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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA,
IRVINE

The Impact of Local Government Support on Arts Organizations and Their Communities

THESIS

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

in Dance

by

Anna F Medina Ochoa

Thesis Committee:
Professor Molly Lynch, Chair
Professor Lisa Naugle
Assistant Professor Cyrian Reed

2022

DEDICATION

To

my parents for supporting and believing in me

my love for his patience and encouragement

all those who dedicate their lives to others

the artform that is my passion

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

The Impact of Local Government Support on Arts Organizations and Their Communities

by

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Master of Fine Arts in Dance

University of California, Irvine, 2022

Professor Molly Lynch, Chair

This research investigates some of the different sources of government funding available to nonprofit arts organizations that support dance education for the youth population of Southern California. It focuses on the process of application for government grants, the different kinds of advocacy and evaluation, and how arts programs affect the local and regional communities they serve. In order to address the issue at hand, I conducted a series of interviews with government representatives, directors of arts organizations, and students affiliated with these organizations. The results of the interviews were then analyzed, compared with each other and grouped according to their different statements and opinions. The literature review, as well as the interviews, revealed that arts organizations are constantly struggling for continuous government funding. Their main sources of funding are typically private foundations and individual donors. Nevertheless, the support and education they provide in their communities proves to be both necessary and valuable for their development. Arts organizations are typically involved in different advocacy groups and attempt to create a relationship with their elected officials; however, the application process for government funding is often non inclusive and lengthy. Although government representatives

seem to understand the importance of an accessible arts education, there is still a deficiency in financial support going to arts institutions.

INTRODUCTION

Having access to affordable and quality arts education can be the key to a future of opportunities for young students and their families. Government funding should be a pillar of support for arts organizations that provide accessible education to low-income communities. This research answers the question: What is the relationship between government representatives and arts organizations, and how does this partnership affect the students that they serve? For the purposes of this study, the scope of research focuses on the Southern California region, more specifically the San Diego, Los Angeles and Orange County areas. With this research I hope to illustrate some of the most effective strategies for arts advocacy, the impact of arts education on its students, the limitations that arts organizations are currently facing, and how this relationship can improve in the future. The motivation to conduct this research comes from a personal experience that occurred during my role as a Council Representative for the City of San Diego.

Background

The motivation to conduct this research comes from a personal experience that occurred during my role as a Council Representative for the City of San Diego. The arts have always been an integral component of my life, and what began as a passion has become a crucial aspect of my career and my personal development. While I worked as a Council Representative for the City of San Diego, I continuously asked for opportunities to meet with local arts organizations, and to listen to their needs, concerns, and achievements. I would often attend student performances to better understand and appreciate the roles that arts organizations play in their communities. During my last few months in this role, I composed a budget memorandum to analyze increases, decreases,

and changes in the 2020 Arts and Culture budget for the City of San Diego. As I read through the numbers and proposals, an unfortunate and somewhat appalling situation became apparent, the COVID-19 pandemic had resulted in the deallocation of millions of dollars in funding to these organizations which I held in such high esteem. In an effort to quell the rapidly growing economic and health crises, the Mayor and City Council of San Diego cut more than half of the Arts and Culture budget, and over 160 organizations lost more than half of the money which had previously been allocated to them by their local government. Arts teachers and administrators were told that they would be let go, and many young students were going to be left without an arts education which they desperately depended on for the development of creative and professional skills. Entire organizations were going to be shut down due to this massive budget cut.

I watched as 11 million dollars, which the City of San Diego typically allocated to their artistic community, was reduced to only \$5.5 million. As this happened, I thought of all the times I had heard members of this community explain how the arts were being severely underfunded. Many such members would arrive at our local meetings with pamphlets which had pictures of children enjoying the program, tickets to their end of the year show, or sometimes even statistics and maps that proved their advancement through the years. However, despite those efforts the Commission of Arts and Culture took the most severe budget cuts that year. As a result, I questioned, why was an accessible arts education seen as something expendable and not a necessity, and what are the effects of its absence?

In this research I explore the relationship between arts organizations that provide arts education to the youth of Southern California, and their government representatives. Through several published materials and a series of interviews conducted with professionals who are directly involved in these organizations and local government, I investigate the effects that an

accessible arts education has on its students, how the government supports arts education, and how advocacy and community involvement play a role in the funding process of these institutions. I also investigate how arts organizations conduct evaluations to keep track of their results and how they use those results to advocate for better funding. Through my conversation with the directors of various organizations I uncover several benefits and downfalls of the government grants application process.

