ABSTRACT

Title of Document: THE NEW BOTTOM LINE: BLACK WOMEN
CULTURAL ENTREPRENEURS RE-DEFINE
SUCCESS

Kathryn Buford, Doctor of Philosophy, 2016

Directed By: Professor Patricia Hill Collins,
Department of Sociology

Black women cultural entrepreneurs are a group of entrepreneurs that merit further inquiry. Using qualitative interview and participant observation data, this dissertation investigates the ways in which black women cultural entrepreneurs define success. My findings reveal that black women cultural entrepreneurs are a particular interpretive community with values, perspectives and experiences, which are not wholly idiosyncratic, but shaped by collective experiences and larger social forces. Black women are not a monolith, but they are neither disconnected individuals completely devoid of group identity. The meaning they give to their businesses, professional experiences and understandings of success are influenced by their shared social position and identity as black women.

For black women cultural entrepreneurs, the New Bottom Line goes beyond financial gain. This group, while not uniform in their understandings of success, largely understand the most meaningful accomplishments they can realize as social

impact in the form of cultural intervention, black community uplift and professional/creative agency. These particular considerations represent a new paramount concern, and alternative understanding of what is typically understood as the bottom line. The structural, social and personal challenges that black women cultural entrepreneurs encounter have shaped their particular perspectives on success.

I also explore the ways research participants articulated an oppositional consciousness to create an alternative means of defining and achieving success. I argue that this consciousness empowers them with resources, connections and meaning not readily conferred in traditional entrepreneurial settings. In this sense, the personal, social and structural challenges have been foundational to the formation of an alternative economy, which I refer to as The Connected Economy. Leading and participating in The Connected Economy, black women cultural entrepreneurs represent a black feminist and womanist critique of dominant understandings of success.

THE NEW BOTTOM LINE: BLACK WOMEN CULTURAL ENTREPRENEURS
RE-DEFINE SUCCESS IN THE CONNECTED ECONOMY

By

Kathryn Buford

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
2016

Advisory Committee:
Professor Patricia Hill Collins, Chair
Professor Roberto Patrico Korzeniewicz
Professor Rashawn Ray
Professor Montré Aza Missouri
Professor Audra Buck-Coleman

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my parents Stanley Gene Buford, Donna Faye Williams

and Albert Mensah. I am forever grateful for your sacrifices for my education.

me what it means to hold fast to joy through trying times and "have fun getting the job done."

Lastly, I commend the black women cultural entrepreneurs that participated in this research project and made this study possible. Thank you for your candor and example. It is an honor to share your insights.

I am a better person because of this project. Graduate school has been a challenging process that brought me closer to God and the spirit within me; I am humbled by and grateful for all that this experience has taught me about human potential.

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ENTREPRENEURS RE-DEFINE SUCCESS IN THE CONNECTED ECONOMY

A cultural entrepreneur, simply put, is an entrepreneur who creates a business

that is grounded in the arts, creatively inclined and/or is relevant to the cultural

heritage[1] of a specific community[2]. The goal of their business ventures is to address

social problems by shifting belief systems and attitudes. Cultural entrepreneurship

has been characterized as a sub-set of social entrepreneurship (Martin and Witter

2011). Social entrepreneurs create businesses to address a social problem, for

example, the privatization of fresh water, structural inequality and environmental

racism. For social entrepreneurs, business success and positive social change

constitute their primary goals, which can take the form of financially viable

enterprises that provide better access to quality drinking water[3], employment for poor

people and the end of impoverishment[4] and environmental sustainability[5].

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[1] Cultural heritage is an expression of the ways of living developed by a community
and passed on from generation to, generation including customs, practices, places,
objects, artistic expressions and values. Here, I reference the UNESCO definition of
cultural heritage used in John L. Comaroff and Jean Comaroff note in their 2009
publication of *Ethnicity, Inc*.: "The practices, representations, expressions,
knowledge, skills - as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts and cultural spaces
associated therewith - that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals
recognize as part of their cultural heritage."
[2] Prevailing definitions have not included cultural relevance and cultural heritage in
their definitions. In the analysis section I explain why, in the context of black
women's experiences, I choose to add these terms.
[3] Anupam Bhargava is the CEO of Clearwater Systems, a company focused on
furnishing environmentally sustainable water treatment systems.
[4] Muhammad Yunus is the founder of Grameen Bank, which provides "microloans"
to small entrepreneurs, most of whom are poor women, in an effort at empowering
them and their businesses.

Cultural entrepreneurs share the same goal of leveraging business to better society. However, instead of developing physical products and systems that foster social change, they create and share cultural products like visual art, music and film that present new ways of understanding these same social problems. Courtney E. Martin and Lisa Witter suggest: "Cultural entrepreneurs, who often rely heavily on new media tools such as Twitter and Kickstarter, use persuasive communications and peer influence to shift attitudes, beliefs, and behavior and, in doing so, change the world for the better" (Martin and Witter 2011, np).

There are myriad examples of well-known black women cultural entrepreneurs, for example, noted figures like Shonda Rhimes, Teri Woods, Ava DuVernay, Issa Rae and Janelle Monáe. Each shares experiences and perspectives with lesser-known black women who have also created businesses in similar creative arenas. Broadly speaking, black women cultural entrepreneurs like the aforementioned filmmakers, producers, writers and musicians, reference experiences with discrimination, the importance of creative control and a commitment to changing worldviews with cultural products[6].

In 2015 Shonda Rhimes became known as "the most powerful woman in television" and is colloquially referred to as "the woman who single-handedly saved

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[5] Ron Finley, founder of LA Green Grounds and The Ron Finely Project, is an urban "guerilla" gardener, dedicated to fostering the ideals of healthy eating and sustainability in low-income neighborhoods in Los Angeles.

[6] I reference David Hesmondhalgh's definition of cultural products described in the 2007 edition of his book, *The Cultural Industries*. He describes cultural products as goods and services that include performing arts, visual arts, architecture as well as heritage conservation including museums, galleries, libraries in the cultural industries. Platforms for cultural products' distribution include written media, broadcasting, film, recording and festivals.

network television" (Henderson 2014). Rhimes' television show, "Scandal[7]," is produced through her production company, Shondaland, in partnership with ABC Studios. "Scandal" now averages eight million viewers a week, making it the number 1 drama at 10 p.m. EST on any night, on any network, among the most targeted demographic, adults ages 18 to 49 in the United States (Paskin 2013). The show has also been innovative in its usage of social media. When "Scandal" airs, fans share over 190,000 tweet per episode (Paskin 2013). Viola Davis, the star of another popular Rhimes show, "How to Get Away with Murder," made television history in 2015 as the first African American woman, as well as the first black woman of any nationality, to win the Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Lead Actress in a Drama Series.

In a similar sense, novelist Teri Woods is also credited with rejuvenating an industry. After numerous rejections from major publishing houses Woods founded Teri Woods Publishing, a self-publishing house to distribute her own work and that of others, in the urban fiction genre. Having sold over 1 million copies independently and generating more than 15 million dollars in revenue, Woods is credited with revitalizing the urban fiction market (Barnard 2008). Woods leveraged her success to negotiate a multimillion-dollar contract with Hachette Book Group USA to re-release her previously published novels. Her books *True to the Game* and *True to the Game II* both debuted on the New York Times' bestseller's list. Woods says that her

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[7] Shonda Rhimes is also the creator of other successful TV shows, such as Grey's Anatomy and Private Practice. Her production company, Shondaland, was acclaimed for having a consecutive three-hour block of television shows appear consecutively on Thursday nights.

website is a blueprint of the modern outlet for authors to sell their books (Buddington 2008).

Bootstrapping was also important to Ava DuVernay, a filmmaker who founded and became CEO of African American Film Festival Releasing Movement (AFFRM) in 2010. Having no external funding and relying solely on her network and grassroots marketing, DuVernay made history as the first African American, man or woman, to have a film debut at number one[8] through a film distribution company that she herself owned. Grassroots organizing and innovative social media engagement including TweetUps and Twitter raffles[9], were important to promoting her company's independently distributed films (Moire 2013).

Young black women cultural entrepreneurs also excel in other creative fields. Janelle Monáe, a musician known for her Afro-futuristic style created her own record label, Wondaland Records, in 2015. Her company is known for bridging arts and activism as exemplified by the protests against police brutality that she led with her label's 2015 album tour[10]. This tour was also digitally innovative; Wondaland Records partnered with Toyota to host a marketing campaign that involved secret concerts, which were announced via e-mail the day of the performance. Boston City Council recognized Janelle Monáe for her artistry and social leadership, naming October 16, 2013 "Janelle Monáe Day" in the city of Boston, Massachusetts.

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[8] *Middle of Nowhere* made box office history as the number 1 Specialty Film Release and the number 1 Highest Grossing Film Per Screen in the nation in October 2012.

[9] For example, AFFRM promotions included programs like "Tweet for Tracks" in which moviegoers who tweeted their box office stubs received a free download of the films' soundtrack. Also, chats via Twitter on film, in general, were held every Monday.

[10] Janelle Monáe's Eephus Tour was a nationwide tour featuring Monáe and five other artists from her record label.

Issa Rae, the creator of the Internet series, "The Mis-Adventures of Awkward Black Girl," became a New York Times Bestselling author for a book of the same name. Rae rejected offers to replace the lead character portrayed by herself with men of a different ethnicity or a fair skinned actress. Rae disagreed with the bias in these proposals that suggested that only certain depictions of blacks were palatable for mainstream audiences (Rae 2012). Produced through her distribution company, Issa Rae Productions, *The Misadventures Of Awkward Black Girl,* and all of Rae's online content has garnered over 20 million views and nearly 200,000 YouTube subscribers (Connelly 2015). Issa Rae Productions has also created the new drama series, "Insecure," to be distributed through HBO, the oldest and second largest premium channel in the country.

Although Rhimes, Woods, DuVernay, Monáe and Rae have realized accomplishments that converge with prevailing understandings of success, they have each shared motives, goals and experiences that go beyond common understandings of what it means to succeed. In popular discussions, large sales, profits and followings are key indicators of success. Each of these women, however, has also articulated a sociological imagination that advances a complex understanding of success that involves self-actualization, black community uplift and social impact in the form of cultural intervention.

Two historic examples of black women cultural entrepreneurs are Edmonia Lewis (1844 – 1907) and Maggie Lena Walker (1864 – 1934). Their experiences provide a historic context for understanding the enduring perspectives, experiences and challenges that connect black women cultural entrepreneurs, not only across

cultural disciplines, locations and levels of success, but also across time. While

Lewis and Walker have been heralded as artists and community leaders, it is also

important to understand them and others who have engaged in similar work, as part of

the tapestry of black women's cultural entrepreneurship. The aforementioned

contemporary women share a legacy with black women cultural entrepreneurs who

have defined success beyond the prevailing status quo and combined business, arts

and cultural relevance to promote social change. Defining success according to

conventional understandings of financial gain or recognition makes contemporary

black women cultural entrepreneurs appear to be isolated actors, when in reality their

understandings and experiences of success are historically and socially

interconnected.

Lewis and Walker are prime examples that demonstrate the practice of

cultural entrepreneurship as well as the personal and social significance black women

have attributed to it has existed long before the terminology. Edmonia Lewis is

regarded as the first African American sculptor to be both nationally and

internationally recognized (Buick 2010). Her artworks are known for championing

abolitionism and complex representations of blacks and women in an accessible

manner (Patton 1998). Lewis is recognized as an accomplished artist but less noted

as an entrepreneur. Still, she owned her own studios in both Boston and Rome

(Patton 2000; Buick 2010). Considered a "shrewd businesswoman,[11]" she also

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[11] In *Child of the Fire: Mary Edmonia Lewis and the Problem of Art History's Black and Indian Subject* Kristen Pai Buick critiques the commentator who describes Lewis as a "shrewd businesswoman," arguing that he overzealously interpreted her professional strategies as "opportunistic."

developed innovative strategies to market and sell her work including newspaper advertising, subscription campaigns, auctions, and raffles (Buick 2010).

Maggie Lena Walker is a cultural entrepreneur whose business was not grounded in the arts, but culturally relevant[12]. A member of the Independent Order of St. Luke, a fraternal organization created to provide social aid to blacks during the reconstruction era. She became the first woman bank owner in the United States when she founded the St. Luke Penny Savings Bank. Embodying womanist values, the bank became a cultural institution that provided loans to blacks at a time of discriminatory lending (Brown 1989).

Many black women entrepreneurs, past and present, can be described as "cultural entrepreneurs." These women are resourceful in creating businesses in the arts and cultural heritage to create positive social change, sharing both challenges and strategies common to their predecessors. Presently, many are also utilizing information technology and social media to realize their goals. Not understanding the patterns, motivations and purpose of their work can lead scholars to misunderstand their influence, power and potential as agents of social change.

When it comes to understanding the diversity and number of black women cultural entrepreneurs past and present, Rhimes, Woods, DuVernay, Monáe and Rae represent the tip of the iceberg. The aim of this dissertation is to explore the larger iceberg, which encompasses black women cultural entrepreneurs of various genres

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[12] Here, I use the UNESCO definition Comaroff and Comaroff note in *Ethnicity, Inc.* : "The practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills - as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith - that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage."

and levels of notoriety. This dissertation explores the group identity of black women cultural entrepreneurs: Black women cultural entrepreneurs are a particular interpretive community with values, perspectives and experiences, which are not wholly idiosyncratic, but shaped by collective experiences and larger social forces. Black women are not a monolith, but they are neither disconnected individuals completely devoid of group identity. The meaning they give to their businesses, professional experiences and understandings of success are influenced by their shared social position and identity as black women.

Statement of the Problem

There are various understandings of entrepreneurship in different fields. Social entrepreneurship literature has critiqued a major conception of entrepreneurship as a capitalist endeavor created expressly for profit. These thinkers suggest that entrepreneurship can serve a higher purpose beyond profit making for the founders. Namely, social entrepreneurs create businesses for the purpose of redressing a social problem. Still, sociologists like Joseph Schumpeter have, conversely, communicated a more aspirational argument that the entrepreneur is a revolution and social advancement depends on his creativity. In this sense, Schumpeter challenges a simplistic understanding of entrepreneurship that frames it as simply created for the purpose of profit making.

Entrepreneurial narratives are powerful. Definitions both of success and of business itself influence who is seen as being an entrepreneur. Theoretically, we do not have a sufficient framework for interpreting black women's entrepreneurial experiences and recognizing their entrepreneurial endeavors as valid. Despite their

importance to the U.S. economy and black entrepreneurial class, black women's entrepreneurship, in particular, has historically been misunderstood and is presently under-analyzed (Boyd 2000). For example, while studies reveal that during the early 20th century black women were often involved in entrepreneurial endeavors outside of domestic service, sociological literature nevertheless emphasizes black women's occupations as "cooks, maids, nurses and laundresses" (Marks 1989; Boyd 2000). Two main reasons for this oversight have been attributed to a vein in sociological literature that suggested blacks were not culturally inclined to self employment (Frazier 1949; Loewen 1971; Yancey 1974) as well as a lack of attention to the informal economy, by which many black women created enterprises (Robinson, Blockson, and Robinson 2007).

Black women's entrepreneurial experiences merit unique academic attention given that much existing research on entrepreneurship has implicitly and erroneously universalized the perspectives and experiences of white men and women (Robinson et al. 2007; Crump 2008). Black women's entrepreneurial motivations and experiences, for example, are uniquely shaped by family structure (Crump 2008) and social stratification (Robinson et al. 2007). To illustrate, the generally accepted statistic that having an entrepreneurial father is important in determining whether someone will be an entrepreneur is accurate for whites, while the contrary is true for blacks; having an entrepreneurial mother is a stronger predictor of entrepreneurship than having an entrepreneurial father (Sferingh, Crump, and Zu 2007).

Also, the survival rate of a new entrepreneurship is positively correlated with the amount of financial capital raised, which often comes from the founders and their

families (Robinson et al. 2007). Such an entrepreneurial financial investment is not simply indicative of an individual's financial means at a given point in life, but access to wealth, which is passed down inter-generationally (Robinson et al. 2007). Noting from a macro-level perspective that black women, as a group, have been systematically excluded from wealth creation, it follows that the wealth aspect of entrepreneurial development requires special navigating on their part. Yet, little research explores how black women cultural entrepreneurs interpret and respond to such challenges.

Since 1997 there has been a 322% increase in the number of businesses owned by African American women, making black women the fastest growing group of entrepreneurs in the country (The State of Women Owned Business Report 2015). Additionally, the rates of African American entrepreneurship are the highest in American history (U.S. Census Bureau 2011). This unprecedented occurrence is noteworthy given that scholars have long theorized the potential of entrepreneurship to enhance the social and political welfare of disfranchised racial groups (Butler 1991). Given that entrepreneurship has been identified as a significant factor in off-setting economic discrimination for ethnic minorities such as pre-World War II Asian immigrants in California (Light 1972), Cuban refugees in Florida (Light 1972), and Chinese immigrants in New York City (Zhou and Logan 1989), the comparatively low rate of black entrepreneurship has been a concern for social scientists and policy makers (Boyd 1991).

Many argue increased black entrepreneurship can help offset professional and economic discrimination as well as redress enduring social problems that

disproportionately affect blacks (Butler 1991; Crump 2008). The recent black entrepreneurial rise may appear promising for the economic and social welfare of black Americans (Crump 2008). However, further investigation is needed to discern in what ways, if any, increased black entrepreneurship will translate into positive social change for blacks collectively.

Disregarding the aforementioned hardships black women encounter in entering the field of entrepreneurship and the challenges they face in even being recognized as entrepreneurs re-enforces the intellectual and policy blind spots concerning minority and women's entrepreneurship that critical and feminist scholars continue to critique. In not exploring varieties of entrepreneurship, stakeholders may take for granted the dominant perspective in entrepreneurship, which often centers on white men. Consequently, the focus remains on profit-driven entrepreneurship and all the related experiences, narratives, perspectives, goals and agendas of such entrepreneurs.

In sidestepping questions about lived experiences, such as those of African American women, scholars may continue to overlook entrepreneurs' complex motivations to create and succeed in new and unconventional business ventures like social and cultural entrepreneurship. Prevailing narratives and frameworks that define motivations and success in terms of profit – while under-emphasizing the importance of identity and social historical context – may misinterpret the atypical businesses that black social and cultural entrepreneurs continue to create.

Exploring black women's experiences on their own terms is key to redressing entrepreneurial misunderstandings. According to their own definitions and metrics, black women cultural entrepreneurs are largely successful. However, these successes go unnoticed or misinterpreted by prevailing conventional knowledge. Imposing external definitions can lead scholars to either view their businesses as unremarkable and failing, if the women who create them are viewed as entrepreneurs at all.

The overarching purpose of this dissertation is to re-insert black women into discussions of entrepreneurship by exploring the motivations, goals and strategies that characterize how black women cultural entrepreneurs understand success. In exploring how black women cultural entrepreneurs, in particular, define success, this dissertation examines the unique and innovative ways the black women in this study combine creativity and entrepreneurship to address social problems. Limited attention has been given to black women with businesses in the arts. Such arts entrepreneurs include women-owned companies with small to large staffs such as art gallery owners, theater owners and film and music executives. These entrepreneurs also include individual artists with little or no staff, who earn a living from the production and distribution of their own creative works including actresses, musicians and visual artists.

While policy makers, economists, and development experts have explored the relationship among positive social change, entrepreneurship and the arts (United Nations Creative Economy Report 2008) ironically, scholars in the sociology of entrepreneurship, cultural activism and the sociology of art seem to talk past each

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other. Sociological literature on entrepreneurship has largely focused on the "supply-side perspective," emphasizing individual traits of entrepreneurs or the "demand-side perspective," exploring the social, political and economic contexts in which entrepreneurship occurs[13]. The sociology of entrepreneurship, however, lacks thorough analyses of social justice implications of entrepreneurship. Literature on cultural activism explores how art educates and mobilizes people to common political ends, but has not often been placed in dialogue with the sociology of entrepreneurship.

Given that the fields of entrepreneurship, the arts and social justice are complex, and continually changing over time, it is worthwhile to reconsider historic discussions about how power operates in these fields in light of recent trends including cultural entrepreneurship and increased entrepreneurship amongst black women. Bridging these fields provides new theoretical standpoints from which to imagine more nuanced and contemporary answers to traditional understandings of art and the marketplace. For example, cultural critics, such as Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, have been critical of the creative integrity of art once it enters the marketplace. In their famous essay, "The Culture Industry," these scholars offer a staunch critique of capitalism's influence on the art world arguing that standardization is key to the culture industry's domination (Horkheimer and Adorno 1936; Horkheim and Adorno 1972). Therefore, similar to an industrial assembly line – as opposed to an inspired and genuine creative revelation – the industry

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[13] For a detailed discussion of supply-side and demand-side sociological perspectives on entrepreneurship, see: Thornton, P.H. 1999. "The Sociology of Entrepreneurship." Annual Review of Sociology *25*, 19-46.

manufactures standard products, for standard people that make up standard markets. Art is no longer a cultural product, but a cultural commodity that satisfies concocted and insatiable needs.

However, the black women cultural entrepreneurs who participated in this study challenge these ideas in that they do not view their goods and services simply as entertainment, nor imagine financial profit their primary goal. Black women cultural entrepreneurs approach the marketplace as an arena for them to make important cultural interventions and empower black communities. Moreover, their goal in doing so is not simply to generate excess profit within the capitalist economy. Synthesizing discussions in the sociology of art, entrepreneurship and cultural activism is fruitful in that it illuminates such contemporary and complex realities.

It is detrimental to understand entrepreneurs strictly as business leaders, without also imagining them as social beings. Entrepreneurial ventures are not created in a vacuum, but in stratified social settings in which, race, class and gender are key markers that advantage some at the expense of others (Robinson et al. 2007). By not asking how entrepreneurs' lived realities shape purpose, strategies and goals, scholars miss an opportunity to build more robust analyses of entrepreneurship and its subsets, social entrepreneurship and cultural entrepreneurship. In focusing my research to explore how black women cultural entrepreneurs define success, I have gained insights that most likely would not have been attained by discussing entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs broadly.

Including black women in scholarship on entrepreneurship requires that researchers fundamentally reconsider taken for granted assumptions concerning

success as financial gain, profit as the primary motivation for business development and the very meaning and purpose of entrepreneurship as a capitalist endeavor. Scholarship in social entrepreneurship has made significant headway in expanding these conversations. However, heretofore, the conversations social entrepreneurship fosters concerning profit, success and the purpose of business have not critically examined the role identity plays in entrepreneurship. Most notably, race and gender are not examined critically in this scholarship. Bringing identity to the fore, as this dissertation does, causes us to re-think who is even considered an entrepreneur and which businesses are seen as valid.

Black Women Cultural Entrepreneurs, Oppositional Consciousness and The Connected Economy

Black women typically bring an oppositional consciousness to their work as cultural entrepreneurs, namely, a mental state that empowers members of a marginalized group to identify the injustice of their oppression and effect change on their behalf (Sandoval 2000; Mansbridge and Morris 2001). In the process of formulating an oppositional consciousness, one recognizes the importance of her or his individual and collective identity. In *Oppositional Consciousness: The Subjective Roots of Social Protest*, Jane Mansbridge and Aldon Morris explain: "members of a group that others have treated as subordinate or deviant have an oppositional consciousness when they claim their previously subordinate identity as a positive identification, identify injustices done to their group…and see other members of their group as sharing an interest in rectifying those injustices" (Mansbridge and Morris 2001:1). Various groups translate their oppositional consciousness into oppositional

projects. For example, Chicana, Queer and Feminist communities have created oppositional cinema, literature, theory and methodologies.

In a similar sense, this dissertation investigates how black women cultural entrepreneurs potentially draw upon their oppositional consciousness concerning race and gender to create an alternative economy that empowers them with resources, connections and meaning not readily conferred in traditional entrepreneurial settings. In this endeavor, their responses to the personal, social and structural challenges that they face have been foundational to the formation of an alternative and powerful economy, which I refer to as "The Connected Economy." Leading and participating in The Connected Economy, black women cultural entrepreneurs represent a black feminist and womanist critique of dominant understandings of success.

The Connected Economy is an economy based on human, internal and digital connections. The human connection of The Connected Economy references the connections amongst the community of black women cultural entrepreneurs. The internal connections include the intersecting and interconnected identities as both black and women. The digital connections encompass all the modes of communication utilizing information technology and social media.

While I have not coined the term Connected Economy, I use it in a way that is very distinct from the most common way it is used in popular entrepreneurship and marketing literature. Best-selling consultant and marketer, Seth Godin and similar authoritative figures in the business world, have used the term the "Connection Economy" to describe the current economy in which entrepreneurs operate. Traditionally, economic activity was seemingly limited to the production and

exchange of natural resources, labor, and capital. However, this perspective did not

account for the value of technology and innovation especially that which produces

intellectual property[14]. Godin and several other theorists of the Connection Economy

have emphasized the importance of technology in making relationships and non-

tangible goods, paramount in the digital age. Leveraging information technology to

create genuine human connections built on trust and creativity are essential to the

success in the Connection Economy.

By using a broad theory that is based on his observations of a general

population, as opposed to investigating the perspectives and experiences of specific

groups, scholars like Godin continue to use the term "Connection Economy"

uncritically. They therefore miss important links between their understandings of the

"Connection Economy," and seemingly unrelated ideas of identity, community and

social change. For example, in a discussion of the Connection Economy, Godin

argues, "Each and every person has an unlimited ability to achieve anything he or she

wants through the power of connection". Such a blanket statement does not factor in

the historical context and social positioning and privilege that make this undertaking

more likely and attainable for some than others.

In contrast to these perspectives, I discuss The Connected Economy's

historical context in a cyclical as opposed to linear manner. Key influencers like

Godin emphasize the newness of the Connected or Connection Economy, and

attribute its novelty to unprecedented technological innovation. However, as the

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[14] Technology and innovation are thus mutually constituting in the sense that automation, process acceleration and cost reduction lead to new products, services, processes and expansion of markets, and vice versa.

earlier discussions of Edmonia Lewis and Maggie Lena Walker suggest, it is not a break from the past for black women cultural entrepreneurs to adapt technologies that foster automation, process acceleration and cost reduction, while simultaneously innovating to create new products, services, processes and expansion of markets. While new digital tools have essentially birthed the economy to which Godin refers, contrarily, for black women cultural entrepreneurs past and present, The Connected Economy must be understood in historical context and understood as a system that black women themselves created.

Furthermore, in addition to classic examples of black women cultural entrepreneurs referenced earlier, many historic black women cultural entrepreneurs have shaped The Connected Economy from their positions within African American communities. Madam CJ Walker is famously known for inventing and selling hair care products that led her to become the first black woman millionaire. However, Walker's entrepreneurial journey is more complex and communal than popular understandings suggest. Walker utilized an innovative business model that involved women's sales agents akin to contemporary brands like Mary Kay that involve networks of entrepreneurs selling common products within their own communities (Coleman 1994). Walker adapted this business model from her mentor, Annie N. Turnbo Malone, whose Poro Agents were trained to sell hair care products locally (Coleman 1994). Walker and Malone's examples demonstrate that The Connected Economy and its innovations, as with the landmark women's network of sales agent models, have been communal. However, just as black women entrepreneurs have

been overlooked, the innovative models and collaborative systems that contributed to their success are also often unnoticed.

The Connected Economy is precisely the type of "informal economy[15]," scholars argue are overlooked by theorists and policy makers, but common to participants (Robinson et al. 2007). Such an economy is described as informal because it operates without government taxation or monitoring (Neuwith 2012). Also, unlike the formal economy, activities in the informal economy are not reported in a country's gross national product (GNP) and gross domestic product (GDP) (Neuwith 2012).

Muhammad Yunus, a Nobel Prize winning leader in the social entrepreneurship movement suggests that an air of elitism pervades entrepreneurial narratives, limiting who can be seen as an entrepreneur and whose businesses are recognized as legitimate. One of the greatest challenges he faced in creating a bank for the poor in Bangladesh was to contest the idea that impoverished people could not become successful entrepreneurs. Yunus famously stated: "All human beings are entrepreneurs…we became 'labor' because they stamped us, 'You are labor.' We forgot that we are entrepreneurs" (Yunus 2006). Yunus' point foreshadows how some black women cultural entrepreneurs in this study conceptualize entrepreneurship in the black community in ways that diverge from popular characterizations. For example, Risikat Okedeyi[16] notes: "Everyone talks about small businesses and we as black people have been entrepreneurial from the very

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[15] This terminology is not to be confused with the hidden or shadow economy that deals in illegal goods and services.

[16] Okedeyi is an interview participant whose perspectives and experiences will be discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

beginning. Everybody has always had side hustles, you know [we] cook, we do hair…but we don't see it as a business, we see it as a side hustle. We don't understand that there are things legally that could work in our favor to help maximize those hustles."

Black women entrepreneurs have had to contend with prevailing ideologies to be seen and respected as entrepreneurs and to identify themselves as such. Cognizant of not being perceived as "the typical white guy you expect," as one participant put it, black women cultural entrepreneurs have responded to limited expectations by developing their own perspectives, resources and mechanisms for entrepreneurial growth and legitimacy.

This study explores how these alternative ideologies and systems concerning black cultural entrepreneurship as advanced by black women are both oppositional and visionary. Black women's personal, social and structural challenges can be especially influential in shaping alternative goals, strategies and an economy to support their entrepreneurial development. At the same time, recognizing black women cultural entrepreneurs in the context of their own economy, The Connected Economy, highlights the ways in which black women cultural entrepreneurs are, in fact, innovators. These entrepreneurs had a vision – which was not solely a response to oppression – to create new products, new ways of creating these products and reaching out to new markets.

Not understanding the agency black women have demonstrated in creating and sustaining this economy, scholars and policymakers can easily reduce black women cultural entrepreneurs to actors in need of government aid to thrive. In

reality, The Connected Economy has empowered black women cultural entrepreneurs to take positions of authority within their creative fields despite receiving little support outside of this system.

Description of Study and Research Questions

This dissertation uses qualitative methodology to investigate the meaning black women bring to their work as cultural entrepreneurs. Because this project explores what the experiences of developing and sustaining cultural entrepreneurship mean to black women, the study does not emphasize business structures or organizational cultures. Rather, my primary focus and data source was the perceptions of black women cultural entrepreneurs on these issues as well as broader concerns that they raised in relation to their businesses.

Most of my participants are African American women based in the United States. Midway through the data collection process I expanded the sample to include black women of the diaspora, specifically the perspectives of women of direct Nigerian, Kenyan and Afro-German heritage. As a black woman cultural entrepreneur myself, I also took several steps, which I detail in the methodology to not bias or lead my participants. A major methodological aim of this research was to not impose my own or dominant scholarly beliefs on the participants.

Ultimately, I gathered a sample of 21 black women cultural entrepreneurs to participate in structured interviews and participant observation in their entrepreneurial settings. Their businesses are diverse including fashion, film, painting, cultural education, and creative consulting. Some were incorporated as non-profit or LLC, while others were not formally registered. Participant observation involved attending

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events held by black women cultural entrepreneurs. In some instances I simply attended such gatherings as another attendee amongst the crowd, taking copious notes about the environment and setting. On several occasions I also took a more active role serving on panels, creating promotional content and or consulting on branding for these events.

The advantage of a qualitative methodology that involved semi-structured interviews and participant observation is that the format allowed for unexpected themes to emerge. For example, I observed participants suggesting that I interview women from different countries. Hence, I expanded my sample to include international participants. Still, an overview of the nuances influencing the national contexts from which these additional participants emerge is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

Understandings of success play a prominent role in this dissertation. Scholars cannot assume that black women understand, define and experience success in a standard way if their own views have not been taken into account. Standpoint theory[17] suggests that groups who are not afforded status advantage have particular insights and experiences that cannot be inferred from the privileged. From a feminist perspective, I deduced that investigating black women's understandings of success would yield novel and particular insights on a fundamental and seemingly unquestioned aspect of entrepreneurship.

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[17] The common theme across the multiple feminist standpoint theories is the idea that knowledge is socially informed and produced in social positions that are structured by power relations (Harding 1991; Hallstein 1999). In other words, the knowledge of groups is intimately linked to their position in a hierarchical social order and will be valued (or not) accordingly.

My primary research question, "How do black women cultural entrepreneurs define success?" investigates black women's unique understandings of success. Additionally, exploring how black women define success helps illuminate particular knowledge and strategies that uniquely shape black women's experiences as cultural entrepreneurs. One sub-question further focuses my investigation: "In what ways do social and structural forces influence black women's experiences as cultural entrepreneurs?".

To explore these questions, this project draws upon literature in three key areas: (1) the sociology of entrepreneurship, with special attention to race and gender privilege as well as social and cultural entrepreneurship as new ventures for social change; (2) the sociology of art and culture, specifically concerning cultural activism and the culture industry; and (3) core ideas from black feminist thought, concerning intersectionality, standpoint theory and the significance of creative expression.

Organization of Dissertation

Chapter 1 introduces the broad parameters that shape this study of how black women cultural entrepreneurs define success. This introductory chapter aims to demonstrate how black women's cultural entrepreneurship merits further intellectual inquiry. The problem is that this group's entrepreneurial practices have been largely misunderstood and overlooked. This dissertation addresses this problem by providing a social, historic and intellectual context for exploring the ways black women cultural entrepreneurs define success. While existing theories and scholarship help me build such a context for their unique perspectives on success, I provide a holistic theory of

black women's cultural entrepreneurship by incorporating and emphasizing the understandings and experiences of research participants.

