seeing examples of active professional artists of color may also support the career aspirations of current students of color. Providing these opportunities, along with an intentional effort to support the educational and career advising of students of color in arts may be the first step in addressing inequities in the art world.

<div style="text-align: center;">**Career Development History, Theories, Identity, and Barriers**</div>

While an art student's personal and academic development are key components of establishing career aspirations and goals, it is just as important to understand the processes of career development to better comprehend career pathways into the arts. The second half of the literature review presents a general overview of the history of career development, career development theories, and career identity development. It concludes with background specific to academic and career advising in the arts and a discussion of structural barriers to arts careers.

History of Career Development

Early American vocational theories and practices drew from ideas from social and religious workers with social justice missions of helping underprivileged community members with job placements. Roberts-Martin (2014b) traced this history to Jane Addams, an American activist and social worker, who established settlement houses in the late 1880s to support the social and vocational transition of immigrants and former slaves who were moving to urban centers, such as Chicago, in search of jobs. The settlement houses provided multiple services

including English language classes, high school completion, exposure to American arts and culture, job placement, and other government-supported services.

Frank Parsons, who was a follower of Jane Addams, later coined the term "vocational guidance" and developed his model of identifying occupations and the types of people who match the skills needed to succeed in these jobs. He also examined the ideal personalities suited to particular job types (Roberts-Martin, 2014b; Savickas, 2002). Like Addams, Parsons had an interest in supporting vulnerable populations during the turn of the 20th century. In developing his vocational theory, Parsons was particularly concerned with the experiences of women: "Parsons believed that education of women would influence their children and perpetuate itself generationally and produce quality citizens" (Roberts-Martin, 2014b, p. 8). Parsons's own varied career trajectory[3] and his service mission orientation informed his approach to social service and job placements.

Educators soon joined social and religious workers in providing career guidance. In 1907, Jesse B. Davis, considered by many to be the first school counselor in the United States, began implementing career guidance at the high school where he served as principal (Roberts-Martin, 2014b). He encouraged the use of English composition assignments as a way of assessing career interests and character development. Assignments occurred in three steps: 1) essay on self-knowledge, 2) assignment about occupations based on interviews of parents, friends, or others in vocations students were interested in, and 3) assignment on choosing careers, with an emphasis on vocations that advanced good citizenship. This process later informed the field of school counseling.

The perspective that the purpose of vocational guidance is to provide appropriate job placement was influenced by the history of the industrial revolution during the late 1800s and early 1900s. The prevailing view was that "individual worker's purpose was to find one's fit into a

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[3] Parsons's many jobs included civil engineer, manual labor, administrator, teaching, writer/editor, social worker, and vocational counselor (Roberts-Martin, 2014b).

broader world-of-work" (Wilson & Hutchison, 2014, p. 17). After World War II, access to higher education increased; simultaneously, societal views on right to work and pay dominated the social landscape. The focus became finding career placement for returning veterans, with an emphasis on science and math professions (Roberts-Martin, 2014a). This technological focus was further emphasized after the Soviet Union launched Sputnik in 1957 and the U.S. government increased their demand for innovative, creative thinkers and technologically trained workers to boost American scientific advancement (Heller et al., 2001).

In the 1960s, vocational development broadened their focus to also include supporting meaningful work, job satisfaction, leadership/management, and team building (Roberts-Martin, 2014a). Around this time, vocational theories also expanded to include a broader view of life and career development (Roberts-Martin, 2014b; Wilson & Hutchison, 2014). Influence of environmental factors were taken into consideration; however, the concept of personality matching remained constant, as evidenced by Holland's person-environment fit theory and Super's life-span, life-space theory on career development[4]. Eventually, environmental factors included a focus on multicultural career counseling and ensuring inclusive experiences for workers.

In summary, the history of vocational guidance and theories transitioned from "best fit" for skills to finding "meaningful and satisfying work and how their personality types may best fit into different work environments" (Roberts-Martin, 2014a, pp. 408–409). This is reflected in many of the practices found in higher education career counseling centers and advisement. Many advisors continue to use assessment tools "to explore students' job values, personality characteristic and interests, and values toward work" (Roberts-Martin, 2014a, p. 396). Yet, a review of this history shows that vocational guidance as a field has remained general in nature. In other words, theories are expected to be generalizable across populations and domains.

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[4] Both of these theories will be expanded upon in later a section.

Many researchers have challenged this generalizability and have called for specific examinations of populations (e.g., women, people of color, people with disabilities, etc.), as well as domain specificity (e.g., arts, social science, biological sciences, healthcare, etc.) (Abes & Hernández, 2016; Abes & Jones, 2004; Bledsoe & Owens, 2014; Fouad & Byars-Winston, 2005). This study aims to address these concerns by focusing on students of color in the arts.

Career Development Theories

There are numerous theories available on career decision-making, choice, and development. The following section will provide brief descriptions of some of the key theories such as Holland's theory of vocational personalities and environments; Super's life-span, life-space theory; Gottfredson's theory of circumscription and compromise; and Lent, Brown, and Hackett's social cognitive career theory. Within the description of the theories, observations and critiques on the advantages and disadvantages of each framework will be provided. This section will conclude with a discussion of cross-cultural approaches to career psychology.

Theory of Vocational Personality and Environments

The goal of Holland's theory of career development is "to understand individual difference in personality types" as it applies to compatible work environments (Holland, 1997; Wilson & Hutchison, 2014). Holland identified six personality types and corresponding environments: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional (Holland, 1997). Ideally, people seek job environments that maximize their skills and abilities, reflect and allow them to express their attitudes and values, and enable them to take on appealing tasks and roles (Holland, 1997; Wilson & Hutchison, 2014). Career choices are made based on the environment that best complements a person's interests and characteristics. A "good fit" between person and environment will lead to career satisfaction.

Research using Holland's theory found that it was consistent across gender and cultural boundaries (Spokane et al., 2002). However, others have argued that Holland's theory primarily focuses on individual variables (e.g., interests and personalities) and minimizes the roles of

sociocultural or environmental contexts in identifying career choices (Fouad & Byars-Winston, 2005; Gottfredson, 1981). The definition of environment is also vague and does not address structural issues.

Life-Span, Life-Space Theory

In his life-span, life-space approach to career development, Super (1980) posited that as an individual's values, personality, and abilities (self-concept) change over time and experience, their career preferences will also change. Life-span refers to the lifelong process of navigating varied personal and work experiences to achieve self-perceived "full potential" (Wilson & Hutchison, 2014, p. 32). Life-space recognizes the roles and spaces a person inhabits throughout the course of her or his lifespan. Super (1980) identified five stages of career development: 1) growth, 2) exploration, 3) establishment, 4) maintenance, and 5) decline. He also described nine roles that most individuals occupied throughout the course of their life: 1) child, 2) student, 3) "leisurite"[5], 4) citizen, 5) worker, 6) spouse, 7) homemaker, 8) parent, and 9) pensioner. The emphasis of Super's theory is on career development over a lifespan starting at the critical time of adolescence as youth navigate exposure to environment, resources, and educational and career options. Within the theory, self-concept is based on the interaction between social/cultural environment and biological make up, so that career satisfaction is based on interest, skills, abilities, and values.

While Super critiques past theorists, like Holland, as being too focused on occupational choice rather than development, his theory still seems to, at least partially, emphasize connecting individual aptitude and interests with career experiences. The key difference is that Super's theory moved from a primary *vocational* focus (i.e., a single event such as job placement) to a *career* focus (i.e., a developmental process of career decision-making and choice) (Wilson & Hutchison, 2014). While Super also takes into account social/cultural

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[5]Super (1980) defined "leisurite" as a person who pursues leisure activities as opposed to work related activities.

environment, often interpreted as the immediate environment (e.g., family and neighborhood), the theory does not necessarily address historical or political structures (e.g., institutional racism, sexism, heterosexism, etc.).

Theory of Circumscription and Compromise

The primary purpose of Gottfredson's (1981, 2002) theory of circumscription and compromise is to help identify the process of developing vocational aspirations, as well as how people determine their "best fit" within a career. The basic concept is based on the following questions: 1) In what ways do people limit (circumscription) their career choices in order to meet particular job expectations as defined by one's role or identity within society? 2) What sacrifices (compromise) do people make during their career decision-making process (Gottfredson, 2002)? In other words, circumscription refers to the boundaries that individuals may place on their career decisions based on perceptions of identity. Compromise refers to any concessions people make in their career decision-making process.

A key difference between Gottfredson's (1981) theory and the work of previous theorists is the combined attention paid to "how people make decisions" (the focus of Super's theory) and "on which occupations they choose" (the focus of Holland's work) (p. 545). Additionally, Gottfredson (1981) argued that while previous theorists recognized the role of factors like socioeconomic background and intelligence in predicting career aspirations, they often minimized these variables in favor of "weaker predictors of aspirations—usually values and interests of youngsters and their parents" (p. 545). Gottfredson's theory centers the importance of variables like gender, class influence, and intelligence on aspirational career development. Lastly, past theorists focused on high school or college-aged development, though the development of self-concept has been found to begin at much earlier ages. Gottfredson's theory examines the development of aspirations starting from early childhood (ages 3 to 5) through the college years.

The two key challenges with circumscription and compromise are that young people may narrow their options before being adequately exposed to other career possibilities thereby making them either compromise too soon or give up on possible career options altogether. Gottfredson (1981) argues that it is important to expose young people early to different interests and social values such as the arts.

Social Cognitive Career Theory

Lent, Brown, and Hackett developed the social cognitive career theory (SCCT) based on cognitive variables such as self-efficacy (Lent et al., 1994, 2000; Lent & Brown, 1996). In addition to personal or genetic characteristics, Lent and colleagues posited that an individual's primary motivation for choosing a career was based on where she or he would exhibit peak performance. SCCT focuses on 1) how academic and career interests develop, 2) how individual interests work alongside other environmental variables to promote career-relevant choices, and 3) how people attain varying levels of performance and persistence as they pursue educational and career goals (Lent et al., 1994, 2000; Lent & Brown, 1996). The variables in SCCT include the interaction between cognitive-person variables (self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and goals) and person-environment variables (gender, ethnicity, social supports, barriers) that lead to career choice and development. Using Bandura's (1977) work as a basis, Lent and his colleagues argue that learning occurs within a social context with a dynamic and reciprocal interaction of the person, environment and behavior.

An advantage of using SCCT in research is that it is a comprehensive framework that addresses both individual person and environmental barriers. In their 2000 article on contextual factors, Lent et al. acknowledged the need for increased research on the person-environment variables particularly in relation to understanding barriers and supports. In SCCT, environmental variables are defined on two levels: 1) immediate, proximal context (e.g., family, friends, financial resources) and 2) larger societal, distal contexts (e.g., institutional racism and other macro conditions) (Lent et al., 2000). However, most of the research using SCCT have focused

on cognitive-person variables and have been primarily quantitative in nature. This approach has been effective in quantitative studies that explore SCCT's ability to examine the relationships between cognitive variables like self-efficacy, outcome expectation, and goal orientation (Lent et al., 2000). However, by focusing solely on cognitive variables, these studies miss the impact of environmental factors on career development. Examining the influence of person-environment variables could be invaluable in assessing challenges and opportunities to career development. A qualitative approach may be useful in examining person-environment variables to better understand participants' career-related experiences. In fact, Lent et al. (2000) encourage further studies utilizing person-environment variables as it relates to perceived barriers and supports as a way of highlighting the experiences of "non-traditional" populations.

Cross-cultural approaches to career psychology

Over the decades, researchers have critiqued career development theories as not reflective of the changing demographics of the United States (Bledsoe & Owens, 2014; Brown, 2002; Fouad & Byars-Winston, 2005; Leong & Brown, 1995; W. Patton & McMahon, 2006). In fact, it is projected that by the mid 21st century the majority population will no longer identify as White (Bledsoe & Owens, 2014). Yet, despite the increasing racial and ethnic diversity in the greater population, as well as in schools throughout the K-20 systems, changes in career counseling and theories have been slow to happen. As colleges grow in all forms of diversity (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, socioeconomic, etc.) staff and faculty that support career development need to also evolve to reflect the new experiences that students bring with them. It is no longer enough to acknowledge the numerical increases in diverse students as a strategy towards inclusivity. Institutions must also show qualitative improvements in the way they support, encourage, nurture, and challenge students and the inevitable cross-group interactions (Bledsoe and Owens, 2014). This is also the ongoing challenge in career development practice and research.

Leong and Brown (1995) were among the first researchers to address the need for cross-cultural perspectives to career psychology. They argued that it was important to test the "cultural validity of existing and Western-centered theories and models for various cross-cultural populations" in order to understand limitations of such frameworks (Leong, 1997, p. 356). They argued that leading career theorists like Holland and Super did not incorporate elements of culture or recognize structural contexts within their examinations of career choice and development (Fouad & Byars-Winston, 2005). By focusing primarily on individual factors like interests, personality, or decision-making processes, past career development theorists often missed problems that were rooted in environmental or structural contexts. Leong and Brown (1995) suggested that theoretical and methodological approaches to cross-cultural career psychology needed to incorporate both cultural validity and cultural specificity. Cultural validity addressed "the validity of theories and models across other cultures," while cultural specificity recognized "concepts, constructs and models that are specific to certain cultural groups" (Leong, 1997, p. 355). Together, the two constructs provide an approach to cross-cultural career psychology that is at once differentiated and inclusive. When a career theory lacks applicability due to limitations in cultural validity, culture-specific approaches can be taken into consideration. Utilizing both approaches in cross-cultural research provide a broader understanding of in-group and between group issues and comparisons.

Concerns over the lack of cultural awareness in career theories and practices also stem from the idea that "vocational interest may be moderated by career salience, which in turn may vary across cultures" (Leong, 1997, p. 357). Different meanings may be attached to work depending on the context and experience, such as the idea of individual versus collective values. Yet, many existing career theories continue to work from "individualist assumptions about life and work," which does not take into account structures and systems that may influence approaches to work and success (Bledsoe & Owens, 2014, p. 796; W. Patton & McMahon, 2006). Perhaps part of the challenge stems from the myth of the American dream,

which supposes that there are unlimited options and choice when it comes to careers. The American dream also assumes that the primary purpose of work is to bring a sense of safety and security to individuals and their families, as well as to help facilitate upward mobility (Bledsoe & Owens, 2014). However, the unequal division of power in society greatly impacts social mobility and work experience. What is often not addressed in career theories are issues related to limited access to education and career options; challenges with who gets to define the meaning of work, as well as who occupies positions; and lastly, the minimization or dismissal of racism and other forms of discrimination in schools and workplaces. Though access may appear to be increasing based on the numbers of people from minoritized backgrounds entering education and workspaces, it does not mean there has been "an immediate shift in the culture" (Bledsoe and Owens, 2014, p. 797). This is reflected in all sectors, including the arts (Boyd Acuff, 2018; Mason, 2004).

One approach to addressing the lack of attention paid to the role of systems in career counseling and theories is the Systems Theory Framework (STF) (McMahon & Patton, 1995). STF allows for the examination of the way a person's intrapersonal system (e.g., personality, ability, gender, sexual orientation) interacts with the broader social and environmental systems that surround him or her. Within STF, career development is considered a dynamic process where the individual and broader systems are continually influencing each other over time (Bledsoe & Owens, 2014; McMahon & Patton, 1995). Lastly, STF considers the positive or negative influence of chance on career development. By recognizing the multiple roles of these interactive systems, STF addresses the needs of diverse individuals within the many contexts in which they interact. However, a key limitation of STF is it does not critically address or directly advocate for systemic change when systems may be oppressive in nature. Without a critical stance, studies utilizing STF may generally describe intrapersonal, social, and environmental systems without naming inequities within such systems (e.g., racism, sexism, heterosexism, able-ism, and other forms of systemic discrimination based on power imbalances). This is why a

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critically integrated approach to self-authorship and planned happenstance is utilized in this study.

Career Identity Development

James Marcia (1980) defines identity as "a self-structure—an internal, self-constructed, dynamic organization of drives, abilities, beliefs, and individual history" (p. 159). The stronger the structure, the more awareness a person has of her or his strengths and weaknesses, as well as her or his position within society. Marcia also emphasizes that this structure of identity is not static, emphasizing its dynamic nature. Therefore, identity formation can be viewed as an ever-shifting process with the elements making up the structure of identity in constantly flux.

Based on Erik Erikson's (1959, 1963, 1968) work on youth development, research on identity development has primarily focused on children and adolescents. However the ages of 18 to 21 (the traditional college undergraduate years) are seen as a critical time in lifespan development (Marcia, 1980; Pizzolato, 2007b; Tomlinson & Fassinger, 2003). Researchers have found that adolescents who seek employment immediately upon high school graduation are less likely to continue exploring their identity compared with those that go on to pursue college (Marcia, 1980). The reason for this continued exploration may be attributed to the encouragement provided by colleges and universities to discover multiple academic, social, and career options.

Researchers also highlight the importance of understanding the relationship between identity formation and career development (Blustein et al., 1989; Pizzolato, 2007b; Tomlinson & Fassinger, 2003). The transition from late adolescence into early adulthood is marked as a period of reflection and exploration of self and the surrounding environment, which helps to solidify and define one's identity. A direct outcome of this process is a commitment to occupational goals (Blustein et al., 1989). The college years are seen as a crucial time to develop one's vocational identity as the primary purpose of college is "choosing a major and

committing to a vocational path" (Pizzolato, 2007b; Tomlinson & Fassinger, 2003, p. 845).

Ideally, that vocational path will also lead to gainful employment.

Career Identity in "Non-Traditional" Majors

What happens when students choose to commit to a path that is seen as lacking or having limited employment viability? In a recent study, Nicholas (2018) examined the construction of "employability narratives" and career-related perceptions of 32 juniors and seniors in a humanities and liberal arts program at a large, state-affiliated university. She conducted the study because most of the research on career self-perception have focused primarily on samples from disciplines traditionally viewed as "career oriented" (Nicholas, 2018, p. 2). These fields excluded the humanities, liberal arts, and presumably creative and performing arts. In a review of the literature, Nicholas (2018) stated that employers claimed to want graduates with "transferrable critical-thinking skills," "diverse competencies," and "shape-shifting [abilities] to accommodate changes in economic and work circumstance" (p. 1). These skills and competencies appear to match the holistic goals of a liberal arts education. In fact, "Human resources professionals in the business world prefer broadly-educated liberal arts graduates over those who are narrowly-trained in a particular area" (Samide et al., 2014, p. 486). Yet in today's society, there is a growing emphasis on employability in fields like business or STEM, which has resulted in increasing numbers of majors in these fields.

Nicholas found that students in majors seen as not having a career-focus need to be more self- and career-aware than peers in fields like business or STEM. Humanities and liberal arts students also have to be open to many possibilities that would support vocational success. In this process, they have to be able to establish their identity as one that has "diverse interests, attributes, and skills" that can be applied across many professional areas (Nicholas, 2018, p. 7). These findings show that humanities and liberal arts students can find multiple pathways to academic and career success. Nicholas (2018) emphasizes, "Attempts to categorize liberal arts employment trajectories with singular, static conceptions of success overlook the civic mindset,

dispositional factors, and purposeful sense-making that shaped participants' exploratory career thinking in this study" (p. 10). Nicholas's study reflects the aims of this dissertation study of identifying the ways in which students of color in the arts author their self-identities and explore multiple opportunities on their academic and professional path to artistic careers.

Impact of Race on Career Identity

Though attempts to recruit racially diverse populations were made in studies of college students and career identity development, the majority of the samples involved White students (Blustein et al., 1989; Pizzolato, 2007b; Stringer & Kerpelman, 2010; Tomlinson & Fassinger, 2003). Two early studies stood out for comparing the experiences with career orientation of Black and White college women (Turner & McCaffrey, 1974) and the career mobility of Mexican-American college graduates (S. Gould, 1980). A common implication of these early studies was the need to further understand the influence of racism and discrimination on the career identity development of people of color. Beyond calling for greater recognition of racism, neither study directly analyzed issues related to structural oppression.

On the other hand, Diemer and Blustein (2006) directly addressed the challenges of structural oppression in their study of urban youth, critical consciousness, and career development. They defined critical consciousness as having "the capacity to recognize and overcome sociopolitical barriers" (Diemer & Blustein, 2006, p. 220). Diemer and Blustein found a significant relationship between critical consciousness and progress to career development. They asserted that having higher levels of critical consciousness may manifest in a stronger sense of one's vocational identity, a stronger commitment to future professions, and a positive perception of the role of work in the person's lifespan. Further, they found that developing "critical consciousness may serve as an internal resource that assists urban adolescents in analyzing and acting to achieve desired outcomes within an environment of inequitable access to resources and racial discrimination" (Diemer & Blustein, 2006, pp. 228–229). This study primarily focused on high school students of color from poor and working-class neighborhoods

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in a northeastern city in the U.S. However, given the potential continuing development in postsecondary environments it may have broader applications for students of color in colleges and universities. Furthermore, the development of critical consciousness during the high school years as part of the process of identity formation may be reflective of the previously mentioned research on self-authorship and marginalized student populations, which found that they tended to develop their sense of self-authorship sooner than their majority identified peers (Abes & Hernández, 2016; Abes & Jones, 2004; Torres & Hernandez, 2007).

Academic and Career Advising in the Arts

Given the literature on career development and some of the challenges associated with majoring in typically "non-traditional" or "non-career oriented" fields, how can higher education professionals better support art students? To answer this question, it is important to first understand the overall role of academic and career advising, then examine the processes and perceptions of career advising specifically in the arts.

Role of Academic and Career Advising

Higher education and career development researchers have identified the college years as a time for exploration and skills building, with choosing a major being an instrumental part of that process (Samide et al., 2014). Interestingly, rarely are majors and careers directly connected, particularly for majors that are often viewed as nontraditional and non-career oriented (e.g., humanities, social sciences, liberal arts, and creative arts).

The disconnect between major and career has a significant impact on academic and career advising of students. While many may assume that academic advising includes some component of career advising, these are often distinct processes (Samide et al., 2014; K. Terrill, personal communication, March 27, 2019). Academic advising is much more about going over the details and steps of being in the major versus tying academic skills to specific career development, much to the frustration of many students. On the other hand, career advising, often occurring in career counseling centers, focuses not only on building a "4-year plan"

towards completion of the degree, but also supports students' pursuits of non-academic skills that employers seek in successful job candidates such as communication or leadership skills (Sutton & Gifford, 2014).

Unfortunately, because of the non-career emphasis of the aforementioned majors, students in these fields are less likely to seek out career counseling services (Sutton & Gifford, 2014; K. Terrill, personal communication, March 27, 2019). Students also often mistake career counseling centers as merely job placement organizations. They are not aware of the multiple skill enhancement and career development services that these centers offer. The services provided in higher education career centers could assist "non-traditional" students, like arts students, in developing their career identities and constructing their career narratives to match the higher-level skills (e.g., cognitive, affective, and leadership) that today's employers claim to desire. Career centers could also be useful resources for career exploration and exposing art students to the varied occupations available in creative sections aside from professional artist. The potential exploratory nature of career center services lends itself well to supporting the self-authorship process and activating planned happenstance.

Processes and Perceptions of Arts Career Advising

Curiously, it appears that processes and perceptions of arts career advising have not changed in the last 25 years. In the 1990s, Thaller (1993, 1994) found that rather than seeking career advisement from career centers, art students relied heavily on the support of faculty advisors. Relying on faculty support is often predicated on the quality of the student-faculty relationship, as well as the actual career knowledge of the particular art professor. If the quality of the relationship is poor, or if the art professor no longer practiced their art outside of the university context, the student may not receive informed or adequate career advice. More likely than not, participants in Thaller's (1993, 1994) dissertation study were advised to go on to graduate programs, which prolonged their entry into the professional market.

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Like today's students, art undergraduates in the 1990s were just as unaware of the role of career centers. Moreover, their faculty advisors and instructors also did not refer students. Some of the items that students reported wanting assistance with (e.g., resume writing, availability of career information in their field) were resources that career centers were ready to provide. At the same time, career services centers did not make their services known to art students and faculty. Thaller argued that career centers could be more effective if they targeted outreach to art students and professors (or other specific fields) about how career services and advising could serve the needs of art students.

Students in the 1990s also had a generally negative view of their post-graduation career options (Thaller, 1993, 1994). Many reported that they would have to support themselves with some kind of low paying, "menial job" in order to continue their artistic pursuits (Thaller, 1994, p. 8). While students in arts programs generally reported being pleased with the content of their arts courses in relation to practice and creativity development, the programs did not foster a sense of prospering after graduation. Nor did they have access to job-related courses that may have provided them with additional career-oriented information.

By the 2000s, art students continued to have a mostly pessimistic outlook on the prospect of full-time employment as a professional artist (Daniel & Johnstone, 2017; Luftig et al., 2003). Students continued to report expectations of having to work a second, often unrelated, job in order to support creative pursuits. Even those with back-up plans, such as pursuing positions as art educators, reported a lack of confidence in being able to be successful merge artistic identities with other career aspirations (Freer & Bennett, 2012). Perhaps this could be due to a lack of general knowledge provided within their arts education on planning for art careers. Ulbricht (2001) argued that students should be made aware of the multiple art and art-related vocations available in the creative sector. Students should know that there are "artists who produce art (e.g., painters, sculptors, and illustrators)" and there are "art vocations that support art (e.g., art teachers, critics, art historians, arts administrators)," as well as vocations

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that "use art for a variety of purposes (e.g., art therapists, architects, and city planners)" (Ulbricht, 2001, p. 42). Exposing students to the value of supporting and using art, alongside the actual creation and production of art would allow students to explore multiple aspects of their artistic career identities and be open to pursuing various opportunities.