The students involved in this research share a truly personal story relating to their dance trajectory. By narrating some sections of their interviews, and comparing them with others, I will illustrate how the arts have a life changing effect on the lives of the students who are involved in an arts program and how quality instruction can make a difference in their learning experience. The interview process reveals that, although the benefits of an arts education are clear to government representatives, leaders of arts organizations, and their students, the needs and challenges of the artistic community are complex and often exhibit a lack of support from local government. Due to government funding allocations fluctuating constantly, arts organizations often rely on private foundations and individual donors to support their programs and operations. However, if the arts are so advantageous to the students and their communities, government support should be available and constant to arts organizations that provide accessible education focused on the arts.

LITERARY REVIEW

Benefits of an arts education

When looking into the effects of an arts education for the youth the results are clearly beneficial in various aspects. Students that are involved in the arts are attentive to their schoolwork, dedicate more time to important tasks, can generate ideas easily, and are often described as more creative by their teachers than students who do not participate in arts programs (Rajan *Arts Evaluation* 182). In the book *Studio Thinking: The Real Benefits of Arts Education*, several authors point out that the benefits of arts education are often determined based on what they can do to improve the students' performance in other school subjects. The No Child Left Behind legislation passed in 2001 was meant to measure and improve the learning ability of students based on a system of evaluation and accountability. This resulted in schools prioritizing the "testable subjects" such as mathematics and English and leaving the arts behind. At the same time the arguments used to advocate for the arts depended mostly on the support they brought to these testable subjects, and not on the inherent value of the arts (Hetland, et al. 2). The author describes arguments based on what the arts can do for other subjects, how they increase test scores and the success rate in students as "instrumental arguments." These arguments can be dangerous because, since they depend on other factors, they cannot stand on their own. For instance, if the main claim to support arts funding is the increase of positive outcomes in testing, then the funding can be in danger if the test results don't improve in the following months despite the incorporation of an arts program in the school. Instrumental arguments present the value of an arts education as dependent on something else, when instead the value of an arts education should be inherent and independent (Hetland, et al. 3). In order to determine the legitimate value of an arts education, arts teachers and advocates should

ask the question: what do the arts teach? (Hetland, et al. 4). This would steer the conversation to center it around the arts. It focuses on the life skills that are obtained while engaging in the arts, skills that would benefit any student in any subject regardless of the path they take in their professional career. The arts offer an opportunity for students to analyze the world differently, similarly to how one can analyze a problem mathematically, scientifically or philosophically (Hetland, et al. 4).

Due to test scores being prioritized, many life skills are often neglected. Art classes can fill the need for the teaching of these skills by practicing different kinds of thinking. A few examples of these skills are: careful reflection, constructive self-criticism, visual -spatial abilities, as well as willingness to learn from mistakes and experiment. These skills can be useful in several careers; however, it seems implausible that they will be taught when success in standardized testing is the main goal (Hetland, et al. 4). Considering that society changes rapidly, and the demands of a working world are constantly evolving, an arts education teaches different ways of thinking, observing, imagining and innovating. Students can use these tools to see their circumstances differently and to find a plethora of possibilities for the future. If fact memorization is the primary demand for students, and other life skills are not incorporated, it is a real possibility that students will not be able to navigate a world where pandemics and global warming are a reality (Hetland, et al. 4). In view of recent events, it is fundamental to contemplate that global issues affecting society as a whole are part of our current situation, and these life threatening problems demand fast and creative solutions. When answering the question, what does art teach? A few possible answers are: it teaches how to learn from mistakes, how to detect opportunities by discovering new patterns, and how to create solutions. The students that have engaged in the arts and have

encountered these skills are the ones who will most likely incorporate problem-solving into their skills, resulting in solutions and answers for the future (Hetland, et al. 4).

Edward B. Fiske, who served as Education Editor of the New York Times describes the impact of arts education in his report titled *Champions of Change: The Impact of the Arts on Learning*. Fiske states, “when well taught, the arts provide young people with authentic learning experiences that engage their minds, hearts, and bodies. The learning experiences are real and meaningful for them. While learning in other disciplines may often focus on development of a single skill or talent, the arts regularly engage multiple skills and abilities. Engagement in the arts whether the visual arts, dance, music, theater or other disciplines nurtures the development of cognitive, social, and personal competencies” (Fiske 12). He continues to explain that the arts reach out to students who might otherwise never be reached in a way that connects them to each other and to themselves. The arts also provide learning opportunities for people of all ages and challenge those who are already considered successful (Fiske 12). In Fiske’s words, “working in a classroom or a studio as an artist, the young person is learning and practicing future workplace behaviors. A company is a company, whether producing an opera or a breakthrough technological service.” (13). All the benefits listed above are connected to the learning experiences that make a successful workforce. Ideas, and the ability to generate them, bringing those ideas to life and communicating them is valuable to obtain workplace success (Fiske 13).