Chapters 2- 6 synthesize insights, theories and arguments to help contextualize and answer my research questions. Each chapter title incorporates business terminology that references the aims and key takeaways of the given chapter. For example, chapter 1 is titled: "An Executive Summary: Black Women Cultural Entrepreneurs Re-Define Success in The Connected Economy." Far from a simple summary of facts, in the business world an Executive Summary introduces a business plan to potential investors. Outlining the problem a venture addresses, an Executive Summary puts forth a compelling rationale for it's significance and explains the rationale for the subsequent components of the plan.

Chapter 2 is titled: "Valuation: Theorizing the Success and Significance of Black Women Cultural Entrepreneurs." Valuation is an important but often tricky concept for entrepreneurs to communicate. Valuation refers to the dollar value entrepreneurs speculate that their business is worth. Investors often critique entrepreneurs for reporting an inflated business value without significant explanation and justification for large valuations. Savvy investors expect companies to have a moderate valuation as well as a clear and compelling account of all the factors and variables the entrepreneur considered to determine the purported valuation. Chapter 2 details the "formula" I used to determine the theoretical value black women cultural entrepreneurs represent as a sociological community of interest. Key components of the formula include discussions of privilege as well as economic altruism in

entrepreneurship literature; domination and resistance in the sociology of art; and intersectionality and empowerment in black feminist thought.

Respecting the investor, I disclose variables in the formula that would seem to challenge my esteemed valuation of black women cultural entrepreneurs. For example, I explain that not every black woman who fits the description of cultural entrepreneur will choose to describe herself as such or even agree with my definition. Hence, the aim of this theoretical chapter is not to simply acquire investor buy in for my arguments. Rather, in the spirit of a cultural entrepreneur, my aim is to encourage and justify alternative ways of viewing cultural entrepreneurship and success in light of black women's experiences.

Chapter 3 is titled: "Mapping The Business Terrain: A Qualitative Inquiry And Audit." An audit refers to the systematic examination and verification of a firm's transactions, claims and procedures. Also a precaution for quality control, this process is used to determine whether a documented quality system operates in the most efficient manner to yield optimal results. Chapter 3 presents the nuts and bolts of how I conceptualized, collected and analyzed research data, namely, an audit of the study's methodology. I explain the theoretical, practical and political factors that make a qualitative and feminist methodological approach appropriate for addressing my research questions. I also provide the rationale for utilizing interviews and participant observation as primary data sources and why I expanded the participant pool internationally.

I use the term "audit" in the chapter title because it highlights the checks and balances used to maintain the integrity and replicability of the project. To this end, I

explain that being a black woman cultural entrepreneur myself gave me a heightened sensitivity to the issues this dissertation raises. However, I took important steps to manage researcher subjectivity. I rigorously justify and document my methodological decisions. The measures detailed in this chapter provide a methodological foundation for my interpretations in chapters 4 and 5.

Chapter 4's title, "On Top of the Lion: Interpreting Challenges to Success" is inspired by a famous article on entrepreneurship cited by a respondent. Referencing the article, the interviewee suggests that entrepreneurship is an inherently risky field; to succeed in this industry is akin to staying atop a wild animal. Chapter 4 draws upon interview and participant observation data in order to illustrate how many participants saw the specific challenges they confronted as entrepreneurs as stemming from broader challengers affecting black women as a group. My research suggests that common challenges of black women cultural entrepreneurs – regardless of their business type, incorporation status or annual income – are specific racisms and sexisms that uniquely effect black women.

Exploring black women cultural entrepreneurs' race and gender identities clarifies how black women experience various challenges in both common and unique ways. The interview and participant observation data presented here demonstrate that, whereas individual black women differ, the black women cultural entrepreneurs who participated in this study understood the structural, social and personal challenges common to all entrepreneurs. Still, participants also had a sophisticated understanding of how these difficulties impacted them uniquely. This

chapter lays a foundation for theorizing the oppositional consciousness that informs

alternative definitions of success I describe in the next chapter.

Chapter 5 is titled: "The New Bottom Line: Alternative Definitions Of

Success And The Connected Economy." The "bottom line" refers to a company's net

earnings. Entrepreneurs and business professionals recognize the "bottom line" as the

paramount consideration informing all business decisions; if an opportunity will not

ultimately enhance the bottom line, it is not worth pursuing. This chapter presents

and analyzes interview and participant observation data that suggests black women

cultural entrepreneurs have very different takes on success relative to typical

entrepreneurial understandings. Chapter 5 argues that black women cultural

entrepreneurs articulate an empowered sense of self to develop alternative and

oppositional definitions of success that are uniquely grounded in their shared legacy,

experiences and goals. I conclude this chapter by adding to the theory of the

relationship among challenges to success, alternative definitions of success and the

operations of what I refer to as The Connected Economy.

Chapter 6 is titled: "Conclusion: SWOT Analysis and Theorizing The

Connected Economy." A SWOT Analysis is a strategic planning method used to

evaluate the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats involved in a business

venture. Among other scenarios, entrepreneurs prepare a SWOT Analysis when

exploring avenues for business expansion, deciding execution strategies for future

policies and identifying possible areas for refinement and change. Such an analysis is

a preparatory step intended to evaluate and justify critical next steps in developing a

venture.

Applying the SWOT Analysis metaphor, through a review of the unique theoretical contributions of the study, chapter 6 explains this dissertation's strengths as well as its limitations. The opportunities are discussed as recommended areas for deeper exploration and analysis of black women cultural entrepreneurs. The threats refer to disciplinary and dominant ideologies that could lead scholars and policymakers to minimize or misinterpret black women cultural entrepreneurs.

I end with a discussion of what I refer to as The Connected Economy. This economy is a system made up of interpersonal, community and digital connections that black women leverage to advance their success. I explore how this economy has helped black women realize their success despite structural, social and personal challenges. I argue that future research should continue to explore the ways in which black women cultural entrepreneurs create systems like The Connected Economy to create the conditions that make their success possible.

Finally, it is worth noting that the aim of this dissertation is to encourage new theories concerning the relationship among entrepreneurship, creativity, identity, resistance and success. My hope is that this dissertation inspires new discussions in various fields including entrepreneurship, sociology of art and cultural studies in light of black women's perspectives and experiences as cultural entrepreneurs.

CHAPTER 2: VALUATION: THEORIZING THE SUCCESS AND

SIGNIFICANCE OF BLACK WOMEN CULTURAL ENTREPRENEURS

Black women entrepreneurs are the fastest growing group of entrepreneurs in the country, but they do not yet have their own body of literature or distinct analytical tools by which to theorize their perspectives and experiences (Boyd 1990; Harvey 2005; Harvey 2007; Robinson et al. 2007). Given limited intellectual resources on black women entrepreneurs in general, and black women cultural entrepreneurs in particular, this chapter synthesizes themes from entrepreneurship, the sociology of art and black feminist thought to provide a cohesive theoretical framework.

Referencing the "valuation" metaphor, this chapter explains that when integrated, much scholarship from these three fields highlights the importance of recognizing black women cultural entrepreneurs as a unique group. I identify and combine selected key concepts from these seemingly disparate fields to demonstrate how discussions in entrepreneurship, the sociology of art and black feminist thought illuminate the ways in which black women cultural entrepreneurs can be theorized to share a common social position and understanding of success. Also, I review this scholarship to explore intellectual gaps and opportunities for further inquiry.

This chapter is divided into four main sections. The first section, "Certain Entrepreneurs, Certain Privileges" is prefaced with a brief overview of the intellectual history and definition of entrepreneurship. This section discusses the fundamentally different social positions that privilege white men relative to black women in both the business realm as well as scholarship on entrepreneurship. This section also explores

how women are disappeared in entrepreneurship literature and the implications of this

erasure for black women. While feminist literature has exposed gender bias in this

field, it has focused less attention on how race and gender intersect to shape black

women's entrepreneurial endeavors. The limited literature on black women's

experiences has, however, sociologically explored the factors that make

entrepreneurship attractive to black women and the barriers they face trying to enter

and upon entry into the business world. Existent scholarship on black women's

entrepreneurial experiences has focused on the beauty industry and has called for

more investigation into black women's experiences in other businesses.

In contrast to the more general analysis of entrepreneurship in the first section,

the second section, "The Rise of Social Entrepreneurship" discusses the growth of

businesses designed to create social impact while remaining commercially viable.

This section examines how the growing popularity of social entrepreneurship has

been mirrored by new belief systems and attitudes towards success. I also review

literature that posits cultural entrepreneurship as a subset of social entrepreneurship

and a style of business that defines success as cultural impact and financial viability.

Building on the previous section's discussion of cultural entrepreneurship, the

third section, "Domination and Resistance in the Sociology of Art" examines the

significance of art as a site of sociological investigation. I begin by defining art in

broad terms to highlight it as fluid and historically contingent. I explain that the

sociology of art is heavily influenced by the sociology of knowledge and questions of

power are central to discussions in this field. Sociologists are concerned with the

social processes and contexts in which, art is created, valued and critiqued (Inglis and

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Hughson 2005). This scholarship suggests that there is nothing intrinsic to a creative work that makes it art or the high esteem in which it is heralded or minimized as a work of "high" or "low" art. This field has explored the ways in which art consumption is used as a marker of distinction (Bourdieu 1984; Veblen 1899). The sociology of art also includes discussions on the emancipatory potential of art (Washburn 2005). While earlier scholars were critical of the consequences of art's entry into the marketplace (Horkheimer and Adorno 2007), more recent scholarship suggests entertainment and popular culture can be emancipatory (Eyerman and Ring 1998). Scholarship in aesthetics, contemporary art and cultural studies have taken sociological approaches and perspectives into account when exploring the structural barriers black women face to entering the art world and the challenges they face upon entry.

The fourth section, "Black Feminist Thought: Intersectionality and Empowerment," reviews black feminist thought as a theoretical approach to understand the unique experiences of black women cultural entrepreneurs. Black feminist thought is explicit and politically specific in its integration, validation and centering of black women's unique realities, perceptions and experiences (Collins 1990). The purpose of this section is to identify key scholarly contributions of black feminist thought that provide a framework for theorizing about black women's lives, especially, attentiveness to emancipation, as well as analyses of black women's art and entrepreneurship.

Defining Entrepreneurship

Economist Richard Cantillon is noted as a pioneer in the field of entrepreneurship for his scholarship in the 18th century (Brewer 1992; Wennekers and Thurik 1999). He recognized landowners, employees and entrepreneurs as three main economic actors in society (Antico-Majkowski 2010). Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* argued that agents of change (or entrepreneurial individuals) were necessary for the balance of trade (Smith 1776; Stevenson and Jarillo 1999). Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and The Spirit of Capitalism* (1904) examined how conservative religious beliefs provided cultural legitimation for the economic behavior that fostered the rise of capitalism. The "spirit of capitalism" represented a will to participate in the secular economic world and take entrepreneurial risk. Building on such early scholarship, economist and political scientist Joseph Schumpeter advanced the field of entrepreneurship (Antico-Majkowski 2010).

In "Defining Entrepreneurial Activity: Definitions Supporting Frameworks For Data Collection," Nadim Ahmad and Richard G. Seymour provide a holistic definition of who can be considered an entrepreneur (2008). The scholars argue: "Entrepreneurs are those persons (business owners) who seek to generate value, through the creation or expansion of economic activity, by identifying and exploiting new products, processes or markets" (2008:14). Their conceptualization builds on Schumpeter's argument that "entrepreneurship is innovation and the actualization of innovation" (Reisman 2004:61). Like conventional business owners, entrepreneurs typically oversee day-to-day business operations. However, what distinguishes them from owners, financiers, shareholders or employees is their assumption of risk and

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innovation in the form of developing new products, processes or markets that increase the potential for profit, employment, productivity and efficiency within their company (Ahmad and Seymour 2008).

Certain Entrepreneurs, Certain Privileges

While entrepreneurship is an inherently tumultuous field for anyone who starts a business, this section examines the ways in which, white men endure professional challenges from a privileged socioeconomic position not afforded to black women as a group (Levine and Rubenstein 2013). More specifically, black women do not have the same access to wealth or gender privilege that allows them to start and accelerate businesses typically associated with white male entrepreneurs (Harvey 2005; Harvey 2007; Robinson et al. 2007). The remark that "entrepreneurship is the ultimate white privilege" stems from financial and social benefits not typically afforded to black women as a group (Weissman 2013:1). As I will discuss, entrepreneurs are disproportionately white, male and highly educated (Levine and Rubenstein 2013).

Moreover, black women cultural entrepreneurs' unique challenges that arise in the data are virtually impossible to discern in common discussions of entrepreneurship. Much of the literature discusses entrepreneurial challenges with a view towards businesses that have more than 11 employees and are formally incorporated. As such, none of the black women cultural entrepreneurs who participated in this study meet the extant criteria for research on challenges facing entrepreneurs. In essence, like African American entrepreneurs, in general, black

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women cultural entrepreneurs in particular are disappeared in entrepreneurial discussions (Robinson et al. 2007). Consequently, the unique challenges they may face are not discussed because they are not even imagined.

For example, many reports on entrepreneurship, including the "State of Small Business Report," focus on self-employed workers with incorporated businesses, the majority of which have 11 to 50 full time employees, to conduct their study on *the* five common challenges facing entrepreneurs (Rampton 2015). In essence, studies like this universalize white men's experiences to all entrepreneurs, claiming that 84 percent of the incorporated self-employed are white and 72 percent are male (Weissmann 2013). The problem is that in defining entrepreneurship in narrow terms that do not take into account styles of entrepreneurship common to black women cultural entrepreneurs, their work is invalidated (Robinson et al. 2007).

Such an oversight is problematic given that women do share the common challenges, most entrepreneurs, including white men, face. For example, five common challenges associated with entrepreneurship are seen as representative of the field, as opposed to solely indicative of privileged white men. These five challenges include growing revenue, hiring employees, increasing profit, government regulations and employee healthcare (Wasp Barcode Technologies 2015). As I will demonstrate in the following sections, black women face these same challenges, but oftentimes must experience and navigate them in particular ways.

Disappearing women in entrepreneurship

Women, in general, represent an under-analyzed and understudied group of entrepreneurs (Wadhwa et al. 2009). Researchers suggest the under-representation of women in entrepreneurship is a cause for concern (Loscocco et al. 1991), as entrepreneurs are seen as important to economic development, noting: "ignorance of this important demographic is a serious blind spot in any effort to increase the total number of entrepreneurs participating in our economy" (Wadhwa et al. 2009:3). While statistical research has compared the rates of women's entrepreneurship relative to men, feminist scholars have critiqued not only what these numbers indicate about the pervasiveness of gender inequality, but also the gendered analyses and conclusions drawn in business and economic literature about differences between men and women entrepreneurs (Bruni, Gherardi, and Poggio 2004).

Discourses on entrepreneurship were produced from a largely "masculinized discursive space" (Bruni et al. 2004; Jones 2010) in which, white male scholars researched white male entrepreneurs. This scholarship not only rendered entrepreneurial innovation and success in masculine terms, but entrepreneurship as a masculine endeavor (Ahl 2002; Bruni et al. 2005; Lewis 2006; Marlow et al. 2009). Scholars like Helene Ahl suggest this intellectual tradition has made the term "entrepreneur" nearly synonymous with "man" (2002). In "Entrepreneur-mentality, Gender and the Study of Women Entrepreneurs," Bruni et al. provide a detailed study of business and economics literature, explaining implicit gender bias in how scholars frame and interpret women's entrepreneurship (2004). The scholars note that

dominant discourse in entrepreneurship literature produces "othering" and perceived inferiority of women's entrepreneurship (Bruni et al. 2004).

Black women entrepreneurs – so little knowledge, but so much to know

As mentioned in the introduction, women entrepreneurs have been particularly important to black business growth. African American women entrepreneurs are increasing faster than African American men (Robinson et al. 2007). Moreover, African American owned businesses are the fastest growing segment of women-owned businesses, increasing at a rate six times higher than the national average (Ahmad and Iverson 2013). The survival rate of African American women owned firms has also been shown to be higher than that of African American men (Robb 2002).

The number of companies started by African American women grew nearly 258 percent from 1997 to 2013 (Ahmad and Iverson 2013). In 2004, African American women owned 365,110 privately held firms in the United States, which accounted for more than 6 percent of all women-owned firms (National Women's Business Council 2004). The number of African American women-owned businesses in 2013 was estimated at 1.1 million, comprising 42 percent of businesses owned by women of color and 49 percent of all African American owned-businesses (Ahmad and Iverson 2013). In 2013, black women employed 272,000 workers and generated $44.9 billion in revenue (Ahmad and Iverson 2013). In light of such trends scholars suggest further exploration of African American women entrepreneurs has important implications for the U.S. economy (Robinson et al. 2007)

Although African American women have made noteworthy entrepreneurial progress, they continue to face significant economic insecurity. While black women are the fastest growing entrepreneurial segment, yet of the top 10 fastest-growing private companies owned by black entrepreneurs from 2009 to 2012, only 27 percent were owned by black women (Iverson and Ahmad 2013).

The Center for American Progress' "The State of Women of Color" report by Farah Ahmad and Sarah Iverson identifies key economic challenges for black women. The researchers find (2013): Only 21.4 percent of African American women had a college degree or higher in 2010, relative to 30 percent of white women; African American women held 8.58 percent of bachelor's degrees held by women in 2012 though they constituted 12.7 percent of the female population; and, only 2 percent of African American women are represented in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM fields), while women in total make up 24 percent of the STEM workforce.

The Rise of Social Entrepreneurship

New Ventures for Social Change: social and cultural entrepreneurship

Black women are becoming increasingly entrepreneurial at a time in which the social justice implications of business development are championed among political leaders, policy-makers, leading business owners and activists. The definition of social entrepreneurship remains an ongoing debate amongst social entrepreneurs and scholars (Antico-Majkowski 2010). Despite varying views on what constitutes social entrepreneurship and who meets the criteria of social entrepreneur, it is

generally accepted that a social entrepreneur is someone who creates a for-profit or non-profit organization that aims to address a social problem (Emerson and Twerksy 1996; Thake and Zadek 1997; Dees 1998). According to Emerson and Twersky (1996) a social entrepreneur can be defined as someone who uses business skills and knowledge to achieve positive social impact and commercial success (Emerson and Twerksy 1996). Mair, Robinson and Hockerts's (2009:1) broad definition of social entrepreneurship reflects the still fluid conceptual boundaries[18] of the growing field:

> [Enterprising] individuals devoted to making a difference; social purpose business ventures dedicated to adding for-profit motivations to non-profit sector; new types of philanthropists supporting venture capital-like investment portfolios; and non-profit organizations that are reinventing themselves by drawing on lessons learned from the business world.

Despite a firm, cohesive definition of entrepreneurship, Amanda Antico-Majkowski (2010:29) argues: "It is now an accepted worldview that social entrepreneurship is a new and valid class of organization."

For social entrepreneurship to advance as an academic field, scholars cite the need for more testing and theorizing (Alvord, Letts and Brown 2004; Antico-Majkowski 2010). Antico-Majkowski (2010:11) notes that such scholars "assert that social entrepreneurship is as vital to the process of societies as entrepreneurship itself is to the progress of economies, and it merits more rigorous, serious attention than it has attracted thus far." Schwandt, Holliday and Pandit (2009) note that scholars

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[18] Muhammad Yunus distinguishes between social business and social entrepreneurship arguing that the former is a subset of the latter in *Building Social Business*.

should build more theory concerning the relations between entrepreneurs and the organizations they represent.

The promise of social entrepreneurship and capitalist critiques

Social entrepreneurship appears to be a quickly growing and significant trend that is attracting business students, youth and world leaders, such as President Barack Obama[19]. Barack Obama created the Office of Social Innovation and Civic Participation[20] (OSICP) to develop new alliances between government, non-profit organizations, private capital and social entrepreneurs. Former assistant to the President and Director of the White House Domestic Policy Council, Melody Barnes (2010), described this "new way of doing business" committed to resolving intractable problems on The White House blog:

> The Social Innovation Fund demonstrates just one of the many ways the Administration's broader innovation agenda uses evidence to identify smart public-private partnerships and national service opportunities that provide solutions to our communities' toughest issues. With the creation of the White House Office of Social Innovation and Civic Participation, the Administration has made this 'new way of doing business' a priority.

To understand the promise of social entrepreneurship, which has been endorsed by world leaders like Barack Obama, it is beneficial to explore its perceived limitations from a sociological perspective. Namely, economic sociologists have been particularly critical of capitalism (Swedberg 2005). Economic initiatives that

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[19] For example, in a 2009 Presidential proclamation, Barack Obama stated: "During National Entrepreneurship Week, we renew our commitment to supporting American entrepreneurs, including social entrepreneurs, who are spreading opportunity and prosperity across our Nation."

aim to advance positive social change through business are necessarily striving to bring about a more socially just society in a capitalist context. In this section, I review classical sociological arguments that critique the institutional nature of capitalism to stymie agency and altruism.

In Karl Marx's landmark text *Capital* (1867), he argues that on the surface, capitalism appears apolitical; its perpetuity is, in large part, maintained by this illusion. In actuality, capitalism's political project is to maintain unjust hierarchy through the exploitation it is predicated upon. In its simplest Marxist conception, capitalism is the equation: $M-C-M'$, a system in which, money is invested in commodities to produce more money. According to Marx, the individual, organization or government investing money is driven by greed. As I will go on to review, social entrepreneurs like economist and Nobel Peace Prize winner, Muhammad Yunus,[21] however, argue that dominant conceptions of capitalism have been based on a faulty assumption that profit maximization, and not morals and values is the single or main motivation for human behavior.

Yunus' point, however, does not account for sociologists like Max Weber who provide a more complex understanding of the connection between values and capitalism. In *The Protestant Ethic and The Spirit of Capitalism* (1934) Weber explains that the religious foundations of capitalism, arguing that capitalism came to dissociate from the impassioned elements of religion (emotion, compassion,

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[21] Yunus was awarded for his work with the Grameen Bank as a pioneer of micro-credit lending to communities lacking access to traditional lending programs.

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selflessness), to a system characterized by rationality and fixity[22]. Still, Weber

concludes that sentiments and values that characterized pre-capitalist western

societies do not simply disappear because they are irrelevant to capitalist

development. Hence, Weber does not suggest that capitalism wholly erodes human

values.

Sociological critiques of capitalism have concerned its influence as an

institution (Nee and Swedberg 2005). Classical sociologists such as Adam Smith

(1776), Karl Marx (1867) and Weber (1937) have understood capitalism from an

institutional perspective and argued that there was an overarching logic to this

economic system that individual actors did not recognize. More specifically, through

the functions of what Smith described as "an invisible hand" and what Marx referred

to as "unintended consequences," capitalism not only produces individual wealth but

social wealth (Smith 1776; Marx 1867). Capitalism has been defined and understood

as an economic system, which often unbeknownst to participants, necessarily creates

advances for some but setbacks and intractable challenges for others (Marx 1867;

Weber 1934). Classical economic sociological theorists laid the foundation for a

continued sociological perspective on capitalism that focuses on power relations (Nee

and Swedberg 2005). More specifically, while economic sociologists were concerned

with capitalism as an institution, it was not until the 1980s that scholarship began to

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[22] Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, explores the
relationship between the seemingly contradictory forces of spiritual beliefs and
rationalized capitalism. Weber argues that the Protestant reformation[22], linking
spiritual beliefs and practices to worldly affairs, was the bridge that made the
transition from a society characterized by faith based practices to one defined by
rationality possible.

explore the attitudes and behaviors of individuals within economic institutions (Dobbin 2004).

To understand a sociological perspective on institutions as it applies to capitalism, in *The Economic Sociology of Capitalism*, Swedberg suggests it is worthwhile to highlight the family as an institution (2005). A family comes into being, not typically through an epiphenomenal will of a mother and father. Rather, to understand how families operate, one must discern the forces (interests) that unite disparate members – they may be emotional, sexual, and/or economic, for example (Swedberg 2005). Sociologists have described institutions as "durable" in that they tend to last over time and tend to exert normative power in society (Tilly 1998). In other words, they seldom change and they are naturalizing in that in that "they tell you *how* interests should be realized in society, be they family, political, economic, or some other type of interest" (Swedberg 2005; 6). When an institution is recognized as legitimate, actors tend to take the naturalizing element for granted, assuming that the social arrangements of a family, for example, are inevitable as opposed to socially influenced.

Economic institutions become even more taken for granted and legitimized when policymakers and lawmakers create legal structures and regulations to protect and or perpetuate them (Polanyi 1944). Just as governments create economic incentives and contracts for marriage, so to do they for corporations and entrepreneurs. In *The Great Transformation* Karl Polanyi (1944) argues that the capitalist institution created new laws as well as unprecedented beliefs and attitudes about economic activity. More specifically, the creation of new market institutions

and industrialization engendered the myth that human's were naturally inclined to trade. Prior to the rise of the market economy, economic activity was based on redistribution and reciprocity[23]. However, the transition to a market economy encouraged actors to behave in ways that supported a new market based economy such that they became more rational and concerned with utility maximization and profit.

Given a top-down perspective that views capitalism from an institutional perspective, it is not surprising that a dominant image of capitalism in sociological literature is its rational nature, devoid of ethics and compassion as outlined in Max Weber's (1934) *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Nee and Swedberg 2005). To illustrate, in *The Economic Sociology of Capitalism* (2005: 5), Victor Nee and Richard Swedberg argue: "[Sociologists] have often tended to ignore interests and focus exclusively on social relations and the impact that these may have. This exclusive emphasis on social relations can to some extent be explained as the professional myopia of the sociologist." Arguably, in emphasizing context and power, as Nee and Swedberg suggest sociologists continue to do, scholars leave less room to imagine and explore ways in which actors functioning within the capitalist system exercise agency. This may be in part why social entrepreneurship literature is under-theorized amongst sociologists. Sociologists have not emphasized agency amongst actors, recognizing capitalism as a largely indefatigable institution as explained by Marx, Weber and Smith.

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[23] Socialism is an example of an economic system characterized by redistribution. Reciprocity refers to systems of economic exchange in which, equal or relatively equal partners, typically possessing kin ties, exchange.

Nevertheless, scholarship in social entrepreneurship calls for a transition from rational or traditional capitalism that is characterized by profit maximizing businesses, to a more socially just capitalism defined by social benefit maximization (Hawken, Lovins and Lovins 1999; Yunus 2009; Porter and Kramer 2011; Savitz 2013; Mackey and Sisodia 2015). In their book, *Natural Capitalism: The Next Industrial Revolution*, Paul Hawken, Amory Lovins and Hunter Lovins (1999) argue that the current capitalist system is unsustainable because it undervalues natural resources and human capital. Ray Anderson, the CEO of Interface Carpet is noted for heeding these authors' insights and made his company more energy efficient and profitable[24]. "Creating Shared Value: Redefining Capitalism and the Role of the Corporation in Society" is a popular 2011 article by Michael E. Porter, head of the Institute for Strategy and Competitiveness at Harvard Business School, and Mark R. Kramer, co-founder of FSG, a consulting firm specializing in social entrepreneurship initiatives. Porter and Kramer argue that a company will remain competitive to the extent that the communities in which it is embedded and serves are healthy. Moreover, those businesses that can strategically capitalize on these connections have the potential to not only grow their company, but advance a new form of capitalism.

Yunus, however, is distinct from other scholars of social entrepreneurship in that he was a forerunner of the movement who directly honed his theory through the creation of some of the most economically and socially successful social

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[24] For a discussion of Ray Anderson's revised business strategy see his popular TED Talk: "The Business Logic of Sustainability."

entrepreneurship initiatives[25]. Yunus (2009) argues that the need for a transition to a more humane economic system is evidenced by the "hazards of prosperity." For example, in his landmark book, *Creating a World Without Poverty: Social Business and the Future of Capitalism*, he notes: "[The] growing anxiety around the world over steadily dwindling supplies of vital resources [poses] a serious threat to global peace" (2009: 207). He argues that social entrepreneurship is a bridge that will help capitalist societies make the transition from rational capitalism to an economic system designed to enhance social welfare and not solely those of the elite and powerful. Social entrepreneurs highlight the human inclination towards compassion and empathy as "blind spots" in conventional conceptions of capitalism as theories of capitalism and a free-market economy are grounded in an impractically narrow conception of human beings concerned only with maximizing personal financial gain (Hawken, Lovins and Lovins 1999; Yunus 2009; Savitz 2013). This perspective is seen in such as Marx's (1867) characterization of humans as purely self-interested economic actors in *Capital*. "The only force that brings them together and puts them in relation with each other, is the selfishness, the gain and the private interests of each" (Marx 1867:195).

Like theorists of philanthropy and altruism, social entrepreneurs argue that human nature is complex (Hawken, Lovins and Lovins 1999; Yunus 2009; Savitz 2013; Mackey and Sisodia 2015). A common critique of rational choice theory, for

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[25] For detailed accounts of Yunus' efforts see: Muhammad Yunus' *Creating a World Without Poverty: Social Business and the Future of Capitalism* (2008); *Building Social Business: The New Kind of Capitalism That Serves Humanity's Most Pressing Needs* (2010) and David Bornstein's (1996) The Price of a Dream: The Story of the Grameen Bank and the Idea.

example, is that people are not always driven by wealth, prestige and power as its theorists argue (England 1989). Contrarily, this argument is also a critique of the Marxist notion that material conditions alone, shape ideology. Social entrepreneurs like Muhammad Yunus and John Mackey, the CEO of Whole Foods suggest that, in actuality, business leaders share various interests and motivations including social justice (Yunus 2009; Mackey and Sisodia 2015). Such entrepreneurs argue that social business reveals the potential for a new direction in a more socially beneficial economic system.

Social entrepreneurs do not wholly dismiss capitalism, but identify important components of it that serve to further social business (Yunus 2008; Yunus 2009; Porter and Kramer 2011). Yunus (2008; 2009) in particular, argued that social enterprises are distinct from non-profit organizations in two important ways. First, non-profit organizations are not self-sustaining, but dependent on donations. In other modes, unlike the social enterprise model, money only flows in one direction. Organizations receive donations to fund programs and initiatives, these donations fund programs and then the organizations must raise more money. A major disadvantage of this component is that it diverts large amounts of time and resources to raising money that could be directed towards directly working towards social initiatives.

Second, although social entrepreneurs are affected by the often, unpredictable trends in the market, they are vulnerable in different ways than non-profit organizations in these situations. In times of economic downturn and crisis, individuals as well as government and private assistance decreases. This increases

the need for non-profit organizations to compete with each other for less money. This increased competition can also lead organizations to alter their missions and strategies to make themselves more attractive to those still in a position to donate.

Critiques of the social entrepreneurship movement concern the measurement of its effectiveness and the ways in which power may operate between social entrepreneurs and the communities they aim to serve. Dees (1998) argues that it is difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of context-dependent and abstract goals like "social value creation" and "social impact." For example, the environmental documentary, *An Inconvenient Truth* is a product of the social enterprise, Participant Media. According to the Washington Post, the film grossed $24,146,161 domestically (2007). However, it is not clear whether the film's financial gain mirrors its social contribution. In other words, it is not certain that the film's multi-million dollar gross generated multi-million dollars worth of social value and that the revenue was re-invested in the company's initiatives and distributed to the employees in the most "socially just" amounts.

Defining Cultural Entrepreneurship

Cultural entrepreneurship has been characterized as a sub-set of social entrepreneurship (Martin and Witter 2011). Cultural entrepreneurs are individuals who create artistic entrepreneurial endeavors that aim to address a social problem. Martin suggests the creators of the popular American television show, *Glee*, can be considered cultural entrepreneurs stating: "Cultural entrepreneurs [solve] problems by disrupting belief systems—using television shows like *Glee* to initiate viewers into the disability or GLBTQ rights frameworks…" (Martin and Witter 2011: np).

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Reviewing Martin and Witter's definition of cultural entrepreneurship in light of discussions of social entrepreneurship and the sociology of art, which I discuss in the next section, I suggest that cultural entrepreneurship can be conceptualized as the merger of cultural activism and entrepreneurship.

Sociologists have considered art emancipatory in the sense that it can be understood as weapon of the oppressed to resist domination (Agger 1992). Members of the Frankfurt school (Adrono 1945, 1972; Horkheimer 1972; Marcuse 1964, 1972, 1978; Jay 1973; Kiralyfalvi 1975; Held 1980; Bottomore 1984; Habermas 1984' Wiggershaus 1994) are seen as the "most prolific writers in the critical application of art" (Washburn 2005). The Frankfurt school represents an interdisciplinary project that combined scientific research methods with critical theory to foster a more just civil society (Payne 1980). To resist oppression, people must become aware of domination and how it operates in multiple and subtle ways. According to Thalasinos (1988), theorists of the Frankfurt school considered art emancipatory in its ability to "jar and shock the masses out of their complacency" (47).

An expression used to refer to the use of art in resistance is "cultural activism." In "Why We Need Cultural Activism," Jennifer Verson argues that cultural activism is a corrective that "seeks to take back control of how our webs of meaning, value systems, beliefs, art and literature, everything are created and disseminated" (Verson 2007:173). Here, Verson echoes the oppositional nature of cultural activism Ngugi wa Thiong'o (2001) explains in "Freedom of the Artist: People's Artists Versus People's Rulers." Thiong'o argues that art is a form of knowledge, a way of seeing the world at the same time it frees one from seeing the

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world from prevailing biased perspectives. Marxist thought suggests this type of activism, cultural activism, is relevant and important given that the prevailing ideas about culture, in general, and art, in particular, will reflect the tastes and interests of the dominant group (Ingliss and Hughson 2005; Bourdieu 1984; Mannheim 1956).