Barriers to Arts Careers

In addition to a lack of knowledge around the varied career options within creative sectors, students also have to contend with various structural barriers on their professional trajectory. A primary barrier is the enormous student loan debt that many students are burdened with upon graduation. One report found that art students graduating with anything over $60,000 in debt were less likely to work as a professional artist (White, 2016). This is especially true among students that pursue degrees from specialized art institutions as opposed to private liberal arts or comprehensive public colleges and universities. Poorly managed student loan debt and finances during the undergraduate years may have multiple consequences including loss of employment, wage garnishment or blemished credit history resulting from inability to repay loans; negative impact on mental health (e.g., anxiety or depression); delay of personal life goals (e.g., starting a family or pursuing a business); negative impact on relationships with individuals who may have served as co-signers of the loan (e.g., parents or significant others); and negative impact on the credit histories of co-signers.

Aspiring artists from minoritized backgrounds also have to contend with inequalities within art careers. In 2013, the Strategic National Arts Alumni Project (SNAAP)[6] reported that structural challenges in the arts starts early with limited access to regular, dedicated, and quality arts education in K-12; restrictive access to art schools (even when they are in settings with traditionally underrepresented and/or minorities communities) through processes like closed

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[6] An annual online survey to arts alumni of participating institutions including arts high schools, comprehensive colleges and universities, liberal arts colleges, and special-focus postsecondary arts institutions. SNAAP houses the largest single database of arts graduates in the country.

auditions; and continues into college with barriers to "access and preparation for auditions, as well as cultural and economic constraints involved with leaving home" for many students of color and/or students from low socioeconomic backgrounds (Strategic National Arts Alumni Project (SNAAP), 2013, p. 6). Once in college, many students from minoritized backgrounds also experience challenges to staying in school and graduating in a timely manner. Black and Hispanic alumni also "generally report[ed] lower levels of satisfaction with their sense of belonging and encouragement to takes [sic] risks at their institutions" (SNAAP, 2013, p. 8). Once on the job market, minoritized artists report employment barriers related to limited networking opportunities, lack of access to effective social networks, high levels of student debt, and wage inequalities. These barriers may be the reason why women as well as Black and Hispanic alumni are "less likely than White men to persist as artists in the work force" (SNAAP, 2013, p. 8). Yet, despite these challenges and concerns, aspiring artists choose to pursue a postsecondary arts education, such as a specialized art/design school, because of "potential educational, professional, social, economic, and noneconomic benefits" (White, 2016, p. 56) (White, 2016, p. 56). These benefits include building professional social networks through faculty and peers, a focus on creative arts that another major would not offer, and affirmation of artistic passions, talent, and skill.

Concluding Summary of the Literature Review

This chapter provided a general overview of the literature related to arts, identity, and career development for the purpose of understanding the experiences of students of color majoring in an arts-related field. Unfortunately, no studies were identified that specifically focused on the experiences of students of color and the intersection of arts, identity, and career development. In fact, there was only one study that specifically examined art careers and a racialized population – Lee's (2013) dissertation on Asian American women visual artists. Though Lee's study asked about participants' educational experiences, the population of focus was not students, rather participants were working professionals. Therefore, the primary focus

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of this literature review was to provide background on existing studies related to art students and artistic development, as well as career development history, theories, identity, and barriers.

Several studies did identify the value of arts among diverse populations, such as those from racial or ethnic backgrounds other than White, women, LGBTQ+ communities, and individuals with disabilities (e.g., Keifer-Boyd et al., 2018, 2018; Minthorn & Marsh, 2016; Noriega, 1998; Schroeder-Arce, 2014; Trusty & Oliva, 1994; White, 2018b). These works affirmed the need to address the gap in the career development literature with relation to the arts and the specific experiences of artists of color. Encouragingly, issues related to gender have long been recognized among researchers as important in the arts. A review of the literature seemed to point to arts as being a gendered field with several studies showing samples with female students and professionals as a large majority (e.g., Burleson et al., 2005; Daniel & Johnstone, 2017; Kreamer, 1997; Luftig et al., 2003; Stringer & Kerpelman, 2010; Thaller, 1993, 1994). Several studies also focused specifically on the experiences of women or analyzing comparisons between women and men's experiences in arts (e.g., Brooks & Daniluk, 1998; S. Lee, 2013; Rentschler & Jogulu, 2012; J. H. Stohs, 1991, 1992a, 1992b; J. M. Stohs, 1990; Tomlinson & Fassinger, 2003). Again, aside from Lee's (2013) dissertation on Asian American women visual artists, the studies on arts and careers rarely identified race or ethnicity of their participants. There was also one early study on general career orientation (Turner & McCaffrey, 1974) that compared the experiences of Black and White women, and another study that looked at the role of need for achievement in the upward career mobility of Mexican Americans (S. Gould, 1980). However, neither of these studies examined arts professions.

Methodologically, there was a clear split between the types of studies that utilized quantitative approaches versus those that used qualitative methods. The majority of early studies and some later ones were quantitative in nature and focused on identifying correlations between variables like personality, interests, abilities, and career-related factors (e.g., goals, orientation, vocational identity, career mobility, etc.) (e.g., Bachtold, 1973; Barrett, 1945;

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Blustein et al., 1989; Burleson et al., 2005; Chen & Zhou, 2018; Daniel & Johnstone, 2017;

Lowman et al., 1985; Turner & McCaffrey, 1974). Perhaps this is due to the cognitive and social

psychology or economic roots of many of the studies whose epistemological and

methodological approaches are rooted in quantitative inquiry. As more studies focused on

career development or identity processes, qualitative methods such as narrative, retrospective

interviews, open-ended surveys, and art-based methodologies were used (e.g., Brooks &

Daniluk, 1998; Carey, 2015; Cooley, 2007; S. Lee, 2013; Minthorn & Marsh, 2016; Williams et

al., 1998). Qualitative methods enabled researchers to emphasize the experiences of people

from marginalized communities.

Curiously, many of the recent studies on arts and the creative sector were based outside

of the United States (e.g., Carey, 2015; Comunian, Faggian, & Jewell, 2011; Comunian &

Gilmore, 2016; Daniel, 2010; Daniel & Johnstone, 2017; Rentschler & Jogulu, 2012). The

reason for this international emphasis may be partially explained by the recognition by some

countries of the role of creative work in the economic growth and advancement of nations

(Bridgstock, 2013). The amount of research literature related to arts and career development in

areas like the United Kingdom and Australia reflect this deliberate inclusion of the creative

sector within discussions of national economies. Similar conversations are not available in the

U.S. at a national level, though they may occur within geographic regions where creative

industries dominate the local economy such as Southern California (Mitra et al., 2017).

While there is not a single blueprint for career development, it is helpful to recognize the

processes that assist students in developing their sense of personal and professional self. One

view of artistic work is that of artists as "protean careerists" (Bridgstock, 2013). For the protean

careerist, personal identity and practice are closely tied, and there is a constant construction

and reconstruction of one's career identity based on her or his passion for the arts. Protean

careerists need to be able to build their skills to maintain this level of flexibility and passion.

They should also recognize the challenges and opportunities that may constrain or expand their

approach to work. Therefore, a critical engagement with self-authorship and planned

happenstance may allow a student of color to develop into this type of well-rounded professional

artist.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a narrative research design to trace the educational and career pathways and aspirations of students of color majoring in arts. As previously discussed, a critically integrated approach to self-authorship and planned happenstance was utilized to examine the students' experiences. The primary means of data collection was semi-structured interviews. A brief questionnaire was also distributed to assess eligibility, collect demographic background information, and gather participant-created Life Lines.

Selecting Qualitative Methodology: Narrative Inquiry

Qualitative research methods are used to help explore and understand complex phenomena about which there is very little knowledge (Krathwohl, 2009). Moreover, qualitative methodology focuses on highlighting "insider" perspectives, giving voice and allowing meaning-making to come directly from the participants (Creswell, 2014; Krathwohl, 2009; Leavy, 2017). Therefore, a qualitative approach was appropriate for this study given the limited attention on the career development of students of color majoring in arts.

Specifically, the study employed a narrative research design, which is used when researchers plan to follow a chronology of events. Data collection was gathered through the collection of stories either directly from participants or through examination of various texts (e.g., diaries, autobiographies, biographies). More importantly, narrative research offers a pragmatic approach to collecting insights about life experiences while connecting individual meaning making to broader social contexts (Miles et al., 2020). In this study, narratives were gathered on the academic and education pathways of graduating seniors; participants were asked to recall stories starting from their childhood.

Narrative inquiry is appropriate to many social science fields because it provides researchers evidence to examine and understand the human experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Kim, 2016). It was particularly useful in this study of art students because narrative has

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roots in multiple disciplines including literature, history, anthropology, psychology, sociology, drama, art, film, linguistics, and education (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Leavy, 2017). Establishing the foundation of this narrative study from a transdisciplinary lens allowed me to better connect educational theories to the arts. Moreover, the trend in using narrative inquiry in educational research emphasizes reflection, highlights individual knowledge, and empowers participants and researchers by bringing underrepresented voices to the forefront (Creswell, 2012; Leavy, 2017). The narrative emphasis on participants' empowerment reinforced the critical lens of this study that centered the experiences and stories of students of color. In fact, the development of first-person composite stories drew heavily from critical race theory (CRT) and counter storytelling in order to actively challenge the narrative of the invisibility of students of color in the arts (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Counter storytelling disrupts the dominant narrative that is rooted in White supremacist systems of power. Furthermore, in education, counter narratives further emphasize the role of experiential knowledge which has historically been given less credibility in academic research (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Combining CRT with a composite first-person narrative approach allowed for a reflective process that actively acknowledged the role of racism, sexism, classism, and other systems of oppression in the educational and professional development of students of color in the arts.

Matching the Theoretical Framework with Narrative Inquiry

As described in Chapter 1, a critically integrated approach to self-authorship and planned happenstance was applied in this study. Within career development research and career counseling, "the positivist search for truth is slowly being replaced by a more postmodern search for meaning and constructed reality" (Clark et al., 2004, p. 25). In other words, the field of career development and counseling is no longer simply about job placement; instead, career counselors encourage individuals to explore and construct their personal and professional identities. This perspective on career development is well-matched with both self-authorship and planned happenstance because both theories come from a constructivist perspective. Baxter

Magolda and King (2007) have stated that self-authorship reflects a constructive-developmental tradition, while planned happenstance is often included as a topic within constructivist approaches to career education (Grier-Reed & Ganuza, 2012; Grier-Reed & Skaar, 2010). Drawing from these constructivist roots, career development research recognizes the importance of "authoring life stories," which lends itself well to a narrative inquiry.

Interestingly, narrative inquiry has been critiqued as placing too strong an emphasis on the individual experience over the social context (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). There have been questions over whether or not narrative methodology is the right approach for highlighting systemic barriers as the nature of storytelling foregrounds the individual storyteller rather than social systems. However, career counselors have found success in using narrative approaches with diverse populations, such as students of color (Clark et al., 2004). Critical scholars and researchers have also used narrative as "a method of telling the stories of those whose experiences are not often told (i.e., those on the margins of society)" (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 32). Within critical race theory, Solórzano and Yosso (2002) further defined the process of counter storytelling as way to "shatter complacency, challenge the dominant discourse on race, and further the struggle for racial reform" (p. 32). Clearly, narrative inquiry can be about more than just telling untold stories; it can also be used as a tool to address social inequities. This study focused on the experiences of students of color within dominant structures of the art world. The use of narrative inquiry elicited new accounts of the role of self-authorship and planned happenstance in the academic and career development of students of color in the arts, as well as empowered participants along their journey.

Sample

Using purposive sampling and a chain-referral technique, 32 students of color majoring or minoring in an art-related field were recruited for participation in the study (Creswell, 2014). Purposive sampling, a commonly used technique in qualitative research, was warranted for this study since the aim was to gain insight about the specific experiences of students of color

pursuing arts-related degrees and professions (M. Q. Patton, 2014). The students recruited to participate in the study all self-identified as students of color majoring in an arts-related discipline. Based on their background, the final sample were able to provide key insights needed to understand the experiences of students of color in the arts. For the purposes of this study, art-related majors or minors leading to a baccalaureate degree in artistic fields included, but were not limited to: crafts/craft design, folk art and artisanry; dance; design and applied arts; drama/theater arts and stagecraft; film/video and photographic arts; fine and studio art; music; arts, entertainment, and media management; community/environmental/socially-engaged art; creative placemaking; arts education; literary arts; media arts; museums; or other forms of visual, performing, or creative arts (National Center for Education Statistics, n.d.; National Endowment for the Arts, n.d.). An initial sample size range of 35 to 40 was chosen to emphasize the complexity of experiences among the participants. Students were recruited until data saturation was reached to ensure that sufficient patterns and themes related to self-authorship and planned happenstance are identified (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This strategy also helped in constructing composite first-person narratives that are representative of the students' experiences (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Creating composite first-person narratives enabled me to interpret data from multiple participants in key ways: "through…knowledge of the literature regarding the phenomenon under enquiry, through listening and hearing the stories told by the informants, and through [my] own reflexivity during the process" (Wertz et al., 2011, p. 2). Utilizing this storytelling technique engages the reader with the narratives in a way that allows for a deeper personal connection to universality of the students' experiences.

To participate in the study, participants met the following criteria: 1) identified as a student of color, 2) was a junior or graduating senior in a college, university, or independent art, music, or design school leading to a baccalaureate degree, and 3) majored or minored in an art-related field. Eligibility was confirmed through completion of a pre-study survey (see Appendix C). Participants were initially recruited based on a list of student artists developed from my

personal contacts. Art professors, artists-in-residence at various post-secondary institutions and non-profit organizations, and academic or career advisors were also contacted for participant referrals.

Description of the Sample

A total of 32 eligible students participated in this study. Nine students identified as male, 22 students as female, and one student identified as non-binary. The majority of students reported being between 18 to 25 years old with one student reported as being over 25. The majority of the participants (n=26) were born in the United States. The remaining six students were born in the Philippines (n=2), Malaysia (n=1), Mexico (n=1), India (n=1) and China (n=1). Of the students that were born outside of the United States, three immigrated when they were younger than three years of age, while the other three were older than 17. Additionally, three of the students reported being born in the U.S. but were primarily raised overseas. In terms of racial identity, the majority of the participants identified as Black or African American (n=12), Asian or Asian American (n=10), or Hispanic, Latino, or other Spanish origin (n=7). Moreover, 10 of the participants also listed two or more races. While narratives are later presented in composite format, it is important to recognize the diverse backgrounds of the participants in the study.

In order to create cohesive composite narratives, the students' majors were group into seven overarching categories: Art History/Museum Studies (n= 4); Classical Music (n = 3), Theater Performance (n = 6), Film, Television, and Animation (n = 5), Arts Entrepreneurship - Music Production (n = 4), Other Arts – Academia (n = 3), and Visual Arts (n = 7). The "Other Arts" category represented students that were pursuing a study of arts leading to career goals in academia. There was a total of 20 juniors and 12 graduating seniors in the final sample. A full breakdown of the participants' demographic and academic characteristics are available on Appendix E (Table 9).

Protection of Human Subjects

I obtained permission to conduct this study from the Institutional Review Boards at Claremont Graduate University. The purpose and nature of the study, consent, privacy, any potential risks associated with participation, and researcher contact information were reviewed with each participant prior to participation in the study (see recruitment letter and social media ads on Appendix A, consent from on Appendix B, and eligibility/demographic survey and Life Line on Appendix C). To further protect all subjects, confidentiality of all participants was maintained. To this end, each participant was assigned a pseudonym; recordings and transcripts were labeled according to the assigned pseudonyms. Though recordings of the interviews remained unaltered, transcripts and any written records developed from the recordings changed participant names accordingly.

Affirmative responses to e-mail invitations or pre-study eligibility survey constituted the participants' consent to participate in the study. All participation was voluntary, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequences of any kind. They were also informed of their right to refuse to answer any question and still remain in the study. Audio or video recordings of the interviews, transcripts, and all additional written records will be kept safely secured and password protected for five years, after which they will be destroyed.

Instrumentation

The instruments for this study consisted of an eligibility/demographic survey, participant-created Life Line, and a semi-structured interview protocol. All tools were created based on an extensive review of the literature on career development, self-authorship, and planned happenstance.

Eligibility/Demographic Survey and Life Line (Appendix C)

Eligibility/Demographic Survey

The demographic survey was designed to collect basic background information about the participant. Data collected will include socio-demographic information (e.g., race and

ethnicity, gender, place of birth, socioeconomic status, year in school, type of institution, and major). This information was used to identify the social structures that may have impacted the students' process of self-authorship and ability to activate planned happenstance. Additionally, information regarding racial/ethnic identification, year in school, and major was used to confirm eligibility in the study.

Participant-created Life Line

Goldman (1992) defined a Life Line as "a way of helping people review their life histories up to the present and to become more aware of their values and needs and of factors that have contributed to their development and current status" (p. 617). Used as a qualitative assessment method in career counseling, the participant-created Life Line is a useful tool for opening up discussion about educational and career pathways. The Life Line in this study also drew from Staik's (2013a, 2013b) therapeutic practice of creating timelines to rework a person's life story.

Within the online demographic survey, participants were instructed to reflect on their experiences to date and create a chronological life line of positive and negative experiences that they believe influenced their life, educational success, and career pathways. They were asked to assess whether they saw the event as having an overall positive ("+") or overall negative ("-") impact on their life. Below was the example provided in the online survey of a Life Line:

- Parents enrolled me in dance and music lessons at age 4. (+)

- Moved to Japan at age 7. It was difficult to start a new school in a new country and have to learn a new language. (-)

- Joined the Girl Scouts. Helped me to be less shy and participate in more creative activities such as Japanese cooking/sushi making and arts and crafts. Also participated in an exchange with international Girl Scouts from other countries. (+)

- At age 10, teacher invited me to submit a poem to a competition. My first poem was published in the Department of Defense (all schools at military bases in Asia) publication. (+)

- Joined band in junior high school and high school. (+)

- Family discouraged application to out-of-state colleges. (-)

- Auditioned for musical in senior year high school. Didn't get cast. (-)

- Participated in open mic nights in college. (+)

The Life Line was used to guide segments of the in-person interviews with participants. I invited the participant to review the Life Line with me to identify any key experiences or patterns. The Life Line provided an additional lens for understanding how students of color in the arts developed self-authorship, as well as recognized and activated planned happenstance. The average time to complete the online survey, including the Life Line, was 15 minutes.

Interview Protocol (Appendix D)

The semi-structured interview protocol had a total of 19 open-ended questions and took an average of 45 to 60 minutes to complete. Questions based on the theoretical framework were developed through an extensive review of the literature and in consultation with a current professional in the field of career development in higher education, as well as a professional arts writer/editor. A semi-structured interview format allowed for other themes to emerge that were not present in the protocol questions, such as additional questions that emerged from examination of the Life Line. This format also allowed for the flexibility to understand the complex experiences of participants through follow-up or clarification probes (Merriam, 1998).

Pilot Test

Since a critically integrated approach to self-authorship and planned happenstance has not been previously examined, it was necessary to conduct a pilot test of the instruments to affirm their content-validity (Creswell, 2014). Two undergraduate seniors majoring in a

humanities-related field (e.g., English, history, philosophy, foreign languages, etc.) at two local four-year universities were recruited for participation in the piloting of instruments. The criterion for participation was chosen due to the parallel experiences of humanities/liberal arts students with arts students in general. Like arts students, students in the humanities and liberal arts contend with perceptions of their chosen field as having limited employment viability (Nicholas, 2018). In the process of constructing career identities, humanities and liberal arts students also learn to become self-aware and recognized potential supportive opportunities for career development. The pilot study confirmed the clarity of the demographic survey and interview questions. An additional question regarding direct experiences with discrimination in the course of students' academic and career pathways emerged in both interviews and was added to the final interview protocol.

Procedures

Students from an initial list of personal contacts were invited to participate in the study through an e-mail or social media solicitation. Art professors, professionals, and art student organizations were also contacted for referrals to the study. Once eligibility was confirmed, participants were instructed to complete the consent form, the remainder of the demographic survey, and Life Line. At the end of the survey, participants were asked to schedule their interview and, optionally, refer additional student artists to partake in the study. Upon receiving the results of the survey, participants were contacted to confirm the interview time and location. While I initially preferred to conduct in-person interviews, accommodations for online interviews via the internet video messaging platform Zoom were also arranged for participants who were unable able to meet in person due to geographic distance or other reasons. Ultimately, all the interviews were conducting via Zoom due to national Covid-19 restrictions. Participants were also offered the option of receiving a $10 Amazon gift certificate as a gesture of appreciation for their involvement in the study. Participants who chose to opt in were sent a gift certificate via email upon completion of the interview. All interviews were audio or video recorded.

Before each interview, results of the demographic survey and participant created Life Line were reviewed to determine whether any responses required further clarification in the interview portion of the study. At the beginning of the interview, participants were thanked for their time; I also re-explained the purpose of the study, ensured confidentiality, and established pseudonyms for participants. The semi-structured interview protocol was used as a guide and additional questions were asked as needed. Applying interview techniques such as using probes for clarification or summarizing to affirm understanding of participants' responses, I performed verbal member checks with participants throughout the interview (Creswell, 2015). Field notes were also taken alongside the interviews to record observations of the participant, tone, and observable emotions.

Interview transcriptions began within 24 to 48 hours of each interview. Transcripts were reviewed two to three times prior to beginning the coding process to gain an overall understanding of participant narratives (Creswell, 2015). During this process, written records were maintained to capture my reflections on the emerging narrative. Participants were also offered an opportunity to review and verify accuracy of the narratives for member checking (Creswell, 2014). While no participant responded to the offer for member checking, 29 of the 32 participants requested a copy of the final dissertation. Transcripts and Life Lines were analyzed using the qualitative analysis software MAXQDA.

Two colleagues were identified to provide peer debriefs during the course of the dissertation study. The first person is an assistant dean of student and community life currently providing career development services at a private four-year university based in Southern California. The second person is a professional writer and artist, with numerous publication credits, whose works focus on digital art, computational media, games, and biotechnology. These peer debriefers provided ongoing feedback on development of the instruments and interpretation of the data to ensure the credibility of the narratives (Bazely, 2013; Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019).

Data Analysis

Stories from the Life Lines and qualitative interviews provided the most substantive data for the study. The data was analyzed in two overarching phases: 1) construction of master narratives and 2) thematic analysis. The initial process of narrative analysis involved: 1) extensive text analysis of the transcript, 2) analysis of the text for chronology, 3) retelling of the individuals' stories in chronological order, and 4) restorying to develop a master narrative (or representative narratives) (Creswell, 2012). Reordering the interviews for chronology were primarily guided by the participants' lifeline. Creation of the master narratives was guided by the following literary form: biographical narrative. The analysis was aimed at capturing the student's personal growth and identity development during the journey along academic and career pathways in the arts (Kim, 2016). To create the master narratives, the process of narrative smoothing was employed to ensure that the story (or stories) were coherent and engaging (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019; Kim, 2016). Narrative smoothing is a way of interpreting and organizing the data around a theoretical framework or research question(s), with the goal of refining the participants stories in order to remove redundant, irrelevant, or disconnected information (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Kim, 2016) The presentation of chronological narratives, told in first-person, was helpful in understanding the academic and career pathways of students of color.

In the second analytical phase, contextual or textual analysis were applied to the seven completed first-person compositive narratives to identify key thematic concepts or common observations and differences (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019; Saldaña, 2015). In the first cycle, data were coded then categorized according to the theoretical framework. For self-authorship, descriptions related to the process of authoring one's life were coded. These processes included: 1) following the formula, 2) crossroads, 3) becoming the author, and 4) internal foundation. For planned happenstance, both planned and unplanned events were identified, along with examples of the key skills that can be developed to help activate planned

happenstance: 1) curiosity, 2) persistence, 3) flexibility, 4) optimism, and 5) risk-taking. In the second cycle, additional codes, using attribute, magnitude, structural, and in vivo coding, were created to capture emergent patterns (Saldaña, 2015). Attribute coding was conducted to analyze demographic information collected. Magnitude coding was applied to Life Lines and transcripts to assess perceptions of positive or negative association with experiences. Structural coding was used to code and categorize responses to questions in the interview protocol, as well as the overall research questions. In vivo coding was employed, in concert with structural coding, as another way of capturing the direct stories/words of participants. All codes were then grouped according to categories and subsequently reviewed for thematic patterns to create a comparative analysis of students' experiences. This second analytical phase provided a greater understanding of the ways that students of color in the arts developed self-authorship and enacted planned happenstance. MAXQDA, a qualitative data analysis software, was used to assist in content analysis and coding.