A review conducted by the National Dance Education Organization in 2013 presents evidence of the value of dance as an education form in different areas, such as, creative process, brain research, student achievement, student performance, equity, and cultural dance found in numerous studies. The conclusions of the studies include the arts’ ability to develop 21st century skills in students and provide constructivist learning experiences for them (Bradley et al. 56).

Engaging in these activities constantly, through learning and practicing the arts, incorporates the skills associated with them to the students' toolbox. Although these skills are relevant to the arts, they are not limited to this specific field.

The importance of arts evaluation

Despite repeated demonstrated results, the arts are constantly underfunded or struggle to obtain funds for the expansion and development of their programs. Research author Rekha S. Rajan stresses in her article "Artistic Assessment: Strategies for Grant Professionals in Documenting Learning in the Arts" that arts organizations often have the smallest budgets compared to other organizations ("Artistic Assessment" 32). Their directors and administrators often face obstacles that other disciplines do not, such as the burden of constantly having to prove their worth. Rajan explains that in order to access the plethora of resources and grants that might be available for arts organizations they will probably have to justify both the financial need of their organization and the general need for the arts ("Artistic Assessment" 32). Even as spectators, contributors or artists, the public is very often judging the role that the arts play in their lives, and how valuable they truly are (Rajan *Arts Evaluation* 1).

Because of this unsteady recognition, organizations must dedicate a significant amount of effort into the practice of constant evaluation¹. Rajan and O'Neil describe the mission of evaluation as "finding ways to sustain an organization, maintain connections to the community, and utilize innovative methods for documenting the individual strengths and benefits of a program." Monitoring the benefits a program brings to its stakeholders, but more importantly to the

¹ Evaluation: According to *Arts Evaluation and Assessment: Measuring impacts in schools and communities*, evaluation is the theory driven, systematic collection of data focused on assessing a program's goals and viability (Rajan *Arts Evaluation* 4).

community it serves, can be a useful advocacy tool. Although the value of the arts might be evident for those directly involved, it is important to take a systematic approach when it comes to data collection. By documenting the advancement of its students, as well as their growth and trajectory from an academic perspective, arts organizations can reiterate their value efficiently and possibly justify their need for funds in the future (Rajan “Artistic Assessment” 34).

Rajan states that this evaluation must be quantitative as well as qualitative in order to obtain financial results and preserve the essence of the artistic work being performed. The question of whether the impact of the arts should be measured by quality or quantity can be answered with one word: both (Rajan “Artistic Assessment” 34). A few examples of qualitative data can include interviews, surveys, and discussions with the students or their parents in order to track their advancement and engagement with the arts. The collection of the data can occur throughout the year and would ideally continue to address several questions. Testimonies from students that are involved in an arts program can provide personal and illustrative evidence on how the arts have impacted their lives (Rajan “Artistic Assessment” 35). When participants share their stories, others can possibly understand their connection to the arts and relate to it on a deeper level. These testimonies can be persuasive to founders on their own, but they can be more productive when presented with specific numbers or statistics. The data collected can be as straightforward as the number of students that benefit from the arts program each year, how many of them graduate and go on to pursue a degree in higher education, or perhaps even how many students are considering a career in the arts because of the program’s tutelage and impact. Other examples can include the percentage of students that live in a low-income household or how many of them are part of a minority group. This can often highlight the wider impact that an arts organization has on a community, making the importance of its mission more apparent. Quantitative data is essential to

founders in order to allocate their resources, but qualitative data is often more accessible and persuasive to the general public and it captures the essence of the arts. Taking this into consideration it is fundamental that both types of evaluation are conducted to obtain the highest level of financial and community support.

An example of an organization conducting qualitative and quantitative evaluations to reflect their work is The Wooden Floor (TWF). In addition to the usual statistics related to age, graduation rate, race, and income, TWF takes additional steps in order to evaluate the work and results of the organization by conducting a 10-year longitudinal study in partnership with a research organization. The study started in 2014 and it is survey based, with hundreds of students involved each year. The framework consists in measuring the motivation, creativity, engagement and future orientation of their students. The data will contribute to The Wooden Floor's mission to break the cycle of poverty in the communities they serve through generational change. In addition to this, the results will also support The Wooden Floor's "theory of change" which states that students who participate in the dance studio learn significant skills related to leadership, confidence, and self-knowledge, which can bring them increased joy and well-being that benefits them in their lives (Rajan *Arts Evaluation* 17). TWF hopes that this longitudinal study serves as an example to other organizations that might consider incorporating a long-term evaluation of their dance and arts programs (Rajan *Arts Evaluation* 14).