Karl Mannheim explains that when "the political and social order basically rests upon the distinction between 'higher' and 'lower' human types, an analogous distinction is also made between 'higher' and 'lower' objects of knowledge or aesthetic enjoyment" (Mannheim 1956:184). The knowledge and art of privileged groups (a colonial elite or upper-class, for example) becomes dominant and seen as superior to that of the marginalized. Just as colonial cultural narratives have constructed colonized populations as savage in contrast to the colonizers' superiority, narratives of Indigenous populations have constructed colonizers as savage in contradistinction to their humanness, for example (Thiong'o 2001:203). In this case, the indigenous population's cultural narratives opened up a different way of viewing themselves, their oppressors and their relationship, such that they challenged oppressive ideologies. Cultural activism inserts oppositional knowledge into dominant discourse, countering prevailing forms of thinking that re-affirm oppressions such as colonialism, racism, sexism and classism, for example.

Cultural activism not only counters oppressive ideologies, but also structures, in tangible ways. Nicholas Brown opens an essay on Ngugi wa Thiong'o's plays with the quote, "Given the immense power of the regime…one would think they wouldn't have to fear an open word from a simple man," to suggest that the Kenyan state would not have closed Thing'o's theatre in Kenya on multiple occasions if his

plays were not perceived as a serious threat. Brown argues that art has literally been at war with the state (1999). Given Thiong'o's experience and other examples of artistic censorship and expulsion[26], it is clear that the arts do not just produce resistance in a symbolic sense, but poses tangible threats and powerful possibilities for social change.

In addition to raising awareness, the emancipatory potential of art also lies in its ability to transcend itself beyond a cultural product and be embodied. Examining protest songs of the Civil Rights Movement, Eyerman and Jamison (1998) argue that songs are not just music, but an "expression of life rooted in structural experience which can then be used to mobilize persons against perceived injustices" (2). In this sense, art is deeply connected to the social lives of those activists that create and consume it. To attempt to understand the Civil Rights movement outside of the art that helped define it would render an incomplete account of the movement itself (Eyerman and Jamison 1998).

The Sociological Significance of Art

Martin and Witter (2011) who helped popularize the concept of cultural entrepeneurship maintain that the distinction between social entrepreneurship and cultural entrepreneurship is important. They suggest that "[Social] entrepreneurship refers to innovations designed to change systems and markets, while cultural

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[26] In 1977 Ngugi Wa Thiong'o was also imprisoned without trial under the rule of president Daniel arap Moi for his polemical play *Ngaahika Ndeenda (I Will Marry When I Want)*. Similar incidences of state intervention are abundant. During the *Tropicália* movement in Brazil, for example, leading artists, Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil were imprisoned for their music's political critique and later exiled to London (*Brazil: The Tropicalist Revolution* 2001).

entrepreneurship involves transforming hearts and minds" (Fenton 2012). This study examines art as a key product that cultural entrepreneurs leverage to effect the change that Martin and Witter describe. Hence, it is worth noting how sociologists define art and assess its potential to transform consciousness.

Understanding art broadly and in social context

Nothing intrinsic to any cultural product qualifies it "art." Rather art works, and collective categorizations of them as fine, high, or low are socially constructed. What one group considers graffiti or even vandalism, another may consider art; what one person considers pornographic another may consider artistic. Power is important to these discussions as authorities and elites in art industries define and legitimize what creative works are considered "art." This consideration is particularly important concerning black artists whose work may not be considered "high art," if art at all.

As a field, the sociology of art has become mainly concerned with questions of social constructivism and power. The sociology of art has largely focused on the examination of art worlds (Eyerman and Ring 1998), a concept advanced by Howard Becker (2008) and Diana Crane (1989, which explored the contexts in which art was produced, consumed and valued. Becker (2008) and Crane (1989) argued that art was not an individual product of individual creative genius, but a socially organized activity. Artists are part of larger networks that makeup an organizational structure that limits, facilitates and legitimizes their artistic expressions. Emphasizing context, sociologists of art, are not mainly concerned with the creative works themselves, but the social processes by which certain works of art are recognized as high, middle or

low brow; included or excluded from the dominant canon; and recognized as a marker of distinction (Bourdieu 1984).

Sociologists have defined art in broad and varied ways. For example, Paul (2005) defines art as visual and auditory creations like painting, photography and music. Art may also include theater, literature and "media generated art forms" like advertisements, movies and television sitcoms (Zolberg 1990). The definition of art is broad and fluid, largely depending on the context in which it is shared and perspectives of its creator and audience (Thomas 2009). Art is often understood as "fine art," which could include paintings by Michealangelo or sculpture by Rodin (Abbing 2004). Art, however, can also be defined and understood as new dance trends, popular television shows and large scale mural projects that use homes and buildings as canvasses (Thomas 2009). Defining the philosophical or aesthetic requirements for what constitutes art is beyond the scope of this paper. In this project, art is broadly conceived[27] and used interchangeably with the term cultural products, referring to visual, aural and written creations (Adams 2002).

The prevalence of mass media, particularly television, has troubled distinctions between art, entertainment and popular culture. To illustrate, opera has traditionally been viewed as "high art" and television, has been seen as a medium of popular culture. However, one can now watch operas on television, suggesting the silos between high art and popular culture are blurred. Additionally, some scholars

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[27] Given that definitions of art are so elusive, I use the term "art" advisedly, rather than definitively. I also draw upon Jacqueline Adams' conception of art in "Art in Social Movements: Shantytown Women's Protest in Pinochet's Chile." In this paper Adams defines art as: "representations of reality or an idea, created with a consideration for aesthetic conventions" (2002:1).

have argued that art consists of creative works that aim to put people in touch with their humanity and individuality (Dewey 1934; Duncan 1982; Mulvey 1989; Carroll 1990). This perspective does not recognize popular culture, including mainstream television, radio and commercial films, as art, arguing that these products facilitate indoctrination and false consciousness. More recent sociological scholarship, however, has come to recognize art broadly as various creative visual, aural and written works that may include products of popular culture.[28] In this study, art is used similarly in a broad sense to include varied creative works such as music, painting, photography, poetry, films and television shows that may include products of popular culture[29].

Additionally, sociologists and feminist aesthetics scholars have explored the ways in which art helps individuals, especially women, imagine new social realities. Art is an important area of exploration for the social scientist given that its consumption and production influences how we understand, interact within and manipulate our social world (Dewey 2005; Becker 2008). The field of feminist aesthetics maintains that scholarship on art must be "thoroughly genderised" as the gender of the artist, art consumer and others that make up the art world, influence our understandings of the world and art (Ecker 1985; Brand and Korsmeyer 1990). These scholars suggest that we do not simply observe art, but live through art (Ecker 1985; Brand and Korsmeyer 1990; Dewey 1934). Three processes by which this unfolds

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[28] Eyerman and Ring even suggest popular culture may be a site of resistance to cultural hegemony.

[29] I draw upon Jacqueline Adams' conception of art in "Art in Social Movements: Shantytown Women's Protest in Pinochet's Chile." In this paper Adams defines art as: "representations of reality or an idea, created with a consideration for aesthetic conventions" (2002:1).

include: 1) Art audiences connect the work observed to their own experiences (Danto 1981), which may have implications for personal and group politics (Brand and Korsmeyer 1990:2) Artworks aggregate our collective consciousness and reflect dominant social ideas through its expression (Berger 1972; Duncan 1982; Mulvey 1989); and 3) Art creates "paradigm scenarios" or experiences that inform our emotional behavior (Carroll 1990).

Arthur Danto suggests that when artwork becomes a metaphor for the life of the consumer, it has personal transformative potential. Referencing Anna Karenina, Danto (1981:173) proposes, "To see oneself as Anna [Karenina] is in some way to be Anna, and to see one's life as her life, so as to be changed by experience of being her." Peggy Brand (1990) echoes this sentiment, to suggest that this metaphorical process also has political and group implications, citing noted feminist artist Judy Chicago's, "The Dinner Party." Chicago's installation includes a table in the shape of a downward pointing triangle. Place-settings are set-up along the tables with names of 39 historical female figures including Sappho, Georgia O'Keeffe and Virgina Wolf. Each place setting is elaborately decorated with a plate design reminiscent of a vulva. Brand (1990:13) argues, "such imagery expressed the previously oppressed power of all females and that all women would positively identify with their new-found symbol, thus enhancing the transfigurative power of that symbol or metaphor." In other words, women could experience the art as an invitation to explore their own need for a "seat at the table" as women.

Domination and Resistance in the Sociology of Art

Critical feminist literature in art, however, provides research and critique to elucidate the systemic processes of privilege and disempowerment that impact black women. Art activists and critics like Howardena Pindell (1989), Lucy Lippard (1976), Jean Fisher (1994) and groups like the Guerilla Girls and Pests, document the exclusionary practices in the art world that either minimize or ignore women or non-white artists. Moira McLoughlin (1999: 208) notes that among others, their critiques have "shattered any illusions that 'aesthetics' is a criteria of judgment free from the racism and misogyny that continues to characterize too much of North American life."

Noted African American artist and activist, Howardena Pindell's (1989) groundbreaking study, "Art World Racism: A Documentation," provides a detailed analysis of the representation of people of African, Asian, Hispanic, Native American, Pacific, Middle Eastern descent and other non-whites, relative to whites. Pindell reviews exhibition lists from New York's seven major art institutions from 1980 – 1988, pointing out that 90 – 100 percent of participating artists were white (Pindell 1989). In addition to finding that artists of color were significantly under-represented relative to whites, Pindell's research exposed deferential presentations of and attitudes towards artists of color. For example, when artists of color were represented in certain art institutions, Pindell (1989:8) found it also important to ask questions like: "Was it organized from the point of view of the arts and artists of that culture? Were non-European scholars consulted or asked to contribute essays or catalogue entries?... Is there any attempt to respect the traditions of the culture in presenting the material[?]"

Feminist activists like the Guerilla Girls research explore the continued male dominance in art worlds. In 1985 the activists found that in New York's Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), of 169 artists on display, only 13 were female (Bader 2012). The same year, the modern art section of New York's Metropolitan Museum was 97% male (Bader 2012). A 2011 Guerilla Girls survey of New York museums found that only 4% of the artists in the Metropolitan Museum's contemporary art section were women (Bader 2012). The same year, the Guggenheim and MoMA had larger representations of women with 26% and 23%, respectively (Bader 2012). Still, of these figures, non-white women represented only 5% and 2% (Bader 2012). This pattern of women's under-representation, in general, and the under-representation of women of color, in particular is not unique to New York. The National Museum of Women in the Arts estimates that only 5% of art on display in the United States has been made by women (Bader 2012). According to digital magazine, *Feministing*, women are consistently only 15% of the names on *Artforum's*, *Art + Auction*'s, and *ArtReview*'s annual "power lists" (Martin and Witter 2011).

African American artist and scholar Adrian Piper's prolific writings on politics of the art world have illuminated the social, economic and ideological processes that make racism and sexism in the art world appear natural and inevitable. Piper's (1985) critique reflects schools of thought in black feminist thought and the sociology of knowledge concerning authority, legitimation and knowledge subjugation. This perspective of systemic domination in the art world provides an in-depth analysis for understanding the structure of privilege, mechanisms of exclusion and particular challenges facing black women artists. Piper's (2003) arguments

suggest that racist and sexist discrimination in the art world will not be remedied by increased efforts to simply include more art by non-white men into white spaces. Rather, conditions will only change with the more impactful, but altogether more daunting task of dismantling racial and gender hierarchies, especially the systemic processes that not only perpetuate discrimination, but make it appear natural and inevitable.

<u>Privilege in the art world</u>

A career commitment to art is not a decision that everyone arrives at equally, requiring a level of risk and instability that only certain individuals can allow. The high rate of "late discoveries" and posthumously recognized artists indicates the minimal correlation between merit and professional success (Piper 1985). For example, Vincent Van Gogh only sold one painting in his lifetime as his work was "despised" (Plattner 1998:485). It wasn't until 100 years after his death that his "Portrait of Dr. Gachet" sold for $82.5 million.[30] Likewise, the impressionist movement (of which Van Gogh was a part) was initially reviled by art authorities and consumers, but later became influential in shaping the modern art market (Plattner 1998).

Given the unpredictable element of the art world, creative individuals must meet what Piper considers "pre-conditions of professional commitment" that facilitate a "social and economic pre-selection" of who enters the art world (1996:64). One must be financially well off enough to invest time, energy and finances into a professional creative career. Additionally, one must either be in an economic position

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[30] The highest price ever paid for a work of art in a public auction.

to protect one's self (or have a support system to protect one's self) in case their "artistic gamble" goes unrewarded. Or, one has to be comfortable living a Spartan lifestyle, recognizing it as a novelty or virtue. For these reasons, Piper suggests that schools, galleries, museums and similar art institutions tend to attract individuals who can withstand social and economic instability. Piper argues that privileged white men have largely made up those that can afford to take an artistic gamble. These men also make-up the overwhelming majority of authorities in the art world as critics, dealers, exhibitors and buyers (Piper 1985).

Piper (1985, 2003) further argues that privileged men of European descent neither enter nor participate in the art world as blank slates; they maintain values and biases that collectively shape the culture of art institutions. These individuals largely tend to shape "formalist" Eurocentric values concerning beauty, form, abstraction and politically neutral subject matter. These values resonate widely, encouraging artists to manifest formalist values in their work; critics to discern and articulate the achievement of such values; dealers to discover and promote artists whose work reflects these values and collectors to acquire and exchange such work. Consequently, artworks are produced, praised and accepted into dominant art institutions to the extent that they reflect these values explicitly or are palatable for the consumption of authorities that posses these values.

Black Feminist Thought: Intersectionality and Resistance

Black feminist thought represents a theoretical and political paradigm dating back to the early 19th century (Collins 1990). Black feminist scholarships argue that despite differences of era, age, class, sexuality and ethnicity, women of African

descent share a common legacy of struggle in societies that devalue black women (Beal 1970; Hooks 1981; Smith 1983; White 1984). Black feminists such as the groundbreaking Combahee River Collective[31] (1982) maintain that self-definition and self-determination have been important to black women's responses to their set of interlocking oppressions along race, class and gender lines. Black women activists, like mothers, teachers and community leaders as well as intellectuals play an important role in the production of knowledge, consciousness and resistance.

Black feminists scholars have codified and built on historic research by black women on black women's lives, as well as interdisciplinary discussions of knowledge and power to identify and articulate a black feminist standpoint grounded in black women's particular experiences. The contemporary black feminist tradition advances an intersectional and activist approach that harks back to the early 19th century anti-slavery movement in the North. Rebel enslaved Africans, freed blacks and white abolitionists advanced the Black women's club movement that aimed to "free the slave and liberate the woman" (Guy-Sheftall 1995:1). Leaders of this movement, including Mary Church Terrell, Maria Stewart, Ida B. Wells, Anna Julia Cooper and Sojourner Truth, organized and participated in local and national conferences not simply because they were not allowed in all male or white women's clubs, but because they recognized themselves as having a unique set of experiences and challenges than those that were not both black and women (Guy-Sheftall 1995).

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[31] The Combahee River Collective was a Boston-based black feminist lesbian organization that operated between 1974 and 1980. The Collective is noted for highlighting black women's underrepresentation in white feminism and their landmark "Combahee River Collective Statement." Their noted text was important in shaping literature, activism and theory in contemporary Black feminism.

Intersectionality is one of the key components of Black feminist thought. The term intersectionality is attributed to Kimberlé Crenshaw whose research on black women's multiple subjectivities illuminated the ways in which, dominant understandings of race and gender "theoretically erased" black women in the "conceptualization, identification and remediation of race and sex discrimination" (Crenshaw 1989:57). Crenshaw's analysis of African American women was foundational to the field and exemplary of scholarship concerning the importance of intersectional analyses in interpreting black women's lives, particularly concerning discrimination. Investigating black women's lawsuits against major companies, Crenshaw revealed that courts could not make sense of black women's unique reality as both black and women, not allowing black women to make claims based on racism and sexism, but requiring them to elect one or the other (1989). In other instances, black women were not recognized as representative of all women or all blacks, such that their claims of sexism or racism were refuted; white women and black men were seen as the "real" representatives of their respective gender and race (Crenshaw 1989). The courts' refusal to recognize black women as neither a particular, nor representative suggested "that the boundaries of sex and race discrimination doctrine are defined respectively by white women's and black men's experiences [and] black women are protected only to the extent that their experiences coincide with those of either of the two groups" (Crenshaw 1989:59). Other scholarship including Barbara Smith, Gloria T. Hull and Patricia Bell Scott's volume (1982), "All the Women are White, All the Men are Black, But some of us are Brave" advanced the idea of discussing interlocking oppressions that shaped black women's lives.

As a field of scholarship, black feminist thought has built on and contributed to the sociology of knowledge and sociological scholarship on power. Three themes are especially germane to this project. First, the field's integration of standpoint theory adds to understandings of knowledge and power as black feminist thought argues that oppressed groups have a fuller understanding of the social order than the privileged (Collins 1990). Second, black feminist thought has been foundational to intersectional analyses of a variety of themes, for example, work, family and violence (Crenshaw 1989). Given its emphasis on multiple subjectivities and oppressions, this scholarship reveals the limitations of generalizable theory when it comes to group experiences. Black feminist thought revealed how black women's particular experiences were theoretically inaccessible given traditional approaches that focused on black men and white women (Crenshaw 1989; Guy-Sheftall 2003). Third, black feminist thought calls for a recursive relationship between society and academia in which, black women's knowledge and scholarship on black women empowers black women (Collins 1990).

Black women continue to face oppression in the workplace (Harvey-Wingfield 2007), street (Grant Bowman 1993), and media representations (Moody 2012). The intellectual tradition of black feminist thought is thus influenced by what scholars call black women's shared "legacy of struggle" (Canon 1985). For example, Katie Canon notes:

> [Throughout] the history of the United States, the interrelationship
> of white supremacy and male superiority has characterized the
> Black woman's reality as a situation of struggles struggle to
> survive in two contradictory worlds simultaneously, one white,
> privileged, and oppressive, the other black, exploited, and

oppressed (1985:30).

Nevertheless, black women have historically demonstrated resistance through the aforementioned club movements and numerous community organizations (Giddings 1984, 1988; Gilkes 1985). Activists like Ida B. Wells' personal experience with the lynching of a friend spurred her commitment to anti-lynching activism (Duster 1970).

Black feminist thought is also noted for exploring knowledge production through dialogue as opposed to adversarial debate (Collins 1990). Black feminist thought is not simply about conscisousness raising, which implies encouraging a group to reach a level of knowledge, which they may not establish (characteristic of the black consciousness and women's movement of the 1960s and 70s). Hence, Patricia Hill Collins uses the term "re-articulation," to describe the process whereby black women's existent knowledge and consciousness is informed by social and political contexts and re-introduced into the national discourse in a cyclical and progressive relationship (1990).

There is no universal "women's experience," rather it articulates with multiple systems of power that shape one's experiences and multiple identities. This perspective is not only a critique of tendencies in feminist movements and black consciousness movements to minimize or disregard the voices of black women (Collins 1990), but also acknowledges the intragroup differences among black women that may perpetuate discrimination class and sexuality, for example (Lorde 2007). Intersectionality in black feminist thought requires an integrative approach to understanding black women's oppression, recognizing race, class, gender and sexuality (among other identities) as distinct and interrelated systems of power. In

addition to Crenshaw, scholars like Angela Davis, Audre Lorde, bell hooks and Patricia Hill Collins have made intersectional analyses central to their studies of black women's social positioning. According to Collins: "Black feminist thought fosters a fundamental paradigmatic shift in how we think about oppression…[a] paradigm of race, class and gender as interlocking systems of oppression [reconceptualizes] the social relations of domination and resistance" (1990).

Exploring Black Women's Cultural Entrepreneurship In Black Feminist Context

Scholars have noted that while the representations of black women's controlling images may appear in more subtle ways than their classic archetypes, in terms of their appearances in popular culture, black women have experienced what cultural scholar Amiri Baraka (1968) calls a "changing same." For example, Adia Harvey-Wingfield (2007) has noted a mammification of black women in professional settings. In this sense, these black women are expected to take on disproportionate amounts of emotional labor relative to their colleagues in work (Harvey-Wingfield 2007). They are also often charged with the responsibility of cleaning up other people's messes. Even though as professional women, they fit the trope of the "lady," they are also perceived as "mammies" (Harris-Perry 2003).

The mammification of the lady in professional settings bears semblance to the character of Olivia Pope[32] played by Kerry Washington on the ABC television show, "Scandal." The show is a drama that chronicles the experiences of principal character Olivia Pope, and her crisis management firm, Pope & Associates. Pope & Associates clientele include a range of political leaders, including the President of the United

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[32] The Olivia Pope character is inspired by former press aide to George Bush, Judy Smith, co-executive producer.

States. Olivia Pope is known as "the fixer[33]," in that her team provides solutions to a range of crises that could threaten their public image, livelihood and matters of life and death like claims of rape and actual kidnappings and murders. For the majority of the show's 2 seasons, Olivia Pope has also been the president's mistress.

Although Olivia Pope's character bears semblance to the controlling images of Mammy, Jezebel and lady, Kerry Washington has shown pride in representing this character. Referencing her experiencing playing slave Broomhilda, in the film *D'Jango Unchained*, Washington explains her sentiment. "[You] also have the privilege of playing a woman [at] the opposite end of the spectrum. In some ways Olivia is the answer to Broomhilda's prayers of what might be possible.[34]"

Drawing upon the critique of black female stereotypes in black feminist thought, one might offer a nuanced analysis of Olivia Pope's character and Washington's understanding of that character in social and historic context. I will illustrate with a brief review of what such a critique might address: Under this view, we might trouble the notion that the character of Olivia Pope is diametrically opposed to Broomhilda. In actuality, black women in Broomhilda's position under slavery were often charged with taking on similar roles of emotional labor and "mess cleaning" under slavery. Additionally, slave women were often the victims of sexual violence at the hands of the white male head of the household that they kept. Olivia Pope is the victim of white male sexual aggression at the hands of the President in

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[34] Kerry Washington made this comment in her appearance on the television show "The View" on January 30, 2013.

one episode in which she is harassed in an elevator despite her continued physical refutation of his advancements.

Recognizing "Scandal" as the cultural product of a black woman cultural entrepreneur, however, adds new dimensions to such an analysis. African American woman screenwriter, director and producer, Shonda Rhimes, created "Scandal" in 2012. In 2005 and 2007, she respectively debuted "Grey's Anatomy" and "Private Practice." Both shows, portrayed blacks in positions of authority.

Entrepreneurial strategy often involves strategic partnerships, planning and sometimes compromise of one's creative vision (Ries 2011). In this sense, entrepreneurs may sometimes need to employ a strategy similar to that critical scholars use in navigating bureaucratic structures. This navigation involves tactfully advancing through rigid structures to attain a position of authority that allows one to then challenge those same structures (Clawson 2007). In "The Sociology that had No Name," Patricia Hill Collins describes this as "learning to be obedient, so I could be disobedient" (Collins in Clawson 2007: 102). From an entrepreneurial perspective, it seems plausible, but remains uncertain that this is Rhimes' aim.

However, understanding Rhimes as a cultural entrepreneur invites us to further probe the economic and ideological barriers that influence her creative freedom. For example, what, if any, are the advantages of having a television show on a major television network that is owned by white men? What if any advantages, or freedoms does she have by working with ABC as opposed to any other network?

When asked "how much pride" she takes in showing more racially diverse casts in her shows, Rhimes noted:

I don't take pride in it at all. I think it's sad, and weird, and strange that it's still a thing, nine years after we did 'Grey's [Anatomy]" that it's still a thing. It's creepy to me that it's still an issue, that there aren't enough people of color on television. Why is that still happening? It's 2013... And oh, by the way it works. Ratings-wise, it works….I don't understand why people don't understand that the world of TV should look like the world outside of TV. Like, why is there an assumption of whiteness on television? (Paskin 2013).

When asked if she thinks the lack of diversity on television was attributable to the preponderance of white male executives, Rhimes replied:

I don't know why the white guys aren't putting people of color on television, maybe we should ask them. And if you ask them all the time, after a while they might start thinking about putting people of color on television…. There was no conversation about the fact that I was going to have an African-American lead on 'Scandal.' ABC wasn't like, 'We need to discuss this.' They were just like, 'Great, that's fine, wonderful. Move on.' But ABC has always been that way, so I don't know (Paskin 2013).

Black feminist thought identifies freedom as both personal and collective (Lorde 2007). Black women's artworks have been foundational to theorizing freedom from a black feminist standpoint (Davis 1983; Lorde 2007). Black feminist thought also maintains an openness to change as a theoretical paradigm as changes in society will reflect changes in the experiences and perspectives of black women (Collins 1990). Hence, more recent and diverse artworks may produce new knowledge in black feminist thought. Just like the art of other black women that black feminist thought theorized about, new and more diverse art may give us new insight into freedom.

The extent to which black women artists, entrepreneurs and cultural entrepreneurs understand freedom as a personal or collective endeavor has important political implications. Sociologists have stressed the importance of understanding the possibilities and limits of freedom for oppressed groups. Linking sociological discussions of freedom with black women's own understandings may prove useful in fostering social change. Such an analysis may illuminate social processes that help black women better understand the social structures in which they are situated, which can foster the creation of their own strategies of resistance. Given current limits in scholarship, further investigation is needed to explore the extent to which entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurship and cultural entrepreneurship constitute strategies of resistance.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

While authorities such as policy makers, economists and development experts have explored the relationship among positive social change, entrepreneurship and the arts (United Nations Creative Economy Report 2008) ironically, scholars in the sociology of entrepreneurship, cultural activism and the sociology of art seem to talk past each other. Sociological literature on entrepreneurship, has largely focused on the "supply-side perspective," emphasizing individual traits of entrepreneurs or the "demand-side perspective," exploring the social, political and economic contexts in which, entrepreneurship occurs (Thornton 1999). The sociology of entrepreneurship, however, is significantly lacking in the analysis of social justice implications of entrepreneurship.

Literature on cultural activism explores how art is deployed to educate and mobilize people to common political ends. Nevertheless, this literature does not typically examine the role of entrepreneurial endeavors in effecting social change. Emphasizing consumption practices among white and wealthy consumers, the sociology of art literature has focused on cultural domination and status acquisition. While scholarship in this field has illuminated connections between art and positive social change, there is a dearth of literature exploring ties between business development and arts-based activism. Additionally, cultural critics in this field have been critical of the creative integrity of art once it enters the marketplace.

African Americans' ability to effectively harness entrepreneurship as a tool for social change and means to emancipation has been contested. Some scholars recognize entrepreneurship as a viable means to counteracting the enduring social problem and injustices blacks face. Others, however, remain skeptical about the practical impact of entrepreneurial activity. It is timely to revisit these discussions in light of new trends of social and cultural entrepreneurship that call for a re-conceptualization of capitalism that makes altruism central and social good just as, if not more, important than profit-making. Black women remain an under-studied group even though they are important to the growing number of African American entrepreneurs.

Scholars have employed sophisticated analyses to explore the discursive, social, institutional factors that limit women's entry and success in entrepreneurship. Less attention, however, has been given to the ways in which sexism and racism intersect as systems of power that structure black women's entrepreneurial

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experiences (Harvey-Wingfield 2005). Just as feminist scholars have argued that the unstated male experience of entrepreneurship is only partial although it appears to be universal, a black feminist perspective argues that there is no "universal women's experience" (Collins 1990). Consequently, further investigation and theorizing of women's experiences in entrepreneurship cannot be assumed to be standard across differences of race, class and gender.

Still, the feminist critique of the characterizations of women's entrepreneurship may have important implications for a black feminist critique of entrepreneurship. Feminist scholarship has long critiqued researchers who study women in reference to a "male" standard (Calvert and Ramsey 1992; Irigaray 1974). Bruni et. al (2004) argue for a feminist critique that destabilizes gender categories by investigating the social, material and discursive practices that produce and re-produce a male/female, man/woman binary.

My proposed research builds on and addresses voids in the fields of the sociology of entrepreneurship and the sociology of art (with particular attention to cultural studies). Conceptualizing cultural entrepreneurship as the combination of entrepreneurship and cultural activism, this study explores how black women cultural entrepreneurs address social problems through their business endeavors. As a specialized knowledge and paradigm for making sense of the intersection of power, race and gender, black feminist thought helps illuminate areas of investigation in the sociology of art and entrepreneurship.

The motivation to center black women's experiences in cultural entrepreneurship stem from considerations in black feminist thought that suggest we

cannot generalize about black women's experiences from those of white men, black men and white women given their particular intersection of identities and group status. Reviewing literature on the social entrepreneurship, the sociology of entrepreneurship and cultural entrepreneurship piqued my interest in new ways of understanding success amidst new understandings of profit and capitalism. These considerations inspired my research question and sub-question: In what ways, if any, do black female cultural entrepreneurs define success? In the next chapter I explain the methods I employed to investigate this section. The omissions and opportunities for further inquiry in the existing literature influenced my methodological decisions. Namely, I made it a point to employ methods that would give voice to participants given that there is such little literature about and centering black women entrepreneurs.

CHAPTER 3: MAPPING THE BUSINESS TERRAIN:

A QUALITATIVE INQUIRY AND AUDIT

Business terrain is the metaphorical landscape of a given business field. A business terrain is said to be harsh amidst economic, structural and de facto challenges like high taxation, underdeveloped infrastructure or professional charlatans. The terrain thus encompasses all the particular opportunities, barriers and personalities an entrepreneur may encounter as they maneuver a given field. What entrepreneurs are willing to do or not do as they traverse the terrain, or seek to transform it, provides insight into the meaning they bring to their work.

A feminist methodological approach and a qualitative research design allowed me to explore the meaning black women cultural entrepreneurs gave to their business within and outside of their terrains. In conducting interviews and engaging in participant observation exercises, my aim was to understand the environments in which participants networked and shared their works. Such events included hosting business events, providing services and socializing with customers and supporters, reflected and influenced their definitions of success. Employing a qualitative methodology proved useful to investigate the terrain in light of the primary research question, "In what ways do black women cultural entrepreneurs define success?"; and sub-question, "In what ways do structural and social forces shape black women's experiences as cultural entrepreneurs?".

This study employs (1) in-depth semi-structured interviews with African American cultural entrepreneurs and (2) participant observation. These methods proved useful in exploring meaning making and experiential knowledge at individual and collective levels, which are key to the study. The in-depth interviews provided insight into black women's personal experiences and perspectives as cultural entrepreneurs. This approach helped answer my primary research question: "In what ways do black women cultural entrepreneurs define success?" because it provided rich first-hand accounts of how black women understood success personally, literally and professionally.

This chapter is divided into three sections. First, I explain why I took a feminist methodological approach to defining cultural entrepreneurs, collecting data on them and analyzing the data that I collected. Next, I summarize the qualitative research design that I used as well as provide information about my study site. Additionally, I discuss the importance of self-reflexivity throughout the research process. Lastly, I discuss the specific research methods I used to conduct and analyze the interview and participant observation data. I explain how I weighed and arrived at my methodological decisions in light of the limitations inherent within each method. Throughout this chapter I aim to provide transparent accounts of the limitations and challenges involved in maintaining the integrity of the investigative process.

Feminist Methodological Considerations

As a field of scholarship, black feminist thought has built on and contributed to the sociology of knowledge and sociological scholarship on power in myriad ways;

three of which merit highlighting. First, the field's integration of standpoint theory

adds to understandings of knowledge and power as black feminist thought argues that

oppressed groups have a broader understanding of the social order than the privileged

(Collins 1990). Second, black feminist thought has been foundational to

intersectional analysis (Crenshaw 1989; Collins 1990). Given its emphasis on

multiple subjectivities and oppressions, this scholarship reveals the limitations of

generalizable theory when it comes to group experiences. Black feminist thought

revealed how black women's particular experiences were theoretically inaccessible

given traditional approaches that focused on black men and white women (Crenshaw

1989; Guy-Sheftall 2003). Third, black feminist thought calls for a recursive

relationship between society and academia, in which black women's scholarship not

only discusses black women as a group of scholarly interest, but also empowers black

women as a community (Collins 1990).

Key feminist methodological considerations that helped me determine the

appropriate methods were standpoint theory, intersectionality and empowerment.

<u>Standpoint theory</u>

The common theme across the multiple feminist standpoint theories is the idea

that knowledge is socially informed and produced in social positions that are

structured by power relations (Harding 1991; Hallstein 1999). In other words, the

knowledge of groups is intimately linked to their position in a hierarchical social

order and will be valued (or not) accordingly. Standpoint theorists (Harstock 1983;

Collins 1990; Harding 1991; Haraway 1991; Hennessy 1993) cite two main reasons

epistemology generated from an oppressed group, such as women, is more

informative than that of the dominant group. First, social analysis will be limited if it begins from the perspective of privileged communities because privilege is blinding and produces ignorance of those who do not share the same social standing (Collins 1990; Harding 1991). Second, subjugated groups have a fuller understanding of the social order since they must learn to navigate it to survive (Collins 1990).

Standpoint theory helped me conceptualize black women cultural entrepreneurs as a group, choose interviews and participant observation as a method and practice self-reflexivity. In conceptualizing black women as an interpretive community, I argue that they share a common standpoint as cultural entrepreneurs that is informed by their social position as blacks and women. Their collective social position does not afford them the privileges assigned to white men entrepreneurs, creatives or activists. Rather, as black women, they collectively face unique challenges as a group, which shape their individual experiences[35]. Referencing standpoint theory I surmised that black women cultural entrepreneurs would share experiences that shaped their worldview and definitions of success. Moreover, I chose interviews as a method to capture the perspectives of black women cultural entrepreneurs, because standpoint theory helped me deduce that black women cultural entrepreneurs might have unique understandings given their particular social position.