Credibility and Trustworthiness

Unlike quantitative studies, reliability and validity are not typically the goal of narrative studies; however, it is important to strive for credibility and trustworthiness throughout the process (Creswell, 2014). This process involves ensuring that there is enough evidence within the narrative inquiry that the findings can be found believable and authentic (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; M. Q. Patton, 2014). Collecting data to the point of saturation provided the rich, thick description needed to adequately communicate the findings. Additionally, employing peer debriefing in the research process helped to augment the accuracy of the narratives. The process of peer debriefing not only added credibility to the study, but also ensured that findings resonated with people other than the participants and the researcher (Creswell, 2012). Lastly, essential to the narrative inquiry process is the partnership that gets developed between the participant and the researcher. To this end, I performed member checks with the participant throughout the interview process. Sharing initial thoughts about the narrative with the participant

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and asking for clarification, when necessary, provided an opportunity to obtain additional comments on the study and findings and ensured that the participant was accurately portrayed.

Limitations

One key limitation that has been addressed in narrative research is the potential for participants to distort reported data (Creswell, 2012). Due to the nature of self-reported information, participants may have difficulty remembering certain events, have a fear of repercussions from telling their story (particularly if the story is traumatic in nature), or embellish details in their story. However, narrative researchers remind us that "any story has an element of truth in it" and that stories shared by participants are the truth of their experience (Creswell, 2012, p. 512). Another potential limitation involved the process of narrative smoothing. The process of narrative smoothing has been critiqued as having the potential to overinterpret a participant's narrative to the point of telling a story that it becomes disconnected from the original experience (Kim, 2016). In the process of creating composite first-person narratives, it was important that selective reporting based on research assumptions about meaning-making related to participants' stories not bias the process (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2019; Kim, 2016). Utilizing strategies such as member checking and peer debriefing helped to offset such challenges.

CHAPTER IV: COMPOSITE NARRATIVES

Prologue

On January 23, 2020, I received verification of exemption for my dissertation study from my university's Institutional Review Board. I was eager to begin my interviews and looked forward to meeting the students who would be the next generation of artists and creative professionals who I believed will help shape societal views on the world. I sent out my first set of recruitment e-mails the very next day, but I struggled to get a single interview scheduled. For the next month I reached out to every arts and humanities contact I had, from professors to working visual and performing artists to support staff working in arts organizations. All my contacts sent encouraging messages of how important it was to hear stories of young artists of color and to better understand their educational and professional needs. But these words of encouragement did nothing to soothe my increasing anxiety as week after week passed without a single sign-up.

As I re-tooled my marketing and outreach strategies to reach out directly to art departments and student organizations, news of a new virus—Covid-19—began to spread. Initially, I paid little attention as the virus seemed isolated to China, then Asia, then Italy, and other parts of Europe. Even when the first case was reported in California, I was oblivious to the potential impact on local life as I was primarily concerned about the slow progress on my dissertation.

On March 13, 2020, I conducted my first interview and scheduled my second interview for three days later. I was encouraged by these students to start posting calls for participants via Instagram and Twitter so that they could forward to their friends and classmates. I had neglected the power of social media among these younger students, but Felicity and Harriet bolstered my spirits and confidently assured me that other interviews would be scheduled.

A few days later, on March 19, 2020, Governor Gavin Newsom issued a statewide stay-at-home order and interviews once again came to a halt (Calmatters Staff, 2020; Office of

Governor Gavin Newsom, 2020). In the first weeks of the pandemic, people turned to arts and creative expression to cope with the isolation of staying home. Entertainment from streaming media services and other creative industries provided distraction from the growing numbers affected by the novel coronavirus. Eventually it was clear that the arts would be one of the hardest hit sectors of the economy (Fego & Editor, 2020).

As I was coming to terms with how this global pandemic might derail my study on aspiring arts professionals, I was surprised to start getting inquiries from students now looking to participate in my study. From April to June 2020, I was able to conduct an additional 30 interviews all from students who were now forced to continue their education from home. They were coming face to face with the same realization that their chosen profession would now look very different in the light of the COVID-19 crisis. Ironically, with this social isolation, they now had the time to schedule interviews with me, and they wanted to share their stories and concerns about being aspiring artists of color in the time of this pandemic.

The following chapter provides seven composite first-person narratives representing the experiences of 32 students of color pursuing artistic careers in 1) classical music, 2) art history or museum studies, 3) film, television, and animation, 4) theater performance (i.e., dance, musical theater, or stage acting), 5) arts entrepreneurship (specifically music production), 6) visual arts, and 7) academia. The decision to group experiences into these seven key categories were based primarily on students' majors, as well as the most common categorizations of professional interests exhibited by the students. In order to write these narratives, I began by reading the transcripts at least two times and reordering for chronological development. I compared each participant's lifelines to identify common themes that pinpoint identity exploration and key events that helped them along their academic and career trajectories. Some of the themes by field/major included:

Table 1 Key Themes by Field/Major

Field / Major	Key Themes

Classical Music	Early Family Support
	Impact of Parents' Divorce
	Narrowing Interests
	Intersectional Identities
	Fighting Bullies
	College Choice and Experience
	Imposter Syndrome
	Mentors
	Social Networks
	Strong Vision for the Future
Arts History or Museum Studies	Early Family Support
	Developing Arts Identity Early
	Racial Identity
	College Experience and Trauma
	Intersectional Identities
	Impact of Pandemic
Film, Television, and Animation	Immigrant Narrative
	Early Family Support
	Peer Support and Friendships
	Developing Arts Identity Early
	Intersectional Identities
	Lack of Institutional Support
	Impact of Pandemic
Theater Performance	Early Exposure to Arts
	Impact of Parents' Divorce
	Fighting Bullies
	Intersectional Identities
	Developing Arts Identity Early
	Community College and Transfer Experience
	Making Opportunities
	Impact of Pandemic
Arts Entrepreneurship – Music producer	Early Family Support
	Teacher Support
	College Choice
	Intersectional Identities
	Making Opportunities
Visual Arts	Early Family Support
	Early Resistance to Arts
	Intersectional Identities
	College Choice and Experience
	Developing Arts Identity Later
	Impact of Pandemic
Academic Path	Fighting Bullies
	Teacher Support
	Developing Arts Identity Later
	Community College and Transfer Experience
	Intersectional Identities
	Mentors
	Lack of Institutional Support
	Imposter Syndrome and Social Networks

Through the process of narrative smoothing, I was able to develop seven engaging narratives that attempt to capture the common voice of these remarkable artists of color. These seven stories also represent common themes among the interviewees that embody their experiences with development of their identity through self-authorship and how they enacted planned happenstance to advance their educational and professional goals.

Pursuing a Classical Music Career

This first story is a composite narrative of Reina, Sarah, and Harriet—three young women immersed in the world of classical music as aspiring instrumentalists. This composite first-person narrative explores the musician's journey from the perspective of a woman of color following a set path for her academic and career development to eventually developing her own voice and identity as an artist of color.

Narrative Summary

Table 2 Description of Key Themes in Classical Music

Field / Major	Key Themes	Description
Classical Music	Early Family Support	Strong support from mother and grandmother, despite being the only musician in the family.
	Impact of Parents' Divorce	Father not as involved.
	Narrowing Interests	In elementary and junior high, was involved in many extracurricular activities, but ultimately had to put everything else aside to focus on music.
	Fighting Bullies	Experienced bullying in early years.
	College Choice and Experience	High expectations from family to attend college. Experienced challenges navigating college as a first-generation college student from a low-income background.

	Imposter Syndrome	Attributes successes to luck rather than effort.
	Mentors	Limited mentors that addressed all aspects of social identities. Mentors either addressed issues of race or gender, but not both simultaneously.
	Social Networks	Built strong social networks among mentors and peers.
	Strong Vision for the Future	Awareness of options and how to reach ultimate career goal.

In the Beginning

Not one person in my family is musical. My mom was a dancer; I suppose that's sort of musical, but no one really played an instrument or sang or knew anything about the musical field. But my grandma steered me toward music. I began singing in church before I can even remember—I was a three-year-old toddler being forced to sing with older kids, mostly 14-year-olds. But I was shy and really quiet and had stage fright. *My first memory is of being in front of a huge crowd, and like I cried the whole time.*[7] I would get punished afterwards for crying, *but then after that you couldn't get me to stop.* I became a good stage performer, or *I just didn't want to get in trouble* anymore. Not only did my grandma push me into being in the choir, but my godparents were also the pastor and first lady of the church. It just felt like everybody wanted me to perform. Looking back, I just have to laugh because I really was scared, but the church choir also shaped me and became a part of who I am.

By the time I was seven, I began singing in the school choir. The classes were early in the morning—*imagine a seven-year-old asking to wake up to get to school an hour early every*

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[7] Italicized texts represent direct quotes from Reina, Sarah, or Harriet.

day! But my mom and grandma really supported my interest in music. They were also big on education, so this was all part of how they encouraged me.

Like many kids I knew, I started taking piano lessons during elementary school. First it was just random lessons from a couple musicians at church, but then I enrolled in formal piano lessons. *I hated it.* I stopped taking those lessons about a year or so later. I maintained my role in both the church and school choir. Actually, I was asked to lead the children's choir in church. I also began competing in solo voice festival competitions and regularly attending an annual young elementary music symposium. Choir was a huge part of my life.

Finding My Instrument

I joined middle school band as a trombone player in the sixth grade. It was like finding my community. *Marching band of course was like really big in the Midwest.* It was its own culture—*I was part of marching band; I was a marching band nerd*. *I joined the band with two of my friends, my best friends still, we're very close, and they're also in music now. When we joined the band, my school just had a bunch of instruments and I remember looking at all the instruments and just picking up the trombone because I thought it was cool. My dad later bought me a little pocket trumpet because he also saw that I was really interested in music.*

The middle school band director was really excited, he said, *"Hey, there aren't any girls playing trombone. I want to see the representation. If I get an all-female brass section, I'll get Beyoncé to come to the school, I promise."* He said all this stuff, it never happened of course, but it was something that really helped me look forward to the trombone. *I was looking forward to just stand out and be different.* It's funny though, at 10, 11 years old, you don't really process what it means to be the only girl playing a brass instrument or even the only person of color in the music room. It just wasn't that deep; you just want to play your instrument because it's fun. But then *someone tells you it's different and then you're like, "Oh, okay" and you just go for it. That's like the fearlessness of that age.* But the band director, he was really excited, and it made me excited.

Narrowing My Interests

During elementary school I also found myself interested in two other activities: community theater and recreational basketball. It was fun to be able to explore different interests. *I got involved in a community theater summer program at age eight.* By that time, *I really enjoyed being on stage*. I also found a love for sports. Joining recreational basketball in the fifth grade was great. It *taught me loads of discipline*, which also helped my music. I was involved in so much as a kid.

I participated in musicals, competed with my team, and by middle school I had made All State Band. It was a big deal, but it also took a lot of time. Even though looking back, I probably *developed some bad habits in marching band.* It was fun, and it let me feel like a normal kid. As I got more advanced with my instrument, it was clear that I could no longer have time for everything.

In ninth grade, I joined a program called the Talent Development Program. And that program, it's geared towards minorities in classical music. They provide lessons, funds, exposure to what you need in order to pursue a classical career. So, when I joined this program, it was sort of a commitment because this program was investing in my future. So for me to be able to get free lessons from musicians from the city *symphony, and have stipends for summer festivals and travel fees, I had to declare, "Okay, if this is what I'm gonna do, I have to make up my mind now." That really began when I was 14.* I quit basketball in ninth grade, and *this was me choosing my career*. I still participated in school musicals, but that was part of school.

I almost didn't pursue music because when I was 13 we had to move from one part of the country to another. *I did no music in the eighth grade.* Rejoining band in high school and being part of the Talent Development Program helped me to get back on track. I was lucky, the Band Director at my school had a pamphlet regarding auditions. *I guess word got out to all the public schools and band directors in the districts. I think the band directors found out about it because they made sure that the local schools knew to recruit from these schools.*

So, *I did band all four years of high school. I was a band officer, the librarian two out of the three years possible, and the third year I was promoted Band Captain. I also did jazz and symphonic band all four years of high school. When I graduated high school, I was accepted into the top five conservatories in the country.*

Facing Racism

Band was great and I really felt at home there, but I still loved the stage and remained involved in musical theater during high school when I could. I played in the pit as the trombone player for a couple shows, was a member of the chorus for a show my freshman year, and then in sophomore year, *I was given a role to play in a Black History month play because another actor couldn't perform.* I felt like to get on stage as a performer, I could only get roles that were stereotypical to my race or what I looked like. *I mean, I experienced racism in theater when I did it in high school. I loved being on stage. I loved acting and if you put me on stage and gave me stuff, I would love to do it… when I'm in a comfortable space. But I started to realize that this particular high school space wasn't very welcoming for me.*

The weird thing was that when *I came out as bisexual to the group most of them were okay with it.* Most people in the honors theater class didn't really respond, but when I came out as atheist they were definitely not okay with me. *"But you still believe in Jesus, right?" was one of the girl's responses.* I was like, *"I mean he was a real person. Sure."* And then there was *my theater teacher who was just racist, especially to Hispanic people and just for brown and black people in general.* I remember she *straight up told me to my face, "No offense, Sophia, but I don't like Mexicans."* And I remember thinking, *"I'm not Mexican. I'm part Honduran, but why are you telling me this?"*

I like to think that *I'm a very open person when it comes to my own internalized prejudices. I have a very strong prejudice against White women. I feel like I have to shift myself and my personality to them. I generally don't feel as trusting towards them, which is a lot of the reason why I don't necessarily like part of the music department. They have just like*

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stereotypical Southern White, maybe not Southern White woman, but middle class, middle upper class White woman that's very condescending towards me and that really grinds my gears.

I often felt silenced by my White women teachers, especially the theater teacher. *I remember talking about this after Trump's election. There were these two girls in my class. One of them was Black and the other was White and they were arguing back and forth because one of them was a Trump supporter and one of them hated him. They started crying and my theater teacher said, "Okay, well, let's sit and have a discussion about it."* I was excited, but then when I tried to share my experience as someone who was mixed race, she kind of blew me off and was like, *"Oh, we've already heard that before from you."* Other students had also accused her of being racist. There was this one student in particular, but she was dismissed because she was already dubbed as someone who was a troublemaker. She was just really outspoken. But the teacher didn't like that. The theater teacher tried to say she wasn't racist, *"I see everyone like M&Ms. We're all different colors and we're all the same on the outside."* I look back on that and I roll my eyes at people who say they're colorblind. I think that's really a new racism.

Even when I tried to audition for other shows, she never allowed me to audition for main characters, just the minor characters who were usually some kind of ambiguous race or oversexualized version of a brown woman. She was also *just an anti-immigrant person*. And that influenced how she cast shows as well. It was hard. *Both of my parents are immigrants and so that really hit home*. That was part of the reason why I stopped doing theater and decided to focus on trombone performance instead. There's still bias there in the classical world, but with theater, it was clearly *not a space for me and I'm tired of dealing with the racist bias within it because it's so visual. In music, generally, no one gives a damn about how I look. If I play well, I play well. It's not as much as a big deal like for casting.* Maybe if there was a different teacher who was more inclusive, things would have been different. But with the Talent Development

Program, I had to choose between performing on stage or in the pit. That teacher made it an easy choice.

Going to College Wasn't a Choice

Even though my mom and dad were around they were separated, and mom worked all the time. So, like I said, my grandma mostly raised me. *I knew I was always going to college, but she didn't go to college.* And even though my mom went to college, *I felt like the first person to go to college.* She wasn't really around to help me, and grandma never had any experience with college. Plus, my mom didn't know anything about music programs, so it was just different. I just figured it out.

But for the most part, everyone was really supportive even if they didn't understand what I was doing. Especially those family members that are on the outside—aunts, uncles, cousins—*they think music is music, you're doing music, so you want to be a singer or a rapper.* They don't really get pursuing classical music. They're supportive, but *they're just like "Oh okay, okay." It's different when you say, "I'm passionate about medicine." Then they're like, "Oh, amazing!" Because those careers are something that's tangible for people,* but not music. With my Black family especially, *you see people in medicine. You see we have lawyers now, we have engineers, but when you say you're going into music, where do you see African Americans in music? They're either rapping or singing.* Whatever is mainstream. They're supportive but they don't get it. *But I was always going to go to school.*

The funny thing is, even though she didn't know anything about music, my mom said *she wouldn't help with school if I didn't do a music major.* I was the one that wanted to do something more practical, so I started out as a music education major, because I thought that's what I wanted to do in high school. *I never planned to be a performance major.* Even though I had taken higher leadership opportunities in high school, even first chair, *I always felt like I wasn't good enough to make it as a performance major. I never trusted myself before.* Honestly, I could have majored in pretty much anything because I had really good test scores. Even though I'd

always been playing, choosing *music was still the hardest thing that I've ever done just because I'm so scared of performing.* But mom really wanted me to do music and grandma, the whole family really, were convinced that it's what I need to be doing. They said, *"Why would you give up a talent that God's given you? You're so good."* But if I didn't choose music, I really don't know what else I would be doing. I'm in my 20s, but I've been doing music since I was three, practically my entire life. *I've never been given the opportunity to pursue anything else full-time.* Right now, I just have to focus, get it done, and graduate.

Navigating the System

When I made the leap from music education to performer, I became part of numerous ensembles, partly because I wanted to improve myself as a performer, but also because my scholarship required me to be in all these groups. It was tough to juggle, especially when they would just assign you to any ensemble. Sometimes I'd go to the office and try to negotiate out of it, but then they'd come back with, *"Well, you have to* be in this group*, or we could cut your scholarship."* I ended up being in every single ensemble that you can be in as a trombonist. Even when I try to explain that I can't possibly be in everything, I'm told that I have to take it up with the financial aid office because my scholarships stipulate that I have to perform in these ensembles. Then when I talk to financial aid, they send me back to the music department because they say it's the department that made up those rules. It makes it hard to really pursue what I want because I'm restricted by the type of scholarships that I have. I think because I'm a first-gen college student and I have to have these scholarships. I don't have the same luxury that other students have to turn down some of the smaller ensembles that don't really help with my future goals. It also feels like every year, the department assigns me to more ensembles, even though the amount of aid doesn't change. It's frustrating.

On top of all the challenges with my finances and schedules, sometimes it just feels like there's no place for a woman of color in classical music. I remember attending my first national trombone workshop in DC and *I felt really uncomfortable because I was the only girl and the*

only black/black person there. It's so different now from when I first joined band and the director was so supportive about having an all-girl brass section. I remember I was at the workshop for the entire week from Monday to Saturday, but *by that Thursday, I had orchestra class and I skipped it and I went to my room and cried. I was like, "What am I doing here? I don't want this. This is an uncomfortable space that I'm in.* That's when I realized that as much as I loved trombone, I wasn't like the rest of the people in the program. I had lost that obsession. *It was nice that there weren't any girls there because I had a room by myself, which meant I had a room to cry by myself, but it was all guys, all of them White.* That's when I started asking myself, *"What am I trying to do?"*

Even though my program was *trying to box me into being a classical musician*, I realized that I needed explore other options. *If I were trying to be like the principal in the Philharmonic, that would be great, but like I really don't see me doing that.* I just don't see women that look like me in those roles, or even just women period. So many of these orchestras *they've never had a female principal in many sections.* I remember reading there was this *female clarinetist, and the conductor at this world-renowned orchestra wanted her, and the other section or the other principals or the other instruments voted no. The Berlin Phil still has not had a female principal for any concert.* And that's clarinet, not even trombone. *And also, she's White. She hit the demographic; she could easily sit up there. I think recently they had a female trumpet player or French horn or something, but that was within my lifetime. She's the first female in hundreds of years. Just now! And they're all White. That's cool, but it's going to take a long time until any Black person, let alone me would be allowed in, and I'm just being realistic.* I still want it, but I need to know that I have other dreams and other options that I can pursue.

What's helped me the most to adjust to everything has been joining the Black Student Union. The first couple of years, I was just trying to figure out my identity at my school, in my program. I think those early ages, 18 through 21, *are vital years in growth. Well, they were for me anyway*. In high school, I felt more connected to my Hispanic, my Latina background, but in

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college I wanted *to be involved with more Black students, that's when I got involved with the Black Student Union.* That's when I was finally able to *gauge who I am.* I remember thinking, *this is the kind of person that I want to be,* and I was able to start understanding my identity in classical music and in my program. I ended up serving as president for two years.

Finding Support

I admit, though, I'm luckier than most. *I have a mentor in the Metropolitan Opera, he's from Texas and he really advocates for people like me and is very supportive. And then, there's this professor of jazz, a trombonist from another university that has recently become my mentor.* But in my own school there's really no one to talk to. *There are two Black females on faculty in the music department and they're both vocalists. One is a jazz singer and the other's the gospel choir director, very stereotypical of what you think Black people should be doing in a music department. There's one Black male and he's a jazz pianist.* I took a semester with him *just to have someone to talk to.* My own faculty advisor *is a White female, and we talk about women issues, but we can't talk about race. Like she gets that it's hard to be female, and she's shared how she had to teach herself with no females around and had to stand up for herself and make sure she wasn't overlooked.* I'm learning from her how to be assertive as a woman, *and I'm just applying that to being a person of color as well.*

Really, *I've been the only female trombone player for about three or four years.* I my classes you just feel the *masculinity and you just realize that you don't feel comfortable all the time.* But I've been able to build some great relationships. *I have female colleagues that I adore so much and when I get a chance to play with them, it's something special.* I've sought out smaller ensembles where I can play with other girls and it's great because they also understand what it's like when we're in the larger orchestras and there' only a handful of girls, and even less people of color. It's been really important to find those supportive spaces.

Future Aspirations

As challenging as it's been to find support and stay motivated in music, I still want to play in a symphony orchestra. As a junior, I know that will mean more classes and maybe pursuing my master's degree in music in a city where I can continue to be mentored by professional musicians. Maybe a larger city with a strong symphony like Boston, Chicago, Dallas, *anywhere from San Francisco to Jacksonville!* But I also know that I have options. I can go to Los Angeles and *pursue a career as a studio musician or go to New York and try and play in pit orchestras on Broadway, or I could go to Nashville and pursue song writing or orchestration there.* But my ultimate dream is to *build a nonprofit organization structured around minorities in classical music. Because it was done for me, I would want to continue something like that and figure out my own way of doing that. I think that will really start with having a platform in an orchestra. That's why I'm really working to pursue that first. Symphony musicians just have a lot more resources and access to different people that are higher up, that have more power.* I would have access to organizations and conservatories when visiting different cities and schools with an orchestra. From there, *I feel it will come, especially with the networks that I have already built.*

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Pursuing a Career in Arts History or Museum Studies

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In conducting these interviews with aspiring art historians, a couple of the students shared how disruptive the current global pandemic has been not just for their education but for their living spaces: *Due to the coronavirus outbreak, my university evicted me from my housing, and I was forced to come home early.*[8] Planned internships were put on hold indefinitely and remaining courses had to be taken online. Experiential learning related to the practical aspects of arts management and curating were either discontinued or had severely limited availability.

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[8] In this section, italicized texts represent direct quotes from Angela, Aliyah, Stephanie, and Alice.

Having to return to their small hometowns, the students shared concerns about opportunities in their university communities disappearing. Yet, they persevere—*we're not devastated though. I'm looking to volunteer at the local gallery and hope to continue learning both the artistic and business sides of the art industry.* This composite narrative is the story of resilience.

Narrative Summary

Table 3 Description of Key Themes in Art History or Museum Studies

Field / Major	Key Themes	Description
Arts History or Museum Studies	Early Family Support	Strong support from mother and father for academics and arts.
	Developing Arts Identity Early	Early exposure to arts and Black artists helped define arts identity.
	Racial Identity	Navigating academic and professional expectations from extended family based on Black racial identity.
	College Experience and Trauma	Experience with sexual assault strongly impacted early academic experience. Also, experience racial trauma during study abroad in South Africa.
	Intersectional identities	Experiences as a Black woman defined her perspective as a potential art historian and/or museum curator.
	Impact of Pandemic	Experience with coronavirus impacted final year in school (transition to online) and potential post-college choices.

An Early Foundation

When I was two, *my parents enrolled me in a Montessori School. We had very little money and were living out of a small apartment on the south side of Chicago, so the school supplemented my tuition out of charity.* My family always talks about *how much that school*

affected the way I learn, and it's odd because my sister and my brother, they both also went to Montessori schools, not the same one, but those schools just set you up to be such a better student. From then on, *we were always top of our class—grade A students without really trying hard, which sounds braggadocios,* but my parents really do think it was that early education that set us up. We were always really creative kids, and *I don't know too much about the science behind the Montessori way of teaching, but I do know that it affected me, and it affected my siblings very strongly.*

I stayed at that school till I was about seven. I still remember one of my teachers at Montessori. *She was very kind and attentive, and she taught me how to create freely but with a very precise control of my mediums.* I remember *I could draw straight lines like straight as a ruler just from how much she practiced with me. She taught me about coloring and doing details or using this brush versus this brush. I think she really only paid that much attention to those things because I showed an interest in them more that the other kids.* I always remember her because *she was my first teacher who looked like me.*

Then my mom enrolled me in this art academy. It was right next to my dad's work, and I remember we would always walk by it and see the kids *working on their crafts and stuff. One summer my mom asked me if I wanted to sign up and so we did. I had this great painting teacher, and it was the first time I'd met someone who just painted for a living. And he looked like my dad.* It's embedded in my memory because it was *like a real thing that happens, and it was a real thing that happens for people like me.* I had lessons with him for three summers. *He taught me color theory and perspective and how to go about creating original work. And he taught me the ethics of art, like how not to plagiarize, how not to copy ideas.* It was a lot for a little kid, but I really appreciated him. Between those two teachers, they really gave me a solid foundation for pursuing art.