TWF shares qualitative data on its website in the "student stories" section, where visitors can read about the students' experiences and achievements while being involved in the program. The organization also includes quantitative data in their home page, such as, "since 2005, 100% of our seniors have graduated from high school on time and immediately enrolled in higher education." These numbers are relevant considering that "in 2019, only 14% of Latino Adults in

Santa Ana had a college degree.” By including both of these statistics in their website, TWF is presenting a problem and a solution. It is using both types of evaluation to demonstrate results that are relevant not only to the organization and its donors, but also to the wider community.

Government and the arts

In the introduction of *Public Money & The Muse*, a collection of essays on government funding for the arts, former Chairman of the United States Securities and Exchange Commission Arthur Levitt Jr. explains that if the arts are to continue to expand and grow, or even continue with their current level of activity then it is fundamental to recognize the importance of political involvement in order to succeed. Being present and excelling in the “political arena” must be among the arts’ highest priorities (Levitt 26). Levitt introduces a tough question: why is it that the cultural institutions in America have been unsuccessful in defining the arts agenda and persuading elected officials that the arts are vital to our society? (26-7). The issue appears to be that the arts have lost touch with normal people, voters and constituents that decide their future, their funding and their vitality. This indicates that they have also lost touch with elected officials, and with it, their support (Levitt 27). For our school system, government and culture to recognize the importance of the arts, they must first be valued by the general population (*Rajan Arts Evaluation* 2). Federal support, whether it’s through funding allocated to the National Endowment for the Arts or through policy change, is a direct indication of the importance the arts hold in our society. This recognition is worth preserving, developing, and fighting for (Levitt 27). Levitt stresses that constituents that voice their support for the arts are the key to alter political outcomes. However, there usually are not enough votes or voices from the arts community to obtain congressional support (29).

A possible solution to the disconnect between the general population and the arts might be to fund organizations that serve these populations directly. An organization that is dedicated to this is The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). The NEA is a federal government agency that provides grants to support art organizations and individuals that demonstrate talent in the arts (Henderson 1). It was created in 1965 when President Johnson signed the Arts and Humanities Act, which means the organization has been operating for more than fifty years (Henderson 3). In 1970 the organization allocated 20 percent of its funding to state agencies, which states could spend at their discretion in order to support inner-city and rural arts programs (Dimaggio 217). There is a significant difference between the organizations that the NEA supports, in relation to those supported by the states. Paul J. DiMaggio, a former executive member Connecticut Commission of the Arts, author and Professor at Yale University, explains this in his chapter *Decentralization of Arts Funding* (216). Dimaggio stresses that the NEA often supports major European-American cultural institutions, cutting edge artistic creativity, and the preservation of art, while state programs usually support smaller and younger organizations that are concerned with diversity, equity and access to all (228). Both missions are valuable for the preservation and propagation of the arts, which is why it is significant to analyze the amount of funding managed by this institution.

The NEA started with a budget of \$2,500,000. By 1980 the budget had increased to \$154,400,000 (Henderson 3). In Fiscal Year 2020, the NEA received an extra \$75 million dollars through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act to distribute among several arts organizations in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. As dictated by a Congressional mandate, 40 percent of the CARES Act funding was for state arts organizations. These funds were used to preserve jobs and cover facility costs in these organizations (“National Endowment for the

Arts Appropriations History”). The appropriation for 2020 was \$162,250,000 excluding the \$75 million received through the CARES act. In the following year, 2021 the appropriation was \$167,500,000, and in May of the same year President Biden submitted his Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 budget, which included \$201 million for the NEA (this would be the largest appropriation that the NEA has received since its creation). NEA Acting Chairman Ann Eilers stated that “the \$201 million request for the National Endowment for the Arts reflects the importance of the creative workforce in rebuilding the national economy, especially after a time of unprecedented disruption.” (“President's Fiscal Year”). As mentioned previously, the arts teach valuable creative skills that can be effective in problem solving, and teamwork regardless of the industry or career path of the students. Investing in preserving the arts through a difficult time is a decision that will bring evident favorable results in the future.