Feminist standpoint theorists, in particular, have also argued for the importance of researcher self-reflexivity. Such scholars note that ethnographic

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[35] For example, Mellody Hobson, a black woman social entrepreneur has been outspoken on racial and gender stereotypes that lead potential clients and partners to assume that she is a service employee when she is in fact the president of the investment firm (Hobson 2014).

methods may lead researchers to misrepresent or exploit groups or individuals due to a lack of reflexive understandings of power in social research (Tedlock 2000; Naples 2003). Across the variety of reflexive practices, all require attention to the researcher's subjectivity and positionality of power in their investigations.

While I agree with feminist theorists who critique seemingly objective and positivistic methodological approaches as the natural and most reliable route to "truth," I took key measures to understand how my personal experiences and beliefs influenced the research process (Sandoval 2000). In the self-reflexivity section I explain that I share a standpoint with black women cultural entrepreneurs. I detail the implications of my shared social identity for data collection, analysis and the study in general.

Race, Gender and Intersecting Identities

Given the diverse perspectives and experiences of women, no one standpoint can represent women as a whole. Black women represent a diverse group with various class, gender and sexual identities; hence, members of this group are differently affected by the various ways aspects of their identities articulate with institutional discrimination. The experiences produced by the intersection of race and gender have different outcomes for middle-class black women than for working class black women and United States born black women than black women immigrants, for example. Therefore, although the common experiences of black women can foster a collective knowledge and standpoint, the degree to which black women's consciousness is shared and politicized cannot be taken as given or fixed.

While I conceptualized black women cultural entrepreneurs as a group, I did not assume that they would all have the same thoughts, feelings, experiences, values and politics. In light of the importance of understanding their biographies and how their lived experiences shaped the meanings they brought to their work, I asked interview questions such as: "As a black woman entrepreneur, do you think there are any particular challenges you face?;" and "Some black women cultural entrepreneurs make their race and gender central to their identity while others don't. For example, some black women cultural entrepreneurs say, 'I am a black woman filmmaker,' while others say 'I am a filmmaker.' Would you say your race and gender are important to your artistic identity?".

It is important to note that recognizing black women's diversity does not undermine the theoretical conceptualization of black women cultural entrepreneurs as a group. Rather, this diversity clarifies the need to recognize a black *women's* standpoint instead of a black *woman's* standpoint[36]. Emphasizing differences as opposed to commonalities among black women would suggest that there was no group at all. Moreover, such an emphasis, would lead to a problematic understanding of individual identity as wholly distinct from group identity; under this view, collectivity necessarily limits freedom, "leaving us with a group of politically unorganized unique 'individuals' and [entrenched] in liberal democratic politics that

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[36] Collins (1992) argues that the conceptual move to downplay black women's diversity in *Black Feminist Thought* was necessary to advance the book's political project. "[To] get Black feminist thought accepted as a legitimate discourse that can quite rightfully take its place among discourses created by those with much more power, it was necessary to present the group itself as being overly homogenous" (Collins 1992:518).

allegedly protect the 'individual's' right to be free" (Collins 1992:518). Rather, there is a collective diversity within black women, which also includes black women cultural entrepreneurs.

Feminist thought on empowerment

The methods I chose and the ways in which I applied them had political implications grounded in black feminist thought and liberation sociology. Black feminist theorists and liberation sociologists have argued that social scientists cannot afford to be apolitical in the face of social injustice. Given these considerations, I chose to take an iterative and semi-structured approach that would go beyond simply imposing theoretical definitions on the research participants; I did not want to prioritize academic knowledge over their own, limiting the space for unanticipated insights.

Historically, knowledge created by blacks has been minimized or explicitly written out of scholarly discussions relative to the predominately white and male dominated canon (Ladner 1973; Collins 1990; Morris 2015). Interviewing is a method that fosters empowerment in that it gives voice to groups whose thoughts may otherwise go unheard or become muddled in an academic setting.

Given that women's knowledge is as diverse and complex as they are (Harding 1991), it is more appropriate to speak of a "feminist thought," which has political implications, instead of a "women's thought" as a general set of ideas and understandings. I also chose semi-structured interviews because they potentially yield qualitative data that I could aggregate to discern potential intellectual

contributions of black women cultural entrepreneurs to feminist thought as opposed to only theorizing women's knowledge about cultural entrepreneurship.

Black women cultural entrepreneurs define the field

Standpoint theory is also useful given that feminist theorists argue that research must be grounded in women's concrete lived experiences and their specific societal positions. These scholars suggest that research about women must begin, not from theory, but from women's lives (Harstock 1983; Haraway 1991; Harding 1991; Hennessy 1993). Therefore, in conceptualizing cultural entrepreneurship for this dissertation, I did not rely solely on a formal definition in the literature[37]. Rather, I paid close attention to conversations black women had about their personal work and each other's.

Initially, I surmised that black women cultural entrepreneurs could be simply defined as "black women who had businesses in creative industries." However, in preliminary research and direct conversations with black women who were entrepreneurial in these areas, I uncovered more nuanced understandings of cultural entrepreneurship. Black women understood cultural entrepreneurship not only as businesses in the arts, but businesses that sold products and services pertaining to cultural heritage[38] as well. When discussing my research project with black women,

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[37] The most formal definition of cultural entrepreneurship as a sub-set of social entrepreneurship is stated by Courtney E. Martin and Lisa Witter in "Social or Cultural Entrepreneurship" (2011).

[38] Cultural heritage is an expression of the ways of living developed by a community and passed on from generation to generation, including customs, practices, places, objects, artistic expressions and values (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009).

people would recommend that I interview friends, colleagues and figures they knew

that worked as hairdressers, vegan chefs and pop culture bloggers. In their minds,

black women cultural entrepreneurs also included those who owned businesses that

offered cosmetology, ancestry tracing and craft making, for example. In casual

conversations, I also learned that black women defined arts very broadly, similar to

the way it is defined in the sociology of art.

As discussed in the previous chapter, sociologists have defined art in various

ways. For example, Washburn (2005) defines art as visual and auditory creations like

painting, photography and music. Art may also include theater, literature and "media

generated art forms" like advertisements, movies and television sitcoms (Zolberg

1990). The definition of art is broad and fluid, largely depending on the context in

which it is shared and perspectives of its creator and audience (Thomas 2009). A key

sociological takeaway in these discussions is that there is nothing intrinsic to any

cultural product that makes it "art." Rather artworks, and collective categorizations

of them as fine, high, or low are socially constructed.

Hence, I describe cultural entrepreneurs as a specific subset of social

entrepreneurs who make a range of artworks, creativity or cultural heritage central to

their mission driven ventures. See Figure 1 as an illustration of this definition. I also

find that black women cultural entrepreneurs design their businesses to advance

social change, self-actualization and a particular type of financial success.

Figure 1
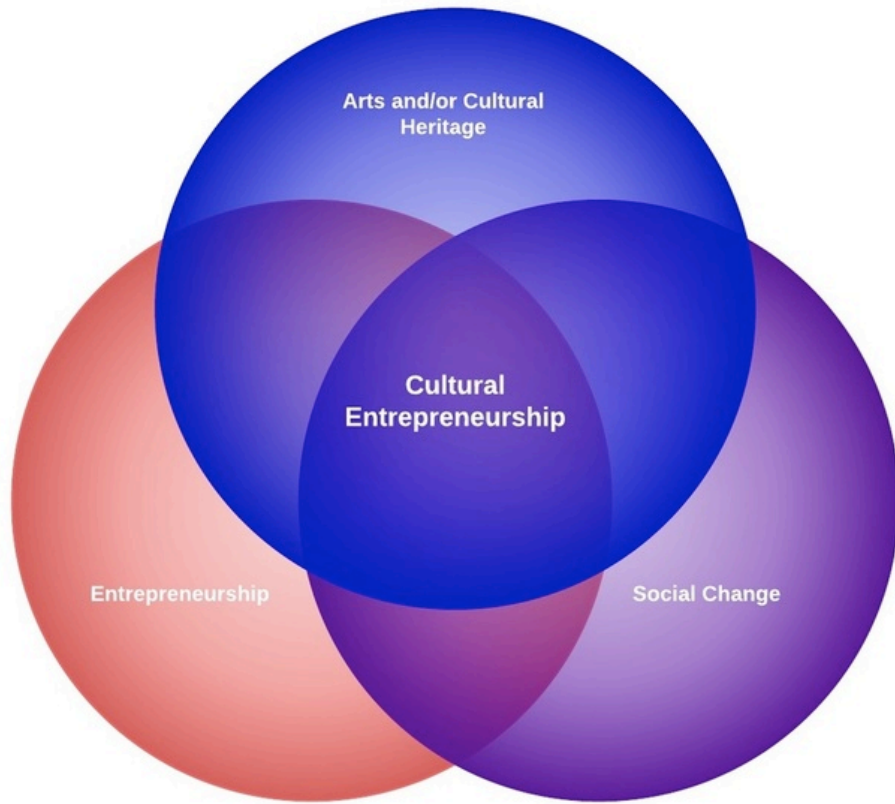
Qualitative Research Design: Contextualizing Data and Self-reflexivity

Qualitative researchers explore meaning making within particular social, cultural and relational contexts (Denzin 2005). They discern and explain meaning, recognizing that meanings are fluid and influenced by one's social location, biography and context (Denzin 2005). Therefore, I did not presume, nor do I purport that my interview questions or participant observation exercises would help me uncover a definitive truth that reflected a singular social reality. Rather, I recognize that all meanings are interactively, and culturally embedded and constructed; interviewees and the actors I engaged in participant observation settings all had interconnected identities and social locations that invariably shaped their construction of meaning within any particular context. Reflexivity involves revealing pre-conceptions and becoming aware of situational dynamics in which the interviewer and respondent mutually construct meaning and knowledge.

Self-reflexivity

Self-reflexivity and objectivity were important considerations in this work. Researchers reflect to become aware of what experiences, beliefs, behavior or assumptions enhance or obscure their perspective on the phenomena they study (Russell and Kelly 2002). Feminist critiques of traditional ethnographic methods have influenced the growth and credibility of self-reflexive social research.

The reflexive scholar is often a member of the community of inquiry (Kane 2011:69). The attention to one's motivations for scholarly inquiry may seem contrary

to positivist approaches that encourage distance as a way of ensuring objectivity and balance. Nevertheless, some qualitative scholars suggest: "Good research questions spring from [a researcher's]...values, passions, and preoccupations" (Russell and Kelly 2002:5).

This research is inherently subjective given that I have chosen to explore a topic that I am personally invested in as a black woman cultural entrepreneur. A shared social identity lends itself to advantages in qualitative research including empathy, trust and access. However, I was sensitive to the fact that it can lead researchers to develop an over-reliance on their tacit knowledge. Imagining themselves already as well-versed, scholars who share a social identity may feel too familiar to take a learner's attitude towards the research. Another potential limitation of such shared social identity research is that respondents may make less of an effort to explain matters, believing the researcher is familiar enough to understand the details of their perspective or experience.

Aware of the benefits and challenges my identification with participants presented, I made it a point to continuously evaluate the attitudes and perspectives I brought to this work. Given my feminist perspective and commitment to liberation sociology, which I describe later in this section, I do want my work to have political relevance and impact. Therefore, I took inventory of my bias and leanings through "self-searching" exercises over the course of the research process (Taylor 2005). Drawing upon various suggested practices across qualitative scholarship, I chose to reflect upon my personal biography (Taylor 2005). Documenting this reflection

allows me to be transparent and accountable to the beliefs and bias that inform this study. This process also helped to maintain scholarly integrity. Being self-aware of my leanings I did not try to resist my intentions and beliefs, rather, being cognizant of them, I was conscious not to manipulate participants or findings to simply advance or confirm my own positions.

Personal biography

As a black woman who identifies as a cultural entrepreneur, the subject matter of this dissertation is especially interesting to me. I have worked as an independent contractor, writing and editing for the online technology magazine SiliconANGLE, where I served as a junior editor and created features on the intersection of technology, creativity and social change. The most important entrepreneurial experience in my life has been the incorporation of a company, which I maintained from 2009 to 2015, called Live Unchained. The organization created arts media (in the form of an online magazine) and events (including art exhibitions, conferences, and networking events, for example) that showcase innovative arts and artists across the African diaspora. The organization was made up of 5 core team members (including 2 officers and 3 advisors) in addition to volunteers and interns.

My experience with Live Unchained gave me familiarity and access to communities of black women cultural entrepreneurs that other researchers may have not been able to reach. Live Unchained has featured interviews with over 100 artists from more than 17 different countries on the website www.liveunchained.com, most of whom I have personally interviewed. The interviews I conducted as a writer for

Live Unchained were not used or referenced in this study. Still, the opportunity to speak with so many artists has given me a perspective on black women's creative experiences and vision and piqued my interest in the strategies, opportunities and challenges involved in making professional creative lifestyles sustainable. For example, my background interviewing black women from different parts of the world gave me a sensitivity to the diversity of black women's backgrounds and cultures. Originally, my study focused exclusively on African American women. However, after three participants and two attendees at participant observation activities suggested that I interview black women cultural entrepreneurs who were not from the United States, I decided to expand the participant pool. I reached out to international participants who I connected with through Live Unchained that met the critieria I explained in the section, "Black Women Cultural Entrepreneurs Define the Field."

Personally, I identify as a feminist, womanist and liberation sociologist; I do not take the assignations lightly, but believe they involve personal and professional responsibilities which I bring to my scholarship. Liberation sociologists have argued that scholarship should reflect the needs and interests of oppressed populations and contribute to the creation of a more democratic and socially just society (Feagin and Vera 2001). I am personally committed to creating scholarship that reflects the complexity of black lives around the world. I believe it is important to create new

and topical scholarship that shows research on the experiences of blacks and women can help sociology realize its liberatory power[39].

Managing researcher subjectivity

Some scholars suggest that a key indication that a researcher has not reflected on the personal beliefs and experiences they bring to their work is when an interviewee's response catches them off guard. Two key moments, which I describe below, reminded me to continually reflect on myself as a researcher and how these instances shaped the meaning I derived, included scenarios in which an interviewee's response surprised me and another occasion when my emotional reaction to an interviewee's response left me unsettled.

In one incident a respondent's remark surprised me so much that I unconsciously repeated the question; she inspired me to discover and reflect on unconscious biases that I was more conscious of going forward. I asked a black woman painter in her late twenties, "Is there one aspect of your identity that is more central? She replied, "Probably [more] woman. I paint a lot of women, I guess cause I'm a woman." Taken aback, I asked her to clarify stating, "Have you ever felt like one aspect of your identity came first or was more primary?" She expanded upon her

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[39] Peter L. Berger's "Sociology of Freedom" explores the irony of students turning to sociology for the revolutionary knowledge to emancipate the oppressed. Berger explains that Auguste Comte and his contemporaries actually viewed sociology as an "*anti*revolutionary doctrine" (Berger 1971:1 emphasis in original). Those recognized as sociology's founders saw sociology having a religious like purpose in restoring social order in the aftermath of the French Revolution and understood it as a conservative approach. Scholars in the Comtian tradition would be confounded by the growing bond between sociology and resistance that began to take shape during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century[39] (Berger 1971:1).

original position, saying: "I think a woman can identify with another woman easily…I mean you don't necessarily…I mean there's so much that comes with being a woman, being African American also, but…you don't necessarily have a connection with another African American even though you both are black, even though you're in a black body obviously…You also see a woman and see that's she's woman as well. Biologically and just mentally you just have a lot more in common." I was surprised that she believed her gender identity could trump her racial identity and did not believe they intersected as I thought her work had a political, racially affirming message. When I took post-interview notes about this experience, I remarked that I was concerned that my surprise may have shown on my face and I had hoped that my reaction did not disturb the participant. I knew that not all of the participants would share the same perspectives on intersectionality as me, so her response was not altogether shocking. Rather, this participant was a black woman painter who is known for paintings that depict women of color, particularly black women as well as black figures in music history. This incident clarified that I could not assume that a person's creative works or target audience was necessarily indicative of how much they identified with that audience.

In another incident, I had a strong emotional reaction to a violinist who explained how she literally feared for her life at a venue where she was contracted to play. Chelsey Green explained that she was disturbed to arrive and see that a fight had broken out, leaving someone laid out on the floor with blood coming from his head. She explained that something told her to perform anyway and she was glad she did because a representative from NPR was in the audience. He approached her that

evening, and later provided more opportunities for her. I became emotional when she described incidences like what she saw as the evidence that after hardship, God and the universe always provides opportunities for your personal and professional growth. I started to tear up as she went on and needed to pause. She was understanding and told me, "Yeah…it's ok."

Self-reflexivity helped me to mitigate my expectations, but not my emotions. I had been conscious of not being leading in my tone in presenting the questions. After the interview with the painter, I tried not to demonstrate surprise during interviews, which could be misconstrued as judgment in my non-verbal communication upon hearing the responses. In a different way, my response to Green's comments made me sensitive to the fact that I was an emotional being and that it might not always be practical to compartmentalize my feelings.

For interview sessions and participant observation events, I always introduced myself in e-mail as a PhD student and tried to project a sense of professionalism in my dress and timeliness. I did not want to appear too informal and personal, which could compromise the seriousness of their responses. However, I did concede that as a member of this group who had shared in similar challenges and opportunities, I may have visceral reactions. Being aware of this heightened sensitivity, I made it a point to not emphasize the matters I resonated with emotionally if my interpretations diverged from patterns I gleaned from the participants. In the instance with Green, however, faith amidst hardship and seeing work as a calling was a theme that I resonated with and also appeared as a recurring theme in the data.

My background in entrepreneurship has given me a unique angle of vision as a black woman who identifies as a cultural entrepreneur, but I do not privilege my own experiences in this research. Personally, I have observed other black women cultural entrepreneurs face some of the same challenges and opportunities I have had to navigate. For example, I have noticed that many women have had to work multiple jobs to cover living expenses, while making time to devote to their creative entrepreneurial pursuits that were not yet cash-flow positive. Like many black women cultural entrepreneurs that I know, I did not receive seed funding or business investment from my parents. I have also had the experience of making business presentations to advisors and competition reviewers and recognizing different viewpoints between mostly white and male reviewers' field of reference and my vision for more diverse representation of black women in the media. Conversely, I have also identified personal internal barriers that stymied me although I had the support of experienced businesswomen and men of various backgrounds.

Adia Harvey-Wingfield and similar black women who have researched black women entrepreneurs, often recognize their shared identity with participants not as a limitation, but advantageous. For Harvey-Wingfield, her identity helped her build a necessary rapport with interviewees. I believe my shared experience with research participants, not only as a black woman, but as a black woman cultural entrepreneur helped me relate to interviewees as well as how they related to me. I also observed that several interviewees showed interest in participating because they liked the idea of supporting me personally, as a black woman—they were proud to see me working towards my PhD. At the same time, also being in the field of entrepreneurship, I have

observed and understood that there are a range of people with diverse experiences developing their businesses.

Throughout the research, I focused on others' accounts and de-centered my personal experiences, emphasizing the various interview participants and data sources. Relying on other data sources in the form of interviews and digital culture will help me remain open to multiple directions, perspectives and interpretations of data, even when they may differ from my own perspectives (Kane 2010:61).

A Semi-structured Investigation of Cultural Entrepreneurship

The nature and inherent limitations of the study shaped the research design. An ethnography or single case study would have given me a unique depth of knowledge amongst a particular entrepreneur or limited set of entrepreneurs. However, given that this group has not been studied or conceptualized, I took an exploratory approach that would span different creative genres. To illustrate, if I had chosen a case study of a filmmaker I may not have felt confident in generalizing about her particular experiences and knowledge to black women painters. Given the different characteristics of their respective fields, I may have been uncertain about which aspects of their knowledge were attributable to them being in the fields of cinema or fine art, as opposed to being cultural entrepreneurs generally speaking.

I chose a semi-structured research design that allowed me to iterate, back and forth among observation, participation, theorizing and reflection. As a result, I conducted semi-structured interviews and participated in a variety of participant observation settings with different levels of involvement that I describe in the methods section. A structured interview schedule or participant observation schema

would have been too rigid, severely limiting inspired and unplanned exchange between the interviews and me. Also, if the participants shared ideas in the interview and I was unable to sufficiently follow up, I may have been led to rely on my own beliefs in connecting the dots, compromising the integrity of our exchange.

In addition to the advantages and benefits of the proposed qualitative research design, there were also key limitations and challenges. A standard limitation associated with qualitative methods in general is that it may not yield a representative sample. Given the structure of this research design, the project is necessarily limited in its generalizability. I do not declare that my findings apply to all black women cultural entrepreneurs as this dissertation explores only a small segment of black women. Still, my aim is that research findings contribute to conversations in entrepreneurship, black feminist thought and the creative economy.

Research Methods

The qualitative methods used in this study aim to yield insight into the meanings participants bring to their motivations, aspirations, beliefs and work as cultural entrepreneurs. Qualitative methods are especially useful to investigate the social factors that inform the perspectives and attitudes of a particular group, organization, nation, or society (Patton 2002).

Enquiring into the world of cultural entrepreneurs

Interviews and participant observation intersected with "enquiring," which Wolcott (2008) describes as asking actors questions about what they see occurring in a given environment. I enquired formally with my semi-structured interviews and

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informally as I conducted numerous casual conversations in an office setting, event or workshop. In the preliminary phase of the research, I was active as a cultural entrepreneur myself, partnering and volunteering with other black women cultural entrepreneurs on behalf of my organization. I continued informal conversations in settings with other black women cultural entrepreneurs throughout the formal research process, which the Internal Review Board approved on September 24, 2014. I conducted 20 semi-structured interviews between Fall of 2014 and Fall of 2015.

Participant observation provided access to the worldview and the worlds of black women cultural entrepreneurs. I could gain some context through in-person interviews, but participant observation painted a clearer picture of the lived realities that shaped the experiences that reflected and influenced black women cultural entrepreneurs' beliefs. For example, in interviews, I gathered that many black women cultural entrepreneurs were seen as community leaders or close friends and family support that many people relied on. During a site visit to an entrepreneur's physical business location, she asked me to meet her outside to assist with a package. When I arrived, she was unbuckling a baby's car-seat and smiled at me saying: "It's bring your girlfriend's daughter to work day!" One of her friends had a job interview out of state that day, so the research participant volunteered to watch her baby. She brought her to the office where all the employees took turns looking after the child in between working.

Such experiences showed me the value black women cultural entrepreneurs placed on their relationships. I had gleaned this theme from the interviews, but I understood how significant it was when incidents like this demonstrated that these

participants actually put their values into action. Many of the participants turned to and could rely on community support for their businesses because they did not simply receive it, they also gave; in other words, they had established a rapport outside of business that led the community to support them in their endeavors in general, including as cultural entrepreneurs. Such repeated incidences showed me that family and family-like connections with others was a way of life for black women cultural entrepreneurs.

The participant observation exercises thus helped me discern the context in which black women's cultural entrepreneurship unfolds as a group. In this study, context references the immediate contexts in which participants worked as well as the social, political and economic contexts in which they were embedded. Enquiring into experience provided a tangible way in which the recurring themes of sisterhood and community proved important in the lives of black women cultural entrepreneurs.

Interview Methods

I aimed to conduct as many interviews as possible in-person. However, as many participants were unable to take part in face-to-face interviews, I conducted 14 interviews via Skype, four in-person interviews, one telephone interview and two written interviews. All other interviews were conducted face-to-face, audio recorded, and transcribed.

The various interview strategies I employed presented distinct advantages and limitations. Skype interviews were advantageous given that they were more time effective for participants. When I spoke with someone via Skype, for example, they

did not to block out additional time to host me in their home or travel to another private location. Skype interviews also allowed me to pick up on non-verbal cues, such as body language and observe a participants' and observe a participants' style of dress. Picking up on body language allowed me to better discern sarcasm and how a participant communicated a range of emotions, including dispassion and enthusiasm, in responding to questions. I also noted participants' apparel. For example, one Skype interview participant wore sweatpants and a headscarf during our interview. Her style of dress suggested that she did not imagine the interview as a stiff, impersonal interaction, but felt comfortable with me. Given that I did not have a travel budget for this research project, Skype interviews allowed me to have a more personal interaction with out of state and international participants that I could not meet with face to face.

Although Skype interviews did allow me to pick up on non-verbal communication, a disadvantage of this interview method was that it felt less intimate than in-person interviews. For example, one participant who was located in New York mentioned not being as technologically savvy and not using Skype that often. She did, however, opt to use Skype for our interview. Our Skype connection became shoddy at one point and I detected that she felt self-conscious about her messages coming across clearly. In-person interviews allowed me to establish a human rapport and avoid technological glitches that interrupted the flow of conversation.

In-person interviews also allowed me to indirectly show participants how much I valued their time. For each of the three interviewees I met in-person, I traveled to their residence (for one participant) or places of business (for the other two

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participants). In personally driving to them, I indicated that I wanted to make the interview process as easy as possible for them. Several participants communicated that they respected how much consideration they saw me putting into the recruitment process, with the online website and online registration and consent forms, for example. I sensed that they took the interview process seriously and were conscious of communicating genuinely and thoughtfully because they valued the respect that I showed them in various ways, including travelling to them to conduct an interview in-person.

The telephone interview I conducted was beneficial given that it was convenient and time effective for the participant. She had to re-schedule our in-person interview several times given her changing schedule with family responsibilities. Ultimately, she suggested that we conduct a phone interview because it would take less of her time than preparing her space to receive me or travelling to meet at another location. Although I could not pick up on non-verbal communication via the telephone interview, I was still able to pick up on vocal cues, including sarcasm, frustration and enthusiasm in her tone of voice.

The two written interviews I conducted were with international participants. They were very busy women who travelled frequently for their work. We tried to link up our schedules to conduct Skype interviews, but the timing was difficult to coordinate. Ultimately, we decided to simply conduct written interviews. The advantage of written interviews is that it allowed the participants to answer the participants at a time that was most convenient for them. Written interviews also

allow participants to sit with the questions for as long as they prefer to re-evaluate their thoughts before presenting them (Meho 2006).

I interviewed each person once and, with the exception of two written interviews, interviews ranged from 60 to 90 minutes. Some participants were eager to share and elaborate. I sometimes had the sense that they found the opportunity to discuss their businesses refreshing and cathartic. Others, however, were very short and direct in their responses. Once, I sensed a participant felt very pre-occupied during her work and paused during the interview to check her business e-mail.

Participants were given an IRB form at the beginning of the interview explaining the purpose of the project and requesting their consent. I verbally re-iterated that the contract allowed them to opt out of the study at any time and explained steps that were taken to ensure their privacy. All interviews were digitally recorded with the participant's permission. No compensation was provided for participation.

Data Collection

This section details the processes I employed to recruit participants, sampling procedures and provides a detailed participant overview.

Participant recruitment

Scholars have argued that black women's entrepreneurship remains misunderstood and under-analyzed, in part, because many of these women operate in an "informal economy," in which their businesses are not registered for tax purposes. To mitigate against making similar omissions, I solicited the participation of cultural

entrepreneurs and artists who may or may not have formally registered their businesses. Additionally, cultural entrepreneurs included those women who founded their own businesses, occupy a position of leadership within a business or are self-employed as independent contractors. For an overview of how many participants corresponded to each of these categories see Table 1. in the following "Participant Overview" section.

Interview participants were recruited from across the country. However, given my network and initial interviewees who were located in the Washington, DC, Maryland and Virginia area, most participants came from this region. Interviewees were identified through my participation in cultural organizations, networking events and connections with black women cultural entrepreneurs. Participants were contacted via phone, e-mail, or in-person to request their participation in an in-depth interview. I also developed a website, www.culturalentrepreneurship.org, which explained the project and allows participants to schedule an interview time online.

After each participant completed an interview, I informed her that she could share my information with another potential interviewee they felt would be a good fit. Participants were notified that their organizations or affiliations would remain confidential unless the participant gave her consent to disclose such information.

Sampling procedures

Given extensive searches in Google and academic databases, like Jstor and SocIndex[40], as well as conversations with experts in the field of social entrepreneurship, to my knowledge, there is no comprehensive list or database of

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[40] I conducted these searches using terminology like "black women," "cultural entrepreneur," "social entrepreneur" and "social business."

black women cultural entrepreneurs. Absent a complete database of black women cultural entrepreneurs, probability sampling proved impractical for this study. Unlike various probability sampling techniques, purposeful sampling does not involve randomly selecting units from a population to create a sample group from which to generalize. Purposeful sampling aims to focus on particular characteristics of a population that are of interest, which are best suited to answer given research questions.

Participants for this study were selected through homogeneous sampling and snowball sampling. Homogeneous sampling is a purposeful sampling technique that aims to produce a homogeneous sample whose units, including individuals and cases for example, share the same (or very similar) characteristics or traits (Patton 1990). Conceptualizing black women as an "interpretive community[41]," I observed a sample of women who all identify as black and met the set criteria of cultural entrepreneur.

Snowball sampling involves identifying future participants that selected interviewees suggest. Scholars have demonstrated the importance of networks and community amongst social entrepreneurs (Antico-Majkowski 2010). Just as many social entrepreneurs are likely to know other social entrepreneurs, it seems likely that cultural entrepreneurs will also have connections with those in similar fields. Snowball sampling was used to identify other interviewees.

In my proposal, I stated that the research process would be iterative. Given that there is still much ambiguity about what constitutes cultural entrepreneurship, I

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[41] Jacqualine Bobo's *Black Women as Cultural Readers* defines black women study participants as an interpretive community, thereby defining them as a group sharing in the experiences and effects of cultural creations.

did not want to simply impose my own definition. I wanted the participants'
understanding of culture and cultural entrepreneurship to also shape the data
collection, analysis and definitions. Incorporating black women's personal and
professional perspectives and experiences, I broadened my understanding of "culture"
and "cultural entrepreneurship." These revisions led me to include participants from
a broader range of professional backgrounds.

This research has been both deductive and inductive. Partly, the study has
been informed by questions of entrepreneurship, activism and creative works, existing
literature on these topics and my experiences as a black woman cultural entrepreneur.
At the same time, my analysis has been iterative, allowing for women's
understandings and communication to influence the codebook I use to assess themes.

Participant Overview

This research provides organizational overviews of the business endeavors of
these women. However, in-depth organizational analyses are beyond the scope of
this project, as is defining the philosophical or aesthetic requirements for what
constitutes art. I was interested in the meaning women brought to their work, not
necessarily the organizational structure in which they carried out that work. Hence, I
did not interview members within a given business; rather, I focused on the CEOs and
founders.

Table 1 provides a visual overview interview participants[42]. For the project, I conducted 21 interviews. Initially, I aimed to conduct 15 to 20 semi-structured in-depth interviews with African American women.   However, when participants suggested I reach out to international cultural entrepreneurs and noted that I broaden the scope of my interviewees to take international perspectives into account, I decided to interview five participants outside of the United States. Of the five I interviewed, two were difficult to co-ordinate with given their schedules and the time difference. International participants in this study included women born and raised outside of the United States and those United States citizens living abroad. I conducted Skype interviews with a Kenyan graphic designer based in London; a Nigerian blogger and clothier based London; and one interview with a Jamaican writer and craftswoman based in the United States. Interviews with an Afro-German musician, sculptor and author based in Berlin and a Nigerian photographer based in Sweden had to be conducted via e-mail.

A total of twenty-one women who identify as black participated in the interviews. Thirteen of these twenty women had businesses that were incorporated as LLC[43]'s, one of which was an LLC partnership[44]. Three were sole proprietors. One

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[43] "A limited liability company is a hybrid type of legal structure that provides the limited liability features of a corporation and the tax efficiencies and operational flexibility of a partnership. The "owners" of an LLC are referred to as "members." Depending on the state, the members can consist of a single individual (one owner), two or more individuals, corporations or other LLCs" (U.S. Small Business Administration N.d.).

[44] "Limited liability partnerships have the same tax advantages of LLCs. They cannot, however, have corporations as owners. Perhaps the most significant difference

was a C-Corp[45], one was a non-profit. And, one was Doing Business As (DBA[46]). Of those that participated, they were owners who also performed multiple employee tasks.

Five participants lived outside of the United States. Mona Penn-Jousset, an African American art galerist and art marketer, lives in Almere, the Netherlands and is the CEO/Co-founder of her LLC. Akua Naru, an African American hip-hop artist lives in Koeln, Germany and is the Co-founder of her LLC. Lulu Kitololo, a Kenyan graphic designer and blogger is the Creative Director and Co-founder of her LLC and lives in London, England. Minna Salami is a Nigerian and Finnish writer, consultant and blogger and is the sole proprietor of her business and lives in London, England. Noah Sow is a German author, visual artist and punk rock artist and lives in Berlin, Germany.

Five were either first generation children of African or African diaspora parents raised and/or now living in a foreign country. Of the five previously mentioned participants living outside of the United States, Lulu Kitololo, Minna Salami and Noah Sow fit this description. Other interviewees who were the children of immigrants and now living or raised in a foreign country were Risikat Okedeyi and Nalo Hopkinson. Okedeyi is a first generation Nigerian woman now living in

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between LLCs and LLPs is that LLPs must have at least one managing partner who bears liability for the partnership's action" (Feigenbaum N.d.).

[45] "A corporation (sometimes referred to as a C corporation) is an independent legal entity owned by shareholders. This means that the corporation itself, not the shareholders that own it, is held legally liable for the actions and debts the business incurs" (U.S. Small Business Administration N.d.).

[46] "A company is said to be "doing business as" when the name under which they operate their business differs from its legal, registered name" (Entrepreneur.com N.d.).

Washington, DC where she works as a consultant, higher education instructor and cultural nightlife event developer.

Nalo Hopkinson is a Jamaican science-fiction writer and fabric maker, born to a Jamaican mother and Guyanese father. Her family moved to Toronto, Canada when she was sixteen. She is now a professor in creative writing at the University of California, Riverside.

Thirteen participants were African American women living in the United States. These thirteen were also all owners, founders, co-founders and/or CEOs of their businesses. The women in this group, as well as their businesses, were based in Washington, DC or Maryland.