A Strong Educational Foundation

I really have to credit my parents for setting up the path early for me to be academically successful. They were really young parents and they both worked. My dad, especially, *always had this want for me and his future children after me to receive the best education possible, or at least to get the best education they could from the schools they went to.* In elementary school, they enrolled me in extra enrichment classes. *I would be taken out of the classroom to do extra readings and other enrichment work*, and it really helped me be an advanced student. When I was seven or eight, we moved to another state for my dad's job, and *it was in an area that was predominantly White.* From then on, *I've never gone to a school that was super diverse, but also in that aspect, schools that are in diverse areas aren't always the best funded schools, aren't always the schools with the best courses or the best teachers.* The communities we moved to because of my dad's job *were in more predominantly White neighborhoods, and more resourced neighborhoods.* I don't know if that was their plan all along to make sure that my siblings and I got the best education, or if that just happened.

Developing an Arts Identity

It was hard being the *only Black family in our neighborhood.* But like I said, *a White school district meant better funding and I was able to take the kinds of arts classes I never would have thought possible. I've been afforded the privilege to go to privileged schools where I've taken courses that some kids couldn't even imagine taking in high school. For example, I worked as a lab technician my junior year in high school in a lab that had 3D printers, laser cutters; I was learning 3D fabrication at age 16.*

The thing is, even though I always did well in my regular academic classes, *I spent most of my time in the art room.* It helped me survive my *experiences with racial microaggressions, or sometimes major aggressions, during my schooling.* I was bullied and at times lost confidence in myself and my abilities. I wasn't too social with the kids in school, and I was closest to my art

teacher. I was *lucky to have a mentor that was extremely encouraging, knowledgeable, and kind.* She encouraged me to pursue my passions and helped me with my different applications.

In my senior year of high school, I was admitted to a pre-college arts program *that not only honed my creativity and introduced me to the art industry, but also allowed me to take classes like Government and Policy, which inspired me to include social activism in my career goals.* I joined the city's Teen Arts Council[9] and contributed to building an arts community, especially in underserved areas. I also became involved with an Afro-Caribbean Cotillion program, which helped me understand community building and instilled in me the desire to give back to my community. These outside opportunities helped me deal with the social isolation I felt at school and gave a purpose to my art.

Am I Black Enough?

Though I was going to school in these White neighborhoods, *my parents were very interested in the children having our own minds and being aware of the world around us. By age ten, we were discussing systemic issues around the dinner table.* My schools may not have been diverse, but my parents made sure that I connected with people that looked like us. *I joined a Girl Scout troop run by a family friend whose daughter was in the troop. I participated in Girl Scouts for around four years. Looking back our Girl Scout troop was the only one I knew that was majority Black and people of color.*

I'm grateful that my parents have always been so supportive and really open to educating us about social issues. But coming to terms with what it means to be a smart successful Black woman was and is still really hard for me. At one point, I remember being made to feel like pursuing an education was a "White thing". For some of my Black friends and even some family members, the way I talk was seen as *"talking White" —talking with proper*

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[9] The Teen Arts Council was a local city initiative that involved youth in planning arts events for underserved communities.

grammar, talking with big words, talking in proper syntactical form. I don't know why people *have this concept that anything seemingly educated or scholarly is White.* But then *they'll commend me for it. For example, if I was in some lab research for some pharmaceutical company, they'll say "Okay. Go get your money. Do what you need to do. We respect you." But they'd still see it as something that is Caucasian designated.* Essentially, it was a White thing.

And yet, I've always been aware of my background and who I am. *My dad is Black, born in Alabama. Most of his family lives below the poverty line. My mother is Jamaican. They're Caribbean Islanders and they aren't necessarily poor. But they have this mentality that you do well in school, you go to college, you become a doctor, or you become a lawyer and that is success.* There's a clear idea of what success looks like and how you get there, which oddly it's to "act White."

Throughout high school, my mom's extended family *praised me a lot for my grades, for different academic awards, or my AP scores.* But when they found out that I wanted to pursue an arts degree, and *I'm not going to be a doctor or pursue a career in business or anything of that sort,* they started treating me differently. They were skeptical. I feel like they've definitely bought into the whole stereotype of *"what are you going to do with an art degree"*. I don't know. Maybe it's too White or not White enough.

Even when I look back at my life, *if you cut out the part about the South Side of Chicago and the part about how important it was to have a teacher looking like me, I would probably guess that this was a story of White person.* There are so many *preconceived notions and stereotypes that I have in my head because this doesn't look like something that an artist of color would do.* Even the town that I eventually grew up in, if you look it up, *it's a really, really small village* in the Midwest *and there are no Black people here. We are the only Black family here.* So, it's no wonder that I grew up thinking that the things that I do seem more part of White culture, especially when even my extended family thinks so.

But my dad *was a very artistic person.* I remember he used to paint a little. *He loved going to museums*, and he passed that on to me. I decided at some point it didn't matter what other people thought because between what I saw from my dad and the support I received from school, *something just clicked in my brain—if I like it, why not pursue it?*

Trauma and Persistence

I was excited to start college and truly focus on art. *But my university's general education curriculum barely allowed me to spend time actually creating art. So, I stopped painting to allow more time for study.* That ended up being a bad decision because then I took a course with a famous painter and she basically told me that *my work wasn't actually very good, and that I wasn't very original. It hurt. But it was good for once to hear an honest criticism that didn't come from a place of hate.* It came from a place of encouragement—*from "I know you can do better. You need to do better. You need to be painting every single day. You need to be practicing your craft, honing your craft, figuring out what you want to do."* I ended up getting a commission out of that experience. It woke me up to what it takes to be a creator.

Then later that year, *I was sexually assaulted, but told no one.* It wrecked me academically and mentally. I got *very sick and was unable to really advance educationally or career-wise. It left me unsure of how to move forward in a major,* if I could keep painting or if I should do something else. If it hadn't been for a course with a visiting professor on decolonizing African arts, I might have continued to be lost. This course *renewed my love in art making and showed me that practicing art is one of the best ways to understand art history.* It helped me focus all the pain and trauma of my assault into something that gave me purpose. And it also opened me up to exploring what else I could do in the arts.

I decided to go to South Africa for the summer to do an internship *at a cultural museum.* That ended up being a different type of trauma. While *it was fun being in a new country, I felt the racism in my work environment and isolation from my cohort.* I was the only Black student in this program. That whole experience of racism in South Africa was so different from what I

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experienced in the States. *Here there are subtle forms of racism, like people don't really want to give access to a Black woman all the time and* being challenged by White peers—*people kind of assuming incompetency, especially in group projects. There are so many assumptions about my intelligence, about my class, socioeconomic status.* But when I was in South Africa, it seemed more blatant. In the States, *if I want to be able to function, there's a lot that I just kind of have to ignore,* that I'm somehow able to ignore. *I have to choose my battles.* That wasn't always the case when I studied abroad.

When I came back from that summer, things here started to feel more intense. There's a confederate monument on our campus and protests happening daily. It started to feel like *I was in danger on campus. I don't like walking through campus I don't want to have to walk from my apartment to my class because I have to pass that monument. I have to pass the protesters and there are KKK who are out there.* I tried explaining to my professors the danger I felt, but it didn't really feel like they were understanding. It took a toll on my mental health. *I had several professors that hooked me up with the Accessibility Resource and Services center to help me with accommodations for my absences, but I didn't really feel like it was addressed well.* They would tell me that even with my accommodations from ARS, *my absences didn't count as university approved absences,* so my grades were still affected even though I had support from ARS.

Finding Support

At the end of the day, what really helped me was finding *people that I felt like I can talk to, and I can process with.* I joined the Black Student Association, and *it was exciting being around other people that looked like me that were at my academic level and that didn't think pursuing an education was White.* I started to feel more comfortable in my own skin and was able to find ways of focusing my interests. I also joined a Black student magazine as a content creator *where I've been able to meet other Black creatives and form a community.* It also helped that my school *finally got a Black psychiatrist and talking to her has been really helpful. She's*

helped me overcome many of the fears I had from my assault and from the racial climate

around campus. Having people like me that I felt safe talking to became a real turning point.

Also, because of my less than stellar experience at the cultural museum in South Africa,

I became even more determined to explore my options in art history and museum studies. *My*

love for African art history was reinvigorated by a visiting professor. She's Haitian-American and

took over the courses that were typically taught by this older White professor. She encouraged

us to *really get into the mind of scholar-practitioners.* We didn't just research Haitian altars, but

we would build these installations and really get into art making. She *allowed me to see art*

history in a different way. It was also one of the few times where *the class was predominantly*

made up of people of color, specifically Black people.

Taking her class showed me how *important it is to have the support of Black faculty.* It's

strange to me that in a field like Africana studies or African art history, most of the professors I

had were White. *To see a Black woman who was only 32 years old be an art history professor*

showed me not only what I could do, but what more still needs to be done. I decided to major in

art history with a museum theory and practice concentration. Choosing a concentration in

museum studies versus just studying art history would allow me to be part of the process of

choosing what gets to be in a museum. I realized just how important this was for me after my

museum internship. If folks are going to be studying or seeing African and African American art,

then shouldn't we get to curate that? One of the curators at our university museum became a

mentor for me and encouraged me by *giving me the opportunity to curate our Black Culture*

Center with student artwork. At the same time, I'm continuing with my own art and integrating

what I'm learning in art history, or specifically *the things that upset about what's missing in art*

history. It's like my own form of *resistance, like counter-narratives that I'm trying to create in my*

own art.

Much of what I do now *reflects the experiences of Black people and Black stories* and I

hope to continue being able to do that. *I love museums and gallery spaces*, and I want to *open*

up those spaces to include more diverse artists and make them more accessible to people that

don't really feel like museums are for them. Part of it is that most people *would never go to an*

art museum because it just doesn't look interesting, it just sounds very boring unless you like art

or unless your family's dragging you there. But if you make those places *interesting and reflect*

people's experiences then it would be more inviting. *And maybe later I could also be a mentor to*

people who are like me, who look like me, and create a village for other people.

Pursuing a Career in Film, Television, and Animation

Identity and representation in media are common themes not only among the five

interviewees represented in this narrative, but more and more in industry conversations. Back in

2015, media strategist and diversity and inclusion advocate, April Reign, created the

#OscarsSoWhite to address the lack of diversity in Hollywood. The problem she targeted was

the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences and their need to diversify their membership,

which at the time was 92% White and 75% male (Reign, 2020). Today, this lack of

representation in front of and behind the camera remains an issue that is at the heart of the

experiences of aspiring creatives of color in film, television, and animation. This narrative

captures the experiences of Alan, Nomi, Seth, Joyce, and Sally in their pursuit of a career in

film, television, or animation. As a group, these participants also represented an Latinx,

immigrant experience (four out of the five identified as coming from a Latinx background, while

one identified as Asian American). All five participants described their relationship to

immigration, whether through their own personal experience or their family history of

immigration. Their narrative highlights the idea that diversity should be examined beyond a

Black/White racial paradigm.

Narrative Summary

Table 4 Description of Key Themes in Film, Television, and Animation

Field / Major	Key Themes	Description

Film, Television, and Animation	Immigrant Narrative	Navigated family's downward occupational mobility and learning new language.
	Early Family Support	Strong support from family to pursue film.
	Peer Support and Friendships	Developed lifelong friendships during middle school. Sought allies during college.
	Developing Arts Identity Early	Early exposure to theater and arts helped define arts identity.
	Intersectional Identities	Experiences as an immigrant woman from low-income background influences her perspective as filmmaker.
	Lack of Institutional Support	Limited support from college advisors, especially in terms of resources for first-generation transfer students or for career support.
	Impact of Pandemic	Experience with coronavirus impacted final year in school (transition to online) and potential post-college choices.

Moving to America

I was five or six when my family moved to America. Before that, *I grew up in Baja California.*[10] I don't remember much, but I remember how hard it was *trying to adjust to living in a small apartment.* Before then we had a big house and a huge yard. My siblings, cousins, and I were always running around outside. We had so much family around us. It was great. When we came to the States, I just remember being indoors all the time and it felt so cramped, but also lonely. I also remember *we moved a lot then.* For a while we were even living with our aunt. *I guess there was this adjustment to living in a low-income household.* We *moved around to*

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[10] In this section, italicized texts represent direct quotes from Alan, Nomi, Seth, Joyce, or Sally.

multiple apartments almost like every year until we eventually moved into the house we live in now.

Even though it was a hard adjustment, we knew we had to move for my father's job. But as young as I was, I do remember it felt like we were all starting over. *I carried that experience with me throughout my entire life.* I remember hearing about classmates that live in these big houses, and they would talk about having cable and all these different snacks. It was my *first comparison as a kid that you're not in this place that they are, and you begin to become conscious as a young kid* how much your family is making.

When I started elementary school, it was really tough. *I didn't have any friends and I was very alone. I know what it feels like to be lost and to just be drifting.* It was like that for all of elementary school. *I was bullied for my accent, and I hid myself away in the library, where I fell in love with reading.* But it was a tough adjustment. *I thought that for the rest of my life, when somebody spoke to me in English, I would have to stop, translate what they said in Spanish, think of my response in Spanish, translate in English and then speak to them.* It was exhausting, so I would just stay quiet. I remember though, *every single time I realized somebody spoke Spanish, I would be so happy because I didn't have to do all that.* Even though I don't have to go through that level of translation anymore, that feeling of *"Oh my god, He speaks Spanish" never went away.* Whenever I meet someone that speaks Spanish, *I just feel more connected to them.* It's the language of home.

Finding My People

In middle school I found my friends, and they're still my friends to this day. Everyone says middle school was the worst and that you will suffer through it. But middle school was a blessing to me. It was a small school, a community, and we were all really close. *I think only 80 people graduated in our eighth-grade class.* After years of loneliness during elementary school I finally came to place that was so open and welcoming. Even our teachers were our friends. *I still babysit for my eighth-grade middle school teacher.*

My middle school also had a great arts program—theater, film, photography—I got into all of it. *I remember at one point I even did photography work for the school covering events.* And I was surrounded by people who were into the same things. It was such an encouraging environment. Then I had the opportunity to direct a couple of shows including *The Wizard of Oz* and *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown*. Originally, the teacher who *chose me to be the director said she was going to direct, too. She says I pushed her aside and I did everything. I directed and choreographed, and I don't even know how to dance! It was like this other part of me was just born immediately when I was given this task.* I felt like I found what I was meant to do. *I memorized everybody's lines, and I made a giant school bus for the set. I would come home so exhausted, but I was tired from doing something I love.* That was when I knew, *"I have to do this for the rest of my life."*

Unfortunately, my transition to high school was horrible. I wasn't happy the first year or so. I went from my small middle school community to this giant high school of nearly 3000 students. They had a small arts program, but it was mostly drawing and painting, some music, but no theater and no film. Even though I was doing stuff outside of school, *like I was already in the local YMCA film program,* I felt unfulfilled. Some students started a Creative Writing and Improv Club, so I joined. *But I had to drop out due to bullying.* I felt like I was in elementary school all over again.

So then I switched to an arts high school. At this school, *you pick a major and you audition to get in.* It was then that I was able to be part of theater and film classes again. I chose to focus on film, *and I met an incredibly encouraging high school teacher that showed me what I needed to do in order to go to college.* This teacher guided me in my *documentary during my senior year.* She helped me put together my portfolio and showed me that I could really do this.

In the meantime, I immersed myself film and theater outside of school, too. I joined a student after-school program where I was actually able to teach theater to younger students. I

attended an *extension program to study screenwriting where I wrote my first feature film.* By the time I applied to the university's film program, I felt ready.

Developing My Vision

Going to film school, I was reminded again how different I was from everyone else. *I'm finding that in my college journey the people that I really fit in with are not in the film major. That's kind of disappointing because there are very few people that I trust in the major that I'm able to divulge personal stuff about my life aside from career and film stuff.* Part of it may be because *people aren't necessarily wanting to tell stories in the same way.* Since high school, I've come from *a very social justice storytelling mindset.* My work in the community and my senior year documentary film class instilled that in me.

I learned that through storytelling in film, *I could foster more empathy in the world by humanizing people* that we often don't pay attention to. For my senior year project, I decided to create a documentary on the day in the life of our high school custodian. *He's the coolest guy. He loves his jo. He remembers everyone's names. He was someone that everyone knows, but also doesn't really know.* And it was amazing. He allowed me to *really explore his life and be vulnerable in front of the camera.* He even invited me into his home. He taught me what it was to *have pride in your work and create meaning out of the things you do.* I remember working on this documentary, telling his story, and *feeling so happy.* These were the stories I wanted to tell.

But in the film program, it's not like that. Everyone is just trying to make the next big blockbuster, and no one seems to share my perspective. *I look for allies in a lot of these rooms, but in the majority of my classes there are White men. There's four other women and two other people of color. It's not that I'm prejudiced towards White people, but it's been hard to connect.* At least with the people in my program it seems that *a lot of our values don't align,* and it comes out especially when you have to work on a film project together.

I've had to find community and that sense of social justice outside of my major. *The reason why I work for the Center for Intercultural Relations is because that's where the people*

of color are at. Even when I'm not working, I'm hanging out over there all the time. It's just a space where you can relax and where people are radical and willing to call out the institution and recognize your experience of being a person of color on a predominantly White campus institution. It's only at the center where I can talk about what it's been like to grow up as an immigrant from a low-income family. It's also the only place where people understand *microaggressions and not make you feel like it's all in your head.*

In my program, I feel like I've been made to feel uncomfortable because I don't look or think like everyone else. *It feels like professors have biases, and it's just easier to be comfortable with people who look like you. It's made me wary of how I present myself in all these spaces* where I'm clearly not part of the majority. Even when professors have offered to help me, it's hard not to feel like they're only helping me because I fill some kind of quota. I had a professor who once asked me, *"So are you poor? Like what class are you?"* I answered, *"Lower middle class, I guess."* And he's like, *"Okay. So yeah, really get into that in your application. Really play that up. And what's your ethnicity. Yeah, you know they like women of color, low income, really play all that up in your application so then you can get in."* I didn't know how to handle it. *There's this White guy* talking to me, a female student of color *and I was starting to have mixed feelings about it. It was like how some of people in the major will exoticize their ethnicity to make a specific film or get an internship or get a specific award or get in certain festivals.* It all made me feel like that's all I was good for, and that was the only way I could make the films—if I met their vision of a woman filmmaker of color. On top of that my school makes a big deal about being a Hispanic-Serving Institution and they *have all these career fairs for nonprofits and teachers and engineers and STEM. And nothing for the arts.* And nothing that specifically supporting students of color outside of these specific job areas.

The film professors just assume that you're going to struggle it out. At the end of college, you move to LA and you're going to struggle. They assume that's just how it is. But for many of my classmates, they have parents that will support them through unpaid internships. Or they

have connections to a studio or agent. *Nobody talks about how it is in these spaces, how in a lot of film sets you just don't get many people of color.* They tell us to make these connections during college. *Maybe I haven't tried hard enough, but I'm also a commuter. It's a little harder to be on campus all the time.* But I think the people in the major, the professors and other students, they just don't get it. *There's just a lack of people who share the same experiences as me.*

Will I Make It?

People tell me, *"You have a real talent in this, and I believe you can go so far. I could see it in you."* And I want to believe it. *I would love to change the industry in this way and really make an impact on a larger scale.* But then I think about my family that depends on me. They support me and tell me all the time, *"Make sure to mention me when you win an Oscar."* Even though *that's not my goal, it would be amazing. I'm proud to have their support*. But they also don't know what it's going to be like after graduation. They don't realize that initially most of the positions are unpaid or have very little pay. They're expecting me to start making money and help out my younger siblings, and I don't know how all of that will happen with me still being able to pursue my dream.

I was already feeling a little lost, but now with the pandemic, *I don't really feel like I can breathe.* How do I make the connections I need now when it was already so hard before the pandemic? I am trying. I realize that I can't rely on my film school to help me when it seems like they just don't know how to help me. It's not like I don't know how to hustle. I feel like I've been hustling since that first director gig in middle school. And when I really think about it, I do have connections. They're just not at my film school, but I do have my community. Still, with everything that's going on it's hard not to worry about *getting a job with the impending recession and everything going around with pandemic. The industry has been stopped. I have to wonder with all the factors going on, how is this going to affect my industry?*

Right now, all my classes have converted to being online and may stay online for the foreseeable future. Just as a student that's already posed so many challenges. I can't imagine the changes that have to be made across the industry. I also feel like it's really highlighted which students have resources and which don't. *All the classes I have left are production. I don't see the point in going to school and spending money on online film school because that just doesn't serve me. You get the experience by working with the equipment.* I have a documentary class this semester, I don't have my own equipment and I always do my editing on campus. Some of my classmates have access to personal cameras, and I'm *going to be filming on my phone camera? It's not the same thing.*

But I have a story to tell *as a "melanated" cultural worker,* and I'm determined to tell it. *August Wilson says, "my art is not political it just so happens that there's politics in it." It's just me.* So even though I have anxiety about my future and how I'm going to achieve my goals, I know that I will find the resources to get the story out there. I just have to remind myself that *I have gained the opportunity to work with all these things*, even if it wasn't directly in my school.

Pursuing a Career in Theater Performance

Since most of the students in this sample majoring in drama/theater arts and stagecraft were male, this composite narrative is written from a male student's perspective. However, the highlighted experiences represented the overall themes present across all six interviews. Similar to the narratives of aspiring creatives in film, television, and animation, this story highlights the issue of identity and representation in theater performance.

Narrative Summary

Table 5 Description of Key Themes in Theater Performance

Field / Major	Key Themes	Description
Theater Performance	Early Exposure to Arts	Exposed through various forms of arts and performance at an early age but was encouraged to pursue activities that were

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		perceived to be gender appropriate.
	Impact of Parents' Divorce	Father not as involved.
	Fighting Bullies	Experienced bullying in early years. Felt a lack of support from White teachers.
	Intersectional Identities	Continued to feel a lack of support from teachers especially around race, sexuality, learning disabilities, and mental health.
	Developing Arts Identity Early	Moving to an arts-based high school and joining theater program helped to form arts identity.
	Community College and Transfer Experience	Solidified arts professional identity during community college and influenced future choices.
	Making Opportunities	Adopts attitude of being prepared for any opportunity and to make opportunities happen.
	Impact of Pandemic	Experience with coronavirus impacted final year in school (transition to online) and potential post-college choices.

Just Me and My Mom

I was exposed to the arts at a very early age. Even before I was born, *my dad was into photography.*[11] There was this artistic aesthetic that was just present everywhere in our home. *At age four, I saw my first show, Oliver!, and I fell in love* with theater. *I remember the following year; I went on a school field trip to see my first symphony orchestra and that really cemented my love for music.* Seeing everyone on stage and dancing around made me so excited, but I

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[11] In this section, italicized texts represent direct quotes from Felicity, Trey, Neil, Kris, Tyson, and Olivia.

didn't really know how to focus that energy. I think since I was a boy, my parents thought I should be in sports. *I became somewhat involved in sports and activities with other kids, like basketball, football, karate, and gymnastics, even though I wasn't good at them.* I did like gymnastics though and it seemed close enough to musical theater and dance, but then my *parents told me I could not do gymnastics because it was too girly.* I ended up being a *self-taught dancer and learned moves from YouTube, MTV, BET and Soul Train.*

When I was six, I *moved to a new elementary school with predominantly White students and educators and instantly felt a sense of otherness.* Soon after, I started to get in trouble a lot in school. *I received my first office referral for repeated misbehavior when I was seven.* That's when my parents decided to enroll me in a whole bunch of activities. *I started taking music classes and after school programs to keep me out of trouble.* I also *befriended a small circle of other Black students and they became lifelong friends.* Between my new friends and my parents getting me involved in acting classes, I started having fun again. I kept up with acting and later even attended an acting camp. But what was great about the program my parents enrolled me in was that *they covered cinematography, then went to directing.* And because it kept me out of trouble my parents started to be more encouraging. They *were always telling me, "If you like it, go with it. Go do something."*

But when I was 10, my parents went through a divorce and from then on, *I was raised in a single-parent household. My father was present, but not as often as I would have liked.* I really didn't understand *why my mother wanted to leave* and it also felt like *my dad was leaving me for another family.* Later on, I understood why my mom divorced my dad. *There was more good to come out of that situation than bad. My dad was a verbally abusive person both to my mom and me. For me, it was important to see my mom take the leap during her divorce and be on her own. It means so much for me, it made her so strong. And I knew that's what she needed. It was a life-changing experience. I think that my growth would not have been the same if they*

had continued to be married. So, I was primarily raised by my mom. My dad was like in and out, though later mom made sure that he provided financial support, especially for school.

Fighting Bullies

In middle school we moved again and this time *I went to a predominantly Black and Hispanic* school. Thinking back, that's when I really started to become aware of how important it was for me to be in a diverse setting. My *high school was really diverse too*, *but once they made the split between AP* (Advanced Placement) *and curricular* (general education) *classes, the numbers just got a whole lot smaller. I was maybe one of three or four Black kids in an AP class. That became the moment where I realized, "Oh. I felt that sense of not really connecting with peers. I have a White teacher." Up until that point, I wasn't necessarily aware of the impact that diversity had because my middle school was a pretty diverse childhood classroom setting—* both the students and the teachers.