Table 1.

Name*	Position within company	Age range	Business duration	# of employees	# of businesses current	# of businesses to date	City and State	Incorporation Type	Annual Business Revenue
1. Mona Penn-Jousset	CEO/ Founder	41-50	3 years	0	1	3	Almere, The Netherlands	LLC	<$10k
2. J'Nell Jordan	Owner/ Artist	26-30	5 years	0	1	1	Hyattsville, MD	LLC	<$10k
3. Gina Paige	President & Co-founder	41-50	12 years	3	1	3	Washington, DC	C-corp	$500k
4. Myrtis Bedolla	Owner/ President	56-60	25 years	1	1	2	Baltimore, MD	LLC partnership	$100k–$200k
5. Chelsey Green	Artistic Director/ CEO	26-30	Over 5 years	4 to 7	1	1	Takoma Park, MD	Sole proprietor	$80k–$100k
6. Adrena Ifill	CEO	41-50	13 years	1	1	2	Washington, DC	LLC	$100k–$200k
7. Lola Akinmade	Founder	36-40	3 years	0	1	2	Stockholm, Sweden		$40k –$60k
8. Anika Hobbs	Owner	31-35	2 years	2	1	1	Washington, DC	LLC	$100k–$200k
9. Akua Naru	Co-Founder	31-35	4 years	5 to 8	1	1	Koeln, Germany	LLC	$60k–$80K
10. Deborah Crimes	Founder							LLC	
11. Jafreda Epps	Owner/ Stylist	36-40	7 years	0	1	1	Washington, DC	LLC	$80k–$100k
12. Olivia Jones	Director	31-35	3 years	1	1	2	Washington, DC	LLC	$20k–$40k
13. Lulu Kitololo	Creative Director		4 years and 10 months	2	1	1	London, UK	LLC	

14. Nalo Hopkinson	Founder	51-55	20 years	0	1–2	5–6	Riverside, CA	Sole proprietor	$10k–$20k
15. Minna Salami	Founder							Self-employed	
16. Jasmine Stewart*	Co-founder							Non-profit	
17. Risikat Okededyi								LLC	
18. Nikki Taylor Roberts								LLC	
19. Latoya Peterson								LLC	
20. Kenya (Robinson)**								Doing Business As	
21. Noah Sow	Founder								

*Names with asterisks denote participants that requested to use a pseudonym. Blank spaces indicate information participants chose not to specify in the supplemental demographic questionnaire. Several blank spaces usually indicate that a research participant elected not to complete a demographic questionnaire. In such instances, the table was populated with information from the interviews that corresponded to the respective delineations.
**Kenya (Robinson) spells her last name with parentheses for artistic purposes.

Genre of Business (not noted in table above) refers to a participants' style of business, as in visual arts, geneaology, or film, for example. To clarify the distribution of participants, I provide summaries of each delineation below.

Incorporation Type:
13 are LLC (Risikat Okededyi; Mona Penn-Jousset; J'Nell Jordan; Myrtis Bedolla; Adrena Ifill; Anika Hobbs; Nikki Taylor Roberts; Latoya Peterson; Akua Naru (L. Olatunji); Deborah Crimes; Jafreda Epps; Olivia Jones; Lulu Kitololo)
2 chose not to respond (Lola Akinmade; Noah Sow)
2 are sole-proprietors (Chelsey Green; Nalo Hopkinson)

1 is non-profit (Jasmine Stewart)
1 is c-corp (Gina Paige)
1 is self-employed (Minna Salami)
1 is doing business as (Kenya (Robinson))

Business Genre:
5 in writing/blogging (Latoya Peterson; Lulu Kitololo; Minna Salami; Nalo Hopkinson; Noah Sow)
3 in visual arts (J'Nell Jordan; Kenya (Robinson); Lola)
3 in music peformance (Chelsey Green; Akua Naru; Noah Sow)
2 in film (Jasmine Stewart; Nikki Taylor Roberts)
2 in art management (Myrtis Bedolla; Adrena Ifill)
2 in design (Lulu Kitololo; Nalo Hopkinson)
1 in event planning (Risikat Okededyi)
1 in marketing (Mona Penn-Jousset)
1 in genealogy (Gina Paige)
1 in fashion (Anika Hobbs)
1 in beauty industry (Jafreda Epps)
1 in education (Deborah Crimes)
1 in organizational development (Olivia Jones)

Years in Business:
5 less than 5 years (Mona Penn-Jousset ;Anika Hobbs; Akua Naru; Olivia Jones; Lulu Kitololo)
4 more than 10 years (Gina Paige; Myrtis Bedolla ; Adrena Ifill; Nalo Hopkinson)
4 between 5 to 10 years (J'Nell Jordan; Chelsey Green; Jafreda Epps; Noah Sow)
8 unknown (see table)

Number of Employees:
7 have 3 or less
4 have 0
2 have 4 or more

Annual Business Revenue:
3 make less than $10,000 (Mona Penn-Jousset; J'Nell Jordan; Nalo Hopkinson)
1 makes $20,000 – $40,000 (Olivia Jones)
1 makes $40,000 – $60,000 (Lola Akinmade)
1 makes $60,000 – $80,000 (Akua Naru)
2 make $80,000 – $100,000 (Jafreda Epps; Chelsey Green)
3 make $100,000 – $200,000 (Adrena Ifill; Myrtis Bedolla)
1 makes $500,000 or more (Gina Paige)

Age Range:
2 are 26 – 30 (Chelsey Green and J'Nell Jordan)
3 are 31 – 35 (Anika Hobbs; Akua Naru; Olivia Jones)
2 are 36 – 40 (Lola Akinmade; Jafreda Epps)

3 are 41 – 50 (Mona Penn-Jousset; Gina Paige; Adrena Ifill)
1 is 51 – 55 (Nalo Hopkinson)
1 is 56 – 60 (Myrtis Bedolla)

Number of Businesses to Date:
6 have 1 businesses (J'Nell Jordan; Chelsey Green; Anika Hobbs; Akua Naru; Lulu Kitololo; Jafreda Epps)
2 have 4 businesses (Myrtis Bedolla; Adrena Ifill)
2 have 3 businesses (Mona Penn-Jousset; Gina Paige)
1 has 5 – 6 businesses (Nalo Hopkinson)

Participant Observation

Participant observation provided the context that brought the interview responses to life and helped me develop the interview questions. The selection for participant observation mirrored the interview selection process. I chose companies that were made up as a black woman owned enterprise, with black women maintaining positions of authority within the organization, arts-focused and/or pertaining to cultural heritage.

I began conducting preliminary research volunteering for cultural entrepreneurs in the summer of 2012 to 2013 in addition to continued work with Live Unchained. During these preliminary participant observation activities, I noticed emerging themes around the importance of community and oppositional consciousness. For example, I discerned that many cultural entrepreneurs had a volunteer staff; it seemed people were willing to work without payment because they strongly agreed with the organization members' values.

My participant observation included attending 4 events developed by black women cultural entrepreneurs, volunteering for a black women cultural entrepreneur's organization and a site visits to organizations between 2013 and 2015. The participant observation activities included a hair styling workshop; panel

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discussion; recurring site visits and volunteership. Volunteership included supporting

a black women's film collective that had a local chapter in Washington, DC. The site

visits included visiting a business located in the Southeast region of Washington, DC

and another in a metropolitan city in Maryland.

Participant Observation Activities

Attending the events allowed me to pick up on recurring themes that I later

analyzed using the strategies I discuss in the subsequent "Data Analysis" section. As

noted previously, participant observation exercises provided context for the research

and made the concepts that emerged in the data tangible. For example, at all of the

events described below, I noticed that social media, community connections and

cooperative economic practices were common and helpful to several black women

cultural entrepreneurs.

Hair styling workshop

One participant, Jafreda Epps, hosted a hair styling workshop to help people

maintain their hair in between appointments. She held the event at a communal

workspace in the Anacostia area of Washington, DC. Including me, 7 people total

attended. The other participants included her mother, clients and friends. As a

participant observer, I assisted with the set up the day of the event and consulted the

salon owner on social media marketing and budget for the event.

Panel discussion

I also supported a black woman cultural entrepreneur as a guest on her panel

for SWAN Day. *SWAN Day/Support Women Artists Now Day* is an international

holiday to celebrate women's creativity. The cultural entrepreneurs' organization has

the stated mission of increasing the number of women art collectors to close the gender gap in fine art collecting. The panel she organized was titled, "The Price of Being Female: Women Artists & The Art Market," and took place March 29, 2015. She communicated that she wanted me to present on Live Unchained "to bring the hipster millennials." I discussed young black women's art across the African diaspora and the benefits of being entrepreneurial as an artist. The participant that organized this panel did not participate in an interview.

Recurring Site Visits

I visited two brick and mortar businesses owned by black women cultural entrepreneurs. One woman had a non-profit organization providing creative and technology courses to youth. This woman was not an interviewee and did not give permission to disclose her name and the name of her company. Her business was located in the Southeast region of Washington, DC. I visited her location once to three times a week between May 5, 2014 and August 25, 2014. I observed classes and assisted with administrative support in the form of signing students and cleaning after hours. The owner was also a graduate student and often opened the space to work on research projects for friends of hers that were also a students or working professionals that wanted a workspace away from home. During these work sessions, I conducted many informal interviews, asking participants their views on entrepreneurship, creativity and identity.

I also performed site visits at African Ancestry, a company specializing in ancestry tracing. I conducted informal observational research between June 1, 2015 and August 24, 2015, where I visited weekly three to four times a week. I offered

administrative support in the form of data entry and answering customer calls. I also

supported in meetings concerning marketing strategy. I also conducted regular

informal interviews with the owner and her all woman staff. The owner, Gina Paige,

was an interviewee in this study.

Volunteering For Film Collective

I also volunteered for a black woman led film collective headquartered in

California with national chapters. Between January 2013 and February 2014, I

conducted informal observational research as a film audience member and support

staff leader. In my position, I wrote social media updates, written blog posts,

developed marketing strategies, signed-in attendees and set-up and take down

promotional space before and after film screenings.

Data Analysis

Data analysis involved developing a codebook to support in identifying

themes that emerged during interviews and participant observation activities. I also

explain the practices I employed to analyze data.

Developing a codebook

Interviews and codebook formulation were an iterative process. After

interviewing the first five participants, I began to identify common themes in their

responses to construct a codebook. I refined the codes in the codebook based on

recurring themes in the interviews across time.

Analyzing Data

I identified themes that emerged from participant observation in three

successive rounds. Utilizing participant observation to discern context, I reviewed

my field notes from my participant observation activities after conducting the first set of 7 interviews, then again after the second set of 7 interviews and finally after the third set of 7 interviews.

I analyzed recorded interviews using En Vivo qualitative data software. Codebook formulation will be an iterative process. After interviewing the first five participants, I identified common themes in their responses to construct a codebook. The research has been deductive in the sense that it is informed by questions of entrepreneurship, activism and creative works, existing literature on these topics and my own personal experiences in the world of cultural entrepreneurship. Still, I let the themes I used to categorize and analyze participants' knowledge emerge from the data, as opposed to pre-determining a codebook.

***

This chapter has explained my research design, the various methods I employed and the theoretical considerations that informed the methods I selected. The data sample I reviewed included women having various business types, ages, revenue levels and number of companies. Despite their diversity, they all met the criteria for what I defined as a cultural entrepreneur. In the next two analysis chapters, I further explore the data that I analyzed using the methods I have described in this chapter.

CHAPTER 4: "ON TOP OF THE LION": CHALLENGES FACING BLACK

WOMEN CULTURAL ENTREPRENEURS

For many entrepreneurs, success is simply survival. Nine out of ten startups fail in the first year (Patel 2015). Regardless of her business type or racial or gender identity, every entrepreneur encounters challenges in an inherently risky field. Amanda Antico-Majkowski, co-founder of Evolved Global,[47] suggests that social entrepreneurs must continually reinvent themselves through "ongoing cycles of strategy shift, financial recalibration, impact miscalculation and product service refactoring" (2015: 3). Given that every entrepreneur eventually "drops the ball," Evolved Global refers to this learning phase as "the fumble period" (Majkowski 2015). More specifically, the fumble period refers to the time frame during which entrepreneurs must re-evaluate their losses and mistakes to decide what to adjust within their internal operations, personnel and/or strategy in order to survive.

Given the findings discussed in this chapter, I argue that the application of the fumble period metaphor requires more nuance when applied to discussions of black women entrepreneurs in general, and black women cultural entrepreneurs in particular. The fumble period concept is not a perfect fit for these groups because their challenges are more constant and ingrained in society. In other words, black women cultural entrepreneurs do not simply traverse a fumble period before going on

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[47] Antico-Majkowski's dissertation is referenced in the literature review.

to success. As two of the more financially successful[48] women I interviewed explain,

black women cultural entrepreneurs continually encounter difficulties associated with

being both black and women.

While it is recognized that African American women are important to

entrepreneurial growth and national economic development, in general, there is still

much entrepreneurial, creative and academic communities do not know about the

challenges uniquely impacting this group. The challenges that were discussed by the

participants include systemic processes of exclusion, racialized gender stereotypes

and personal, internal stresses. This chapter examines how black women cultural

entrepreneurs both face challenges common to all entrepreneurs as well as the

structural and social positions that foster particular hardships associated with their

race and gender. As such, this chapter explores the importance of identity in

discussing entrepreneurial phenomena like "fumble periods" and challenges to

success.

The first section, "That Little Circle is Difficult to Get Into," describes

respondents' perspectives on particular structural challenges, which include

underrepresentation and bias amongst industry gatekeepers as well as vetting

processes. Data discussed here indicate that black women cultural entrepreneurs have

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[48] I define financially successful as those participants generating more than the
median annual revenue of those participants in the sample that completed a
demographic questionnaire. As such, participants were considered financially
successful if they generated $80,000 or more annually. Of the 10 participants that
elected to complete a demographic questionnaire, 6 respondents fit this
conceptualization. Of these 6 participants, two made between $80,000 and $100,000
and three made between $100,000 and $200,000 and one participant made $500,000
or more annually.

a sophisticated understanding of the privileges conferred to certain identities. In some instances, participants did not feel professionally discriminated against. Still, many did recognize structural inequality as fundamentally shaping their realities as black women cultural entrepreneurs. This section also discusses the international dimensions of black women cultural entrepreneurs' perceived racial challenges. Additionally, I review discussions concerning controlling images and unequal funding practices.

The second section, "The White Guy You Expect," reviews the social challenges black women cultural entrepreneurs describe, which often consist of racialized gender stereotypes. Here, I use an intersectional lens to interpret the difficulties black women cultural entrepreneurs report. The interview participants' perspectives and experiences highlight how race and gender compound entrepreneurial challenges.

The third section, "On Top of The Lion," explains that black women cultural entrepreneurs experience common internal challenges and overwhelm. Respondents often articulated a lack of work-life balance. I examine interview data that suggests difficulties with such work-life balance stems from gendered expectations of women's responsibilities to family.

"That Little Circle is Difficult to Get Into": Structural Challenges

Out of all 21 participants, all but one identified racism and sexism as larger social problems that shaped her entrepreneurial experiences. Deborah Crimes, a participant who provides cultural education programming believed that being a black

woman did not come with any particular responsibilities. Additionally, she noted that

being a black woman cultural entrepreneur did not present any unique hardships.

When asked if she believed there were any challenges associated with being a black

woman cultural entrepreneur, Crimes explains:

> I don't see them. I think because I live in a predominantly black county, even
>
> though I do business outside of my county, I don't, I don't really see that. I
>
> don't see any big challenges. I think because we're all doing it together and
>
> we're all doing it successfully. Maybe if I lived in another county, maybe.
>
> But, because I live where I live, I don't see it.

Crimes lives in Prince George's county Maryland[49]. Providing supplemental cultural

education programming to schools throughout Prince George's county, Maryland,

Crimes negotiates mostly with African American officials who serve predominately

African American students. When she does encounter professional difficulties with

others, she does not attribute it to racial discrimination because the people that she

often interacts with are black.

Crimes' observation communicates a positive, mutually beneficial support

system amongst black professionals in her areas. While her vantage point is valid,

implicit assumptions in her remarks highlight how her perspectives on race and

gender differ from the other 20 participants. It is worth noting here that Crimes'

remark also implies that hardships associated with race occur at the interactional,

person to person, level. In saying that she does not "see" challenges, Crimes implies

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[49] According to 2014 Census Data, the county's population is 64.7% black, 26.9%
white; 16.9% Latino; 4.6% Asian; 1.0% American Indian and Alaskan Native; and
0.1% Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander.

that racial and gender challenges tend to present themselves in obvious ways that can be easily seen.

However, racism and sexism are not phenomena that only exist at the interactional level (Guinier and Torres 2003). Rather, racism and sexism are systems of power that must be understood in historical context (Guinier and Torres 2003). Understanding how these systems of powers work to shape reality requires a discerning insight that counters dominant ideology that defines racism and sexism in simplistic terms (Bonilla-Silva 2003).

Twenty of the twenty-one interviewees (with the exception of Crimes) communicated a sophisticated understanding of systemic racism and sexism. More specifically, their thinking goes beyond narrow understandings of oppression. In the current climate of colorblind racism, oftentimes, racism and sexism are reduced to racial and gender attitudes (Bonilla -Silva 2006; Crompton and Mann 1986). Such attitudes are defined at the personal/interactional level – stemming from a personal mental state that leads someone to view one race as superior. Following this logic, racism is seen only in overt and personal ways, such as a white person calling someone a racial slur (Guinier and Torres 2003; Bonilla-Silva 2006). Contrarily, attitudes towards racism can also be understood from a structural or institutional perspective, which argues that institutions are designed to privilege some at the expense of others (Omi and Winant 2014).

Racism as a "local equals global" problem

Two research participants that were particularly outspoken were both in the film industry, creating and distributing content about diverse populations. Their

comments suggest that racism is a deep-seated problem with global dimensions. In discussing the challenges they face as black women, Nikki Taylor Roberts and Jasmine Stewart communicated the gravity of racism as a social problem with international dimensions; both women articulated a transnational perspective on systemic racism.

Nikki Taylor Roberts was exceptional in giving a thorough elucidation of racism as a system of power, elucidating it in historical and international context. Roberts states:

> [Our] country has an issue with race. [And] it's only because the people who have issues with race have been allowed to stay in power for as long as they have. [Whenever] you have, whenever one group has more resources than other groups then that's when problems arise, whether it be race or not, but I think for this country specifically race is the issue. It's steeped in such a black and white history that unfortunately has been perpetuated around the world and so that's what keeps that racism going. Like you can go to any continent in the world where there has been some form of colonialism and you're going to see the same thing playing out there. Maybe your time zone is different and maybe your race is different but if those who came into your country were a different shade than the people who lived there and they come in with more force then the same scenario often comes out. The only thing that keeps it in power is two parts: one a mind game and second power, like the hoarding and stealing of all the other person's resources. Which is like if you really look at it, it's like the most evil hat there has ever existed in the world is when you

have a system like that exist to this day and still be the same that we're

fighting.

Here, Roberts argues that racism has always been both a local and global phenomena.

For her, affirming her racial identity, she also identifies with those who have been

historically and systematically denied access to power, regardless of their geographic

location.

Roberts' perspective on common struggles amongst non-white populations is

arguably reflected in the content her company creates. Roberts' film production

company, Rocket Light Films creates commercials and web content for big brands

like Nike and Louis Vuitton. Additionally, Roberts directs independent films as the

company co-founder. Rocket Light Films tells stories with characters of diverse

backgrounds including Latinos, Haitians and African Americans. They have shown

their films at International and Latino film festivals.

Jasmine Stewart is the founder of a film collective with the tagline, "local

equals global cinema." Her collective hosts film screenings and discussions featuring

filmmakers across the global south[50] including India, various countries in Africa,

Palestine and more. The collective also showcases films by students at a historically

black university where many of the founding members studied. Speaking of the

importance of communicating diverse and international perspectives as black women,

Stewart shares that even though her film collective was founded at a historically black

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[50] The Global South refers to is made up of Africa, Latin America, and developing
countries in Asia including the Middle East. The term became popular after the
release of a 1980 report, "Share The World's Resources: The Brandt Commission
Report."

institution with the idea of having a black audience base, "what I have come to understand and see is that the challenges that a black independent filmmaker from America finds just here domestically and then the larger territories abroad are an independent filmmaker's challenge." Stewart says that "those independent filmmakers who are already marginalized" come from various backgrounds, including southern Asia, where her company has made a concentrated effort to source films. She suggests that independent filmmakers around the world face similar challenges of having adequate distributions for their films. A major goal of her collective is to bring international and independent cinema to diverse audiences, in effect practicing coalition building through the curation of the films her collective distributes. Stewart remarks:

> I was thinking about how is it that [our collective] is reaching out to the South African filmmakers or the Nigerian filmmakers or the Pakistani filmmakers or the Indian and the list goes on to be able to get their films to a culturally and ethnically and racially diverse audience that just like I would think at this point, not all, but independent black filmmakers would like to see a diverse audience watch their films. I'm like yo wow how do we get diverse audiences to watch all kinds of different films and I think [our collective] tells you to go see this film by this Indian guys who's made a documentary about HIV/AIDS in the global south and how the U.S. and other western pharmaceutical companies are keeping drugs that are needed from getting from India to Uganda, [you] trust that even though you don't necessarily know this Indian filmmaker or this Pakistani filmmaker or who this guy is, that we build

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enough of a trust in our collective that you believe it's okay to go and see that film. I can be black from this part of DC but [our collective] pushed it so now I'm going to go see that Indian guy's film and I'm not sure if we weren't the ones to push it, you would have gone to see it but you know okay [our collective] put it out there so it must be good. It's not that you need to have a black character in there. It's the whole idea that film is a language that should be able to speak to many different cultures and people.

The Structure of Limitations

As mentioned the majority that was 20 of 21 respondents' understandings of racism and sexism were complex in that interviewees often ascribed personal experiences of racism and sexism to the structural nature of their industries. As such, research participants did not simply associate occurrences to personal behaviors and beliefs of individuals within their fields. Myrtis Bedolla, a Baltimore-based art gallery owner in her late fifties specializing in African American and African art, interprets her experiences with racism from a structural perspective. She describes the challenges she faces using the descriptor "we" rather than "I;" a common identifier in the interviews that indicates the shared experiences among black women cultural entrepreneurs. Bedolla observes that the under-representation of black women gallerists is a reflection of systemic inequality. The fine art world "is still very white-male dominated" she says in a disappointed tone. Bedolla elaborates:

There are some doors I know have been closed to me because of that, like there are certain organizations I would like to become a member of and you

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have to be nominated, which you know what that means. And that's one way they keep that closed and we are forbidden to be a part of that.

The nomination process Bedolla describes highlights a subtle, but powerful system of exclusion in the art world. This system is re-enforced in three main ways. First, because discrimination is not obvious, the system of exclusion is not explicitly stated. Second, black women do not typically occupy positions of authority in this field; as such, they usually do not have the power to judge, but are usually only evaluated in terms of vetting processes to confer membership. Third, a colorblind ideology allows this system of exclusion to appear innocuous, while making the deliberate creation of opportunities for inclusion seem excessive.

African American artist Adrienne Piper's prolific writings on politics of the art world have illuminated the social, economic and ideological processes that make racism and sexism in the art world appear natural and inevitable (2003). In the same vein, Bedolla's concern speaks to the fact that the artists she represents create work she believes is not valued by art world authorities which are largely white men. Describing why her work as a gallerist is personally important to her, Bedolla says:

> Ultimately, this is part of my legacy and I want that legacy to be one that my children and my grandchildren would be proud of, that I've made an impact upon the lives of the artists, that I've served, that I've helped raise the level of awareness and understanding of the importance of art, and specifically African American art. Our art is still very underappreciated and undervalued in the marketplace. And I hope to play a role in people understanding the greater importance of it and the need to preserve it.

To unpack the power relations implicit in Bedolla's discussion of black art begs two questions: "Who ascribes lesser value to African American art? And, why is it in their interest to do so?" The perceived superiority of European standards of aesthetic excellence both reflects and justifies the authority and socioeconomically privileged position of art world authorities including curators, gallery owners and heads of prominent exhibition and educational institutions. Piper explains: "[R]ooted [in] the prior socioeconomic balance of resources that engendered and continually reconfirms it. For such individuals, these values are a direct expression and idealization of their lifestyles" (1985:31).

Challenging the prevailing status quo of such values threatens not only the practitioners' legitimacy as an authority, but also the legitimacy of the unequal socioeconomic relations that engendered their status. Art practitioners, thus, have a vested interest in maintaining formalist values through a "tightly defended consensus" (Piper 1985:31). This consensus represents a common agreement for what is considered "art" and what makes it "good" or not. The "tightly defended consensus" makes Euroethnic art[51] the standard that is legitimately seen as universal. This standard is enforced and legitimized through art education, criticism, exhibition and other practices including honors and memberships that privilege the representation and veneration of Euroethnic art.

As I will describe in Chapter 5 the ability to make a "cultural intervention" is a key measure of success for black women. Disrupting dominant ways of portraying

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[51] Euroethnic art broadly refers to art that reflects Eurpoean sensibilities of aesthetic success, beauty and form (Piper 1985).

and interpreting certain people, places or things through cultural products constitutes cultural interventions. However, at an institutional level, engaging in cultural interventions has proven difficult for certain black women cultural entrepreneurs in this study. J'Nell Jordan mentioned that to be more successful, she would need to be "more political."

J'Nell Jordan cites an example of a "more political" artist that has achieved much financial success and praise as Kehinde Wiley[52]. Wiley is a gay African American man whose paintings present strong perspectives about black masculinity, class and Victorian ideals of respectability. This artist has exhibited at such esteemed institutions as the National Portrait Gallery and The Corcoran in Washington, DC. In 2011, the New York City Art Teachers Association/United Federation of Teachers awarded Wiley the Artist of the Year Award. He has also received several other awards and accolades including Canteen Magazine's Artist of the Year Award. Leading institutions and critics value Wiley's work for it's unique aesthetic and sharp political critique.

Jordan's work has a less serious tone. She describes her art as fun and lively. Her paintings portray people dancing, partying and enjoying themselves in nightlife settings. She also pays homage to hip hop artists in her paintings. Jordan feels that while the content of her art is a true reflection of her, it will not resonate with gatekeepers of influential circles in the art world. Jordan explains:

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[52] Kehinde Wiley did not participate in this study. He is referenced here to explain J'Nell Jordan's understanding of what constituted political art that was institutionally and commercially rewarded.

[It's] not necessarily just business, oh this person does it best, I'm going to go there. It's definitely relationships which is every business but it's definitely preference so I can't help that and the art world is really really hard to stay afloat in or really get into and be somebody in like a huge gallery that people know and spend money on and you can really do it on your own and make a living but to like sell a [million] dollar, 100,000 dollar pieces you got to get into that little circle and that's really difficult to get into. I think maybe I need to be a little more political or something. For me to be a black woman, they would expect me to be political and they want something that's going to give you like a boom, like a wow type of effect, shock factor, that's what I see anyway.

For example, filmmaker, Nikki Taylor Roberts says that black filmmakers are narrowly understood as only being capable of making certain types of art if they affirm their racial or gender identity. She explains:

It's the same thing that actors go through, you don't want to be typecast. You don't want to be typecast and that artist who only does that. I know Spike Lee wanted to do a whole bunch of other things but he made his name, like he hyped his name off of the hype of his stuff, like this whole militant stuff, like that's what he goes down in history for. Don't look at him to do "Interstellar," don't look at him to do "Back to the Future," [a] development executive or producer would say, "Oh no, he couldn't do that."

As a black filmmaker who creates films that center on the black experience, Roberts believes Spike Lee has been "typecast" as only being skilled at telling stories about

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the black experience. Roberts does not want to be confined in a similar way. However, she feels, as a black woman filmmaker, she will inevitably encounter limited expectations about her capacities as a filmmaker. Although she identifies as a black woman, she is hesitant to present herself in the industry as "a black woman filmmaker." Roberts laments: "I think it's hard for black people especially, especially women of color, because the moment that you say that you're a type, you're not a whole."

Returning to Jordan's comments about certain types of content that glean attention from leading institutions, Kenya (Robinson)[53], a conceptual artist also felt certain types of black art were more palatable for elite interests. (Robinson) observes:

Unless you market your work as kind of a bit of poverty porn. Like, I think Cherise Austin[54] does that a lot… I really like the way it looks, but I'm like, when are we gonna break out of that? [And], I don't think they are aware that they are playing into this. But, I have to know as a cultural entrepreneur, what are my…what are those stumbling blocks.

In sharing this remark, (Robinson) echoes Jordan's observation that "to be successful…for me to be a black woman, they expect me to be more political." (Robinson) describes "poverty porn" as content that speaks to class politics, which dominant interests like to consume. However, she observes that the tendency for black artists to be more likely to succeed as they discuss poverty is exploitative.

The problem that both (Robinson) and Jordan highlight is not that there is a dearth of diverse black art, which goes beyond political and class content. Rather,

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[53] Kenya (Robinson) places her last name in parentheses for artistic reasons.
[54] Name has been changed for privacy.

they suggest that alternative content by black artists is not given an adequate platform or esteemed platform in the same way. Jordan feels the gatekeepers she would need to influence are only interested in certain representations of black women's art. A musician, filmmaker, photographer, and conceptual/performance artist explicitly stated that their racial and gender identity precipitated limiting assumptions of their creative works.

There is a prevailing notion in the art world that worthwhile art "makes itself known," leading to quips like "if [the art] was good, I would have heard about it" (Piper 1985:31). According to Piper, this attitude is not solely, if at all, arrogant. Rather, aesthetic interests are shaped by social and cultural biases that make art that does not meet Eurocentric standards "ontologically inaccessible." In other words, it is difficult for anyone to imagine that art that does not meet the prevailing status quo amongst art elites to be considered "good," if "art" at all. Piper notes: "[That] one's aesthetic interests should be guided by conscious and deliberate reflection, rather than by one's socio-culturally determined biases, is a great deal to ask" (Piper 1985:31).

Regardless of their creative industries, fine art, film, creative writing and music, several black women cultural entrepreneurs described experiences with structural oppression. Nalo Hopkinson, a California-based Jamaican science fiction writer and designer in her early fifties, says the greatest challenge she faces is structural racism. She explains:

> Racism is systemic so often it's not blatant. Mostly, people are smart enough
> to pretend it's something else but […] most of the time in fact it's not one
> individual doing something to you because you're black and female. It's a

whole system that makes it possible for people to do nothing and therefore, change nothing. It's a system that keeps the lives of the advantaged and the disadvantaged so far apart that people with more privilege don't know what our lives are like and think we're just whining. I could go on…

The "not blatant" aspect of racism Hopkinson describes as fundamentally shaping her life and career resemble analyses of colorblind racism (Guinier and Torres 2003; Bonilla-Silva 2003).

Another structural problem black women cultural entrepreneurs describe involved the controlling images that they faced as black women, namely archetypes of mammy, sapphire, welfare-recipient, jezebel and the strong black woman. Drawing upon scholarship on power in the sociology of knowledge, black feminist scholars critique these five enduring representations of black women as they are perpetuated in contemporary mass media. These controlling images have functioned to contrast and maintain the perceived superiority of whiteness and mask larger social injustices. These images represent stereotypes that reflect severely limited ideas of black womanhood that perpetuates a racialized and gendered binary that influences understandings of difference (Collins 1990).

Chelsey Green's discussion of the implications of black women demonstrating authority highlights the institutional problem of navigating these controlling images. As a black woman in what she describes as "a male-dominated music industry," Chelsey Green was advised to accept that she would never be fully respected. Green is a violinist and artistic director of her band, The Green Project, in her late twenties.

Encouraging her to "play the game," Green notes that several colleagues have advised:

> Chelsey you need to get you a strong man, a white man [as a manager] somebody who can really be that face so that you don't have to deal with that anymore… It's difficult to be a strong black female presence without either being called a diva or the b-word or you know something else because they just don't like it.

In encouraging her to "play the game," her colleagues have essentially conceded that the industry is fundamentally disadvantageous to black women. Since Green will most likely not be able to access positions of power, she has been advised to get a man, a proxy of power, who can advocate on her behalf to secure the level of respect as well as financial and professional opportunities that she would be denied solely because of her race and gender.

Archetypes of mammy, sapphire, welfare-recipient, jezebel and the strong black woman persist, not only making whiteness and European notions of femininity seem standard and superior, but also making social injustices of misogyny, racism and poverty seem inevitable and justifiable (Mullings 1996 Harris-Perry 2009). In other words black women are seen as deserving the oppression they suffer across varying intersections because they *are* their stereotypes and do not embody the "cult of true womanhood" (Mullings 1997).

Green also shares:

It's difficult to be a strong black female presence without either being called a

diva or the b word or you know something else because they just don't like it.

And that's sad. It's very sad but I think that is definitely one of the challenges.

Here, Green indirectly highlights a struggle with the sapphire stereotype. The

sapphire represents an overly aggressive, emasculating black woman (Collins 1990).

Green suggests that black women, by virtue of being black, are perceived as

inherently more aggressive than white women. As a result, she feels she has to be

extra conscious of what she says and how she behaves around potential stakeholders

and professional collaborators. While desiring to speak out against unfair

expectations that have actual negative financial and professional consequences some

black women, like Chelsey Green, were self-conscious about being perceived as a

"bitch" or "diva." These notions reflect enduring stereotypes that allow men's

assertiveness and aggression to be heralded. However, when women exhibit these

qualities, they are seen as inappropriate and worthy of condemnation (Klaus 2010).