Even though the school was more diverse racially, I found it difficult to adjust overall. *I started to recede into computer gaming. I spent hours playing online MMORPGs* (massively multiplayer online role-playing games) *and watching videos off of YouTube.* I didn't interact too much with people. *I felt very distant to other students and could not connect with people my age.* It probably didn't help that I was bullied a lot. *I'm dyslexic, learning is really hard sometimes. There are so many things that I struggle with and so I began to believe that there was only so high that I could go.* People also didn't expect much from me. I was always told to *be realistic* and not reach too high, *to be more humble.* The thing is that *I have always been humble just by nature. There's so many things I feel that I can't do. I try my best*, but it never feels good enough, even now. But online, it didn't matter. It became easier to talk to people online than in person.

I also came out as bisexual after I moved schools. I thought after always feeling out of place in elementary school, that middle school would be *a little bit better. It was not. Seventh grade was just as bad as sixth grade. It went from people just taunting me to ganging up on me,*

like questioning me. I come from two heterosexual parents, and they didn't know how to help me. They told me *"We can't relate. Just said tell the teacher."* So, I tell the teacher and the teacher says, *"Stop telling me. We know! We're trying."* I didn't really understand what they meant by that—were they trying to get the students to stop bullying me? Or were they trying to get me to be more like everyone else? Some teachers would say they would have a talk about it to the bullies about it, but it's clear that they didn't have that talk. *I've only had one teacher openly tell a class to stop bullying me. Then it got to the point where it got violent.* But I wasn't going to let anyone *whoop my ass. I started fighting, and I got really angry. I got to the point where I questioned, "Why are people so mean to me?" And I started to be mean back.* I would get written up and suspended for standing up for myself and telling people to leave me alone. Nobody ever addressed the bullies. I ended up switching schools again *because a week into my eight-grade year, I got into three fights.* At that point, I was exhausted. I knew violence wasn't the answer but telling people to stop didn't work. So, I fought back. *It shouldn't have worked, but it did.*

Theater, My Home

High school wasn't any better initially. I was still pretty socially isolated, playing video games. *I learned strategy and computer skills, but I didn't learn how to be a person.* Still, I was able to start making money off my gaming. *I was able to buy a guitar and pay for lessons.* I boosted my confidence and *I felt accomplished*. Thinking back, I was probably depressed. My parents tried to help, but being separated, they had their own problems to deal with. Nothing *was really making me happy*.

But then I transferred to an arts high school and joined the theater program. I started being more active. *I joined choir and I loved it.* I started auditioning for different shows and *at age 14, I took part in my first musical, Wizard of Oz*. I saw my first show on Broadway later that year. Funny enough, it was *Wicked! I fell in love with theater and made it a point to enroll in theater classes* and audition for more shows. *I got my first lead as Bert in Mary Poppins*. In my

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senior year, I was selected to *perform on a traveling Broadway series with actresses Liz Callaway and Jeannete Bayardelle*. I knew from then on that this was what I wanted to do.

The Next Step

But when it came time for applying for college, my parents and I were worried about job security. I wanted to go to college for theater, but finances were a problem. So rather than go straight to a university, I decided *to save money, not take the SAT or ACT, but rather go to a community college where my father worked.* It delayed my timeline, but I was still able to pursue some community theater on the side. It wasn't perfect, but everyone felt comfortable with this decision.

When I first started at community college, I thought, *"I'm going to go in here and get out. I'm going to go to university and then I'm going to get the education I need."* I didn't really take it seriously. But then I got more involved. *I started making some very good friends and also learning about different facets of theater. I also started performing around town.* It was in community theater that I really learned how to start connecting with people. *I always worked with older people. It's not necessarily young kids in college working on college shows. I would be performing with older people who did this from six to ten at night because they had a nine to five.* It was eye opening seeing *people who don't want to give up on their dream, they're doing their dream.* But they weren't doing it full-time or professionally. It was still just a side gig. It really made me think about the reality of pursuing theater full-time.

I decided to transfer to a university that offered *a 100% job placement with an education degree.* It seemed like the logical choice. I could still perform, but then have the *degree of music education.* What I didn't realize was that the music education program was *specific to choral music. I wasn't getting any performance training*. That's when I realized I had another decision to make.

The Hustle

From then on, I decided that I would take every opportunity to support my theater dreams. *I continued auditioning for shows around town*. I also volunteered backstage to learn all aspects of stagecraft. I started taking *modern dance and jazz classes as electives* in order to improve my movement for musical theater. Changing my major to theater arts opened up more possibilities. *I joined a sketch comedy troupe* and started having some of my poetry published. I was being exposed to writing, performance, improvisation, tech, even voice acting.

I very much believe in hard work and getting what is deserved for you based on what you put in. Before I even apply for jobs, I know that I need to lay out the foundation. Whenever an opportunity comes my way, I do my best because you never know what will be offered to you out of that experience. *Like when my boss offered me* an opportunity to work as the light tech for a show. I was able to show him *that I am trustworthy,* and he was able to recommend me for professional theater work. *That comes from hard work. That doesn't come from luck or accidentally bumping into someone and showing them my resumé. That comes from my boss getting to know me. Making the connection that way is satisfying to me.*

Unfortunately, the pandemic has blown up my plans. *Coronavirus has cancelled all my shows that I was in and now I have to* figure out another plan for making connections and opportunities. It's ironic how challenging it is to now have to *learn my craft online. I feel like I'm losing my sense of identity and purpose.* But I don't want to take any steps back, so I'm trying to find ways of making my own opportunities. *The thing my teachers always said is if you are always working, you are going to do the best you can do when the opportunity comes. So, I'm ready in the wings because* you never know when it will come. But I don't want to work just for the sake of that *lucky break. I want to work towards something, have a goal. A lot of people wait for the big breaks, but I don't like to wait. I just want to make today, and I have ideas that are feasible to make today.*

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Pursuing a Career in Arts Entrepreneurship as a Music Producer

Intersectional identity as a woman of color is a strong theme in this composite narrative of aspiring music producers. Three out of the four participants in this study identify as women of color, which strongly influenced the female voice represented in this narrative. This is also the only narrative that represents art school as the post-secondary institution of choice. Out of the 32 participants in the study, only three choose to attend art school, and two out of those three were pursuing majors related to arts entrepreneurship and music production. I made the deliberate decision to capture this tale of being an art school student as part of this composite narrative because it was important to highlight the different pathways into post-secondary arts education.

Narrative Summary

Table 6 Description of Key Themes in Arts Entrepreneurship - Music Production

Field / Major	Key Themes	Description
Arts Entrepreneurship – Music Producer	Early Family Support	Influenced strongly by brother who was a musician. However, parents had limited means to regularly support music lessons.
	Teacher Support	Strongly supported by music and academic teachers to pursue goals.
	College Choice	Due to professional aspirations, chose to go to art school rather than an academic university.
	Intersectional Identities	Experiences as a woman of color from low-income background influences her perspective as music producer.
	Making Opportunities	Adopts attitude of being prepared for any opportunity and to make opportunities happen.

Cultivating the Music

I always had music in me. I was that kid who *recognized music in a way other kids couldn't—kids sometimes don't sing on key, but I have something called perfect pitch.*[12] *I don't know if it's extremely perfect pitch, but it was definitely way better than other little kids.* Unfortunately, my family didn't have the finances to really support me the way other kids that were really good in music were supported. *I'd say I was hindered by not having private lessons early and so I didn't learn the fundamentals of things like music theory* until college. Fortunately, I had resources available to me through my school. *I was part of a program where they bussed inner city kids to schools in suburbs to get a better education. That being said, I was part of a predominantly White school in one of the richest cities in the country from second grade until I graduated high school.* Even now, I go to a predominantly White college.

But really it was *my brother who had inspired me to pursue music. He was really good at playing the piano and violin. I remember watching him and I was with my crappy little Yamaha keyboard, and I was just amazed.* I was maybe eight or nine and he was in his teens, and I was like, *"Oh, maybe I should do music."* When he died while I was in elementary school, it really pushed me towards music even more. He was so young, and I wanted to be just like him. I wrote my first song shortly after he died. Then at school, I was able to take music lessons and *something that was really important was playing the violin* like he did.

I think my teacher saw something in me because she helped me through the rest of elementary school and into middle school. When I moved into the middle school, *I got to skip beginning orchestra and go into advanced. There was only one other sixth grader that got to do that with me, so I felt really cool.* Because of that experience, *I actually got free lessons* from a more advanced violinist, *which helped my experience as a violin player grow.* From then on, I

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[12] In this section, italicized texts represent direct quotes from Elsa, Eric, Jenna, and Malia.

was able to get scholarships and be part of music programs, which allowed me to develop my skills even though my family was struggling economically.

Challenges and Opportunities

I wish I could say I loved school. Even though I was finally able to do music without worrying about how much it would cost, *I struggled with school.* The motivation just wasn't there. Or maybe it was that the other kids weren't that great. *When I was 13, I got to be orchestra leader, but a student who wanted to be leader discouraged me harshly.* She made me feel like I wasn't good enough and always put me down. The bullying continued for a while, but *I still took nearly every art class my middle school and high school offered from seventh to twelfth grade.* Later, thanks to the school's music director, I was able to join the city music program. School was rough socially, but I was lucky to have music.

Then in my teens *my family lost our house of twelve years, which took a big toll on my ability to write and play music.* I continued to struggle with school and with motivation. I still got good grades, but I know I could have done better. I also started to feel the pressure of *trying to decide a career*—should I go into music or do something else. I felt lost. Fortunately, my family was there for me. *Everybody was really supportive.* I was lucky, even though money was scarce, I didn't have parents that pressured me to pursue a specific career. *I was fortunate enough to have a family that isn't like, "Oh, you're not going to be able to make this with this career. So, you should major in this instead."* They were always *really supportive and rooting for me.* I'm grateful for my family because I know *there are a lot of students and people in this field that don't get the support that they would necessarily want.*

It probably helped that my parents were big supporters of the arts. *My parents were actually involved in theater 20 or 30 years ago. I think my father played Hamlet at that time.* Even though they didn't necessarily understand music and the business side of music, I think their experience with theater made them more open to me pursuing this career. I was also lucky that I ended up at a high school that *I think could be considered a vocational school because*

within that school you could choose what you wanted to major in or pursue as an elective. We had so many options like *culinary arts, auto shop, wood shop, green engineering, and art.* My school also emphasized writing, which really prepared me for writing at the college level. *Going into freshman year of college, my writing was to the point where my teacher thought I was a creative writing major because of how well I wrote.* So, between my family and school, they helped me be more prepared for going into the arts.

Choosing Art School

For college I decided to go to an art school rather than a university *because I knew the importance of learning the business side of art. I could have just majored in a regular business major,* but that would not have given me the insight into the music industry. I found this particular school because of the Music Business, Entrepreneurship, and Technology major and *I thought it was just me killing two birds with one stone because I'm learning everything I wanted to learn.* But I also knew that I wanted to keep making and writing music, so *I played in the symphony orchestra at my school but felt discouraged because of how drastic the music level was in comparison to high school.* That's when I realized that my free lessons and school-based music education didn't match the training everyone else had through professional private lessons. *I decided to take a break from symphony orchestra,* and focused more on management, composition, and production. That was when *I composed my first sy*mphony orchestra piece and got chosen to have it played the following semester. It was amazing to *join orchestra again and be able to conduct my piece and have the symphony play it.*

I also started getting really interested in the engineering and technology side of music. I explored lights and sound engineering, mixing engineering, and sound design. I started attending different conventions and learning more about immersive media and audio in film and gaming. I don't think I could have explored all these options at a regular university. But one thing I noticed as I got more involved in music business, *was the challenge of being a woman in this career is a big thing.* I'm always hearing, *"Oh, a female engineer, we're not used to that."* And

you wonder if they're *not trusting your expertise because you're a female or if they want something else.* You never know if guys are *giving you opportunities because they want to date you or because they think you're attractive.* I'm constantly having to set my boundaries and say, *"Oh, I'm just in this to be professional and just to be friends."* The funny thing is I've learned that *they're always going to highlight the man over the woman* in this industry. But I've learned that the engineers for some of the greatest artists that make the greatest albums, *they were all women.*

It's the same with composing. *I feel like we don't have enough women composers that are recognized, and it was just this last year that the second woman in history won an Oscar for the Joker for original score.* But you still don't see many women in this industry. I remember my first day of art school, *I realized it was mostly men. When I entered, there were four women, including myself, in the class of 20, almost 30 people. I'd say a lot of my female friends seem to be frustrated.* Many of us come in with less experience than our male classmates, not because we're not interested, but we just didn't have the same opportunities. Boys are encouraged to play around and experience the technical side of things even before they go to college, like with different software. These things just aren't targeted to girls and so we come into college and we're behind. Then they say, *"Oh, she doesn't really know what she's doing."* But it's because we never had any experience. We're trying to learn something that they've been doing for years before even getting into art school.

But then *we're all used to discrimination in some form.* Race or gender, *at some point, I just don't even register it anymore. I just kill everyone with kindness, and don't let it affect me. I've learned about microaggressions, and I would say I've definitely experienced that, but* I've learned that you can't let it bring you down if you want to keep going in this business.

Being at the Right Place, At the Right Time

At the end of the day, I've learned that I have to make my own opportunities. *I've had a lot of experiences where I can be at the right place, at the right time.* But you'll never be *at the*

right place at the right time if you don't attempt to go out to that place to get that opportunity. It's important to say yes to opportunities because you never know what connections will be made and who can help you get to that next level. *It's all about networking. For example, when I went to the studio and met my boss there my freshman year, that was unexpected because I didn't know at the time who I was going to meet. I was 17, 18 at the time, so I didn't know much and at that time I wasn't even planning on being an engineer. I did know that I liked being in the studio,* so I just wanted to check it out. I didn't know that I'd meet my now boss *and that was just an unexpected thing.* From that experience I learned *that it was good to follow up and just stay in contact with people like him that are willing to help and open up their knowledge to others.*

But it's not enough to *just put yourself out there.* You also have to be *a dedicated student that gives a good impression to professors and teachers and faculty members. That way if an opportunity came to them then they can be reminded of you and tell you "You should sign up for this."* Without being prepared and having the skills ready, you won't be able to take advantage of the opportunities when they come. That's why I get so frustrated when I hear people say things like girls aren't good at something. Because you have to wonder if they had the same chances to build their skills before the opportunities came.

My art school also plays a big role in coordinating these opportunities that I don't think I would have gotten in a regular university. *Like the college introduced me to this program called GRAMMY U where people within our major could go participate in soft soundchecks. Certain artists come in to perform and we can sign up to go listen to their soundcheck before the performance. Then you can meet other students at different colleges with the city.* Even though it's open to college students around the country, I really don't know if I would have learned about it if it wasn't for my school and this major.

All in all, *I feel pretty accomplished in terms of getting a lot of my classes out of the way so that I could graduate in four years instead of the typical five years, which is expected for music majors.* I wanted to get out as soon as possible because it's been tough finding enough

resources to fund my education, especially these last two years. Financial aid just wasn't

enough. *I took a lot of online summer classes, so that I wouldn't have to be here that extra year.*

But I think I've made the most of my time here. *Everything is up to you based on what you want*

to do and what you want to accomplish. It's your own challenge towards your independence and

it's good to get that experience before going out in the real world right away. I'm happy to say

that *I know a lot more about music now. I still think I have a long way to go. You never really*

stop learning with music. You just keep going.

Pursuing a Career in Visual Arts

One of the goals of critical race theory and critical raced-gendered epistemologies is to

"recognize students of color as holders and creators of knowledge" (Bernal, 2002, p. 105). This

composite narrative of visual arts students of color embodies this goal as it directly challenges

the idea of artists pursuing "art for art's sake." On the surface, the notion of "art for art's sake"

this may seem like a race-blind/neutral approach to art and meaning making, but in practice it

elevates a mainstream, dominant White, middle/upper-middle class narrative in arts and erases

the "histories, experiences, cultures, and languages" of anyone outside of this paradigm.

Drawing from the methodological approach of counter-storytelling, this compositive narrative

highlighted the experience of Asian American students in arts (five out of the seven visual arts

participants identified as Asian American), as well as the queer and transgender experience.

While only one participant in the sample identified as a non-binary and transgender individual,

the choice to elevate their story through this compositive narrative was a deliberate and

conscious decision. As this composite narrative shows, it is important to show that "one's

identity is not based on the social construction of race but rather is multidimensional and

intersects with various experiences" (Bernal, 2002, p. 118).

Narrative Summary

Table 7 Description of Key Themes in Visual Arts

Field / Major	Key Themes	Description
Visual Arts	Early Family Support	Parents instrumental in early exposure to different forms of art.
	Early Resistance to Arts	Parents' strong influence in choice of art and music lessons elicited initial resistance to arts.
	Intersectional Identities	Experiences as a queer transgender non-binary Asian American student with depression impacted academic, personal, and social experiences.
	College Choice and Experience	High expectations from family to attend traditional academic university. Experienced challenges navigating college as a first-generation college student. Chose to double major to appease parents.
	Developing Arts Identity Later	Family conflicts with college and major choice influenced development of arts identity. Comes to identify strongly as a transgender artist.
	Impact of Pandemic	Experience with coronavirus impacted final year in school (transition to online) and potential post-college choices.

Early Lessons

I hated Chinese school. *My mom tried enrolling me in Chinese language classes at a young age and I refused.*[13] I did participate in Chinese painting lessons though because the *teacher was one of my dad's friends. He was some guy who was a master in a certain style of Chinese painting.* I did that for a few years, and *that was pretty influential in some ways,*

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[13] In this section, italicized texts represent direct quotes from Sam, Han, Rhoda, Arlene, Amy, Scott, and Nadia.

especially where it dictates my style. I think I enjoyed those classes because it was just fun. It was playing with drawing and ink, and that was so much better than learning the language.

I also grew up in a place where everyone was having piano lessons at a young age. In many ways, my parents really influenced my path into the arts because of all the extracurricular lessons they signed me up for. They tried so many different things to get me into the arts. Once they even enrolled me in ballet classes. *I went to one class. I think I was five. My mom claims I asked for ballet lessons, but I can't even imagine that now.* It seemed all the little Chinese girls took ballet, piano, or violin. I think I was really bad as a ballerina, but I just stuck with everything for as long as I could.

They enrolled me in piano lessons starting at the age of three. A couple years later, *at five years old, I took violin lessons. I absolutely hated it. It was in no doubt a negative in my mind at that time. No doubt about it.* Looking back on it now, I don't know if I would still say it was negative. *I feel conflicted about these types of life events because they're part of who I am now.* Good or bad, the experience with violin *built my character.*

Still, piano and violin played significant roles in my life along with visual arts. I took piano lessons through grade 7 and continued violin through high school. *My high school was known for their conservatory.* Music was a big part of my life. But I stopped playing when I went to college because *I didn't think I was as good as other people who have taken lessons all their life.* I know I started young, but the individual lessons stopped once I had access to a music program at the school. I think the people that go on to play in college and beyond are the ones that continued to take private lessons and really refined their technique. And besides, *I really didn't like playing the violin. My dad is the one who really wanted me to play violin because partially it's like the Asian parent thing. Also, he used to play the violin. It's almost like he wants me to be able to play out what he wasn't able to do. So, violin for me was something that was very oppressive.*

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But as I look back now, *it really helped me to build a lot of grit. I had to practice the violin for two hours a day. Of course, two hours isn't a lot compared to what other students did. They were practicing four or five hours a day. Two hours—that was just the minimum.* This is why I didn't continue on with it after high school. With this experience though, *I think it really helped me out with this idea of practice. This is something that I continue to do to this day whether it's learning a new software or practicing specific techniques for my art. There's this kind of craftsmanship attitude towards practice of just doing things over and over and pushing the limits of your own mentality. That really helped since I did it at such a young age. I feel like many things that I do now just don't seem as much of a challenge because I know I can overcome it* through deliberate practice.

Certainly, this influenced my approach to art. *This is funny. In the third or fourth grade I was really bad at art. Just terrible.* My mom would look at my art and say, *"What is this?"* I started taking more and more art lessons throughout the school year. Once I got to high school, I would spend my summers working at an art institute because I really enjoyed painting. I really improved over time. And it was something I enjoyed, unlike the violin. But what I learned as a musician in terms of practice, I was able to apply towards improving my visual arts. *Those years really honed my skills.*

Struggling through High School

As much as I thrived in the arts, moving from elementary to high school was difficult. *I moved away to study abroad on a scholarship for a high school in Singapore at age 13. I was eager for a new start, but my parents reacted with upset and worry very much. Adjusting to living in dormitories and a new social environment was challenging.* When I was 13 or 14, I ended up developing an eating disorder. It was undiagnosed for a while, and I *worked on my relationship with food alone throughout my high school years.*

I remember, prior to entering high school I was struggling with math as well as with making friends. It didn't feel good, and I often felt like a failure. As I got more involved with art at

the high school level, I ended up making more friends. I also felt like this was an area where I was finally good at something in school. *I remember in the first art class I took in seventh grade, we made marionettes and my teacher told me, "You're pretty good at that. Why don't you take this [class]? How about that one?"* So, I loved art, and even as I continued to struggle in other subjects, the arts became a constant source of positivity for me.

To make more friends, I also decided to join the school band as a clarinetist. I'm not sure why I chose that instrument, I hadn't played it before. But I ended up being *mostly estranged from the other members of the band for joining late in the year. I became aware of my queer identity around age 14 or 15. I started becoming insecure about my existing relationships, and remined closeted throughout high school.* It didn't seem like I could come out as an exchange student in a foreign Asian high school. Also, *I found out that my parents weren't supportive of queer people.* Going to school abroad *made me realize that I had to be prepared to stay somewhere else outside of my family* if I were to come out.

Conflicts with Family and Mental Health

When I was 17, I started attended free counseling therapy services at a local church to help me with some of my issues around coming out and my depression. For the most part, it was a mostly positive experience, *but towards the end, I got rubbed the wrong way with how my therapist handled my issues around being transgender. I don't think* the counselors at the church were trained to handle these topics. So, *I stopped seeing them at age 19.*

During my time in therapy, *I went back home a few times a year to visit my family. I found out they believed queer people were unnatural.* And this broke my heart. My parents couldn't even accept that some of my depression could be traced back to some of my issues with coming out as queer and transgender. *Instead, my father often said that I had issues socializing because I left home far too young.*

I moved back to live with my parents after graduating high school. It was a struggle. I basically had to go back into the closet in order to live with them. *I had no social connections*

outside of my immediate family, and I spent most of my time alone at home. On top of this silence around my identity, *my family and I argued over my desire to pursue arts, as well as where to go to college.* I was surprised that when it came time to choosing colleges and careers, that they would discourage the arts because early on they seemed so supportive. Also, even fighting with my parents was an adjustment because like I said before, they primarily did let me do my own thing pretty much since I was 13.

Sometimes I wonder if we fought over my choice of career and college because it was easier than having the conversation around my sexual and gender identities. But I also think that *generally parents or my parents want me to have a job that's more stable. Usually when you think of an artist, it's not a very stable career. You might not be guaranteed a specific income or an income you want. Being an artist is not usually a path people should take unless they really, really want to or have that drive. And even then, it's hard to succeed because you can't just stay in your room and make art.* So, it was big argument with my parents.

First Generation Status

I'm also the first in my family to go to college. So, there wasn't really a set path for me to follow. *My mom didn't like the idea of me going to school so far away,* especially since I had done the whole study abroad during high school. I remember *going to a university career fair with my parents at age 15 and expressing an interest in arts and animation degrees much to their dismay. They sat me down and discouraged me from pursuing art degrees. But it's very confusing because my parents continued to support me financially but didn't really provide any other kind of support.* I really wanted them to show more of an interest beyond occasionally giving me funds for tuition or equipment I might need. *I feel like everyone except my family supports me more emotionally or just career wise. They especially give me words of encouragement. Also, I have people who have been helping me get to know other people that can help me in finding work. I wish my family, my parents, would have more confidence in the work I do rather than discouraging me.*

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But I guess if I really examine it closer, they have been showing support in their own way. Even though now my mom seems more supportive overall, *she doesn't really know that much about the majors that I'm pursuing.* Though she is worried that it's not *like being a doctor or going to computer science.* We don't fight as much anymore because I think they see that I am confident in setting a path for myself. *My mom is more supportive because she knows English. My dad doesn't really, so it's kind of hard to explain my major and what I'll be doing with my art degree.* I receive so many mixed messages: *don't do arts, but whatever you do, just get good grades; stay the course, take whatever class you must take to succeed, just get great grades; whatever you do is fine as long as you don't end up completely homeless.*

Now that I've decided to go to grad school after finishing my bachelor's degree, I think my dad is beginning to come around. *I think the idea of grad school is helping him comprehend what I'm doing with art. Also, he's accepting that the art classes are easier for me, so I'll get better grades. So that's what he's focusing on. He's not necessarily asking me to see my artwork or asking, "what are you working on with that or have you found any new techniques or anything."* He's just more focused on good grades and feeling that with strong grades I'll be going somewhere after college is over, and not just turn into the stereotype of an artistic bum.

I think my experiences negotiating college decisions with my parents, helped pave the way for my younger siblings. *I guess I'm a role model. I felt more like a guinea pig. My parents biggest worry now is will I graduate.* The closer I get to graduation, and they see that I am doing well, *I think they have more confidence in my siblings* pursuing their own thing and being able to graduate.

Choosing to Double Major

When it came to finalizing my major, I felt *pressured to choose something practical.* After being on my own during my high school years studying abroad, I no longer liked being disconnected from my family, especially my parents. *To appease them, I started school as a double major in computer science and visual arts. But the math classes completely wrecked me.*

I didn't expect to fail as bad as I did with computer science. I was good at it in high school, at least the computer science part, though *I've always struggled with math. I think that's also one of those stereotypes that Asians should be good at math. That wasn't the case for me, and it always took me way longer than everybody else to figure out that problem. I had a talk with one of my calculus professors, and he was like, "I don't think you should continue your studies in this. Maybe find something else." I think dropping that major was a lot more relieving even* if it left me with only the art major my sophomore year.

Recently, I decided to also pursue a double major in *East Asian Studies with the emphasis on contemporary art.* Looking back, *failing has contributed to my growth in learning what I wanted to do, because I had always thought that if you failed, you have to keep on going.* But I've learned that *at a certain point, you don't have to keep on going after not succeeding. That would be like hitting your head against the wall over and over again and wondering why your head hurts. I feel like my path is a lot more interesting and that I didn't first choose to do the East Asian studies major initially. I connected with that major a lot more than with computer science. Also, I had done study abroad in Beijing, and I realized I wanted to know more about East Asia. I have such a narrow view.* Adding East Asian Studies as a double major has given a greater appreciation of my Asian heritage. It's been eye-opening for me to learn Mandarin, and ultimately, the major has *made me want to do more in this field, explore more about different East Asian cultures,* and how that can be combined with visual arts. It helps me to home in on my own aesthetic, which looking back, Chinese art and painting has always been a huge part of who I am. It's like coming full circle, which is ironic since I started out hating Chinese school. *I will say my parents are very happy about that* because now I can speak to them in their language.

Geography and Transgender Identity

Honestly though, when I was looking for colleges, *I was looking at the State Equality Index and looking for rules that would protect me as a transgender individual. I chose my*

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university because I was concerned about being safe and open about this aspect of my identity. Choosing to go to school in a larger urban environment *is a cultural adjustment.* After studying in a small, insular private school in Singapore then being practically isolated with my parents, *I just never knew where I stood.* I knew it would be more open in the city. Still, I don't fool myself into believing that it's the ideal place to live. Prior to coming to university, I was still *navigating the sort of idealistic world in my head where everyone is respectful towards transgender people, but I know that there's a lot of work to be done. This place is not perfect, but I'm learning to appreciate the amount of safety that's afforded here.*

I know that there are cases where people still do not feel safe, but by and large it's been better than if I had gone to school in my small hometown. *It's just the way people interact here,* especially at the university. The student health insurance *covers hormonal replacement therapy. The people that I've seen have been very supportive.* It was also here at university that I was finally able *to get therapy services for gender dysphoria and depression/anxiety. I started hormone replacement therapy at age 20.* The community here also really helped me make sense of my identity as queer and transgender. *I helped out with a graduate film students' short film assignment about Asian trans youth. I was cast as part of the main cast.* For the first time, I felt that I was finally being seen for who I am.

Is it Racism, or Something Else?

When it comes to racism, *I've never experienced any overt aggression or offensive language toward me or my peers of color*. But whenever we've tried to have those conversations around race, whether informally or in the classroom, *it never plays out the best way. But I haven't experienced aggressive racism per se and not anything that was [purposefully] ill-intentioned. Just maybe passive-aggressive ones. It might be me over reading stuff, but I remember this specific instance in one of my classes where I think we were supposed to design a cover album. Someone was doing a bilingual song. Their cover included a non-English title. I think my professor was kind of like trying to work with them but was having*

difficulty bridging expectations between the work for someone that's clearly from a bilingual perspective versus addressing the strictly Western audience. I don't think it was racism. Maybe? But I know after these experiences many students of color and even the international students end up feeling less than affirmed. *I didn't say anything at the time because I didn't want my professor to hate me, but I did try to give my own feedback to that person.* I feel like I understood more of what they were trying to do because I also spoke that language.

Sometimes I wonder if it's more about gender than race, especially before I began my transition. Even now, I read more female than male in some spaces because I am small, Asian, and appear more feminine*. With visual arts more so than East Asian studies, when we think of professors in the field, we think of more established artists that are old, white male artists. For me, I don't really have that much interest in that, it's not representative for me. Representation does matter.* This was why it was so important to me to add the East Asian Studies. I guess it addresses both that race and gender dynamic. As it is, there aren't too many Asian Americans in our departments. Even in East Asian Studies. The Asians that are in the program as faculty or graduate students are *mostly Asian international students or international visiting faculty.* They aren't Asian American.

Exploring Identity

More often than not, I'm confused 95% of the time on who I actually am. Culturally speaking, because I speak English and I grew up in America, I am American. *But I can't exactly say that I'm, like, detached from my own Chinese culture as well.* I went to high school in Singapore and that also has an influence. *I feel like all the time I'm stepping between boundaries. I'm still trying to figure it out and I don't think I'll ever truly figure it out.*

I would say the arts world is more open to identity exploration compared to other fields. So much of what the artwork I've seen both from my fellow students and the professors has been *about expression and doing things no-one ever seen before and pushing the boundaries on everything. Many times it includes race or gender or social class, all that stuff.* I think that at

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the public university*, the art world is something that is a place where you can express these things, and it's embraced by a lot of people.*

Ultimately, where I want to work will depend on where I think I can continue to be safely living. The places that I am considering are the US and countries where I have to consider my own circumstances as a transgender person. Even though I feel like my art is *not really related to my identity as a transgender person, I think in terms of the decisions I make and the outside work I create, I always have to think of safety and access to health care, and the community I expect to surround me.*

Goals and Pandemic

It's a scary time right now. *Normally you're worried about job prospects after graduation and things like that,* but with the *COVID crisis that we're going through right now I feel like wherever I can get a job that would be where I'm happy to be. A lot of people are just losing their jobs and especially with people in the art industry just have nothing to do*. I'm guessing that *when people start coming back, like when all of this is over, like I'm not going be the first choice of option for a lot of these companies to hire.* Those that have been laid off and out of work because of the pandemic will most likely get those jobs because they'll already *have the perfect qualifications for it. That will be really rough for me*. I know that I still need to figure that out. It scares me that *I don't know where I'm going to end up.*

Pursuing the Academic Path

This final composite narrative represents a different path from the other narratives in that these students have decided to pursue a career in academia as professors, rather than in a specific creative industry. One observation I made about Wilhemina, Jack, and Belinda is that they all seem to straddle the line of practitioner-scholar when it came to their art. All three participants identified as creative writers, who also have a strong connection to the philosophy

of arts and cultures. They all actively wrote and pursued publication avenues, but they also

showed strong desire to further the education of future writers.

Narrative Summary

Table 8 Description of Key Themes in Academia

Field / Major	Key Themes	Description
Academic Path	Fighting Bullies	Experienced bullying in junior high and high school years.
	Teacher Support	Strongly supported teachers to pursue goals academic and creative goals.
	Developing Arts Identity Later	Lack of safe spaces in schools leads to finding voice as a writer during high school and community college.
	Community College and Transfer Experience	Solidified academic identity during community college and influenced future choices.
	Intersectional Identities	Experiences as a mixed-race Latina and Pacific Islander woman and first-generation college student impacted academic, personal, and social experiences.
	Mentors	Limited mentors that addressed all aspects of social identities. Mentors either addressed issues of race or gender, but not both simultaneously.
	Lack of Institutional Support	Limited support from college advisors, especially in terms of resources for first-generation transfer students of color or for career support.
	Imposter Syndrome and Social Networks	Questions ability to succeed without the right connections.
	Impact of Pandemic	Experience with coronavirus impacted final year in school

		(transition to online) and potential post-college choices.

The Safety of School

I've always felt outside of society. I felt like I wasn't a normal kid. Sure, I liked to play and be around other kids, but what I loved most of all was the idea of going to school. *I don't know why I remember this vividly. I really wanted to go to Head Start because every time my mom and I would go to the store, I would see the playground and kids playing.*[14] Maybe it wasn't really about school, but about playing. *There wasn't a park that was close to us for me play at;* it would be a trek for my parents to take me. But that school was close by, and it would be a safe place. *I was so excited when my mom took me to inquire about how to enroll in school.* When I came home, I promptly announced to my dad, "*I'm gonna go to Head Start." I took my backpack and put notebooks and pencils in there and said, "I can finally use them because I'm gonna start at Head Start."* I loved it immediately. *I had my favorite teachers. There was even a particular smell that would make me so excited knowing that I was at school.* To this day, whenever I *pick up my niece or nephew from school, it has that similar smell, and it makes me happy.*

Needless to say, school was my happy place. It was at school that I realized that I loved learning. By *fifth grade I knew I was going to be a writer* or a teacher. But I also immersed myself in other interests. I enrolled in a local after-school program where they mainly offered sports. *I played basketball.* It was good to have these activities because at home my parents were *fighting viciously for years. They almost got divorced.* My father was in the military and *was frequently deployed.* When he came home, he had his own demons and the rest of us had to deal with his alcoholism. It was hard on all of us, but for me school was my escape.

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[14] In this section, italicized texts represent direct quotes from Wilhemina, Jack, and Belinda.

It was probably like that for most kids where I grew up. I was a *mixed-blood* Pacific

Islander and Latino kid living in a *low-income Latinx neighborhood*, and there wasn't much else

for us to do outside of school. Many of my friends got involved with gangs and drugs. At the

start of middle school, *I got in trouble for weed.* It wasn't mine. *I had it in my binder, and I was*

gonna give it to another student, but the security lady knew, and she caught me. I had to go to

court for it and it was scary. I'd never gotten in trouble before. That ended up being a *turning*

point because my mom decided immediately to enroll me in a new high school that was about to

open. She thought this would be the best way for me to make new friends and to keep me out of

trouble.

The Unsafe School

The new school might have removed the bad influence of my friends from elementary

school and junior high, but it introduced bullies. *I was bullied a lot for my nose, my big nose. I*

was Shrek. I struggled with my body image. I was bigger than most of the other kids. I looked a

bit Asian and a bit Latino. They didn't even know Pacific Islanders. Most people were confused

so they just picked on me for not being one thing or another. My grades suffered and I started

losing interest in academics. I was depressed and anxious and just didn't feel like doing

anything. If it wasn't for my sophomore English teacher, I might have given up on school

altogether.

I remember we had a poetry assignment where we wrote our poems, shared our poetry

with her, and then we presented it in class. Most people didn't take it that seriously, but I really

enjoyed it. I really enjoyed the feeling of crafting a poem. Using the strength of language not just

to communicate, but to communicate a feeling. It was like I found my voice through writing.

Though the bullies would often silence me, in my writing I was able to share my thoughts and

feelings—the pain, the anger, all of it. *And my teacher encouraged my writing and exploration.*

She let me do an independent project for an essay. I still remember it—I was tracking the motif

of light in Frankenstein. I went through the whole book, and I had maybe 200 post-it notes

where I color coded whether passages were fire or sunlight or natural light. I got lost in the project and in words and it opened up a whole new world for me. My school was primarily focused on STEM education. The more challenging and engaging classes were all in STEM or business. *I'm not very much of a STEM person to be honest,* and I always felt out of place among my peers. But through writing and poetry my English teacher showed me a different direction. *She was great. And then she left and became this critically acclaimed poet. She went on a tour around the country doing book readings. And I was like, "Dang, that's crazy!"* But for the first time I saw that in words, in poetry, in writing, there could be a career.

Finding Community, Finding Self

My English classes became one of the only safe spaces I had in high school. I found my people there. But I decided I needed to get involved in something outside of school to survive my teen years. *I was also really interested in the arts, but I didn't really know how to get involved. I remember just Googling internships for high school students and going through this whole Google loop of finding resources for low-income students like me. I felt that would be the easiest place for me to start.* But I really didn't know what I was doing. *Then I went to the Museum of Contemporary Art with my friends. I started browsing through their pamphlets and saw this internship program, but the application wasn't open. I checked every month until it finally opened and then I ended up applying. When I got the interview, I was super excited. But then I didn't hear back from the program. I was so bummed that I didn't get it. After the program had already started, I got an email from the director, and she explained that there were two students with the same name and the other girl got two acceptance letters.* One of them was mine! She asked if I was still interested in the program, and I jumped on it. Even though it was completely unexpected, I was so happy to be part of that program and to become immersed in something that I really cared about.

By my senior year of high school, I started to feel like I had found my place at school with my writing and in the community through the arts. I also started receiving help from my

school guidance counselor, who also happened to be one of my neighbors, and she and her husband helped me with some of the issues I was having at home with my dad's PTSD. *They really just made sure that everyone was okay.* My parents moved away in my last year of high school. My dad got stationed to another base and my mom decided to go with him. My sister was enrolled at the local college, and she stayed with me as my guardian. My school counselor *and some of my other neighbors also helped us out.* They would check in on us from time to time to see if we needed anything like food or help with chores. *I was getting neighborly love.* They all helped me to adapt to the situation and to make it through my final year of high school.

I learned so much about myself that final year of school. *I feel like every experience was available to me saying, "Take it, it's yours."* Senior year, my English teacher assigned a memoir project to the class. *English teachers are so sentimental. But this project made me remember good things about high school and not just the crappy stuff.* The memoir also made me reflect on who I am and what I wanted to do in the future.

Every once in a while, I pull out my high school memoir and look back. I've also added to it—scrapbooking about my experiences at community college and now at university. Looking back, I realize that *I was following the paths that were stereotypes for people of color, specifically for those of lower socio-economic backgrounds.* Everything was geared towards what would help you make a quick buck and not necessarily jobs that inspire passion. *I look back to the people that were in middle school what they're doing now is completely different to what I'm doing.* Few of them are in college. Most are in low wage jobs, retail, or some other manual labor. Or not doing anything at all. *I might have followed down that same path* if it hadn't been for the encouragement I received from my English teacher or the support I received from my school counselor and her husband. *They shifted a negative experience at that point in my life to other opportunities.*

Adjusting to College

Even with the encouragement I received, I still couldn't go straight into a four-year university like I wanted. *At first, it was very sad for me. But I think it ended up being a good thing because I was able to mature* during my time at community college. I was able to *understand the way that education worked.* I developed good study habits, but most importantly, *I was taking classes and being in a space with people of all ages and all backgrounds like LGBTQ folks or working parents.* It helped me to understand and accept that *not everybody that's in school has to follow the same path.* It made me more aware of my surroundings and helped me to change my attitude – *like it's okay to do your PhD when you're 40 instead of being 25.*

I also gained more confidence while at community college. *My first English professor recommended the college hire me as a writing tutor and praised my reading and writing skills. Another professor hired me as his embedded tutor,* which was like being teaching assistant or dedicated tutor, *for his class.* That class was the first time that I was exposed to Pacific Islander literature. *I felt seen and appreciated for the first time.* The funny thing is that even though I was doing well in English, I still wasn't sure what I was doing or what I should pursue. I started out as a sociology major because I thought that would be more practical. *But it was just missing that personal connection that you don't really have when reading narratives or memoirs.* I wanted to write. As I started to think about transferring to university, I began to meet more artists and writers. *I had my first poem published in a student magazine.* I started to take more classes in the English department and began studying with renowned poets. By the time I transferred to university, I was *writing more poetry and focused on honing that craft like spoken word or contemporary lyric poetry.*

But I was anxious about transferring to university. My identity as a Pacific Islander, as someone from an indigenous background, is really important to me. Yet, *I felt like the links between art and culture, at least the way it was taught in the classes, I took were very western-oriented. It almost felt like a fetishization of cultures. My expectation was that I would just*

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encounter more of the same European literature. I wasn't too far off. I remember taking this one English class and I made it a point to really participate because usually I was pretty quiet. *This older gentleman in my class told me, "Oh, I never expected someone like you to be able to say something like that."* I asked him, *"What do you mean by someone like you?" And he just looked at me and didn't say anything.* Everyone was stunned and at first no one said anything. Not even the professor. Finally, one of my classmates *looked at him and said, "I don't think that's appropriate."* I thanked that classmate for saying that, but I was still shocked that the professor didn't intervene.

It just seemed like when I transferred to university *there was a lot of incidents in relation to race on campus. I don't know if it's racist, but there's been spaces that aren't very welcoming. I've never been outwardly called out. I've had microaggressions like in the classrooms, I don't know if that really counts.* There was this one time during the first week of school when *somebody made a very racist remark about people in my ethnic group. I didn't really know how to handle it, and it was very alienating for me. But other students jumped in, and someone said, "Oh, that's wrong."* I appreciated the support, but at the same time, it's one thing to hear someone say "that's wrong" but *it's another thing to actually live these things.*

I had another experience where this student called me out after I had asked a question in class and told me that I asked *a sixth-grade question and that it was inappropriate for the reading level that we were at in class.* Again, the professor didn't say anything. When things like that happen, *I get discouraged from ever saying anything again.* It's already tough to motivate myself to participate in courses that I feel have nothing to do with what I really want to study, but then to have my classmates also put me down; it's demoralizing. The university makes claims about how it supports students of color and that there are resources available for those that need help. *But I'm hesitant.* I've had conversations with other students of color, and we all feel like there might be resources, but they're not really geared towards us. Honestly, it was more

comfortable at community college because of the diversity of people there than it was at university.

I feel like part of adapting to university has been about finding a community where I feel like it's a safe space for me to share when things like this happen. Most times, when these situations happen, I really don't know what to say. Having a community, even if it's a small one, gives me a chance to reflect in a more healing way. But it's still hard when I'm just trying to adapt to the classes and the campus itself. I have to remind myself that when these incidents happen, *it really has nothing to do with me in particular, but more about what somebody's been taught their whole life by family or whoever's instilled this ideology in them. That's not something that can go away overnight, unfortunately. I'm going to have to just keep doing what I do to work towards a more tolerant society.* This is why studying and writing about communities of color like Pacific Islanders are so important to me. We need our voices to be heard.

Transferring to University

Being of mixed heritage, people tend to only recognize my Latinx side. *Most people think I'm from Mexico or Central America, not that there's anything wrong with that, but it's not all of me. The first quarter that I had a class that had something to do with non-Europeans or dead White people was an upper division class called Mormonism in the Pacific. Even then the perspective was from White people talking about Pacific people and comparative indigenous cultures.* That professor was the first person at university that *allowed me to incorporate my culture into the classroom, in classroom discussions. If there was a jumping off point that had something to do beyond the texts and touched on cultural experiences, he would invite me to chime in so that day everyone got to hear a little bit about Pacific Islanders. And I felt super happy.*

It was bad enough that in my first quarter transferring to university, I was the only brown person in three of my four classes. Coming from a more diverse community college, that was only an hour away from the university, I was expecting there would be at least one other person

of color. I knew it would be a tough transition, but I thought *the hardest transition was going to [be] adjusting from semester to a quarter system. When I got to university and saw only three other people that looked like me and then only two Black students, I realized that the statistics or demographics the school mentioned were pretty off in terms of race.*

And then when my classmates started speaking and sharing where they were from, I realized what a big difference being an hour away from the university really meant. My new classmates came from very affluent areas, and it really took me aback. While I expected that I would be learning more Western thought from my department, I still held on to this idea that *I was going to enter a worldly, cultural space where I was going to learn insight on other people's cultures that were similar but also different to mine.* It was a shock to discover that *the department was very White.* As supportive as the faculty tried to be, *they didn't really understand what students of color needed or how certain assignments can affect the perceptions of students of color in the department.*

It wasn't just that I was having a hard time adjusting as a person of color. It was also that I was a first-generation college student. *I really had no idea what I was doing.* Fortunately, my sister who is a couple years older, was also going through college for the first time and I relied on her experience. *I would always ask her, "What do I do for books? When do I need to buy them? What else do I need? What is acceptable in the classroom?" I really didn't know what to expect; everything was just sink or swim the first time around.* I'm not even sure she really knew what she was doing either. *It was just an odd experience overall.* But she helped me get through it initially.

I do feel like sometimes I wish I had more guidance. I hear my peers that are Caucasian, and they say, "Oh, my parents told me to do this." I feel jealous. I'm not sure if that's the right word. I don't know what that feels like to have parents understand what it's like to go to college. *My parents support me being in school, but they don't really understand exactly what I'm doing.* And they don't give me advice on what to do. *It seems to me like the Caucasian students get*

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more of a sense of direction than I do. I have to figure out things as I do them, as opposed to having parents telling me what to do. Their path is very linear. *For me, I find it's not a straight path. I have to find different ways to get to my goals and to keep going once I get there.*

You're supposed to have help in college. Unfortunately, I didn't really have a good experience with the college advisors, especially when it came time to transfer from community college to university. *Initially, I was given incorrect information about requirements for transferring, and I was going to end up behind a semester.* Fortunately, I caught the mistake on time, and I was able to catch up by taking online courses. But then there were other times with my work-study position and financial aid where I was given the run around multiple times. At one point, after being transferred to so many departments, I ended up right back at the original office where I first asked my question. It's so frustrating because the school is always talking about how they support all students, especially students of color, but then in practice it's just a mess.

I'm grateful that I've at least had some supportive professors, even a couple of White professors that I would call supportive allies. In my first quarter at UCSB, I emailed the professor that taught Pacific Studies. *He was the first person I had ever encountered that was doing something I always wanted to pursue.* Because he was White, he would *always thank me for allowing him to work with me because he's like, "It's your culture, it's not mine. Thank you for helping and allowing me to continue. And he's always super positive and checking in on me, asking "How are you doing?" instead of "What did you read for today?"* It makes such a huge difference to feel like someone at the school actually cares for me instead of being shuffled around like I was a burden to be pushed off to someone else.

Goals and Fears

What I would like to be is a professor, but I would also like to keep up with my creative writing on the side. I'm considering pursuing a graduate degree in Pacific Studies so I can do literature and history without having to pick one or the other. I want to share the gift of writing

with future students, especially other students like me. I want to show them that you can incorporate your culture and history with what you study and write.

But honestly, I have so many self-doubts. *What if I'm never hired as a professor because there are other people who are better and cooler? I've never seen anybody who looks like me in the classroom, or on a chair on a committee in higher education.* Is this imposter syndrome? It just feels like sometimes academia is more based on who you know versus what you know. *I have to take stock of my social capital. I know that just because I'm associated with McNair, it's like I already have more prestige.* When I've reached out to other professors at UCLA, Michigan, or Minnesota, places where my professor suggested have strong Pacific Studies programs, they all seem to be impressed. They said, *"You're a McNair Scholar, you're going to go wherever you want as long as you have a strong statement of purpose."* When I'm feeling anxious, I remind myself that the *McNair name is going to carry me far, but also it took a lot of work to get into McNair.* That's my work. I did that!

It's funny though, I hadn't initially planned on applying to the McNair program. *It was completely unplanned. I did research my first year.* I found that I really like it, so I applied on a whim thinking, *I'm probably not even going to get in. I remember I saw this big line of students submitting their applications and they only had 14 spots. I think they got more than 200 applications in this round.* So, when I got accepted it was such a big deal to me. *The folks in the program posted pictures of all of us that were accepted. It was so cool. The program itself is mostly Black and Brown students. So just having a space to talk about what it's like to be a student of color in higher education and research and attempting to become a professor really helps me to deal with the other challenges I face in school. I like all the resources they offer. We have mentors. And the way that our work is divided in the program also really helps me set my deadlines and start my research without the work feeling very heavy.*

The more research I do, the more convinced I am that this is the right path for me. Even though pursuing academia causes me, and even my parents, so much anxiety. They're still not

really sure what I'm doing. They want to see me do something practical. They don't understand why I need to go to grad school after I finish college, and they don't believe professors really make that much money. And they definitely don't understand why I want to be a writer, but they say if I'm happy then they're happy.

But I know they're scared, especially now. *This coronavirus thing is not easy to overlook, especially in arts and also in education. I'm currently on this board at school that's half undergraduate students and half graduate students, and I see the struggle that the graduate students are going through. There have been huge protests for graduate students to get better funding and support.* I think to myself, do I really want to go through all that? The students in the arts and humanities are really hit hard because I don't think they get much funding to begin with. I know as an undergrad, having financial aid is the only reason why I'm even able to pursue creative writing, I can't imagine trying to also make a living the way the grad students are. *It was hard enough before coronavirus, and now it seems everything is dying. Support for education, support for the arts, all of it is going away.* I still want to be a professor in this field, *but there's a lot to think about as I put together my portfolio for graduate school.*

Epilogue: Interview Reflections

As I reflect, on the past few weeks of interviewing participants for this study, Los Angeles is on Day 3 of a county-wide curfew. Tonight's curfew has been extended to 10 pm versus 5 pm yesterday and 6pm the day before. This is a clear reflection of everything going on in the world right now—global pandemic, protests, police murder Black women and men. Members of Asian American community complicit with racism and White supremacy as embodied by images of Asian American cops participating in horrific police brutality. At the same time, Asian American elders being brutalized on the streets and in public transportation for being the picture of this so-called Chinese virus.

I'm amazed at how many students were willing to make themselves available for these interviews. Only one student cancelled at the last minute. Brian is a young Black man and I wonder if his cancellation had something to do with how he's navigating the current world of social unrest and deadly disease. At the same time, I have to acknowledge that after the interviews I often felt raw, tired, and at times, angry. Many students wanted to continue the conversation even after the official interview had concluded. These post-interview conversations often ended up being around either the coronavirus or the current social upheavals going on around the country or both. It was as if my interviewees just needed to release their emotions about the world especially after spending over an hour, sometimes over two hours talking with me about their personal challenges. In fact, one student thanked me for "the free therapy." At this point, I felt that all I have to offer is my ear—to listen to these young creatives and artists of color who have struggled and continue to struggle to make their voices heard.