Green's observation thus articulates a particular conundrum that

disadvantages black women cultural entrepreneurs. During informal interviews held

during participant observation events, various participants affirmed the idea that there

is a professional double standard in which a man is respected for using authoritative

language and demeanor. However, when a woman does the same, participants

suggested they are typically criticized or seen as whining or out of control

emotionally. For example, at a site visit, one research participant noted that when her

male colleagues are aggressive, they are seen as "assertive" or "a boss." However,

when she clearly articulates what she wants professionally, she is seen as a bitch.

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Various participants believed this "self-censorship" or downplaying of one's power can be particularly detrimental to black women cultural entrepreneurs because the entrepreneurial field requires actors to be aggressive and direct in voicing their needs and desires.

In other words, the nature of the business world requires that actors be aggressive in seizing opportunities and advocating on their own behalf (Kay and Shipman 2014). However, in doing so, black women may be self-conscious about perpetuating certain stereotypes, such as that of the sapphire. As a result, this controlling image may hamper black women cultural entrepreneurs' efforts to take or maximize certain entrepreneurial opportunities. Green noted for example that she took on projects and opportunities that were not in her best interest financially because she did not want to be seen as entitled. She explains: "I didn't want people to, you know, think that I was being a diva or think that I'm too difficult to work with, which is a huge issue in this industry. I definitely would just kind of take anything that came…"

Nevertheless, not all participants felt racism and sexism represented major roadblocks to their success. Jasmine Stewart was aware that racism and sexism existed in the film industry, of which she was a distributor. However, she said that she has yet to experience discrimination and resistance from white men for her company, which screens, distributes and markets films by filmmakers across the global south. Stewart explains that white male collaborators and gatekeepers have not presented any roadblocks in developing her business:

I haven't gotten from any [resistance from] men, I have not had any resistance

at all. Maybe because I'm not anticipating it, I'm just saying, I haven't had

any snubs and I've been working with white males of all different walks of

life and they're just like okay they're in [that collective].

Still, like several other respondents, Stewart showed a keen awareness of how

white supremacy shaped opportunities for black filmmakers in particular. For

example, explaining the importance of business savvy for black filmmakers, Stewart

shares:

Every budding filmmaker needs to understand the business side. But, I think

[it] might be especially true for black filmmakers, black filmmakers in

America because there's a lot of misinformation about global territories, all

those territories outside of North America. The idea is that [a] black-casted

film, there's a cap on the budget I put to it, if I could do a low budget with a

high return domestically, but the argument would be to the black independent

filmmaker, the reason I can't give you a higher budget is because I cannot sell

your film in international territories.

Here, Missouri highlights that particular challenges associated with unequal funding

practices that impact black filmmakers. African American cineastes, and other

groups whose works are seen as less appealing internationally must be business savvy

concerning how to sell distribution rights to different territories. Missouri adds:

If you don't have a sense of what is the business side, how rights work, how

you sell distribution rights to different territories, theatrical, television, online,

digital. I mean if you don't have an idea about those things, then before you even started to shoot, you already are at a disadvantage.

"The White Guy You Expect": Social Challenges

The data suggest that for black women cultural entrepreneurs, powerful race and gender stereotypes either close doors to opportunity before they can enter or make success formidable. Participants describe stereotypes in which they were "othered" and easily seen as a bitch, under-qualified, desperate and scattered, which limited access to professional opportunities. Also, I share an example of how some participants do not fit the stereotypical image of creators in their field, as black women.

In general, respondents communicated that they did not have the freedom of unbridled expression that the dominant group seemed entitled to demonstrate. Explaining the racial and gender challenges with which she contends, Risikat Okedeyi, a first generation Nigerian woman now working in Washington, D.C. as a consultant, higher education instructor and nightlife event developer, observes a "discomfort" people have with her as a black woman who does not fit expectations about what a black woman represents. Okedeyi, who wears dreadlocks and a bindi, speaks passionately when discussing these challenges. Exasperated, she says:

> I see white people able to just be themselves and [in] being themselves, somebody takes an interest in what they do. They don't have to wear sneakers, they don't have to wear shoes if they don't want to, they don't have to comb their hair, brush their teeth… They can just show up cause they're white, somebody is going to give them all this money to support whatever it is that

they want to do. And me being this black girl with an education, with a clear idea, and with all this gusto. [When] I get a chance to present my ideas, nobody can resist me. But, I can't even get in the door because blackness only shows up a certain way and I'm not showing up in a way that they can understand, so no, you know… If I was white and I was doing this, you would think that it's cool, you wouldn't have problem with it.

In the quote above, Okedeyi references double standards associated with race and gender in the social imagination. White and male are privileged identities, while black and woman are marginalized identities. Although she may be just as qualified as white men in entrepreneurial settings such as mixers, pitch events, scholarship and grant opportunities, she is seen as an "other," not belonging to the group and, consequently, not deserving of the same opportunities.

Okedeyi's sentiment echoed that of another black woman cultural entrepreneur. I gleaned a similar attitude concerning "othering" during a site visit to a brick and mortar business in Washington, D.C. headed by Marsha Sullivan, an animator and educator who taught technology classes to youth. During a visit to her workspace, I overheard her explaining her thoughts on the need for "culturally relevant" education to a friend. The friend was suggesting that racism and sexism were not serious in the field of technology. In response, Sullivan cited a collegiate event Google hosted to illustrate passive aggressive racial and gender discrimination. The event she describes was a technological competition featuring colleges across the country as well as the historically black university, Howard University based in Washington, D.C. Although participants from Howard University ranked just as, if

not higher than their competitors in various categories, the students did not earn the same honors as groups from other institutions. A representative from Google explained that Howard University students were not awarded because they were not "Google-y enough."

Sullivan says this is the field of subtle, yet powerful discrimination in which she operates. Like the Howard University students she referenced, Sullivan feels that she and other black women are qualified and merit the same opportunities and rewards as any other entrepreneurs. However, because she does not project the image of a typical and expected candidate, she is positioned to be covertly, but clearly rejected.

Similar to Okedeyi and Sullivan's experiences, black women cultural entrepreneurs also noted that they felt challenges associated with societal expectations of who was considered the norm in their field. For example, Nalo Hopkinson describes the stereotypical image of a science fiction writer as a white male. She says that being a black woman science fiction writer is an anomaly that is often met with prejudice and lost opportunity. Hopkinson shares:

> The type of work I do is not thought of as "a black woman's work." A black
> woman is the last person anybody thinks of when you say science fiction
> writer. For some readers that means they're curious to look my work up. But,
> I also get a fair bit of prejudice because of it and barriers because of it.

Seemingly in contrast, film collective founder Jasmine Stewart noted that she had not encountered any resistance from white men in her business development. Still, Stewart says that when proposing and discussing professional opportunities she

recognizes, "I am the antithesis of the white guy you expect to be doing business with."

All 21 participants lauded the freedom of being able to head their own businesses, as opposed to being an employee, as a major motivation and benefit for becoming entrepreneurs. However, Latoya Peterson, a freelance writer, consultant and founder of major blog shares remarks that are representative of several participants. Peterson shares that "being an entrepreneur is charting your own destiny." Peterson notes that she became and enjoys being an entrepreneur because it allows them to avoid pressures associated with traditional business settings. The data suggest that most participants still encounter stereotypes indicative of traditional business settings.

As cultural entrepreneurs, black women did not evade common stereotypes of black women in the corporate world, including the idea that black women are under-qualified and unskilled (Kennelly 1999). At the same time, black women are seen as hard-workers, which on the surface can be seen as a stereotype with positive consequences. Nevertheless, this stereotype justifies exploitation as black women workers are viewed as hard workers because they are in financial straits and desperate for their earnings[55] (Kennelly 1999).

Chelsey Green, referenced earlier, recalls a time when she encountered this stereotype. Describing her experiences with contractors feeling entitled to exploit her labor she notes:

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[55] Although Kennelly's research speaks primarily to situations of black mothers, black women, in general are cited as facing these stereotypes.

> I think as a black woman, especially a younger black woman, I definitely get
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> taken advantage of on the business front more than I should. You know, [they
>
> basically say] 'You're going to open this show and bring your whole band and
>
> bring all your equipment and do this for no money because you need this
>
> opportunity. Or, "You better be glad I'm allowing you to do this." Stuff that
>
> other people would never have to battle.

The booking agents and venue representatives that Green encounters often speak to her with an air of entitlement. Green has earned several prestigious accomplishments including finalizing her candidacy as a doctoral student in music, performing at Carnegie Hall and The Kennedy Center in addition to having her album reach number 22 on the Billboard Chart,[56] amongst other noted accomplishments. Despite her credentials Green often feels mistreated as under-qualified.

As a performance artist, Green notes that being overweight compounds her discrimination as a black woman. She cites an experience of blatant racism and sexism, sharing:

> …being overweight is also an issue. I've done recordings where I played the
>
> whole album and then the producer comes to me and is like, 'Uhhh, Chelsey
>
> you sounded great, now can you help us find a little white girl that can play
>
> your part on the tour?'

I ask Green to clarify that someone stated this to her explicitly. She affirms that the producer was clear and direct in saying that Green only possessed the sound he

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[56] The Billboard Chart is an industry standard in the music industry. Selling enough records to make it on the chart indicates that a single or album was commercially successful.

wanted, not "the look". As such, Green's experience with discrimination was not an instance of colorblind racism, but overt racism and sexism. Compared to a petite white woman, the producer did not see Green's image as an overweight black women as beautiful, marketable and palatable for mainstream consumption.

Another theme that I observed concerning stereotypes involved being multi-passionate cultural entrepreneurs. Marie Forleo is a popular figure noted for dispensing wise advice on business development uses the term "multi-passionate entrepreneur" (2011). A multi-passionate entrepreneur is someone who feels inspired and committed to various personal and professional interests (Forleo 2011). In several participant observation activities, I noticed participants highlighting various passions in diverse art forms, politics and sources of professional inspiration.

For example, one woman I met at a site visit was a jewelry maker, music producer, dancer, interior designer and stylist. In her experience, others mostly believed that one can only excel in one area professionally. Moreover, one's true profession was the one that earned them steady income. This woman's work in various fields, however, was inconsistent. Sometimes she earned money as a stylist and interior designer and others as a music producer, for example. She explained that she was self-conscious about describing her work to others, suspecting that they may not take her seriously. Her sensitivity to others' opinions led her to reflect on whether she wanted to release one interest to pursue another. Yet, she decided against sacrificing one of her professional areas out of a fear of feeling incomplete and unfulfilled. She noted, "I have to accept that I'm a Jill of all trades and that I really can be good at multiple things."

Another participant suggested that when a woman has diverse professional passions, she is seen as scattered and indecisive. Risikat Okedeyi, a Nigerian American cultural event producer notes that men are heralded for being multi-dimensional dynamic professionals. She cites Benjamin Franklin as a historic example "who is praised as a visionary genius for his varied interests in everything from politics to science and the occult." Next, referring to herself, she explains, contrarily, "When I say I have all these interests, people just think I'm all over the place." Okedeyi feels that when men have multiple career interests, they are seen as capable of succeeding in them all.

Ruth Feldstein's argument in, ""I Don't Trust You Anymore': Nina Simone, Culture, and Black Activism in the 1960s" illuminates the significance of Okedeyi's comment. Feldstein argues that Nina Simone excelled in many creative areas. However, the term "virtuoso," was a gendered term more closely associated with men than women. History now remembers Simone as virtuosic, yet, at the time, she was understood through a Eurocentric male lens that misrepresented her as a self-taught, improvisational jazz musician when, in reality, she was a classically trained pianist exceptionally talented in various musical traditions. Stereotypical understandings translated into professional limitations in terms of the opportunities Simone was afforded. Okedeyi believed this scattered stereotype narrows certain career possibilities in diverse fields; being a woman of various interests and talents she is stereotyped as a "Jill of all trades and a master of none."

Another participant echoes the challenges associated with limiting stereotypes of black women she encounters as a multi-faceted entrepreneur. Minna Salami is a

blogger and former online fashion boutique owner based in London. When asked what challenges she faces as a black woman, she responds, "…just being a black woman entrepreneur, writer, thought leader, I think itself is the challenge because you're not supposed to be any of these things." In other words, Salami believes that black women are not expected to be seen as key influencers in their fields, in general. She is not seen as capable in various fields because, due to her race and gender, she is seen as incompetent in general.

Still, even when black women cultural entrepreneurs are concentrated in one line of work in which they have demonstrated expertise, they are seen as less intelligent and savvy than their male counterparts. Gina Paige, in her late forties, is the founder of African Ancestry, a company that has been in business for more than 12 years selling ancestry-tracing kits. She recalls a meeting in which her business partner, a man, was automatically deferred to as the leader, and she was seen as irrelevant. She says instances like the following occur often:

> I'm at the table, I'm the only woman, it's me and Josh[57], so I'm the only black woman and the only woman. And those white guys just kept looking at Josh, they kept talking to Josh and we weren't talking about the science, we were talking about the business and so I had to show out a little bit, I showed out.

Paige is the full-time CEO who handles all the company's operations. Her responsibilities and expertise did not make her immune to stereotypes of her inadequacy relative to her male business partner.

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[57] Name has been changed for privacy.

All entrepreneurs are believed to have strong feelings of overwhelm and anxiety in the development of their businesses (Bruder 2013; Masten 2001; Markman, Baron and Balkin 2005). All 21 research participants suggested that they felt emotional and psychological strain as entrepreneurs. Still, an additional stressor that affects black and black women entrepreneurs in particular ways concerns the need to counter stereotypes about one's credibility.

Two respondents from different regions explicitly stated that as black women cultural entrepreneurs they seemed to also have to contend with the prospect of not being seen as good as other people in the field, which creates added pressure to work hard to be as respected as white men, by white men or non-black women. For example, Lola Akinmade, a Nigerian photographer currently based in Stockholm, Sweden as well as Myrtis Bedolla, an African American gallerist based in Baltimore, Maryland discussed what Akinmade and several black professionals refer to as "the black tax". Akinmade reflects:

> There will always be that "black tax" that people of color will forever have to pay. That is, working twice as hard and being nothing short of exceptional in what you do to get half the recognition of our white colleagues.

Bedolla reiterated this statement suggesting:

> [We] are just, always having to prove ourselves in ways that other people may [not] intellectually. Our intellect and knowledge and expertise about

something. You know there's some truth to the fact that we have to know twice as much and work twice as hard. And I know that I have had to demonstrate that in many ways.

The "black tax" and notion of needing to work "twice as hard to be just as good" are common ideas amongst African Americans in corporate settings (White 2015). Stereotypes suggest that blacks are unqualified or affirmative action hires, which leads black professionals to feel the need to demonstrate that they are exceptionally smart and talented (White 2015). A study by The National Bureau of Economic Research reiterated this idea finding: "While white workers are hired and retained indefinitely without monitoring, black workers are monitored and fired if a negative signal is received…Discrimination can persist even if the productivity of blacks exceeds that of whites" (Cavounidis and Lang 2015).

Akinmade and Bedolla observe that if they perform in ways that are simply comparable to their white contemporaries, they will be held in low esteem. Being of different ethnic backgrounds and having different business types, Bedolla and Akinmade were among the three participants who had been in business for more than 20 years. Their desire to highlight the "black tax" phenomena without any specific prompting suggests this pressure may have been an enduring problem in their careers.

Another challenge participants described was not directly tied to their identities, but general experiences as entrepreneurs. "On top of the lion, we're a success." Anika Hobbs, a 31-year old fashion boutique owner tells me with her voice trembling. The vibration in her speech mirrors the wavy hand gestures she

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pantomimes to illustrate the precarious nature of having to find stability on top of a wild animal. Anika's lion metaphor is appropriate given that nine out of 10 startups fail within the first year. She concludes: "So you're like, 'How did I even get on this lion? And how do I not fall off to get eaten?'"

Given numerous demands in business, many entrepreneurs in this study expressed intense feelings of anxiety and self-doubt that may cause them to question why they begin and stay committed to such risky endeavors. In general, entrepreneurs of all backgrounds tend both to experience feeling overwhelmed and desire more assistance in the form of staff, government support (including lesser red tape and taxes) and emotional support (Bhide 1996).

All 21 participants communicated feelings of overwhelm as they had a plethora of tasks to manage, but were not able to hire and/or trust someone to support with business management and development. For many of the black women cultural entrepreneurs who participated in this study, limited resources and the need to project a polished business image, contributed to their stress. All twenty of the participants were the founders and CEOs of their companies, yet none of their staffs exceeded five people. The average number of employees was three. Several participants reported that they did not have the budget to hire someone to consistently take on more administrative responsibilities.

Each participant communicated that she derived a sense of personal fulfillment from her work. Still, my research suggests that personal fulfillment is not synonymous with a positive internal state. One participant, Kenya (Robinson) described her work as a calling that felt fulfilling to answer, but taxing. When asked

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to confirm whether she did in fact feel divinely compelled to be a cultural entrepreneur, (Robinson) emphatically responded: "Hell yeah! Why the fuck else would I be doing this shit?!" In posing this rhetorical question, (Robinson) affirmed that the work could be grueling and feeling connected to a higher motivation inspired her to continue creating art.

Another recurring theme in the data was feelings of guilt about not being able to handle more tasks. During one of my four site visits to African Ancestry, I noted that Gina Paige, the CEO was quieter than usual. Normally, she is the life of the office, telling jokes and curating the background music for the office, which typically consists of upbeat jazz or 80s hip-hop. One day, however, she looked especially reticent. When one of her staff asked her how she was, Paige remarked, "I feel guilty about being away." Paige had taken a weeklong trip to meet with potential clients in another state. Two other staff members and myself were demonstrably taken aback by her response. One staff member said, "But, why should you feel guilty about that? You were gone for work. You had to be away." Paige, somberly replied, "I know, but I still feel guilty. You all had to do a lot of work without me."

I remember feeling the heaviness and sadness in the room at that time. Starting to feel awkward and uncomfortable, I tried to lighten the mood I said, "But, if you hadn't been away on that trip, everyone might be doing all this work with no lights on." Paige, unmoved, replied: "I still feel guilty. When you have your own business and staff one day, you'll understand. I'm preparing you for that experience." As mentioned, all 21 participants, like Paige, experienced feelings of stress about not being able to complete all the various tasks as efficiently as they intended. The

respondents suggested that they had more professional, creative and personal responsibilities than they themselves could handle.

Most participants wanted administrative support so that they could focus on the development aspects of the business. Still, I observed that regardless of income or staff size research participants communicated that they could either not afford to outsource certain tasks, or believed that tasks were dutifully performed to their liking when they themselves took the lead. Having to handle administrative tasks of managing their own books, appointments and e-mails was very stressful, however some women were hesitant to delegate for fear that the mundane but important tasks would not be completed with the level of care they themselves would bring. Cultural education specialist, Deborah Crimes, notes that she would also like more assistance. However, hiring more staff would create another financial strain. Although Crimes makes as much money working for herself as she did working in corporate America, hiring proves difficult as she faces common financial challenges that leave many entrepreneurs under-staffed. Crimes shares:

> [I] know you can outsource something but then you know you end giving away a lot of your profit because you're paying this person to do the marketing, this person to do the sales, this person to, you know, and you're not a big company. So the big companies can do that but as an entrepreneur of a small business you really have to learn to wear more of the hats.

As the lead performer for her band, Chelsey Green, currently wears most of the hats for her business, which, she laments, takes times away from creative

production. Green believes mitigating this stress means accepting that not every task will be completed perfectly. She shares:

> I need to release that everything is just not going to be done the way that I want it to be done and I think once you create something from the ground up, like you have seen it do nothing, and turn into a billboard charting you know performance group, it is literally like your child at that point and I've put my whole self into it.

Many entrepreneurs in general, are seen as anthropomorphizing their businesses, referring to their business as their child or baby (Hassay 2014). Green, was also very protective over her business development and believed it hard to let someone else share in the responsibility for its growth.

Green was not alone in feeling this sense of protectiveness as I observed what can be considered extreme vigilance at events that I attended when black women cultural entrepreneurs supervised teams. For example, during one of the film screenings I noticed that one woman seemed very concerned with details of the event. Among other issues, she commented on the guests' level of social engagement, less than expected turnout, promotional strategy and problems with audio. At the end of this event, one of the organization's members asked me if I would be interested in joining her team. Referencing the cultural entrepreneurs' heightened concern with details and business reputation, she said I would be a good asset because "someone else [needs] to be here to talk her off the ledge."

At another film screening event, I observed how fast moving this research participant was as she multi-tasked all the while communicating with audience

members and affiliate team members that were not physically present. I turned to one of her colleagues and remarked, "She is literally doing the work of 10 women." Her colleague remarked, "she'll do this all night."

I noticed that the act of releasing control, allowing other team members to lead in certain areas so as to give themselves less responsibility, would afford black women cultural entrepreneurs to take time for themselves to de-compress. Conversely, Chelsey Green was exceptional in that she suggested that even when she does get help, she still feels the need to go back and re-do everything herself. She explains:

> So, when I give somebody something to do and I just let them do it and then I see how they send it out and see the different level of care that I would have taken to forming that email or doing something that it kind of makes me get back to the well I'll just do it, I'll just do it, I'll just do this and I'll just do that. But I'm working on kind of releasing that so I can have time again.

The sense that volunteers and staff would not put as much care and attention into the presentation of their work as founders may be rooted in the idea that black professionals "need to be twice as good [as their white counterparts] to be good enough" (White 2015). Nevertheless, the interviewees did not seem to attribute their meticulousness, to a desire to validate their worth, but to their pride of authorship. This finding suggests that taking on the vast majority of the entrepreneurial workload, as well as seeing the business as an extension of oneself, can foster exploitability.

One conversation with cultural event promoter, Risikat Okedeyi, illustrates a leaning towards exploitation. She describes cultural business development, as an art unto itself, noting: "For me, business is a form of creative expression." Several participants of various creative backgrounds also described the experience of entrepreneurship as a calling. However, one participant, Olivia Jones, an actress and playwright who owns an organizational development business that provides creative consultation to non-profit organizations smirked at the thought of referring to entrepreneurship as a calling. Jones says: "Saying it's a calling makes people think that you'll do shit for free."

Jones also notes that people feel entitled to her time and treat her as a volunteer as opposed to a businesswoman. She shares a story of how one business associate asked her to repeatedly reach out to a young woman to mentor. Jones suggests that this associate was disrespecting her time in assuming she could postpone her work to contact someone else to offer them help. Jones remarked: "I'm like, my e-mail address is on my website…Why do I have to contact someone who is interested in having me mentor them? Why can't she contact me?"

I ended all interviews with the question: "Is there anything I didn't ask that you think could have been beneficial?". Jones, 32, responded, "You didn't ask about my self-care practice." She mentioned that part of her self-care practice includes meditation and curfews by which she does not allow herself to continue working, no matter how pressing the task. Three other participants referenced the importance of meditation and delegating time for personal care. However, it was Jones and the two older participants over 50 years old who maintained a relatively consistent personal

self-care practice in the form of meditation, yoga, reiki, accupuncture and herbal medicine. In general, many black women cultural entrepreneurs tend to take on more work, resulting in more time away from family and friends with little time for personal care.

In struggling to balance work and family, Jasmine Stewart, film collective founder; Jafreda Epps, a hair stylist in her late thirties; and Hobbs, fashion boutique owner, were the three participants that communicated challenges common to professional women of various backgrounds associated with "the second shift." Arlie Russell Hochschild's (2012) *The Second Shift: Working Parents and the Revolution at Home* is a landmark study that finds that when women enter the external workplace, their expectations and responsibilities for work within the household remain unchanged. The "second shift" refers to the second round of household work women take on after they return from their workplace. Many professional women in *The Second Shift* study felt guilty and inadequate as they often reported lacking sleep and interest in sensual and personal pleasures.

Similar to the research participants described in *The Second Shift*, black women cultural entrepreneurs in this study often defined their work as all-consuming. At the risk of not being able to cover their basic expenses, black women cultural entrepreneurs – like most entrepreneurs – often work long hours and do not have sufficient time or energy to practice self-care. Nevertheless, their families and social networks expect a certain level of support and involvement in their lives.

For example, Hobbs, a 31 year old clothing store owner, notes that being a woman entrepreneur requires finding a balance between work and family that is not

easy to reach. She shares, "[We] have to balance family in a way that our male counterparts may not have to. So I know my dad has been very ill, and I'm an only child, and my mom she recently moved here; basically, that was all on me. So it's a challenge of being able to have a work-life balance, which I haven't found yet." Hobbs recognizes that her personal responsibilities to her family are grounded in gender stereotypes that confer more stigma on women than men who deflect family responsibility. Hobbs wants to take care of her family and feels societal pressure to do so.

While five of the 21 participants had children, Epps and Stewart were the only respondents who suggested that motherhood was important to their identity and experiences as cultural entrepreneurs. During a supplemental, informal interview, Stewart plainly stated that "it can be challenging to balance everything with kids."

Epps' take on the challenges associated with motherhood were more nuanced. She noted that being a mother led her to feel disconnected from other entrepreneurs who did not have kids. As a result, she was hesitant to attend mixers for entrepreneurs that did not have many women attendees or did not specify that mothers were welcome. She remarks:

I feel like I constantly find networks and support groups for young, 20-something, white-male driven…and they don't market it that way but then I go to the website and look at the meet up pictures of people who have joined, if you look at who's in charge of it, it feels so, so masculine. Like am I going to come up there with my problems and they're going to be like those are girls' problems? Particularly as a wife and a mother…I feel disconnected, like

I never feel like that's the group I can be a part of. I feel like almost like an outsider when it comes to stuff like that.

When it comes to personal challenges black women cultural entrepreneurs faced, this sense of failing to achieve a work-life balance was consistent across all 21 interview participants. The two participants with the longest-running businesses with brick and mortar residences in their late forties and fifties had achieved a feeling of stability later in their careers. However, Hobbs' remarks were representative of a recurring theme that suggested work-life balance often proved elusive.

Paige, like several other participants discussed the challenge of managing a "very high stress level." During the first 10 years of her business, Paige worked 16-hour days and says regular physical exercise was the one thing that "kept me alive." However, she reflects on the arduous travel schedule she struggled to maintain:

I really feel like I could've had like a heart attack or a stroke or something because I just worked too much and my entire life revolved around this company, every aspect of it. One year, two years in a row I got a companion pass on Southwest airlines which means you flew 50 legs, like 25 round-trips, I got that two years in a row. I didn't even know that, the companion pass thing just came in the mail where my companion could go anywhere I went for free. I was like, how do you get this? 25 round trips in a year. That's a lot. That's a huge compromise. And I didn't take vacations.

Paige says that it wasn't until she broke the second biggest bone in her body and needed to have surgery that she began to re-think her travel schedule. She took it as a

sign from the universe that if she kept working at her current rate she could hurt herself even more and might not recover the next time.

One notable finding from the interview data is that the black women cultural entrepreneurs in this study did not see the structural, social and personal challenges discussed in the previous sections as purely oppressive. In fact, one participant said the advantage of being black and woman in her field was that it gave her a broader understanding of social power dynamics. Jasmine Stewart, the founder a film collective remarks:

> I do think that black women have a very unique social positioning that we can take advantage, that I think allows us to be able to relate to diverse peoples and organizations, diverse groups and organizations. And I kind of feel as like it's our responsibility, like it's almost our obligation…if anyone can tell you what America is really about, it's me.

With their intersecting identities and ability to operate both as insiders and outsiders in their industries, black women cultural entrepreneurs embody the complexity that social entrepreneurs are encouraged to be cognizant of in society. Social entrepreneurs can have the best intentions for bettering society through businesses created to foster social good. However, absent an understanding of the nature of "social arrangements," they may, in fact, reinforce problems they seek to dismantle.

<p align="center">***</p>

As I discuss in the literature review, black women have largely been disappeared from discussions on entrepreneurship and challenges. The findings in this chapter suggest that these oversights are highly problematic given that black women cultural entrepreneurs see their style of business as well as their challenges to success as unique from white men. Heterogeneous findings concerning attitudes about the centrality of racial and gender identity to one's entrepreneurial experiences suggest that not all black women cultural entrepreneurs encounter or experience challenges to success in the exact same ways.

The next chapter discusses definitions of success. I explore how the challenges black women cultural entrepreneurs face are foundational to the alternative definitions of success they articulate. Their particular challenges have led them to articulate a unique oppositional consciousness. This empowered mental state, described in the interview responses and practices in the field, has led black women cultural entrepreneurs to create new definitions of and strategies for success.

CHAPTER 5: THE NEW BOTTOM LINE: ALTERNATIVE DEFINITIONS OF

SUCCESS

"The bottom line" is a double entendre amongst entrepreneurs. Literally, the phrase refers to net profits, which are reported below the last line on an account statement. When deciding to take on a new project or risk, an entrepreneur usually asks herself, "How will this project impact my bottom line?" Because entrepreneurs typically recognize profit maximization as the paramount goal, if a professional move will not improve the bottom line, it is normally dismissed. In common vernacular, the bottom line is another way of saying the "ultimate consideration above all others." Hence, the bottom line has a dual meaning amongst entrepreneurs; net profits are the most important concern.

Popular literature encourages entrepreneurs of various backgrounds to "start with why[58]" and remember the motivations for founding their businesses that go beyond financial gains (Martin and Osberg 2007; Sinek 2011). Still, entrepreneurship literature has typically interpreted success as financial gains in the form of profit, wealth generation and growth (Cukier et. al 2011; Mair and Martí 2006; Martin and Osberg 2007; Shaw and Carter 2007; Yunus 2008; Yunus 2010). Social entrepreneurs have shifted the definition to a double or triple bottom line of profit,

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[58] *Start With Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action* (2009) is a popular book and TED Talk by Simon Sinek, which cites case studies of entrepreneurs.

social impact and, more recently, environmental sustainability (Elkington 1997; Hibbert, Hogg and Quinn 2002; Matin and Osberg 2007; Gillis and James 2015).

The research participants in this study shared understandings of success that are similar to definitions of accomplishment in social entrepreneurship that conceptualize success as a "double bottom line" of both financial success and social impact (Alter 2000; Rosenzweig 2004; Bisconti 2009). In contrast to this depiction in the social entrepreneurship literature, alternative definitions of success became visible upon analysis. Major themes in the data emerged as research participants' specific understandings of success, which included social impact in the form of cultural intervention and black community uplift. Additionally, participants largely defined success as professional/creative agency.

While participants were not uniform in their interpretations of success, a dominant theme in the data suggests that black women cultural entrepreneurs' unique perspective on success were largely attributable to their viewpoints and experiences as black women. Still, participants' intersectional race and gender identity cannot be conclusively proclaimed as the only – or always and necessarily most important – factor shaping their attitudes towards success. Rather, patterns also developed among those who defined success beyond social impact and professional/creative agency. These incidences suggest that business type and current number of businesses also influence perspectives on success.

This chapter is divided into two sections. In the first section, "Beyond Profit: Social Impact and Professional/Creative Agency as Pillars of Success" I explore black women cultural entrepreneurs' definitions of success as both collective and

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personal. Primarily describing success as social impact and professional/creative agency, I review research participants that define success in ways dissimilar to common understandings of success as profit in dominant entrepreneurship literature. I also explore respondents who suggest that financial success was still important to their businesses.

In the second section, "Achieving Success" I explain black women cultural entrepreneurs' means of realizing success. In this discussion I review three common themes participants associated with entrepreneurial achievement: (1) intersecting race and gender identity; (2) community connections; and (3) the Internet and social media. I present and examine participants' interpretations of the significance of their identities in limiting their access to certain opportunities, while affording the benefits to others; such conceptions shaped what many interviewees believed was in the realm of possibility for them to achieve. Next, I present participants' discussions of the importance of community support in accomplishing their objectives. Finally, I review participants' understandings of the importance of the Internet and social media to attaining success.

Beyond Profit: Social Impact and Professional/Creative Agency as Pillars of Success

Profit is necessary, but not sufficient

The interview data I analyzed suggests that research participants believed their race and gender influenced their personal definitions of success[59]. For example, Noah Sow and Myrtis Bedolla suggest that their race and gender identity informed their inclination to define success as social impact. Noah Sow, a black German visual artist, punk-rock artist and author, who started her own record label Jeanne Dark Records, chose not to subscribe to popular understandings of success in her fields. Sow notes, "I know if I'm doing something primarily for the money, or if I'm trying to meet somebody's imaginary expectations, [my work is] gonna become mediocre, corrupted and fail." In this sense, Sow sees profit seeking as a path to failure, not success. As I mentioned earlier, the belief that profit is not the ultimate goal is not unique to Sow or black women cultural entrepreneurs. Rather, Sow's motivations for understanding success in this way were grounded in her unique experiences as a black woman. She continued to explain:

> In the creative industries, money is oftentimes an indicator for how many
>
> people identify with you [or] how well you serve their interests or
>
> preconceptions. I wouldn't want to consider either of those aspects. To me
>
> it's not 'how many' but 'who' and 'on which level.' For me it's worked out
>
> so far.

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[59] The research participants' perspective on success being defined by more than profit was not necessarily unique given that social entrepreneurs also understand success in this way.

Sow describes the "who" she refers to as black women and fans who have a sincere appreciation for the diversity of black music. The "level" on which she aims to reach them is deeply personal, allowing them to see people of African descent in a more diverse light than she has personally experienced in Germany.

Sow shares another personal experience that occurred after a performance in Berlin that influenced how she wanted her art to be received. After a musical performance for a predominately white audience, she was disturbed by the attendees' reactions. She recalls, "They compared me to Beyoncé and wanted to touch my skin and my hair." Sow suggested that black artists are often lumped together and exoticized. When she is "treated like a pet," as she describes, "it shows me how they hear the music."

It is important to note here that success went beyond profit to include who Sow's work products would reach and how deeply those supporters would connect with those products. She also added that making work that was an honest reflection of herself was a measure of success noting, "The more authentic, radical and true to myself a project is, the happier it makes me, the better the workflow, the more enriching to me, and the more relevant. I believe that I can't control money, but I can focus on relevance."

Similar to Sow, Myrtis Bedolla, an art gallery owner in her late fifties specializing in African American and African art, and based in Baltimore, also suggests that profit and social impact are not at odds. She notes, "I think for me they are equal because what [am] I doing if I'm not contributing to the social good? Then, all of this is for naught…I believe the more good that is done, the more profitable my

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business becomes." While black women cultural entrepreneurs' understandings of success were similar to social entrepreneurs in the sense that social impact is seen as imperative, their experiences and perspectives as black women in large part, shaped their interpretations of the nuances of that success.

Unpacking social impact and agency

Whereas the entrepreneurship literature has typically interpreted success as profit, social entrepreneurs have broadened the definition to a double or triple bottom line of profit, social impact and, more recently, environmental sustainability. In contrast, the black women cultural entrepreneurs in this study seemingly have shifted this understanding to include social impact and professional/creative agency. Recurring themes in the data suggest that social impact included cultural intervention and black community uplift. Professional/creative agency involved being a willful actor in one's career, such that one takes an active role in shaping one's career opportunities, creative projects and work/life structure.

Another pattern in the data regarding attitudes was the belief in the power of art, culture and media to shape social consciousness. For example, when asked what success means for her business, Nikki Taylor Roberts, a filmmaker who started her own film production company, Rocket Light Films, shares:

> [It's] making stuff that's going to change people's hearts and change the world. I know that's really lofty but you know film and television and commercials have the ability to change the world. They have the ability to change people's thoughts and perceptions about what is going on in their lives

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right now. It has the ability to not only enlighten but also fulfill people by

giving them messages.

Here Roberts communicates the idea that images and ideas perpetuated through art,

culture and media influence worldviews, interactions, goals and life chances.

Other participants like Nalo Hopkinson understood success as fulfilling

responsibilities she associated with being a black woman cultural entrepreneur.

Hopkinson, a Jamaican fabric designer and science-fiction writer in her fifties, shows

how the categories of social impact – including cultural intervention and black

community uplift – and, professional/creative agency, are not mutually exclusive, but

overlap. Hopkinson explains:

> I see it as my responsibility to keep showing the world that we are beautiful,
>
> that we are smart, that we are creative. So I put black people in my stories, I
>
> put little black girls and boys in my stories. I put our languages in the mouths
>
> of my characters, I depict them in the fabrics I make and the crafts I make.

Hopkinson suggests these responsibilities involved her exercising her

professional/creative agency and creating cultural products that contributed to more

diverse representations of black people.

Still, it is interesting to note that Hopkinson's interpretation of success as it

relates to such responsibilities seems to correlate with her business type and number

of businesses. Patterns in attitudes towards success correlated with the nature of a

participants' business. Hopkinson is one of 12 (out of 21 total) respondents that had

creative businesses that involved the direct selling and creation of her own art[60].

These participants tended to associate success with their ability to effectively

communicate the messages that they found important through their art. Artists like

Akua Naru prioritized making "good music" over financial profit, but still saw the

latter as fundamental:

> Like I just feel like for example if I'm able to put out good music or I'm able
>
> to create more opportunities for an artist or for myself as an artist or whatever
>
> and make enough money to like pay everybody and to make a profit and still
>
> to pay us as the business [I] feel like that's successful. But especially when we
>
> could still sleep at night and not feel like we have to get over on people to do
>
> it, that's point. Cause for me you are going to want to make a profit but that's
>
> not the bottom line for me, you know what I mean.

Chelsey Green, a classical and hip-hop violinist in her early thirties similarly defines

success as her ability to grow as an artist and make quality work:

> And I don't believe in saying, "we've made it" or "I've made it" or "I've
>
> reached this" cause you get no inspiration to [grow]. You know, I'm always
>
> trying to practice new things, learn new techniques, and do something
>
> different to continue to reach beyond the level that I'm at. And you know I
>
> always say if you booked a gig or you just played a gig, that is being
>
> successful. If somebody asks you to do something because of who you are and
>
> what you do, then you're being successful. And I don't think there's one
>
> definition really. I think a good rehearsal is being successful. A good new

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[60] The other 11 participants included 1 filmmaker, 3 visual artists, 3 musicians and 4 writers/bloggers.

arrangement of something that started from one thing and now has ended up

as something totally different, then you're being successful.

Still, however, one visual artist was more aligned with non-artists in defining

success more along the lines of profit. Photographer Lola Akinmade defined success

as "financial security." She reflects:

> For my business, financial security is certainly a part of the
>
> equation. Personally I define success for my business as being
>
> able to bring in repeat work from clients I enjoy working with and
>
> who value my work. Word of mouth recommendations that keep
>
> coming in as well as being able to put out quality work I enjoy
>
> feels rewarding.

In this sense, as a visual artist, Akinmade echoes participants who define success

primarily in terms of profit. Participants who had multiple businesses and were not

solely reliant on their cultural enterprise as a source of income tended to de-prioritize

financial profit relative to social impact. For example, Risikat Okedeyi, a cultural

event promoter defined success primarily as:

> I've always felt that I'm addressing the void of black progressive aesthetics.
>
> Nightlife is full of disposable ratchet [crap] it just is. And people tend to look
>
> at a night out as the whole point is just debauchery…I feel like when it comes
>
> to nightlife and clubbing and stuff like that, there's that expectation by club
>
> owners and promoters that it's always got to be ratchet, that it's always got to
>
> be over the top, that a good time has to always look like a line around the
>
> corner and everybody vying to get in. A good time can't be 20 people with

their hands up, eyes closed, sweating cause I've been there and had those

kinds of nights where it may not be a profitable night but the energy is so high

and people are so excited and feeling so good that it's success because people

have walked away better than they came in.

Jasmine Stewart, the founder of a film collective promoting cinema by members of

the global south defined success similarly, noting "the bottom line is neither here nor

there." Both Okedeyi and Stewart had jobs outside of their business where they

earned a living such that their cultural entrepreneurship was not their sole or primary

source of income.

Participants who interpreted profit as fundamental to success, or as success

itself tended to not be actual artists, but headed businesses that offered culturally

relevant services. For example, Gina Paige, who offered ancestry tracing services as

well as Deborah Crimes, who sold cultural education programming to schools

recognized the social significance of their contributions and also described success in

terms of profit. Crimes, similarly associated success more directly with profit stating:

I guess the expectation I had was that I didn't have to be a millionaire, if I

became a millionaire that would be great, if I made 6 digits—which I do—

would be great. But my success for me was, because the reason why I started

was so that I could spend time with my children as they grew up, success for

me was being able to pay all the bills I paid when I was in corporate America,

and still being able to pay them by having my own business. So I didn't want

it to be a hobby, I wanted it to be successful so that I can live the life I live,

even when I was in corporate America. But of course making a million dollars would be great too.

During a planning meeting with Gina Paige's marketing team for a social action campaign, I noticed respondents becoming extremely excited about the social impact of the proposed initiative. Paige shared her excitement for the potential of the campaign. Still, she added, "at the end of the day, we have to sell."

Participants in this study also described black community uplift as a form of success. They understood this form of accomplishment in tangible and theoretical ways, namely, hiring and collaborating with other black entrepreneurs, particularly black women cultural entrepreneurs. In this sense, community uplift had a politics that involved empowering black community members with opportunities they felt other business owners or potential colleagues may be less likely to offer; when and if these individuals and organizations did, they may not have been as likely to support the full expression of their intellectual, creative and professional talents. Community uplift also involved supporting black communities in more conceptual ways, as in providing positive examples that would inspire others to define and pursue their own entrepreneurial endeavors and visions.

In terms of making a cultural intervention and fostering black community uplift, black women in this study were very conscious of how their audiences and communities would receive their work and what their example would mean to others interested in a similar creative profession. However, some felt the word "responsibility" infringed on their creative agency. For example, Minna Salami, a writer and consultant, who owns the MsAfropolitan blog remarks:

I think the responsibility that might come actually is to not have

responsibilities, to feel free, and in so feeling, set an example to other black

women, hopefully, even if it's just one person who can look at you and say

she doesn't seem to have this weight of black womanhood on her and maybe

that means I don't have to have it either, that would be the responsibility, I

feel that responsibility actually strongly…

In this sense, Salami refused to see black womanhood as burdensome. She felt a duty

to lead by example in this regard through expressing herself as freely and truthfully as

she could through the content she shared on her site, social media and speaking

engagements.

Success as cultural intervention

While many black women cultural entrepreneurs took the need to make a

cultural intervention seriously, some showed a concern about being "too heavy" or

"preachy." They suggested that one can "lose oneself" in the process of being

politically engaged. J'Nell Jordan, a painter in her late twenties, shares that she

strived to find a balance between speaking to social ills without those challenges

becoming the dominant focus in her work and life. Describing what void in the

market she thinks her LLC, Paintings by J'Nell Jordan, fills she says:

There's so much bad in the world, there's so much death, there's so much

going on, there's so much to be angry about and upset about and so I kind of

what my artwork to, not be the opposite, but to kind of inspire something else

in you. Not that I don't like to be political, because it can be and it is

sometimes but I don't want to be so heavy.

Jasmine Stewart, a professor in film at a Historically Black University leads a film collective that promotes diverse filmmakers, specifically people of color and women from around the world. She explains:

> It's not we're doing this for straight capital, this is…because this is a cultural
> importance, it builds cultural and national identity. So because this is my way
> of thinking, then I'm thinking okay what we're doing with [the film
> collective] is that we're trying to get films out that many times wouldn't even
> be seen by people but it's important that the films be seen. You see what I
> mean? And what the bottom line is or isn't is neither here nor there.

Deborah Crimes[61] is the founder of Lessons From Abroad, an organization that offers language and cultural education lessons to youth. She describes her success as contributing to children's world perspectives, which enhances their life experiences:

> [S]uccess for me would be knowing that I have, my company, you know
> cause it's not only me, it's the people who work with me, work for me,
> knowing that we have touched the lives of others and have exposed them to
> the languages and cultures and to see, even if we only see a few of those
> people actually use that, that is success and since we've seen that happen, it is
> successful.

Research participants like Mona Penn Jousett and Lulu Kitololo were also self-reflexive and cognizant of the fact that their embodiment of positions of authority

could contribute to cultural intervention. Mona Penn Jousett is an African American woman gallerist in her forties, now based in the Netherlands, where her art gallery, Marginalia is incorporated. She shares that the motivation to start her business was in large part due to a need for more diversity in black representation in the art world. Jousett notes, "the actual desire to do the business came from looking around and realizing that there are not many African American women in contemporary art in terms of selling it to the public."

Lulu Kitololo, a young Kenyan woman, is a graphic designer based in London. Similar to Jousett, Kitololo's aim to share more diverse representations of Africa was common amongst several participants. When asked what void her business is filling, she says that it provides African-centered design work, which represents the continent in a different light and that doing so is very important to her. She remarks, "I'm really big about presenting what Africa means in different ways so beyond the usual clichés and getting people to appreciate that there's so much complexity, diversity around the continent and everything that comes out of it."

Success as black community uplift

As discussed in the previous section on defining success as cultural intervention, cultural entrepreneurs were not simply inspired to make profit but to effect social change. In some instances, black women cultural entrepreneurs' social goals were rooted in their connectedness to a larger black community. African American, Kenyan, Nigerian and German participants shared responses that suggested the contours of this community identity spanned gender, age and national identity.

In discussing community uplift, participants like Gina Paige explained a broad understanding of what constituted the black community. Paige, in her late forties, is the founder of African Ancestry, a company which has been in business for more than 12 years selling ancestry tracing kits. In her view, African heritage is essential to her identity and that of black people, in general. In discussing the need for her business, she says her ancestry tracing company "exists because slavery worked," leading people of African descent to believe that their roots didn't matter. Paige shares:

> There's a generation of people who grew up being black and proud and being happy to be from Africa and celebrating that their Africanness is what contributed to their blackness or that their blackness comes from their africanness. So their social consciousness was formed during a culture that supported the positive nature of being black and being from Africa wasn't a bad thing. There's a generation before them who were brainwashed into believing that being African was bad. And I think younger generations…I think current culture is completely disconnected from a black consciousness or maybe not completely disconnected but it's certainly not the same type of black consciousness.

Myrtis Bedolla, an art gallerist who specializes in African American and African art notes:

> We still are our African selves, no matter where we are, where we're born, and we think we are, and we may want to separate ourselves from all that but we truly are, you know, from the birthplace we sprang. And then who captures that? It's the artist who tells us those stories.

Five of the 21 interviewees explicitly noted that they wanted to also support others through leading by example. Chelsey Green, a violinist and artistic director of The Green Project, a band for which she is the lead, is in her late twenties. Green states that being a role model is one of the voids her business is addressing. She aims to demonstrate that not only can black people play the violin but, more importantly, they can play it *well*. Green shares:

> You know it's not just about getting on stage and being a wild and busting bow hairs and doing all that. You know, is your hand position correct? Is your intonation correct? Because there's a little black girl somewhere looking at you on TV or the internet, going to emulate everything that you're doing, and what kind of example are you being for that young person who is so excited to see you doing what they want to do, that they're going to do everything that you're doing.

For respondents like Green, success also meant embodying an example of excellence, what it meant to be a success for the next generation of artists. It is worth noting that Green and the other 4 respondents who shared this viewpoint did not share common demographic characteristics that evidently pre-disposed them to communicating the importance of leading by example. Chelsey Green, Minna Salami, Gina Paige, Akua Naru and Nikki Taylor Roberts are different ages (ranging from early thirties, late thirties and late forties) and have different styles of business (including music, blogging, ancestry tracing and film).

Nikki Taylor Roberts, a filmmaker and founder of Rocket Light Films, who also described success as community uplift, notes that it was important that she

portray her success as attainable. Roberts has a boutique production company that in addition to writing and producing films and web television series, provides digital content for big brands. Some of the companies that have contracted her company, Rocket Light Films, include billion dollar organizations like Nike, Sony and Amazon. Her company has also secured distribution deals with major television networks like HBO. Additionally, one of her films has also shown at Cannes, a premiere film festival known for its elite curation.

She believed that uplifting others meant showing them that success was not inaccessible or only for a select few:

> We don't see a lot of examples like that where they seem attainable. There's something where you see black people or even like Latin people in this country when they get ahead it just seems like to the rest of the population, it's not attainable. It's like "oh that's Chris Rock, he's successful because you know he has a gift to be a comedian"…that person who's no less valuable than Chris Rock says to himself or herself, "I'll never be in that person's shoes because I didn't have the same breaks that person did." And so when I get to that level, if I were to ever become like crazy famous…I would want that success to be reflected back on people because it's like if I'm going to use my influence to do anything, it's going to be to encourage people and not make them feel so bad…

Success as professional and creative agency

Black women cultural entrepreneurs were deeply involved in their businesses. Creative agency can be defined as a way of exercising one's ability to purposefully

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create cultural products in an attempt to alter taken for granted personal circumstances, social realities and popular knowledge. Professional agency can be defined as being a willful actor in one's career, such that one takes an active role in shaping one's career opportunities, projects and work/life structure.

A common theme in the data is that black women cultural entrepreneurs shared a black feminist understanding of "self," which was not individualistic, but rooted in a collective identity (Collins 1990). For example, Minna Salami, referenced earlier, explains that her work is not only a personal endeavor, but motivated by the desire to enter into important conversations about gender, race, national identity and imperialism. She notes: "I would reiterate that being a cultural entrepreneur in the field that I do is a…it is a 100% of an independent choice that nevertheless stems or comes out of a necessity to speak and be present." In this sense, Salami views exercising professional agency as an act she performs on behalf of her communities.

Akua Naru, a Germany-based African American hip hop artist in her early thirties, shares that exercising professional and creative agency meant owning and controlling her own image in the media. Unlike other cultural entrepreneurs, such as filmmakers or painters, performance artists literally embody their art when they are live on stage or for recorded performance like music videos. For Naru, as a black woman, exercising her agency in this regard means having authority over the images her brand creates. Naru comments:

> [I] need to be clear about what am I saying, what am I doing, like how am I putting this across. I just did a video last week and it's like I had to think about how do I want to be portrayed, how should I portray this. Like, [I]

don't like the way that we [black women] have been portrayed in media, so when I have the chance to create my own thing or whatever that is I have to think about how [I] want to be portrayed.

Gender was an important factor shaping women's commitment to creative agency. When asked about the importance of creative control, Nikki Taylor Roberts shared that being a woman in control was "powerful," because society often denies women to be at the forefront. Roberts notes that being the owners, as opposed to employees meant that women, who otherwise would be more susceptible to being taken for granted or taken advantage of professionally, had the opportunity to be rewarded for their work. She comments, "As a woman, being an entrepreneur, yes you have more of an authority over you as an artist, you take control of that [because] you're not just like blowing energy and not reaping the benefits of it."

Roberts also speaks to a significant social perception that limits black women artists, in that instead of being seen as multi-talented, they are seen as not having a focused sense of direction in their careers. She says that being an owner allows a woman to exercise agency as the "master of her own craft," in the multiple areas it encompasses. She notes:

> You're so much more powerful when you can master your own craft, but not just in one specific way, meaning not just the doing of it, not just being the best director, not just being the best writer or producer, but to be able to at least do all those things well enough to protect you as that director or you as that director/writer. And women we don't have that, we're not even encouraged that directly or indirectly in society…

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Some black women cultural entrepreneurs were motivated to create a business because they realized they were fully capable and could be more effective than others in the industry. Discussing her startup story, Noah Sow describes her frustration with the incompetence she encountered through established music labels, which motivated her to start her own label. Sow reflects:

> I kept thinking I better invest this energy in my own business…People being half-assed, not disciplined, not interested in legal aspects, not communicating, and on top of all this culturally clueless or plain rude, remember that I'm a Black German woman. It was just much easier for me to become independent in everything I do.

Like most participants, Sow describes professional and creative agency as the greatest advantage to running her own business. She says:

> Not having to negotiate or interact if I don't want to. And working where I choose to work, on the projects I chose and approved of, applying my ethics to what I'm doing, being able to be fully responsible and accountable, and at the hours I choose. I can be most productive at 5 or 6 in the morning, going to bed around 8pm. Being my own boss all of these are not an issue.

It is a testament to the significance of professional and creative agency in these women's lives that they do not see the desire to fulfill one's own desires and engage in political projects to uplift their communities at odds. When it comes to the importance of creative control, Sow shares:

To me it's vital. Especially being a black woman. [I] have to consider the political aspect of being autonomous. Of amplifying my own questions and expressions. Of not catering to other [people's] interests. Of not dealing or interacting with people who were socialized to regard my body as disposable, my intellect as ancillary, my experience as non-universal and my work as a self service supermarket. If I want to work with people I'm sharing experiences with, whom I admire and like, then I automatically have to run my own business. At some point I made the deliberate decision that it's not my *responsibility* to "inspire" anyone. It's a choice and a gift and a practice. But not a responsibility.

Here Sow echoes earlier participants referenced earlier who were hesitant to use the word "responsibility" in references to particular duties associated with being a black woman. In choosing to identify her creative decisions and actions as a "choice, gift and practice," as opposed to a responsibility, she affirms that black womanhood is not burdensome, but actually affords her the opportunity to willfully express herself.

Achieving Success

This section explores how black women cultural entrepreneurs' go about achieving success and the meaning they ascribe to their paths to accomplishment. As discussed in the previous section on alternative understandings of success, this research project points towards an understanding of success that is unique to black women cultural entrepreneurs. These entrepreneurs relied upon distinctive tools that fostered their success, namely (1) community connectedness; (2) digital connectivity in that they took advantage of the Internet and social media to build symbolic and

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social capital; and/or (3) interconnected racial and gender identities. In this section I discuss these three areas, in turn, with a view towards how they shape research participants' path to success.

Community Connectedness

Amongst economists, cooperative economics has typically referred to the study of the business practices of cooperatives (Potter 1891; Gide 1921; Owen 1970; Matthews 1983). A cooperative is a particular type of business that is owned and managed by it workers. However, classic and contemporary African American scholars such as W.E.B. DuBois (1898, 1907) and Jessica Gordon Nembhard (2014) have used the term more broadly. These thinkers describe cooperative economics as practiced amongst African American individuals, kin, colleagues and fellow business owners who pool together money, skills, ideas and other resources to further their individual and collective interests (Gordon Nembhard 2014).

In *Collective Courage: A History of African American Cooperative Economic Thought and Practice*, Gordon Nembhard identifies W.E.B. DuBois[62] as one of several scholars who explored cooperative economics as a practice blacks could employ to redress racial economic inequality (Gordon Nembhard 2014). DuBois argued that racism created economic discrimination and inequality that necessarily limited how much success African Americans could achieve as capitalists (1907). Given persistent economic injustice, DuBois proposed that blacks continue to form

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[62] Works that Jessica Gordon Nembhard cites concerning W.E.B. DuBois economic theory include his 1898 volume, "Some Efforts of American Negroes for their Own Social Betterment." She also references a 1907 monograph included in his Atlanta University series on blacks entitled, "Economic Cooperation among Negro Americans."

group economies to meet their own needs, independent of the white mainstream economy. Nembhard elaborates, "This way we could control our own goods and services and gain income and wealth - stabilize ourselves and our communities. Then if we wanted to join the mainstream economy, we could join from a position of strength[63]" (Ifateyo 2014).

Research participants articulated cooperative practices that corresponded to the broader definition African American studies scholars have discussed. Community Connectedness was a core feature of the research participants' model of success in that it allowed them to practice cooperative economics. In light of the structural, social and personal challenges that limited the access to resources, several participants relied on community support to meet their needs and succeed. Community connections included bonds with colleagues, kin and mentors that participants leveraged to advance their success.

All 21 participants discussed receiving tangible support in the form of labor and consulting. For example, Deborah Crimes says that she relied on her friends to help create her products and services. She explains:

> [I] relied on my friends and family members who are certified teachers to help me write lesson plans. They wrote a lot of lesson plans for me in the beginning but then they also trained me and coached me on how to write them so then eventually I didn't need anyone to write them I just started to write them myself.

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[63] In essence, Nembhard argues that in defining the problem of the 20th century as the problem of the color line, he also articulated the solution as black cooperative economics (Ifateyo 2014).

One woman also formed strong friendships and family like bonds with her clients. Jafreda Epps, a hair stylist in her mid-thirties, describes her clients as a key resource that contributed to her success. She notes:

> [I] tend to connect a lot with them and so in exchange they connect with me and they share a lot. And so I would say, "oh my goodness I need business cards" and they would say "you should check this website." Or I would say, "I need someone to work on a website" and literally one of my clients was like, "oh I do websites, I can manage your website for you." So just by talking about my struggles with my clients, they became a resource for me as much as I think I've been a resource for them.

Bartering was also a common theme that allowed black women cultural entrepreneurs to circumvent limited access to resources and still continue their business development. For example, Chelsey Green shares that she approached another musician to perform on her album stating:

> I don't have ya'll's budget but I would be honored if you would play on my record and he was like, "we got you." So he had the horn section come and they did two tunes for me and we agreed that I would do the string arrangements for their upcoming album for free as well. That was a straight barter.

Black women's community connectedness contrasts with the individualism and competitiveness that characterizes enduring entrepreneurial representations (Kirzner 1973; Morris, Avila and Allen 1993; Morris, Davis and Allen 1994). For

example, Jasmine Stewart and Nalo Hopkinson contested the stereotype that

entrepreneurs needed to be competitive with each other. Stewart explains:

> There's I think a certain degree of support that young black women give each
> other when we're stepping out there. It's actually the complete antithesis of
> what the mainstream image is of black women—that we're just trying to tear
> each other down and we're just kind of into superficial shallowness…

Hopkinson reiterates this statement, noting:

> [The] other support I have received is from fellow artists who, sure the fields
> are competitive, but contrary to popular belief there's also a lot of people
> helping each other. So lots of older writers gave me very good advice just out
> of the generosity of their hearts.

Arguably, the structure of privilege and opportunity in their creative industries

requires that black women cultural entrepreneurs chart a more communal path to

success. Operating independently, the structural, social and personal challenges black

women cultural entrepreneurs have articulated can become professionally stymying.

It is worth noting that in articulating community connectedness, the

participants saw themselves as having a vested interest in each other's success. In

this sense, they echoed the black feminist notion that the collective self and the

individual self were implicated in each other. Anika Hobbs' commentary concerning

why she rarely posts selfies on Instagram highlights this point:

> I feel like as people of color, we do not have enough platforms to highlight us.
> So there's like an upper-echelon of us who are succeeding and who like get all
> the light. But there are so many creatives and artists and designers that are

doing really really wonderful things but don't have that outlet. And so we try

to really highlight the artist. Like you will hardly see a selfie of me on

Instagram or anything like that, like that's not what we're about.

In acknowledging that there are some black people that are privileged and get all the

light while others do not, Hobbs suggests that a false hierarchy makes black people

appear disparate and fragmented. She chooses to not draw the attention to herself in

posting "selfies" on Instagram, but prefers to highlight those artists that she thinks do

not receive enough praise.

Digital connectivity

Black women cultural entrepreneurs in this study used digital connectivity and

social media to practice self-study, build social capital and practice cooperative

economics. Participants indicated that they used social media as a means for

marketing, communicating one's interests and concerns. Participants discussed using

social media to establish themselves as thought leaders in their particular fields. For

example, a graphic designer may not only blog or tweet about their latest works, but

new design trends and techniques in the field because the ability to speak to broader

issues of interest to the blogger and her audience may enhance her credibility to her

audience.

Participants also described how the Internet allowed them as black women

cultural entrepreneurs to build symbolic and social capital. Symbolic capital includes

reputation, credibility and legitimacy (Bourdieu 1979). Social capital refers to the

formal or informal relationships individuals leverage in an effort to achieve benefits

in the market (Bourdieu 1979). As an independent artist, Akua Naru does not have an

expensive marketing team that will secure her promotions on television, radio and other media outlets. As such, she has to secure other means to reach her audience. Social media has allowed artists with limited budgets to build their audiences without costly promotions that are typically afforded to artists that make popular works. For example, Nauru shares:

> Now the Internet created a whole other world, like an opportunity for people to connect and for people who are...like some people really rely on Internet news sources or Internet media content to be informed about what is going on musically or socially or whatever. I feel like I've been able to use that to my advantage and like reach a lot of people and through that have a lot of more opportunities that I wouldn't have had if I just wasn't online cause how would the world have access, I mean I'm in Europe, and where are you? You are in Maryland?

As Naru points out, the Internet allowed her to build trust with her community. Record labels are investing less in artist development and instead prefer artists who have their own followings, having established themselves as a proven brand that can sell (Swift 2014). As such, the industry has shifted to place the onus of brand development and recognition on the artist, not the label (Swift 2014). Artists like Naru use social media to enhance her brand recognition and network, which can be interpreted as forms of symbolic and social capital respectively. She does this through carefully curating the posts she shares on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

As mentioned, absent large budgets that afford black women cultural entrepreneurs expensive marketing campaigns, social media transforms followers into

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marketing committees (Holiday 2014). Chelsey Green explains this idea in reviewing

the importance of social media for her career. She shares:

> Social media is a huge engagement and it's very important to the connection
> you have with the audience because still to this day, word of mouth is the
> strongest version of publicity that you can have. So when you have one
> audience of people committed to what you're doing that can spread the word
> to various other people, they're actually part of your marketing team at that
> point.

Several participants noted that social media afforded them access to paying customers

or influential people who could open doors for lucrative opportunities. As Myrtis

Bedolla notes: "I've sold artwork to people abroad that I've never met because they

found us through a Facebook post or something tweeted something about us and then

they went to the website so definitely it's beneficial." J'Nell Jordan also shares this

perspective noting that she may not have been able to start her own company without

these digital tools. Jordan says:

> I feel like if I was trying this 10 years ago or 15 years ago, this absolutely
> would not be...I don't know how I would be doing it, I might be a starving
> artist for real. Maybe I'd feel very differently about it, maybe I would be
> really crushed at my 9 to 5 and just it might be very different. I can reach
> people who have never seen my work before, I can reach them and ask them
> to come out to a show or something like that. It's a great marketing tool.
>
> Respondents also indicate that social media was a way to practice co-

operative economics. To illustrate, Anika Hobbs discussed the mutual support she

shared with other key influencers on social media. Hobbs' social media account had less followers on Instagram than a popular figure on Instagram that was a member of her network. When her colleague posts a picture of her wearing an item from Hobbs' shop, it drives attention to Hobbs' website and increases sales. As Hobbs explains, this figure will post a picture of herself wearing an item from Hobbs' shop online and "then it's off the rack."

Still, noting a generational difference, other participants lamented their inactivity on social media, noting that they recognized its importance for business success. For example, Adrena Ifill says that "social media is not yet a way of life" as she observes it is for younger people. Ifill and Myrtis Bedolla mentioned that they would each like to have a social media manager to optimize their social media presence. Bedolla shares that she is still uncertain about her target audience's engagement of social media and, thus, hasn't taken her children's advice on maximizing her online presence:

> I wish I were better at it...I put that in the hands of young people because they're so much better at it. I'm less concerned about it than I used to be. Because [I] justified it in my head, because I am not certain that the audience I serve looks to social media in the way that...for advice...or that helps them to make their art buying decisions...my kids are always saying mom you need to do this and then that because for them you know it's second nature, but for me it isn't. So I do what I am able to do or what I allow myself to do. But I really wish I were using it more fully. I think I would benefit from it.

When asked if social media plays a crucial role in her business, Lulu Kitolo affirmed that it had, but not just for marketing purposes, but also how it helped her build community. Lulu Kitololo identified with black women all over the world when describing the benefits of social media. She says:

> [It's] been amazing to find all these black women all over the world, creative and cultural entrepreneurs who are doing really interesting things and it's just like, it feels kind of affirming cause then you realize there are so many of us, you know we can be an aid to each other and we're doing really great things and so it's really inspiring and encouraging as much as in my physical environment I might feel that I stand out or I'm alone, it's nice to know that there are so many of us.

Intersecting identity

Black women cultural entrepreneurs' in this study suggest that their intersecting racial and gender identities as helping them achieve both financial success and success in the ways they collectively articulated. In this regard, a third important theme in the data indicated that interconnected identity was important to achieving success. As described in Chapter 4, the study participants tended to articulate success as cultural intervention, black community uplift and professional/creative agency. As I go on to discuss, the data suggests that interconnected identity particularly supported participants in realizing the former two understandings of success.

Interview data suggests that being both black and woman gave participants a unique perspective that allowed them to relate and market to untapped and

underserved markets. Drawing connections between identity and business operations, two participants also indicated that their intersecting identities shaped their organizational structure and business decisions. In this sense, their intersecting identity connected them to a creative and cultural legacy from which they could draw inspiration to create innovative content that was lacking in the industry. Nevertheless, one participant did note that her racial and gender identity was not essential to her professional success. Additionally, one participant noted that as a black woman conceptual artist, she could leverage her outsider status to gain attention that others would not.

Despite challenges associated with being black and women, participants communicated that their intersecting identities were also advantageous professionally. To this end, Jasmine Stewart suggests:

> Black women have a very unique social positioning that we can take advantage [of] that I think allows us to be able to relate to diverse peoples and organizations, diverse groups and organizations. And I kind of feel as like it's our responsibility, like it's almost our obligation…I think we can carve out a new space, where we can lead without relying heavily on just a patriarchal system.

Nalo Hopkinson a Jamaican science fiction writer felt that her black womanhood also advantaged her. Still, in her reflection, her racial identity allowed her to relate to the diverse black populations across the African diaspora. She states:

> I think that, you cannot discount the value of that. When I'm home anywhere in the English-speaking Caribbean, they're all very different cultures, with

different languages, and different foods, but there are connections, I find them right away. We understand each other at some level. We don't always. They think I'm American, and it's a big thing, but I can signify and have that recognition. I think that's a large part of it. And I just like us.

While Stewart has not encountered any personal challenges to developing her business, she nevertheless recognized patriarchy and white supremacy as systems of oppression that fundamentally influenced her organizational structure. Two other participants drew connections between their racial consciousness and business decisions[64]. For example, Gina Paige, specializing in ancestry tracing made it a point to hire black employees exclusively. Additionally, Anika Hobbs, a fair trade fashion boutique owner communicated reservations about selling wares by white artisans, preferring to sell products exclusively by black artisans.

While two participants saw their racial identity as primary, one saw her gender as more prominent than her racial identity. The remaining 17 participants suggested that their racial and gender identities articulated to create particular hardships. The two participants who communicated the primacy of their racial identity included Gina Paige and a woman in the fashion industry. Anika Hobbs, a fair trade fashion boutique owner specializing in African inspired wares by local artisans and those across Africa. She suggests that how she identifies complicates her business decisions. Hobbs notes that recognizing the importance of her race has shaped contractual decisions, which continue to be a source of tension as she develops her business. When asked whether she sees her race or gender more

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[64] I discuss these participants' concerns in this regard in-depth in the Chapter 5 section on "Achieving Success."

important to her identity she responds, "[Definitely] my race. [I'm] really pro-black and sometimes that gets me in a tough place." I followed up asking her to expound on how race gets her into a "tough place." She elaborates:

> [For] example, I do have some vendors that are white and because they fall under showing culture, they have the philanthropic side but you know I toil with that, I toil with that a lot, like what that means. Like one of the brands that I have, they've gone into Kenya, they're Swedish and gone into Kenya and they've basically set up shops and they're helping women and things like that. But there's a side of me that's like, I don't need a white lady to do that for us but I still love what they do and I feel like their heart is in the right place so I work with them. I fight within myself on that.