The fear was palpable as student after student described an uncertain future that had clear implications for their future as artists, but for the viability of the arts industry in general. While I had no answers, I was comforted in knowing that by providing a space to listen to their concerns, the students in this study were able to release some of the anxiety that they were experiencing. Being asked how they saw their futures in one year, five years, or even 10 years from now, inspired some interviewees to take stock of what they'd accomplished during their undergraduate years and begin to dream beyond the ambiguity of the current times. In this way, they (re)asserted their self-authorship and reminded themselves that they have the ability to handle any happenstance with flexibility and grace.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The primary purpose of this narrative research study was to highlight the challenges and opportunities faced by students of color pursuing arts-related degrees as they advanced along their educational and career trajectories. This study also aimed to 1) contribute to the limited research on post-secondary educational and career trajectories of students of color majoring in the arts; 2) address disparities within arts education and professions through the examination of the narratives of students of color in arts; and 3) broaden application of college student development and career development theories in the arts. By constructing seven composite first-person narratives from the 32 interviews of my participants, I aimed not to create a monolithic story of any one person's experience, but to show how the intersections of systems of oppression (including but not limited to racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, and xenophobia) impacted the development of personal, educational, and professional identities of aspiring artists of color. The creation of these composite narratives was guided by three key frameworks: self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2008, 2014), planned happenstance (Mitchell et al., 1999), and critical race theory (Bernal, 2002; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; Ladson-Billings, 1998).

Major Findings by Research Questions

Self-Authorship

The first research question guiding this study was: What is the role of self-authorship in helping students of color majoring in arts advance their educational and career trajectory? In constructing the narratives, I found that for students of color in the arts development of self-authorship was not a linear progression. In Baxter Magolda's (2007, 2008, 2014) conceptualization of the components of self-authorship, it seemed that identity development and meaning-making occurred on a linear spectrum: following the formula, crossroads, becoming

the author, and internal foundation. However, in analyzing the interviews, I found the participants would often appear to have a strong sense of their internal foundation, only to go back and question their plans and values when faced with a crossroads. In Baxter Magolda's studies, by the time individuals reached the point of developing their internal foundation, their sense of self is fully formed and integrated into "one cohesive reality" (2008, p. 280). By the time individuals reach internal foundation, they had developed their self-authorship—"internally determining one's beliefs, identity and social relations" (Baxter Magolda, 2008, p. 281). However, Baxter Magolda did acknowledge that in the process of securing this foundation, individuals may sometimes reexamine past plans and values to affirm their internal commitments. For example, by the time he was in junior high, theater major "Kris" had a clear plan: I'm going to go [to community college], go in and get out. I'm going to go to university and then I'm going to get the education I need [in theater]." While he was clear on his identity as a performer of color, changing circumstances related to finances, parental support, or availability of roles often had him questioning his internal foundation. However, when opportunities for advancement presented themselves, whether planned or unplanned, it was clear from the narratives that knowing who you are and what you bring to the table helps you activate the skills to take advantage of these chances. This finding paralleled a study on career management and psychological well-being of college graduates, which found that planned happenstance skills— curiosity, persistence, flexibility, optimism, and risk taking – provide the competencies necessary for success (Valickas et al., 2019) Classical musician "Harriet" emphasized that the way to be successful while encountering unplanned events was to always be "prepared for everything". In her narrative, "Harriet" described the importance of being flexible, optimistic, and willing and able to take risks when the opportunity presented itself:

I was the last chair, so if someone needed to be cut in an ensemble, I was kicked out…I had to be good enough. [When I was told] "The principal clarinetist is out of the country,

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can you sit in for his part?" [It} meant that I had to play all the solos, like the Dvorak 7,

and had a few days to prep the solos. And when I got there, I did it.

Likewise, theater major "Felicity" talked about how necessary it was to be adaptable, especially

as a young immigrant: "My Life Line shows that persistency to perform. I developed the ability to

adapt, especially when I came here [to the United States]."

The narratives also reinforced past findings that found that marginalized students often

developed a sense of self-authorship much sooner than their counterparts from mainstream

backgrounds (i.e., White, male, middle to upper middle class) (Abes & Hernández, 2016; Abes

& Jones, 2004; Baxter Magolda, 2017; Welkener & Baxter Magolda, 2014). Participants,

particularly those in music, found themselves being asked to commit to their fields as early as

their teen years. "Reina," who found herself recruited to a talent development program for

classical musicians, stated she had to show "a commitment [to her instrument] because this

program was investing in [her] future." At the age of 14, "Reina" told herself, "Okay, if this is

what I'm gonna do, I have to make up my mind now." On the other hand, being faced with this

pull to commitment solidified for Sarah that being a classical musician was not the path for her:

> This past summer, I went to a DC trombone workshop, and I had realized there… I came
>
> to this epiphany—"What am I doing here?" Matt Howard, [a] bass trombone player, was
>
> just like, "If you can't imagine yourself not doing this, maybe music isn't for you." And I
>
> was like, "Well, I can definitely imagine myself not doing music. Maybe music isn't for
>
> me."

Coming to this realization early on that performing was not going to be the path for her, solidified

Sarah's trust in her internal voice and laid the foundation for her authorship of her identity as an

artist of color, if not necessarily a classical musician of color (Baxter Magolda, 2008). Instead,

the decision not to pursue performance led her down the path of music education.

Exhibiting Self-Authorship

This first research question also had two sub-questions. The first sub-question was: In what ways do students of color majoring in arts exhibit self-authorship? For many participants, their self-authorship was informed both by their artistic interest and their social identities. A common phrase, particularly among Black and Latina participants, was "I've always been aware of who I am," referring primarily to their racial and gender backgrounds. This self-awareness of the intersection of their social identities made these young artists hyperaware of who defined art, who affirmed art, and who showcased art. In expressing their self-authorship, participants fully embraced their social identities, especially around race, gender, and sexuality. Often these expressions of self-authorship reflected at the intersection of their perceived artistic, social, and professional identities. For example, when asked about whether he identified as an artist of color, "Neil," an aspiring music educator and performer, stated:

> This is the first that I'm seeing a potential distinction between different types of arts identities: creator, musician, historian, curator, teacher, performer. There's always a part where you're like, "Am I an artist? Or am I a musician? Is that an artist?" It like gets to where the terminology gets confusing and the definitions change. When you get to different people, I feel like my art form, my art as a musician comes from my expression and how I approach music.

"Neil" goes on to describe the importance of understanding the background of a musician or composer and how that informs his own self-authorship:

> The background information, interesting facts, origins of pieces and composers. That always interests me, the historical aspects. When I think about music and art, I think about the story it tells… [I also] look around and think, are there people who look like me in here? Are there women? Is there representation?

The participants' experiences with social identity development and self-authorship strongly paralleled the experiences of other students from marginalized backgrounds (Abes & Jones, 2004; Torres & Hernandez, 2007). Their strong self-identification as artists of color also defined

the development of their cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal competencies, which are at the core of self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2007, 2008, 2014). For example, in the composite narrative for film, television, and animation, the very definition of being an artist of color is shown to be part of the development of one's internal foundation: "Since high school, I've come from a very social justice storytelling mindset. My work in the community and my senior year documentary film class instilled that in me."

Enacting Self-Authorship

The second sub-question was: How do they enact self-authorship with respect to educational and career trajectories? Again, it is important to highlight that what was a clear common thread among the participants was that the development of self-authorship was not a linear process. However, throughout their educational experience and artistic development, the participants were not fazed by the uncertainty of their chosen fields because they were secure in their development as artists (reflecting a sense of becoming the author) and had a clear sense of their values and social identities (reflecting the development of their internal foundation). Even when they found themselves having to go back and follow someone else' formula, like a parent or a former teacher, they always returned to a strong sense of self, or self-authorship, to guide their decisions. This was exemplified by the composite narrative of aspiring art historians and museum curators who strongly expressed how their racial identity enabled them to focus their interests particularly in highlighting arts from marginalized communities. "Stephanie" stated it best when she described how she put together her life line:

> I feel like [my life line] is everything when it comes to identity. Coming from my perspective as a Black woman, understanding what [art history] isn't, there's not a lot of people that look like me within this field. Having my own cultural background that I wanna bring to the field that I don't see [myself] represented in research or appreciation of art. It definitely influenced me to be very proud of describing myself as an art historian of color and seeing other art historians of color always makes me very happy.

All four participants who informed this narrative identified strongly as Black women. Their collective story also exemplified how they enacted self-authorship as a way of resisting the normative narrative that effectively erased Black women and other minoritized artists as creatives showcased in museums or art history books (Berger, 2005).

Planned Happenstance

The second research question was: What is the role of planned happenstance in helping students of color majoring in arts advance their educational and career trajectory? In analyzing the interview transcripts, it became clear that self-authorship and planned happenstance were intertwined in the experiences of students of color pursuing arts careers. Developing skills related to planned happenstance (i.e., curiosity, persistence, flexibility, optimism, and risk taking) seemed strongly influenced by the development of self-authorship, particularly around the skills of persistence and risk taking. This was unsurprising since past research showed that students from marginalized communities were often faced with systemically oppressive contexts that required them to cultivate their self-development early (Abes & Hernández, 2016; Torres & Hernandez, 2007). Skills like persistence and risk taking would naturally support this process. Moreover, a viable career in arts continues to be seen as a risky pursuit (Daniel & Johnstone, 2017; Luftig et al., 2003), high levels of risk taking and optimism were not surprising among the participants in the study. As "Nomi" stated, "The film professors just assume that you're going to struggle it out. At the end of college, you move to LA and you're going to struggle." For first-generation college students of color, this dominant narrative of the "struggling young filmmaker" doesn't consider that often this experience is dependent on having parents who will support you financially as you go through the struggle. "Angela," an aspiring museum curator described what she perceived to be a lack of flexibility in being able to choose choice job opportunities in her field because of class-related structural barriers:

Even as I'm preparing to graduate and I'm looking for jobs and fellowships I cannot afford. I cannot afford to participate in a lot of the career development fellowships and

things like that because a lot of them are in New York. A lot of them pay between 20 and

30K [annually] and being someone that's on full financial aid and a low-income student I

can't afford to move to New York and live off of that amount.

Impact on Major and Career Decision-Making

This research question on planned happenstance is supported by two sub-questions.

The first sub-question address: How do students of color perceive planned and unplanned

events that may impact their major choice and career decision-making? Throughout the

development of the compositive first-person narratives, two key themes emerge: 1) being at the

right place at the right time and 2) always being prepared. Both themes reflect the planned

happenstance skill of being flexible. Participants from film, television, and theater arts talked

about "the hustle" and how important it was to always go after any opportunity. However, they

also emphasized the importance of preparation to help you take advantage of opportunities.

Often early experiences through internships, school clubs, or part-time jobs helped to provide a

foundation for being able to take advantage of future opportunities. "Tyson," an aspiring

performer and director, talked about how a lack of preparation and skills is a sure way of losing

out on opportunities: "I learned to be a jack-of-all-trades." He also added that you must do things

well so that people will remember you and be willing to recommend you for future jobs. "Alice," a

future conservationist talked about the importance of keep in touch with former supervisors to

help you stay abreast of upcoming opportunities in the field:

> [I constantly learn] information on new pieces [museums] acquired and get really good
>
> background knowledge of current events in the art world of conservation. [This
>
> approach] was recommended to me by my earlier supervisor at the Conservation Lab at
>
> [my university]. And so, I just keep up with their website and stay in the loop in case it
>
> ever comes up in an interview.

Constantly building skills around curiosity and flexibility, allows aspiring arts professionals like

"Tyson" and "Alice" to be prepared for unplanned opportunities in their field.

Helping or Hindering Ability to Take Advantage of Opportunities

The second sub-question focused on: Does what they believe help or hinder their ability to take advantage of more opportunities? Past research has shown that early exposure to arts and having supportive parents and teachers at the PreK to 12 grade levels had a strong influence on later talent and career development among artists (Bloom, 1985b; Kamin et al., 2007; Subotnik et al., 2010). The narratives in this dissertation supported this idea—early exposure to arts by parents and teachers reinforced development of skills that helped participants later take advantage of planned happenstance. Parents and educators ignited curiosity by exposing them to what they consider the love of arts. Theater performer "Trey" vividly recalled seeing *Oliver!* as a four-year-old and falling in love with theater. He became involved in all things related to performance and music. Without this early exposure some participants described feeling like an outsider in the arts world. This was especially noted by those in the visual arts, museum, or art history fields, which as previously mentioned has been seen as a traditionally White male domain (Berger, 2005). Visual artist "Rhoda" described how seeing her mom as an artist was a key influence in her own artistic development: "One of the main things that encouraged [me] to go [into] art, to pursue my art major, is my mom being that artist. I grew up watching my mom design and paint. It was probably a really big impact."

Many participants described how their artistic passions continued to be encouraged by key professors and mentors in the field. Future museum curator "Stephanie" said, "My love for African art history was reinvigorated by a visiting professor. We didn't just research [art], we would build these installations and really get into art making." It was important for participants to have these interpersonal relationships with supportive educators, mentors, and family members, especially after having negative experiences dealing with racism, sexism, heterosexism, or other systemic barriers. "Sarah," a classical musician, described that having support helped her "survive [her] experiences with racial microaggressions, or sometimes major aggressions, during [her] school." Many participants also described how early experiences with bullying

based on race, gender, or sexual orientation often turned them away from opportunities. Again, "Sarah" originally wanted to pursue a career in theater performance and ultimately decided that the lack of representation and support for performers of color on stage or in film and television was too strong a deterrent to continue pursuing that career. She described instances of feeling stereotyped and cast in roles based on her Latina identity:

I was typecast into racial roles. In my junior year, I played this oversexualized Hispanic character. And I remember going up to [my teacher]. I'm like, "You didn't give me this role because I was Hispanic, right?" I remember the character had a very heavy accent, she had a very Latina personality, very oversexualized. I was a 16-year-old girl. My outfit was really sexualized. One of my lines, I had [to say] in this shrilly voice, "Te quiero America!" She was a showgirl character and she's only a very minor character and just, there is that. [My teacher] was, like, "I see everyone like M&M's. We're all different colors and we're all the same on the outside." I look back on that and I roll my eyes. People who say they're colorblind, I think it's the new racism.

Ultimately, "Sarah" decided not to pursue any kind of performing arts, even in classical music, because of the racial and gender pressures that she felt.

Participants also described how challenges with finances often determined what opportunities they chose to pursue. "Kris," whose father worked at a community college described how that helped him decide what school to go to. Others talked about how the availability of scholarships also determined their options. "Harriet's" financial aid and music scholarship package included having to play in multiple ensembles. Often these obligations prevented her from taking advantage of other educational opportunities: "Because I'm an instrumentalist [the music department] tries to schedule classes so that you can't really take, take choral classes or other instrumental classes." Further, Harriet described how she was "overwhelmed with work… they put me in so many ensembles, but they won't up the scholarships. I'll go to their offices and be like, 'I can't play in all of these groups.' And they're

like, 'Well, you have to, or we could cut your scholarship.'" For other students, having a scholarship meant being able to focus on their art, while not having one meant needing to get a part-time job or two to pay for school. This often left very little time or energy for creating art pieces, going to auditions, or writing.

Lastly, I was surprised that whenever I asked students about their experiences with racism, most of them would not say that they experienced racism out right. They described many instances of microaggressions (even specifically used this term), but few named their experiences as racism. When asked about experiences with racism, "Reina" described it this way:

As soon as, as soon as there's a topic on anything that has anything to do with Black people, [other students] kind of like look at you like, maybe you know (laughs) about this, or expect that you can voice your opinion for your entire community. I think those are microaggressions. Things you notice. Not completely debilitating, but you see it, and it affects you.

However, many students, in particular the Black students across different arts fields, were hyperaware of the social upheavals occurring around the country related to police brutality and racist incidents on their campuses. "Aliyah" shared this story of racism and feeling unsafe on her campus:

Last year, there was so much going on with [confederate statues at my school]. For a lot of my professors, especially with my White male professors, it was something that intellectually they could see was bad, but for me I [felt] like I am in danger on campus. I don't like walking through campus, I don't want to have to walk from my apartment to class because I have to pass that monument. I have to pass the protesters and the KKK who are out there. That was not really something that I felt like was sensitively addressed or understood. I've spoken to professors about [missing class] and they were

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like, "Well, you're gonna take that absence." It wasn't really an understanding. I didn't

really feel like that was really addressed well.

This frustration over racist incidents and microaggressions not being addressed by teachers or

peers was shared by many participants from different racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Summary: CRT and Contextualizing Systems of Oppression

In addressing my primary research questions related to self-authorship and planned

happenstance, it became clear that the context of systems of oppression cannot be removed

from the participants' experiences. Critical race theory was a key lens in helping me unpack how

the students developed their self-authorship and enacted planned happenstance within the

structural frameworks of race, class, gender, and immigration status, especially around the

issue of representation in the arts. The participants challenged the notion that the arts operated

on a colorblind ideal. Under the guise of a colorblind approach, aspiring artists of color often

found themselves either stereotyped into specific roles, like "Sarah" in her high school theater

experience, or underrepresented not just because of their race, but other intersectional

identities.

By using CRT to center race and intersectionality in my methodological and theoretical

approach, I was able to interweave participants experiences with systemic oppression

throughout the composite narratives. Moreover, this study emphasized the importance of

utilizing counter-storytelling to disrupt the dominant narrative that maintains the arts as the

domain of White, upper-middle class privilege. As stated by Ladson-Billings and Tate (2016),

"Stories by people of color can catalyze the necessary cognitive conflict to jar dysconscious

racism" (p. 21). The first-person composite narratives in this study underscored the importance

of explicitly naming the experiences of students of color within systems of oppression in order to

dismantle social inequities in arts education and professions.

Implications for Practice and Research

By asking participants to share their experiences from a lifespan perspective, I have found that efforts to support students of color in the arts must start from an early age and involve multiple sources of support. Therefore, the findings in this study have broad implications for educators, career counselors, advisors, and researchers. This section will focus specifically on four key areas: 1) implications for primary and secondary schools, 2) implications for postsecondary institutions, 3) implications for career support, and 4) methodological implications.

Implications for Parents and Other Caregivers

While many of the narratives in this study highlighted the importance of parental support and encouragement in the development of the aspiring artist's personal and professional identity, there was also a secondary narrative that underscored parental concerns about the instability of artistic careers. Visual artist Han expressed this best when they said, "I feel like everyone except my family supports me emotionally with words of encouragement or helping me find work [in arts]." With both of their parents working in the health industry, Han felt pressured not to pursue arts because it was not seen as a stable or lucrative career path. They did not understand that Han's major in Design Media Arts opened prospective career paths in print, gaming, film and television, web design, and other industries that require creative and innovative expression. The parents' limited comprehension of arts careers is indicative of the broader lack of public understanding of the role of arts and creative industries in professional and social contexts (Bain, 2005). This leads to the general devaluation of creative industries. Therefore, parents and guardians, along with students would greatly benefit from more exposure and education on the various opportunities and career trajectories available in the arts.

Implications for Primary and Secondary Schools

As previously mentioned, the common thread among the participants' early school experience was the exposure to arts. Therefore, having access to arts education and programs that are fully integrated into the curriculum, at the earliest levels of education, would develop students' passions. "Alice" described how her early childhood experiences at a Montessori pre-school and at an arts academy prompted her interest in the arts. Moreover, having a teacher that "looked like her" affirmed her desire to pursue arts as a career:

> I remember we went and visited the academy just because I kept passing it, 'cause it was right near my dad's work. And I always saw the kids in there working on their crafts and stuff. One summer my mom asked me if I wanted to sign up and so we did. And I had this great painting teacher, and you know it was the first time I'd met someone who just painted for a living. Like that's all he did. He didn't have another job on the side, and he looked like my dad. So, it was kind of like, whoa this is, this like a real thing that happens and it's a real thing that happens for people like me.

Career development and interest depends on this exposure, and without early exposure to the arts we may have less people going into creative industries. As participants described, the arts cover a myriad of fields and does not only refer to creators. Creative industries are in need of those that are also behind the scenes such as arts entrepreneurs, producers, technicians, and even arts educators (White, 2013, 2015). School counselors at the junior high and high school levels also need greater awareness of options in creative industries to better support career exploration. Some participants also described how many of them lacked role models or family members who had professional experiences in the field, and so they lacked a "blueprint" for success. This was particularly true for participants who identified as first-generation college students. Therefore, early exposure in schools could help offset this lack of experience or limited familial support.

In addition to early exposure and career exploration support, students of color need to be able to see themselves in the arts. Therefore, the narratives provide clear implications for increasing representation including teaching outside of a Eurocentric White arts cannon, supporting and connecting students to professional artists of color, and creating pathways for arts educators of color to be in classrooms.

It is important to note that while early exposure to arts may provide a solid foundation for some aspiring artists, not all students have access to arts due to a lack of resources in their schools or communities. International researchers on primary education found that children from marginalized, poverty-stricken communities are often at the greatest risk of failure due to inadequate education systems that fail to address the needs of gifted and talented children, like budding young artists (Academy for Educational Development, 2010). This does not mean, however, that not having access to early exposure to arts either in schools or from families preclude students from developing as future artists. At any point in their development, teachers, role models, peers, or other aspirational sources (e.g., books, media, etc.) can play a role in solidifying interest in arts and formation of an artistic identity. Wilhelmina, an aspiring creative writing professor who grew up without the benefit of consistent parental support, found her inspiration in video games:

> My dream job is to be a cultural consultant for the *Assassin's Creed* franchise. I love video games and I hope they make one about Polynesia. And if they don't, I will pitch it to them 'till the day I die (laughter)…. I would need to have more storytelling experiences.

Wilhelmina went on to describe how her focus on Pacific Islander literature and her growing creative writing portfolio will help her with world building for the popular video game franchise. Additionally, Wilhelmina described the support she's received from her writing professors who have identified her ability to tell a "compelling story" and have provided guidance and

connections in publishing. Her passion for gaming along with encouragement from her

professors motivate Wilhelmina in her artistic pursuits.

Implications for Postsecondary Institutions

One of the common laments among the participants was the perception that arts and

humanities was less valued than STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) and

business education, as well as athletics at their colleges and universities. Participant "Jenna" an

aspiring music producer, shared:

> It frustrates me 'cause I know that my university has a lot of money and they almost felt
>
> like an insult to injury the fact they, installed a $5 million soccer field with turf grass right
>
> next to the music building where there was just open regular grass. And everyone was
>
> kind of mad because they're like, "You couldn't fix the basement, you couldn't fix the
>
> pipelines, you couldn't somehow take this $5 million and contribute it to arts individuals.

"Jenna" was not alone in her observations. Many participants described how structural support

for arts buildings were always the lowest priorities while departments like engineering or

business had the latest and most technologically advanced resources in their buildings.

This knowledge of the lack of support for arts at traditional academic colleges and

universities impacted the college choice decision for some participants. However, while most

described a preference for going to an art school or similar institution specific to their industry,

many also said that financial aid and scholarship options where often more readily available at

traditional four-year colleges and universities. The disconnect between types of support

available to students in the arts led to inconsistent experiences as will be described in the next

section.

Lastly, one specific area that was brought up across sectors was the idea of supporting

arts entrepreneurship education for all arts majors. Creators such as visual artists, filmmakers,

as well as performers talked about needing to learn how to run a business or operate as

someone that was self-employed. Their assessment of their personal experience with career

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support at post-secondary education reflects research on arts entrepreneurship education. Most schools are great at training arts students on the practice and performance of their art, but few actually "prepare students to be professional artists" (White, 2013, p. 28). Therefore, post-secondary arts curriculum should consider making arts entrepreneurship an essential part of the educational experience.

Implications for Career Support

A major complaint brought up by most participants across the various art sectors was the lack of domain specific support for students pursuing arts majors. Academic and career advisors at larger universities were described as not having enough knowledge about the arts industry, while faculty advisors were described as often being too busy to provide adequate support:

> During orientation they told us we'd have advisors. I expected more guidance than I have gotten. I expected more guidance and a sort of understanding of my experience [as an arts major]. I don't feel like I have been able to find support [from] school instituted advisors ("Aliyah" on describing her experiences with school-appointed advisors).

While students often described their education as adequately preparing them for the practical skills related to their artistic medium, participants felt that they lacked knowledge of their field in general from a practical industry perspective. They mourned the lack of networking opportunities with working professionals, knowledge and connections to internships, and overall career specific support, such as tailoring resumes for creative industries. They often compared their experiences with peers in what they perceived as "vocationally" and "technically" oriented fields like engineering or business, who they saw as receiving very specific hands-on support from career advisors and counselors.

Methodological Implications

In choosing to conduct a narrative study, I was aware that while storytelling has become more widely used in educational qualitative research, there remains epistemological conflicts around whose narrative is considered valid for advancing scholarship (Bernal, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1998). Advancing narratives from marginalized populations, as well as lesser-known fields and industries, such as the experiences of students of color in the arts, helps to disrupt the narrative that only certain stories and experiences are valid. Choosing to incorporate CRT as both a theoretical lens and a methodological approach was a deliberate choice that educational researchers who conduct studies related to the experiences of students of color should choose more often.