Gina Paige of African Ancestry also saw her racial identity as paramount. She notes:

> I definitely I see myself as a community of black people. I don't identify right off the bat with women. I'm very very black. So if I have to be down with women or be down with black people, I'mma be down with black people. For the most part. I'm not going to sacrifice anything that I feel or believe as a woman for the black community but my first inclination is to be black and proud.

Paige clarified her remarks to note that she saw herself first and foremost as a member of the black community; within this group she also saw herself as part of it's subset of black women.

Unlike Paige and Hobbs, Stewart provided an intersectional racial and gender analysis to explain why her collective promotes group-centered as opposed to individual-focused leadership. Drawing a comparison between the Civil Rights movement she remarks:

Civil Rights that was cool, black power that was alright, black feminism okay that is more kind of on point. And, now, you take that and say, "Okay, now how do we just step in to leadership positions?" But it doesn't have to be leadership position for the black women or the leadership position for the white…cause black men and white women are kind vying for more patriarchal positions and generally black women are not trying to… I think we can carve out a new space, where we can lead without relying heavily on just a patriarchal system. So I feel like that's the kind of approach in terms of organizational leadership that I try to apply to what we do that we're not hierarchical, [our collective] is not hierarchical, meaning like okay [I'm] the front person cause [I'm] the loudest. Sometimes it looks crazy and chaotic but as long as we can, we don't do that. Anybody can step to the forefront and say I got this, I'm going to throw the ball or baton to you and you…

For example, a recurring theme in the data indicated that participants believed that other people's reactions to them shaped their consciousness of their racial or gender identity in a given context. To illustrate, Mona Penn-Joussett explains, "I think about it sometimes but it's too intermingled because depending on what I want from a person or what I want from a situation, one thing is more emphasized than the other. Not coming from me, coming from them…" Hopkinson echoes this sentiment

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noting, "[It] depends on where I am, like what the context is, but usually, it's some combination of any of those. I can't sort separate out one piece of me and say, well, it's not about you today. I come as always one."

Still, other participants, like Deborah Crimes did not believe that her racial or gender identity shaped her challenges or experiences as a cultural entrepreneur. Moreover, she believed that her racial and gender identities should not impact why people choose to be a partner or customer. Crimes is the founder of Lessons From Abroad, an organization that offers language and cultural education lessons to youth. Crimes, however, does note that there are certain contracts and opportunities that are race and gender based to which she would still apply:

I don't know the reason why people are doing that, why do they need to that, unless it's to win a particular contract. I'm just an entrepreneur. It just so happens that I'm black and I'm a woman. And again if I need to use those identities, then I will. But if I don't, I'm just an entrepreneur, I have a business, I have a product, a service, I have something to offer whoever and hopefully it doesn't matter what I am. It just matters that you have a need for that service and I might be the best company or the best buy as you want it.

Nalo Hopkinson and Minna Salami suggested that their interconnected identities helped them succeed as cultural entrepreneurs in that being black and women inspired the products they created. Nalo Hopkinson a Jamaican science fiction novelist and fabric designer based in the United States shares: "We come [from] African diasporic culture, we got some style. We're [a] people with an amazing set of culture that wherever we live, we make culture and have done since

we've existed and that drive and that beauty buoys me up." Hopkinson also explained that being inspired by other black and black women creatives' works at a young age affirmed her belief in her potential to also succeed as a cultural entrepreneur. She recalls:

> I remember the first time I saw, it was an ABC book that featured African people, it was called Ashanti to Zulu by Leo and Dianne Dylan and I had never seen stylized, contemporary paintings of African people designed to show our beauty the way I would see on the covers of, say, the fantasy novels I read. [That] recognition not only [of] here's somebody else who thinks you're beautiful but that it's possible to think that way, to make art that way, to have it published. But just the recognition says hey, you're here.

Minna Salami a writer and former online fashion boutique owner echoes this remark noting:

> [We] have rich cultural legacies and pools to tap into. But also the fact that our history and our cultures have been so negated and obscured by both patriarchy and white supremacy. So I think you know it's a little bit like as a child when you wonder off into the woods excited about what you might find or wherever you wonder off to even if it's just your backyard and you're excited about flowers and plants and trees and animals. It's a little bit that feeling that I have about black women's history, you know. There's so much to uncover and tell and relish at. Yeah I feel very enriched by it, I feel like there's a lot of advantages to my cultural background and to having my cultural background.

Kenya (Robinson) a conceptual performance artist was the only participant who explicitly acknowledged that the challenges she face were simultaneously her opportunities. Being denied professional opportunities to be affiliated with an institution or gallery, she has a freedom that artists with such affiliations do not necessarily experience. For example, she shares:

> I don't think that there are many artists like me. And, I'm not talking about my work persay, but like there aren't many artists who, well, there are artists who have the pedigree and they've been co-opted very early in their career and so they are attached to an organization or an institution or ummm a gallery or something like that and none of that has worked out for me, so it gives me a lot of space to say and do whatever I want. So, like, there are a lot of artists who are making a lot of money, but they can't go on record saying certain things.

(Robinson) also acknowledged that her racial and gender identity advantaged her in the realm of conceptual performance art. She suggests that this is an arena in which artists are striving to stand out. Because the field is mostly white and male, as a black woman, she is necessarily distinct from the crowd. In this sense, creating art that allows her to exaggerate her identity affords her a unique path to distinction. (Robinson) says that there has not yet been a "woman Stagga Lee[65]," a space she can uniquely occupy as a black woman. She notes:

> There hasn't [been] like just a bad girl. I think in many ways, that really is my brand. That's just who I've always been…especially not a black woman. I

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[65] Stagga Lee is a badman archetype associated with black men. This character is noted as a aggressive, lawless and defiant of white authority.

mean, Kara Walker is not that. Even though she may have had this really provocative material, her personality is not matched like, I'm talking about I'm a hundred million on the art and I'm a hundred million at cocktail parties.

<div align="center">***</div>

In this chapter, I reviewed particular, but not definitive ways, in which black women cultural entrepreneurs define success. Key themes in the data suggest that social impact in the form of cultural intervention and black community uplift were important to black women cultural entrepreneurs' definitions of success. Similarly, professional/creative agency emerged as central to the research participants' understanding of and experiences of that success.

Black women cultural entrepreneurs have articulated a particular politics. Their way of negotiating and demonstrating power involves collective uplift, cultural intervention and personal agency. These politics articulate with a keen awareness of personal, social and structural realities that I discussed in Chapter 4. In the concluding chapter I synthesize important considerations in the section on "Achieving Success" to describe the ways in which black women cultural entrepreneurs create the conditions that make their success possible. Weaving together various participants' perspectives and experiences, I explain that this process emerged as a system built upon various connections, which merits further exploration. I argue that black women cultural entrepreneurs have thus rendered cultural entrepreneurship a political space for community, women's empowerment and consciousness raising.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION: SWOT ANALYSIS AND THEORIZING THE CONNECTED ECONOMY

To conclude this study, I metaphorically employ the term SWOT analysis. This business-planning tool reveals a company's standing by evaluating its viability and relevance. SWOT is an acronym for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Applying the metaphors of "strengths" and "weaknesses," I identify key advantages and limitations to this study. "Opportunities" refer to recommendations for further inquiry of black women cultural entrepreneurs. "Threats" connote continued difficulties this group may face if scholars and policymakers do not recognize their unique needs and experiences as valid.

I end with a discussion of the ways in which black women cultural entrepreneurs' economic practices can be analyzed systematically. To this end, I theorize the ways in which research participants have communicated the pillars of an alternative economy that supports the realization of their particular definitions of success. I describe this economy as The Connected Economy.

Key Findings

For black women cultural entrepreneurs, the "New Bottom Line" goes beyond financial gain. This group, while not uniform in their understandings of success, largely understood their most meaningful accomplishments as being able to make social impact in the form of cultural intervention, black community uplift and professional/creative agency. The structural, social and personal challenges that

black women cultural entrepreneurs encounter have shaped their particular perspectives on success.

As described in the literature review, many scholars have argued that increased black entrepreneurship will foster enhanced social welfare for black communities. However, outside of research on black capitalism little scholarship has explored the extent to which black entrepreneurs, themselves, link their business efforts to social empowerment (Hutchinson 1993). I find that for black women cultural entrepreneurs, success is largely understood as social impact.

Social entrepreneurs have been critiqued for not being more self-reflexive about why certain people arrive to be social entrepreneurs while others arrive to be the recipients of social entrepreneurs' initiatives (Farmer 2016). As such, social entrepreneurship requires a fundamental distance between social entrepreneurs and the communities they empower. Many black women cultural entrepreneurs, however, mainly started these businesses because they felt deeply embedded in the communities they wanted to serve. In fact they, in part, define success by effecting positive social change in the communities to which they belong.

Black women cultural entrepreneurs' understanding of success is not to be underestimated in that it calls for a paradigmatic shift concerning important underlying assumptions in entrepreneurship literature, in general, and social entrepreneurship, in particular. Entrepreneurship literature suggests the profit motive is the primary inspiration for success (Yunus 2009; Yunus 2011). Black women's understanding of success suggests they have myriad motivations, in which their

collective identity, and the linked fate which they believe people of African descent

share, is primary.

Strengths

A major advantage of this study is that in identifying black women cultural

entrepreneurs as a unique community, this research opens the door for further study

on this group. In identifying black women cultural entrepreneurs as a particular

entrepreneurial class, I articulated the following thesis statement:

> Black women cultural entrepreneurs are a particular
> interpretive community with values, perspectives and
> experiences, which are not wholly idiosyncratic, but shaped
> by collective experiences and larger social forces. Black
> women are not a monolith, but they are neither disconnected
> individuals completely devoid of group identity. The
> meaning they give to their businesses, professional
> experiences and understandings of success are influenced by
> their shared social position and identity as black women.

Substantiating this statement allowed me to communicate the importance of research

on black women cultural entrepreneurs and feminist theoretical and methodological

approaches to investigating their experiences. This theoretical and methodological

approach allowed me to acknowledge black women cultural entrepreneurs' collective

standpoint and validate their own perspectives and experiences.

The benefit of enhancing knowledge on women through an intersectional lens

goes beyond simply filling voids in the literature, but has the potential to advance and

ultimately transform scholarship in entrepreneurship, art and black feminist thought.

Similarly to how privileged groups are less likely to be aware of the perspectives and

experiences of those outside of their purview, scholarship in certain fields may

continue to reflect pre-defined "knowledge cultures" that are characterized by

repeated discussions, theories and terms of art (Somers in McDonald 1999:53). Arguably, these conventions remain rigorous and relevant to the extent that they help scholars better understand understudied and new phenomena. When an existing ontology does not help clarify the lesser known and current matters of investigation, either the subject matter of inquiry may not prove fruitful for critique; Or, scholars should consider broadening the spectrum of analysis and the tools with which they use to conduct such analysis (Somers in McDonald 1999).

This research demonstrates the utility of broadening the ontological considerations in entrepreneurship. Substantive areas for inquiry, which should not be taken for granted are black women entrepreneurs, cultural entrepreneurs and intersectional theorizing in general. This dissertation drew upon black feminist thought and feminist theory to make sense of the particular experiences of black women cultural entrepreneurs. Given the insights this approach has yielded, I argue that future research on entrepreneurs not take their identity for granted, but explore the ways in which intersecting structural and social forces shape their experiences with success.

Taking black women cultural entrepreneurs' experiences seriously suggests that we re-consider how success is defined and what the path to realizing it involves for all entrepreneurs. Black women cultural entrepreneurs demonstrate that in understanding the various ways in which entrepreneurs define success it is worthwhile to also explore why and how they come to interpret success accordingly. For many black women cultural entrepreneurs, their shared social position and collective experiences as black women have shaped their perspectives on success.

This research project asserts that acknowledging the insights black women cultural entrepreneurs provide entrepreneurs in general, also requires recognizing alternative forms of organizing and resistance as valid. Scholars like Robinson, Blockson and Robinson (2007) demonstrate that black women's entrepreneurial endeavors are often overlooked or minimized because they take place in the informal economy, suggesting that those succeeding financially with familiar infrastructure are the standard against which others are seen as legitimate entrepreneurs.

I broadened the scope of my analysis to women who did not own businesses with large staffs and high profits. In doing so, I learned that while participants wanted additional support, they resisted ideologies, structural inequality and social oppression that hampered their professional growth and development. Given that the research participants defined their own success, they recognized themselves as successful in various and non-traditional ways that may have gone overlooked through a narrow lens (which largely interprets success according to firm size and financial gain). Moreover, in prioritizing black women cultural entrepreneurs' voices and recognizing their forms of resistance as valid, I was able to recognize a system by which black women cultural entrepreneurs support their own and each other's success.

Another major contribution of this study is how the experiences of black women cultural entrepreneurs speak to prevailing definitions of The Connected Economy. The three dimensions of this system reflect the key themes in this dissertation: black women's intersecting identities; community connections and

digital connectivity. I argue that these connections support black women cultural

entrepreneurs in making social impact and exercising professional/creative agency.

Limitations

Many considerations were beyond the theoretical scope of this paper. Key

limitations in this study include the sample size and diversity of respondents.

Because the sample size was 21 participants and I took a qualitative (as opposed to

quantitative) approach, my findings are limited in their generalizability to the entire

population of black women cultural entrepreneurs. However, the research design did

position me to make contributions to theory about this group.

Additionally, this research has focused on race and gender as central and

broad aspects of black women cultural entrepreneurs' experiences. As such, it lacks

the nuance associated with other aspects of black women's identities including class,

sexuality, nationality and ability for example. The sample could have been more

diverse in terms of including participants of various identities from more diverse

geographic backgrounds. For example, one participant noted that being queer also

shaped her perspectives on success and the challenges she faced in pursuing that

success.

Another limitation can also be interpreted as an opportunity for further

inquiry. This study is limited in the extent to which it can theorize *about* cultural

entrepreneurship, as a field unto itself. One theme that did arise, but was beyond the

scope of my analysis was the idea that entrepreneurship supported respondents'

personal freedom. Yet, theoretically, I was not able to determine in what ways

cultural entrepreneurship *is* emancipatory for black women. Rather, my research has

only been able to glean how black women cultural entrepreneurs interpret the impact

of their businesses. However, in light of my findings and analysis, I argue that

sociologists are uniquely positioned to shed light on the emancipatory potential of

cultural entrepreneurship.

Peter L. Berger suggests that sociology is both subversive and conservative; to

understand either of these leanings, one must understand the relationship between

sociology and freedom[66]. In the same vein of *The Social Construction of Reality*,

Berger suggests that individuals take much of their knowledge for granted and this

same knowledge legitimates dominant ideologies and institutions. Sociology,

however, helps to unveil the reality of the social world and is therefore, "a threat to

the taken-for-granted quality of legitimating thought patterns…and to the individuals

who have a stake in the institutional status quo...by its own intrinsic logic, [sociology]

keeps generating such threats" (Berger 1971:2). Sociology's "built-in debunking

effect" gives it what could be considered emancipatory potential (Berger 1971:2).

The discipline offers a full and ironic portrait of freedom, as both necessary

and impossible in particular ways.

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[66] Although Berger does not offer a clear definition of freedom, he conceptualizes it
as freedom from the prevailing status quo imposed on society through institutions and
vested interests. The irony, however, is that sociology also shows us that freedom, in
this sense, can never be completely realized as "society…is the imposition of order
upon the flux of human experience" and "*every* social institution, no matter how
'nonrepressive' or 'consensual,' is an imposition of order" (Berger 1971, 3). Using
the metaphor of consciousness, Berger suggests that freedom would mean a constant
state of awareness that would be humanly impossible to endure. Sociology
demonstrates that every society needs order, continuity and triviality to function and
these imply limits to freedom (Berger 1971:3).

> Sociology, therefore, is a liberating discipline in a very specific way. There can be no doubt about its liberating effects on consciousness. At least potentially, sociology may be a prelude to liberation not only of thought but of action. At the same time, however, sociology points up the social limits of freedom—the very limits that, in turn, provide the social space for an empirically viable expression of freedom (Berger 1971:4).

Pierre Bourdieu echoes Berger's "paradox of freedom" in his *In Other Words:*

> And so, paradoxically, sociology frees us by freeing us from the illusion of freedom, or more, exactly, from the misplaced belief in illusory freedoms. Freedom is not something given: it is something you conquer—collectively…The analysis of mental structures is an instrument of liberation (Bourdieu 1990:15-16).

Both scholars highlight three important points concerning freedom, which are in line with liberation sociology. Namely, liberation does not necessarily produce utopia, but may engender alternative (and in some instances even similar) constraints to freedom. Sociology as a discipline is particularly equipped to facilitate liberated consciousness. Freedom must be understood as more than a philosophical or political ideal, but an aspect of human life that is interpreted and negotiated through everyday lived experiences.

Therefore, future sociologists' research may be best suited to investigate the liberatory potential of cultural entrepreneurship for black women – the field could have proven and still may prove more oppressive than freeing for black women – rather scholars can explore what "illusions of freedom," black women cultural entrepreneurs might disrupt. This consideration helps discern the significance and implications of such research. As I mentioned in the introduction:

Including black women in scholarship on entrepreneurship requires that researchers fundamentally reconsider taken for granted assumptions concerning success as financial gain, profit as the primary motivation for business development and the very meaning and purpose of entrepreneurship as a capitalist endeavor.

In the context of black women cultural entrepreneurs, such "illusions of freedom" to disrupt may include the "rags to riches entrepreneur" narrative and socially constructed belief that hard work will necessarily be rewarded accordingly.

Opportunities

Opportunities for future research include more and diverse research participants. More research on a larger number of research participants can produce more generalizable results. Additionally, situating black women cultural entrepreneurs in a broader international context while accounting for regional differences can also prove beneficial.

An overarching theme in comparative scholarship is the idea that certain processes are best illuminated and understood from an international perspective. Focusing on cultural entrepreneurship from a local perspective obscures important processes and relationships that influence the common transnational expressions of black women's art and entrepreneurship. In fact, foundational leaders and movements of social entrepreneurship (from which, cultural entrepreneurship is said to derive) have occurred in Bangladesh and Kenya (Yunus 2008; Maathai 2003). The experiences and strategies of several social entrepreneurs in the global south have influenced and been replicated in the United States. A narrow perspective obscures the central role of these countries in shaping theories and templates that have been

replicated amongst social entrepreneurs in the United States (Bornstein 2007). A local perspective also occludes questions about the interconnectedness of cultural entrepreneurs as well as their strategies, challenges and goals.

A world-systems perspective suggests that nations are necessarily mutually constitutive; the economic and political actors that make them up may or may not be aware of the processes that shape their interconnectedness. In understanding cultural entrepreneurship, a world-systems perspective demonstrates that businesswomen across the African diaspora may be linked in multiple and subtle ways. In *Forces of Labor: Worker's Movements and Globalization Since 1870*, Beverly J. Silver (2003) explains that relational processes can be direct or indirect. "The specific contribution of the world-systems perspective to social analysis is its focus on …indirect relational processes" in which, "affected actors are often not fully conscious of the relational links. Rather, actors are linked behind their back by systemic processes" (Silver 2003:27).

An analysis of the international process of black women's cultural entrepreneurship can benefit from world-systems considerations, but must also account for its limitations in this context. World-systems analysis tends to minimize the role of collectivities and individual agency in effecting social change. The unit of analysis from a world-systems perspective is the world and the totality can be identified as *the* structuring agent that facilitates social change (Silver 2003). Beverly Silver argues: "The larger system has a steamroller-like quality…[excluding] a priori a situation in which local action (agency) significantly impacts local outcomes, much

less a situation in which local agency impacts the operation of the system as a whole"

(Silver 2003:30).

Freida High W. Tesfagiorgis', "In search of a discourse and critique/s that

center the art of Black women artists", reflects the role of art in developing black

women's self-definition and collective identity (Tesgagiorgis in Busia and James

1993). Tesfagiorgis goes farther to suggest that black women's art, and particularly

visual art, is important in understanding possibilities for bridging communities locally

and internationally.

> By speaking a shared language derived from shared
> knowledge/s and cultural and social experiences, black
> women artists could collectively discover each other,
> and our collective history…such a synthesis for Black
> women artists could contribute to our empowerment at
> both intellectual and practical levels, and thus
> potentially lead to the development of an irreversible
> collective critical art history and activism that would
> not only make use visible and effective in the various
> institutions of the dominant art establishment, but also
> increase our effectiveness in our multiple communities
> (1993:237).

Still, it is not analytically sufficient to claim that black women cultural

entrepreneurs are necessarily interconnected as their societies are; this must be

demonstrated. Tomich argues that understanding events outside of a larger context

"restricts sociological reflection to the correlation of repetitive social phenomena that

are *taken as given* in each instance" (Tomich 1997:1457, emphasis added). This

assertion echoes the logic of Africana scholars Tiffany Ruby Patterson and Robin

Kelley who explained that "[the] linkages…that tie the Diaspora together must be

articulated and are not inevitable" (Patterson and Kelley 2000:20).

Threats

As a group that has been historically and systematically oppressed, understanding challenges and opportunities for black women in expressing their freedom is important to understanding black women's cultural entrepreneurship. A potentially great challenge facing this group is that scholars and policy makers may conduct research about them in a way that is either decidedly or unconsciously apolitical or colorblind. This research has shown the importance of black women cultural entrepreneurs' racial and gender identities. These identities are not simply characteristics, but marginalize black women within embedded social structures. Still scholars would be remiss to conceptualize black women cultural entrepreneurs as so oppressed that they cannot exercise agency or practice resistance.

Future research on black women cultural entrepreneurs requires that scholars recognize and address the disciplinary leanings that prioritize investigations of domination and minimize the role of research participants. Concerning conceptions of freedom, ironically, sociology was founded to understand how to maintain a prevailing and oppressive status quo. Since its inception, many scholars, particularly those in the fields of public and liberation sociology, have advocated for a sociology that is critically engaged, invested in the advancement of oppressed populations and, in general, improves the recursive relationship between academia and society (Feagin and Vera 2008). Both theory and focused studies exploring the needs of oppressed groups that make their own knowledge central is essential to recent disciplinary progress.

Positionality and self-reflection are also important in participatory action

research (Herr and Anderson 2005). The researcher must understand their role in relation to and as perceived by participants. Self-reflexivity has been seen as "essential" in qualitative research given that the researcher is the "instrument" of analysis (Glesne 1999; Russell and Kelly 2002; Watt 2007). Researchers reflect to become aware of what experiences, beliefs, behavior or assumptions that enhance or obscure their perspective on the phenomena they study (Russell and Kelly 2002).

Participatory action research is a method that recognizes action and research as intertwined, rather than mutually exclusive (Herr & Anderson 2005). De Schutter and Yopo (1981) identify seven key components of participatory action research as: 1.) Contextualizing social events within macro-level social forces; 2.) Framing social processes and structures within historical context; 3.) Recognizing theory and practice as integrated; 4.) Creating a "subject-subject relationship" with participants through dialogue; 5.) Recognizing research and action as unified process (as opposed to mutually exclusive); 6.) Creating critical knowledge through practitioner community partnership; and 7.) Apply findings immediately to a present-day real-world situation.

This approach is a useful method in the proposed study for two main reasons. First, it makes the knowledge of the group I aim to study central by recognizing the participants as creators of knowledge. Second, it is recognized as an emancipatory method and, therefore, in line with the research purpose and public and liberation sociology research philosophies that frame this dissertation. The most significant aspect of action research according to Herr and Anderson is that it alters the power dynamic between scholars and those "traditionally called the subjects of research"

(2005). Historically, knowledge created by blacks (particularly knowledge expressed through cultural creations) has been minimized or explicitly written out of scholarly discussions relative to the predominately white and male dominated canon (Ladner 1973; Collins 1990). Hence, Herr and Anderson argue it is not coincidental that "emancipatory, grassroots approaches to research emerged from the oppressive social conditions of the third world and among disenfranchised groups in the U.S." (2005). This approach therefore aims to elucidate understanding from participants in a manner that aims to mitigate against disempowerment.

As mentioned in the literature review, participatory action research shares similar aims to liberation sociology in giving voice to groups whose voices may otherwise go unheard or muddled in an academic setting as well as in providing knowledge that will be useful to those being studied and those in similar situations. In addition to intellectual investigation with participants, this approach also aims to generate products, instruments, strategies and/or theory that will be useful to the group at hand and similar groups (Herr and Anderson 2005). Argyris and Schon recognize the goal of action research as the creation of "knowledge that is useful, valid, descriptive of the world, and informative of how we might change it" (1985:x). While more positivistic approaches may valorize an approach that yields more generalizable theory, Argyris and Schon suggest: "to attain a certain level of rigor, the methodology may become so disconnected from the reality it is designed to understand that it is no longer useful" (1985:x).

While there are many ways to employ participatory action research for studies pertaining to black women cultural entrepreneurs, the main tenant of this approach

that may prove most useful to research on black women cultural entrepreneurs is actively incorporating the participants studied. To this end, scholars and policy makers may be well served to develop a hypothesis and research project with black women cultural entrepreneurs themselves. This tactic allows participants to be engaged in the research process (rather than only examined) and may help make the fruits of research applicable and useful to their businesses.

Theorizing The New Bottom Line in The Connected Economy

As mentioned in the introduction, an oppositional consciousness is a mental state that empowers members of a marginalized group to identify the injustice of their oppression and effect change on their behalf (Sandoval 2000; Mansbridge 2001). Disbelieving has proven to be an enduring resistance strategy for marginalized communities, particularly women (Sandoval 2000; Lorde 2007).

Defining success as cultural intervention, black community uplift and professional/creative agency, respondents suggested that their particular race and gender identity posed them to succeed in these areas. In this sense, they enacted a form of resistance termed "disbelieving" (Sandoval 2000). In disbelieving, they did not give credence to dominant ideologies that suggest black womanhood is inherently disadvantageous.

I argue that the research participants articulated an oppositional consciousness to create an alternative means of defining and achieving success. This consciousness empowers them with resources, connections and meaning not readily conferred in traditional entrepreneurial settings. In this sense, the personal, social and structural

challenges have been foundational to the formation of an alternative economy, which I refer to as The Connected Economy.

I argue that The Connected Economy is an economy based on human, internal and digital connections that comprise this system's three key pillars. The human connection of The Connected Economy references the connections amongst black women cultural entrepreneurs and their community. The internal connections include the intersecting and interconnected identities of both race and gender. The digital connections encompass all the modes of communication utilizing information technology and social media.

The Connected Economy is an economy in which products and services are exchanged with the aim of fostering cultural intervention, black community uplift and professional/creative agency. As opposed to other economies like the market or creative economy where goods and services are exchanged for profit, The Connected Economy is more akin to The Gift Economy. Sociologist Marcel Mauss' (1954) book *The Gift* was influential to understandings of the The Gift Economy. Mauss argued that the exchange of objects between groups fosters human connection and recognizes non-monetary exchanges as an economic practice (Levi-Strauss 1987; Hyde 2007). In light of the challenges to success the respondents articulated, I argue that black women cultural entrepreneurs' relationships are invaluable in that they are the means by which they exchange their knowledge, labor and skills for goods and services that serve them. As one participant, Olivia Jones remarks:

> [My] network of friends have helped me with referrals…Partners played a
> really big role in just providing emotional support and financial stability and

yeah my family and also people who I don't even know like through social

media have been very supportive. Yeah relationships have been kind of key.

As many participants described the importance of relying on their networks of

friends, family and colleagues for support, human connection emerged as a

significant theme in the research.

In terms of their own communities, many black women cultural entrepreneurs

feel dominant cultural businesses do not reflect the diverse perspectives and

experiences of black people of African descent. Consequently, many cultural

businesses lead to products and services that are not designed to meet their unique

needs and interests, or do not cater to them at all. In short, black women cultural

entrepreneurs find that women and people of African descent are largely

misunderstood or ignored by existing purveyors in the their respective creative fields.

The dearth of diverse cultural representations, inclusion in positions of

cultural authority and resources are major motivations to advance their own

businesses. Key strategies to achieve success included practicing cooperative

economics; building symbolic and social capital online through social media; and

drawing creative and professional inspiration from one's racial and gender identity.

At several points in their lives, several participants had powerful experiences

with art, culture and media that positively impacted them. Such experiences

demonstrated the power of effecting change through cultural mediums. A belief in

the power of art and culture inspires many black women cultural entrepreneurs to

continue to share cultural products that will have a similar beneficent social impact.

Several research participants also demonstrated that their motivations for success also stemmed from a frustration with dominant authorities, cultural products and business practices. The black women cultural entrepreneurs in this study communicated that African Americans' art, experiences and perspectives are not venerated in the ways they should be. Additionally, they believe that black community members should be more aware of the products and services black cultural entrepreneurs create. As such, many black women cultural entrepreneurs in this study demonstrated that success cannot be reduced to how much one sells or earns. Rather, success is also a matter of transforming cultural attitudes, uplifting other members of their racial community and exercising one's agency to change attitudes and perspectives.

The research project is evolving into an extended study that will continue to develop over time. I am currently working in partnership with an organization co-founded by a black woman cultural entrepreneur, Milan "Whippa" Wiley. Wiley is a founding member of the creative agency and arts collective Fear & Fancy, whose primary client is recording artist, Jidenna. This organization also has another director, Eleanor Kateri Tannis, who is also a black woman cultural entrepreneur of Caribbean and Filipino, descent. As Art Director for this organization, I have opportunities to understand the process, strategies and experiences of black women cultural entrepreneurs. I also work as a freelance writer and consultant for cultural and creative brands. Continuing to develop my dissertation while in the field grants me priceless first-hand experience, which lends itself well to future research.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Activity Participant Observation Guide

Name of cultural entrepreneur:

_____

Name of event/activity:

_____

Event location:

_____

Date and time of event:

_____

   I. Demographics

- Age, sex, race/ethnicity, gender, perceived social class and family composition of attendees?

   II. Physical Setting

- What does the surrounding neighborhood of the event look like? (Suburb, city, residential, businesses, etc.)

   III. Group dynamics

- What happens during the course of the event? (Format, length, activities and who's involved, etc.)
- What is the music like? (Solemn, upbeat, contemporary, live instruments, etc.)
- How are people interacting in the event? (Reserved, social, engaged, etc.)

Note: Probe questions are used only in case I need clarification on what the interviewee states. Follow-up questions are questions related to the original question, but more specific.

Introduction: Thank you again for agreeing to be interviewed. Just to remind you this interview is going to be about your company's involvement in social entrepreneurship and the arts. Before we begin I want to give you this form, which explains my research. It's also a consent form that says you agree to do this interview and you agree to be recorded. As I mentioned, this interview should last from 1 hour to an hour and 15 minutes. Do I have your permission to record this interview?

BACKGROUND & BUSINESS

1. What are your responsibilities in the operation of the business?

2. What motivated you to become an entrepreneur? Was there a specific event?

3. [If not answered in above question] What made you want to create [your organization]?

4. Would you say you had assistance in getting your business started?

   Probe: How?

5. Why did you choose to incorporate your organization as you did [e.g. as an LLC, non-profit or C-Corp]?

6. What are the advantages or disadvantages of running [your organization] as a business as opposed to another type of entity like a non-profit or charity organization?

7. Are there any advantages or disadvantages to running your own business?

    Probe: Could you give me an example?

8. What do you think makes a business successful?

    Follow-up: Is this how you define success for your business?

9. In terms of business, what does the word "competition" mean to you?

    Follow-up: Would you say you have competition?

    Probe: If yes, who are your competitors?

10. Would you say you've experienced opportunities in the development of [your organization]?

    Probe: (If yes) What would you say has been one of the greatest opportunities you've had?

    Probe: (If no or if there is no clear answer) Why do you think this is?

11. Would you say you've experienced challenges in the development of [your organization]?

    Follow-up: What would you say has been the greatest challenge you've had? How have you addressed these challenges?

    Probe: (If no or if there is no clear answer) Why do you think this is?

12. What are your business goals?

Follow up: How does operating your organization as a business (rather than a "collective" or "project," for example) help, or not help, you reach those goals?

SOCIAL PERSPECTIVES

13. Usually businesses are created to fill a void in the marketplace. What void, if any, would you say [your organization] fills ?

Probe: How does it fill this void?

14. Are there any social problems [your organization] addresses? If so, how does your organization address this/these social problem(s)?

Follow-up: What is it about these issues that most concern you?

Follow-up: Are you personally affected by these issues in any way?

15. Art is important to the mission of [your organization]. What does art mean to you?

Follow-up: In general, do you think art, in various forms, and social justice connect?

Probe: (If yes) How?

16. How does art help you reach your larger social goals? (Assuming the interviewee answers in the affirmative.)

Probe: Are there any examples of this that you can give?

17. What responsibilities do you think businesses have to their patrons?

18. What responsibilities do you think artists have to their audiences?

19. Having a business involves a lot of personal commitment and risk. For examples, successful entrepreneurs like Steve Jobs of Apple have been homeless. Are there certain things you wouldn't or don't risk for your business success?

    Probe: If yes, what things?

    Probe: If no, why?

RACE AND GENDER IDENTITY

20. Some black women artists make their race and gender central to their identity while others don't. For example, some black women cultural entrepreneurs say, "I am a black women filmmaker," while others say "I am a filmmaker." Would you say your race and gender is important to your artistic identity?

    Follow-up: Would you say one aspect of your identity, is more central than the other? Namely, your identity as black or female.

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

21. Are you active on social media? (If no skip to question 29)

    Probe: Which platforms do you use?

22. Would you say social media has helped you develop your business?

Probe: If so, in what ways?

23. Are there any campaigns you have participated on via Twitter?

24. Do you think social media is important to business success?

      Follow up: (If yes) In what ways?

      Follow up: (If no) Why do think this way?

25. Are there any questions I didn't ask that you'd like to acknowledge? Is there anything else you'd like to share?

I appreciate your time. Thank you for speaking with me.

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