Given my goal of elevating the voices of students of color in the arts, I knew that conducting a narrative study guided by CRT was going to be my main methodological approach. However, with over 30 interviews, I did not know how I would be able to distill and present the tremendous amount of data collected. In my search for narrative models I discovered composite first-person narratives in qualitative research. However, most of what I found were outside of education, including medical/community health research, social welfare, and political science (Biglino et al., 2017; Wertz et al., 2011; Willis, 2019). In these studies, researchers identified two key critiques and limitations: 1) the "burden of responsibility upon the researcher, to convey accurate, yet anonymized, portrayals of the individuals" (Willis, 2019, p. 471), and 2) the potential "danger of privileging narrative, relying too much on accounts provided by individuals, and not seeing the wider context or structure within which the narrative is set" (Willis, 2019, p. 478). These critiques assume that the researcher may cherry pick specific interview passages to create a particular type of master narrative that furthers an agenda rather than providing a representative narrative. However, the primary benefit of utilizing composite narratives point to an intentional focus on pulling the prevailing narrative to ensure the greatest representation

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(Willis, 2019). This process allows researchers to present complex data directly from individuals' perspectives and present findings in a way that is accessible to the broadest audience.

Moreover, by adding a CRT lens to the composite narrative approach, researchers are able to create a composite counterstory that "*speaks against* the master narrative in US society – a narrative that is based on the social and cultural history of the dominant race" (Cook & Dixson, 2013, p. 1243). This master narrative is so prevalent in US society, that it is often accepted as truth without question. Narrative researchers in education that want to tell the stories of multiple participants from communities outside of the dominant paradigm may benefit greatly from this approach. The compositive first-person narrative also lends itself well to approaches that draw from arts-based methodologies that utilize autobiographical and first-person storytelling as ways of creating new knowledge about particularly painful and traumatic experiences in deeply personal and meaningful ways (Leavy, 2020). This approach could be an ideal vehicle for telling painful experiences with systemic oppression.

Suggestions for Future Research

As a qualitative study guided by a clear theoretical framework, my dissertation was both a deductive and inductive process. While I initially used the framework to guide my analysis, I found that many themes emerged that were outside the scope of analysis in this study. For instance, while it was important to me to tell the story of visual artists from a transgender Asian American perspective, writing the narrative highlighted for me the importance of conducting a study that specifically focused on the ways in which students in the arts navigated their personal and professional identities, while clearly navigating their queer identities.

Research in broad fields with multiple sectors like the arts and creative industries also needs to be tackled from a domain-specific perspective. As I was making the decision on how to organize the composite narratives, I found myself initially struggling with how to synthesize the experiences of 32 participants into a handful of stories. The intersections of their social identities

and educational backgrounds meant that their stories could be told from multiple angles: race and ethnic experience, gendered experience, first-generation college experience, etc. Ultimately, the decision to create narratives around fields of study and career aspirations highlighted that in the development of self-authorship and planned happenstance, you could not separate one's social identities from their artistic identities. In fact, in their study of visual arts, music, and psychology students, Haller and Courvoisier (2010) found that the differences among art students where just as insightful as the differences between artists and non-artists. Therefore, future researchers should consider more in-depth studies focused on experiences of artists of color in specific domains.

Similarly, in the process of creating composite narratives, I also saw the value of disaggregating the data by race, gender, and other aspects of social identity. As an Asian American Studies scholar, I learned the importance of disaggregating the data to show the diversity of experiences between and within communities and applied this lens to my analysis (Maramba & Bonus, 2013; Museus & Chang, 2009; Pak et al., 2014). For example, among visual artists, there were clear divergent experiences for support between the Asian American participants, who found a lack of career support from their parents, compared with the single Black visual artist, who describe her parents as highly supportive of her choice to pursue the arts. I also found that based on the final sample, what emerged were primarily female narratives. This was because with the exception of the theater performers, the majority of participants were female. There needs to be a closer examination of the gendered experience in arts education and professions.

As previously discussed, the students in this study seemed more comfortable describing their brushes with racism as microaggressions, rather than labeling them as racist acts. This finding warrants a discourse analysis in the use of terms like racism, microaggression, and imposter syndrome among today's college students.

Lastly, challenges with mental health, particularly with depression and anxiety, emerged as a key theme that was outside the scope of this study. This may be because of the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on their educational experience exacerbating their anxieties around school and their future.

Conclusion

Ultimately, these narratives revealed that self-authorship and planned happenstance are two approaches that can be used to analyze the personal identity and career development of students of color in the arts. However, it is important that these approaches employ a critical lens by critical race theory or other critical frameworks. Systemic oppression often masquerades as an erasure of race and gender through the assumption of the dominant social traits of artists as White and male (Pearce et al., 2020). These assumptions supported liberal ideologies, such as racial colorblindness, in arts program admissions or museum curatorial decisions and often were in direct conflict with the institution's stated diversity goals (Berger, 2005). These composite first-person narratives emphasized the importance of further examining and critiquing student development and career development theories among marginalized populations such as students of color in the arts.

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Appendix A: Recruitment Letter and Social Media Ad Sample

Hello!

You have been identified as a graduating college student of color majoring in an arts-related field. I am writing to invite you to consider participating in a dissertation study exploring the educational and professional pathways of artists. The goal of this study is to provide parents, educators, and researchers with a greater understanding of your experiences within the arts. My hope is that with your story, we can provide a way of better supporting the next generation of artists of color.

To participate in the study, you must meet the following criteria:
1. Identify as a student of color;
2. Be a junior or graduating senior in a college, university, or art school leading to a baccalaureate degree (with pending graduation in spring, summer, or fall 2020); and
3. Major or minoring in an art-related field (includes but not limited to crafts, craft design, folk art and artisanry; dance; design and applied arts; drama, theater arts and stagecraft; film, video and photographic arts; fine and studio art; music; arts, entertainment, and media management; community, environmental, socially-engaged art; creative placemaking; arts education; literary arts; media arts; museums; or other forms of visual, performing, or creative arts).

Participation in the study will involve:
1. Reading and signing the online consent form;
2. Completing an online survey (approximately 15 minutes);
3. Participation in a one-on-one interview with the researcher to be arranged either in person or online video chat (approximately 45 to 60 minutes);
4. Opportunity to review the summary and results of your interview responses and provide comments as needed.

Your responses will be kept strictly confidential and recorded under an assigned pseudonym, and further information will be provided in the consent form.

Your valuable time is respected and very much appreciated. As a token of appreciation, you may opt to receive a $10 gift certificate to Amazon.com. The gift certificate will be distributed via e-mail upon completion of the interview.

If you are interested in participating in the study, have any further questions (including questions about eligibility), or would like to recommend someone to participate in the study, please contact me at shirliemae.choe@cgu.edu or 323-716-2929. Questions regarding the study may also be directed to Dr. Dina C. Maramba, faculty advisor, via e-mail at dina.maramba@cgu.edu.

Thank you for your kind consideration.

S. Mae Mamaril Choe
Ph.D. Candidate, Claremont Graduate University

Sample of social media ad to be posted on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Ad will also be shared with art professors, professional artists, and academic/career advisors at four-year colleges and universities.

Seeking college students of color in their junior or senior year majoring or minoring in applied, literary, music, performing, visual, or other creative arts

ABOUT THE STUDY

Share your story about your experiences as aspiring arts professionals by participating in:

An online (zoom) interview and a brief pre-interview survey

Receive a gift card in appreciation for your participation in the interview.

HOW IS "CREATIVE ARTS" DEFINED IN THIS STUDY?

Any arts-related field including but not limited to visual, music, applied, performing, literary or other creative arts (e.g., Arts Education, Creative Writing, Dance, Fashion Design, Film and Theater, Illustration, Museum Studies, Music, Studio Arts, Toy Design, etc.)

PARTICIPATE IN A DISSERTATION STUDY ON ARTS EDUCATION AND CAREER PATHWAYS

FMI
shirliemae.choe@cgu.edu
tinyurl.com/smcstudy

Note: The URL will be linked to a Qualtrics Survey that includes the online consent form, eligibility survey, participant created life line, and demographic survey

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Appendix B: Online Consent Form

Claremont
Graduate
University

AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE IN *AUTHORING SELF AND REDEFINING LUCK: PATHWAYS TO THE ARTS DEGREES AND PROFESSIONS FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS OF COLOR* (IRB # 3666)

You are invited to take a short survey and be interviewed for a research project. Volunteering may not benefit you directly, but you will be helping me explore the academic and career experiences of students of color in the arts. If you volunteer, you will complete a short survey and participate in an interview. This will take about 60 to 75 minutes of your time. Volunteering for this study involves no more risk than what a typical person experiences on a regular day. Your involvement is entirely up to you. You may withdraw at any time for any reason. Please continue reading for more information about the study.

STUDY LEADERSHIP: This research study is led by Shirlie Mae Mamaril Choe, a doctoral student of education at Claremont Graduate University and supervised by Dina C. Maramba, associate professor of education at Claremont Graduate University.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this study is to examine the educational and professional trajectory of students of color majoring in arts. This study aims to construct narratives of these students to better understand their experiences within the arts.

ELIGIBILITY: To be in this study, you must 1) identify as a student of color; 2) be a junior or graduating senior in a college, university, or art school leading to a baccalaureate degree (pending graduation in the spring, summer, or fall of 2020); and 3) minor or major in an arts-related field.

PARTICIPATION: During the study, you will be asked to agree to participate by completing this consent form. You will then be asked to complete an online survey on your demographic background and create a brief life line (timeline) of your personal and educational experiences (estimated time of completion is 15 minutes). Upon completion of the survey, you will be scheduled for either an in-person or video chat interview at your convenience. Interview questions involve questions about your childhood and later experiences related to your educational and professional trajectory in the arts. The interview is expected to take no more than 45 to 60 minutes of your time.

RISKS OF PARTICIPATION: The risks that you run by taking part in this study are minimal. The risks include possible loss of time for participating in the interview and a possible likelihood of psychological or emotional distress due to the personal nature of the interview questions involving life experiences. Therefore, at any time during the online survey or interview, you are free to skip any question that you do not feel comfortable answering. If you are interested in receiving information for additional psychological support, you can be referred to people who can help you.

BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION: We do not expect the study to benefit you personally. This study will benefit the researcher by helping me complete my graduate education. This study is also intended to benefit the field of education by providing parents, educators, and researchers with a greater understanding of how to support educational and professional aspirations of the next generation of artists.

COMPENSATION: You will be directly compensated with a $10 gift certificate to Amazon.com for participating in this study. You will be asked to opt-in to receive the certificate by providing your name and e-mail address during survey portion of the study. The gift certificate will be distributed via e-mail upon completion of the interview.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may stop or withdraw from the study at any time or refuse to answer any particular question for any reason without it being held against you. Your decision whether or not to participate will have no effect on your current or future connection with anyone at CGU.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Your individual privacy will be protected in all papers, books, talks, posts, or stories resulting from this study. I may share the data I collect with other researchers, but I will not reveal your identity with it. In order to protect the confidentiality of your responses, I will assign you a pseudonym. Recordings and transcripts will be labeled according to the assigned pseudonyms. Though recordings of the interviews will remain unaltered, transcripts and any written records developed from the recordings will change the participant names to pseudonyms accordingly. All audio recordings of the interviews, transcripts, and all additional written records will be kept safely secured and password protected for five years, after which they will be destroyed.

FURTHER INFORMATION: If you have any questions or would like additional information about this study, please contact Shirlie Mae Mamaril Choe at 323-716-2929 or by email at shirliemae.choe@cgu.edu. You may also contact Dina C. Maramba, faculty advisor to the study, at 909-621-8000 or via e-mail at dina.maramba@cgu.edu. The CGU Institutional Review Board has certified this project as exempt." If you have any ethical concerns about this project or about your rights as a human subject in research, you may contact the CGU IRB at (909) 607-9406 or at irb@cgu.edu. A copy of this form will be given to you if you wish to keep it. You may print and keep a copy of this consent form.

CONSENT: Selecting "I consent to participate" means that you understand the information on this form, that someone has answered any and all questions you may have about this study, and you voluntarily agree to participate in it.

Appendix C: Eligibility/Demographic Survey and Life Line (Online)

Eligibility Questions

Are you a graduating college senior (graduating in the spring, summer, or fall of 2020) pursuing a bachelor's degree in an arts-related field (includes but not limited to: crafts, craft design, folk art and artisanry; dance; design and applied arts; drama, theater arts and stagecraft; film, video and photographic arts; fine and studio art; music; arts, entertainment, and media management; community, environmental, socially-engaged art; creative placemaking; arts education; literary arts; media arts; museums; or other forms of visual, performing, or creative arts)?
- o If yes, when is your graduation date (month and year):
- o If yes, please specify major:
- o Note: If no, participant will be forwarded to message regarding non-eligibility for study.

Do you identify as a student of color?
- o If yes, what is your race/ethnicity? Please check all that apply.
  - ▪ American Indian or Alaska Native
  - ▪ Asian or Asian American
  - ▪ Black or African American
  - ▪ Hispanic, Latino, or other Spanish origin
  - ▪ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
  - ▪ White or European American
  - ▪ Other, please specify: _____
- o Note: If no, participant will be forwarded to message regarding non-eligibility for study.

Demographic Survey

What type of college or university are you currently attending?
- o Public 4-year university (e.g., Arizona State University, University of California, University of Michigan, etc.)
- o Private 4-year university (e.g., The Claremont Colleges, Oberlin College, Sarah Lawrence College, etc.)
- o Independent Art, Music, or Design School (e.g., Berklee College of Music, California College of the Arts, Minneapolis College of Art and Design, etc.)
- o Other, please specify:

What is your gender identification?
- o Female
- o Male
- o Transgender
- o Non-binary
- o Other, please specify:
- o Prefer not to answer

How old are you?
- o Under 18
- o 18 to 25
- o Over 25

What is your country of origin?
- o U.S. Born
- o Born outside of the U.S., please specify
- o Prefer not to answer

If born outside of the U.S., how old were you when you came to the U.S.?

What are your parents' or primary caregivers' highest level of education?
- o Mother
  - No schooling completed
  - Some high school, no diploma
  - High school graduate, diploma or equivalent (e.g., GED)
  - Some college credit, no degree
  - Trade/technical/vocational training
  - Associate degree
  - Bachelor's degree
  - Master's degree
  - Professional degree
  - Doctorate degree
- o Father:
  - No schooling completed
  - Some high school, no diploma
  - High school graduate, diploma or equivalent (e.g., GED)
  - Some college credit, no degree
  - Trade/technical/vocational training
  - Associate degree
  - Bachelor's degree
  - Master's degree
  - Professional degree
  - Doctorate degree
- o Other caregiver (if applicable):
  - No schooling completed
  - Some high school, no diploma
  - High school graduate, diploma or equivalent (e.g., GED)
  - Some college credit, no degree
  - Trade/technical/vocational training
  - Associate degree
  - Bachelor's degree
  - Master's degree
  - Professional degree
  - Doctorate degree
- o Prefer not to answer

What are your parents' or primary caregivers' occupation?
- o Mother:
- o Father:
- o Other caregiver:
- o Prefer not to answer

What is your current student status?
- o Dependent (reports self and parental financial information on relevant forms)
- o Independent (reports self and, if married, spouse's financial information on relevant forms)
- o Prefer not to answer

Life Line

Instructions: Take a few minutes to thoughtfully reflect on the course of your life. To the best of your ability, recall both high and low points, as well as times of stability, between the ages of one to the present. List in chronological order events and/or experiences, both positive and negative, that influenced your life, educational, and/or career successes and pathway. Place a "+" sign by events that you feel represent overall positive experiences, a "-" by the ones that you feel were overall negative.

Example:
- Parents enrolled me in dance and music lessons at age 4. (+)
- Moved to Japan at age 7. It was difficult to start a new school in a new country and have to learn a new language. (-)
- Joined the girl scouts. Helped me to be less shy and participate in more creative activities such as Japanese cooking/sushi making and arts and crafts. Also participated in an exchange with international girl scouts from other countries. (+)
- At age 10, teacher invited me to submit a poem to a competition. My first poem was published in the Department of Defense (all schools at military bases in Asia) publication. (+)
- Joined band in junior high school and high school. (+)
- Family discouraged application to out of state colleges. (-)
- Auditioned for musical in senior year high school. Didn't get cast. (-)
- Participated in open mic nights in college. (+)

Concluding Questions

Please use this form to schedule your interview. Please note, interviews are schedule for 2-hour blocks. However, the average interview is 45 to 90 minutes. All times reflect Pacific Time Zone. Interview may be conducted in-person (Los Angeles and surrounding areas) or via Zoom (online video conference, a link will be sent to you). Once you've selected your interview time, you will be contacted by e-mail to confirm and finalize detail. If you have any questions, I may be reached at shirliemae.choe@cgu.edu or 323-716-2929. Thank you!

When you've completed the appointment form, please scroll to the bottom of this survey and click next.

<Embedded calendar/appointment system>

Would you like to receive a copy of the study upon its completion?
- o   If yes, please provide your Name and e-mail address.
- o   No, thank you.

Would you like to receive a $10 gift certificate to Amazon.com for your participation in the study? You will receive your certificate after completion of the interview.
- o   If yes, please provide your Name and e-mail address.
- o   No, thank you.

Is there anyone you would recommend for participation in the study? Please include their name and e-mail below.

Appendix D: Interview Protocol

The following protocol includes the list of questions that will be included in interview portion of the study. Please note that the column "Connection to Framework" is provided to show the questions' relationship to the concepts stipulated in the theoretical framework. It will not be shared with participants.

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to this interview regarding the academic and career pathways of students of color. Although I will take some notes, I would like to record our interview so I can refer to it later, would this be okay?

As you read in the consent form, this is part of my dissertation study. Your information will be kept confidential. In fact, I will assign you a pseudonym, unless you'd like to select one now. Just a reminder, if at any time you don't want to answer a question, we can skip it, or if you need to stop the interview, you may do so at any time.

The interview should last no more than 90 minutes. Do you have any questions before we start?

If you're ready, I'll turn on the recorder and we can get started.

Questions	Connection to Framework (Self-Authorship: Follow the Formula, Crossroads, Becoming the Author, Internal Foundation; Planned Happenstance: Curiosity, Persistence, Flexibility, Optimism, Risk Taking; Structural/Systemic Influences)
1. Tell me, what led you to declare your major in _____?	Self-authorship/all Planned happenstance/all
2. What expectations did you and others have going into your major/college?	Self-authorship/ Follow Formula Structural/Systemic Influences

3. Has your experience matched those expectations?
  a. Prompt: How do you feel about where you are now?
  b. Prompt: How did you adapt to your experience
	Self-authorship/ Crossroads
	
	Planned Happenstance/Persistence, Flexibility
	
	Structural/Systemic Influences

4. What expectations did you have of your instructors? Advisors? Peers?	Self-Authorship/Crossroads, Becoming the Author Structural/Systemic Influences
5. Who supported you in your educational and career decision-making process? a. Prompt: How did they support you?	Self-Authorship/all Structural/Systemic Influences

6. What experiences enabled you to pursue your major/career? (opportunities)
    a. Prompt: Were any of these opportunities unexpected/unplanned? How did that make you feel?
    b. Prompt, if unplanned: How would it have been different if it was a planned event?
	Planned happenstance/all
	
	Structural/Systemic Influences

7. What experiences hindered you from pursuing your major/career? (barriers/challenges)
    a. Prompt: Were any of these opportunities unexpected/unplanned? How did that make you feel?
    b. Prompt, if unplanned: How would it have been different if it was a planned event?
	Planned happenstance/all
	
	Structural/Systemic Influences

8. Have you experienced racism or other forms of discrimination in the course of pursuing your education or career goals? If yes, please describe. a. How did you handle the experience?	Planned happenstance/Persistence, flexibility Structural/Systemic Influences
9. Did you ever experience conflicting information between what you learned in the classroom and what you learned outside of class? a. Prompt, if yes: Can you provide an example? How did you respond to those conflicts?	Self-authorship/Crossroads Planned happenstance: Flexibility
10. Do you see a discrepancy between what you learned as an {art} major and what you believe you'll do for a career? a. Prompt: Please elaborate.	Self-authorship/Becoming the author Planned happenstance/Persistence or Risk taking
11. Do you believe your major has prepared you for your chosen career? a. Prompt: Please elaborate.	Planned happenstance: Persistence, Flexibility, Optimism Structural/Systemic Influences
Life Line related questions Let's review your life line together.	

12. What stands out for you in your life line?
    a. Prompt: Was there anything that was surprising to you?
    b. Prompt: Please elaborate
	Self-Authorship/all
	
	Planned Happenstance/all

13. How did you decide what to include?	Self-authorship/all
14. What do consider a meaningful experience that contributed to your growth?	Self-authorship/all Planned happenstance/all

15. How does this life line represent you and your identity? a. Prompt: In what ways does it reflect your identification as an artist of color?	Self-authorship/Becoming the author, Internal foundation Structural/Systemic Influences/Race
Closing Questions	
16. What concerns do you have now that you're graduating? c. How do you plan to address these concerns?	Self-authorship/Becoming Author, Internal foundation Planned happenstance/Risk Taking
17. Where do you want to be in 5 years? 10 years?	Planned happenstance/all
18. Do you have anything else to add or any questions?	
19. Is there anyone you would recommend participate in this study?	

Appendix E: Demographic and Academic Characteristics

Table 9 Demographic and Academic Characteristics

Name	Academic or Career Field	Academic Level	Race/Ethnicity 1	Race/Ethnicity 2	Age	Gender ID	Country of Origin
Angela	Art History/Museum Studies	Senior	Black or African American		18-25	Female	United States
Aliyah	Art History/Museum Studies	Junior	Black or African American		18-25	Female	United States
Stephanie	Art History/Museum Studies	Junior	Black or African American		18-25	Female	United States
Alice	Art History/Museum Studies	Junior	Black or African American	Other, please specify -- Jamaican, Caribbean Islander	18-25	Female	United States
Harriet	Classical Music	Junior	Black or African American	White or European American	18-25	Female	United States
Sarah	Classical Music	Junior	Hispanic, Latino, or other Spanish origin	Other, please specify -- Middle Eastern/Arab	18-25	Female	United States
Reina	Classical Music	Junior	Black or African American		18-25	Female	United States
Felicity	Drama/Theater Arts & Stagecraft	Senior	Asian or Asian American	Other, please specify -- Filipino	18-25	Female	Philippines

Name	Academic or Career Field	Academic Level	Race/Ethnicity 1	Race/Ethnicity 2	Age	Gender ID	Country of Origin
Trey	Drama/Theater Arts & Stagecraft	Junior	Black or African American		18-25	Male	United States
Neil	Drama/Theater Arts & Stagecraft	Junior	Black or African American		18-25	Male	United States
Kris	Drama/Theater Arts & Stagecraft	Junior	Other, please specify -- Iranian American		18-25	Male	United States
Tyson	Drama/Theater Arts & Stagecraft	Senior	American Indian, Alaska Native, or Native American	Black or African American	18-25	Male	U.S. Born
Olivia	Drama/Theater Arts & Stagecraft	Junior	Black or African American		18-25	Female	U.S. Born
Alan	Film/Video and Photographic Arts	Senior	Hispanic, Latino, or other Spanish origin		18-25	Male	Mexico
Nomi	Film/Video and Photographic Arts	Junior	Hispanic, Latino, or other Spanish origin		18-25	Female	United States
Seth	Film/Video and Photographic Arts	Senior	Hispanic, Latino, or other Spanish origin		18-25	Male	United States
Julie	Film/Video and Photographic Arts	Junior	Asian or Asian American	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	18-25	Female	Philippines
Sally	Film/Video and Photographic Arts	Senior	Hispanic, Latino, or other Spanish origin	White or European American	Over 25	Female	U.S. Born

Name	Academic or Career Field	Academic Level	Race/Ethnicity 1	Race/Ethnicity 2	Age	Gender ID	Country of Origin
Elsa	Music Business, Entrepreneurship, and Technology	Senior	Asian or Asian American		18-25	Female	China
Eric	Music Business, Entrepreneurship, and Technology	Junior	Asian or Asian American		18-25	Male	U.S. Born
Jenna	Music Business, Entrepreneurship, and Technology	Junior	Hispanic, Latino, or other Spanish origin		18-25	Female	U.S. Born
Malia	Music Business, Entrepreneurship, and Technology	Senior	Black or African American		18-25	Female	U.S. Born
Wilhemina	Other Arts (Academic)	Junior	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	White or European American	18-25	Female	United States
Jack	Other Arts (Academic)	Junior	Asian or Asian American	White or European American	18-25	Male	United States
Belinda	Other Arts (Academic)	Junior	Hispanic, Latino, or other Spanish origin		18-25	Female	U.S. Born
Sam	Visual Arts	Senior	Black or African American		18-25	Female	United States
Han	Visual Arts	Junior	Asian or Asian American		18-25	Non-binary	Malaysia
Rhoda	Visual Arts	Senior	Asian or Asian American	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	18-25	Female	United States
Arlene	Visual Arts	Senior	Asian or Asian American		18-25	Female	United States

Name	Academic or Career Field	Academic Level	Race/Ethnicity 1	Race/Ethnicity 2	Age	Gender ID	Country of Origin
Amy	Visual Arts	Junior	Black or African American		18-25	Female	United States
Scott	Visual Arts	Junior	Asian or Asian American		18-25	Male	United States
Nadia	Visual Arts	Senior	Asian or Asian American		18-25	Female	India