The unfortunate occurrence of the recent COVID-19 pandemic offers a unique perspective when examining the fluctuations of state arts budgets. Focusing on a state that usually receives a large amount of federal support, the California Arts Council (CAC) works as a state agency that allocates grants to arts organizations across California. Among the Council’s responsibilities there is: encouraging artistic awareness, participation, and expression, helping independent local groups develop their own arts programs, and promoting the employment of artists and those skilled in crafts in both the public and private sectors (“2021-2022 State Budget”). Since 2018 the CAC has had a \$27.5 million annual budget, mostly funded by the general fund (ninety percent), receiving only five percent of its funding from the NEA (“California Arts Council”). However, the CAC’s budget for this fiscal year has changed drastically due to the pandemic. “On July 20, Governor Gavin Newsom released the details of fiscal year 2021-22 state budget that includes a more than \$100 million one-time funding allocation for the California Arts Council” (“California Arts

Council”). This year’s budget includes a \$40 million one-time General Fund allocation, to be spent over three years, to support the Arts Council’s existing Creative Youth Development Programs. The CAC will use partnerships between community-based organizations, educators, and local artists to increase participation in these programs (“2021-2022 State Budget”). The type of programs funded by the CAC under the Creative Youth Development Programs include: arts projects in early learning, projects that teach traditional arts and cultural practices, youth leadership and mentorship opportunities in the arts, and arts programming that supports workforce development and entrepreneurship (“California Arts Council”). This funding allocation impacts the arts community directly because it trickles down from the state to arts organizations (teachers), and then to the community (students) in the form of arts education. The 2021-2022 Budget also includes a \$60 million one-time allocation to be spent over three years, to implement the California Creative Corps Pilot Program. “This program will support artists and local art organizations with a focus on art campaigns that bring awareness to stopping the spread of COVID-19, water and energy conservation, emergency preparedness, response and recovery, civic engagement, and social justice (“2021-2022 State Budget”).” Although the funding allocated to the CAC has increased steadily since 2013 the uses for this funding are not necessarily related to arts organizations and their participation in the community. The \$60 million allocation for the California Creative Corps Pilot Program is an example of this because regardless of this significant increase, the funds are not supporting arts education.

Impact of funding on arts organizations

Towards the end of his essay in *Public Money & The Muse*, Dimaggio touches on the importance of funding stability and the presence of political vulnerability (Dimaggio 243). He

explains that the predictability and stability of support is as important as the amount of funding that arts organizations receive. In the case of fluctuating and unpredictable funding the states usually suffer the most, while federal funding is often considered a source of stability. State budgets vary from year to year depending on the economies of each region often resulting in volatile budgets (Dimaggio 243). However, a study made in 1982 by the State University of New York determined that states that spent the most amount of money on social and human capital (education, health, natural resources, and highways) also invested more in the arts (Dimaggio 245). This means that the objectives and priorities of each state are important factors when determining their support to the arts. States in comparison to federal organizations are also most likely to succeed in addressing issues that affect their constituents directly and determining which arts forms will have the greatest impact in which places. This is especially the case with art forms that have their roots concentrated in racial communities (Dimaggio 250). Arts organizations require a constant source of income to support their programs and operations, often making state grants seem unreliable, considering that they could decrease or disappear depending on the fundings available for that budget year, or the priorities that government officials have during that election period. However, increasing funding for something like the CAC's Creative Youth Development Program can be extremely impactful for arts organizations because it would allow them to provide their services to a wider population or to extend the length of their program. A possible consequence of this is the increased presence of arts programs in disadvantaged communities with a racially diverse population, communities which are often underserved. Although periodic increases to state funding for arts organizations can be somewhat beneficial, it is also imperative to consider that a steady source of funding for these organizations, such as a tax percentage, could have a greater impact and would eliminate the unpredictable nature of government funding.

METHODS

As I analyzed the literature related to this topic, I saw the need to compare it with the current practices among the artistic community in Southern California. An example of this would be the inclusion of quantitative and qualitative data as an advocacy tool. A few questions that came up were the following: are arts organizations in San Diego, Los Angeles and Santa Ana using qualitative and quantitative data to fundraise and advocate for their mission, and more importantly, do they find them successful? Regarding the skills and learning experiences that can come with an arts education, how would students that attended organizations in Southern California describe their experience? How did an arts education impact them or their career? After reading several published studies, I determined the need to ask follow-up questions that perhaps had various responses depending on who was answering them. Some questions to illustrate the current situation would be: what are the relationships between government and arts organizations like and how can they improve? What is the true impact of an arts education? I decided to ask these questions of people who are currently working every day to either represent Southern California communities as elected officials, experts who run their own arts organizations in an effort to bring arts education to youth of all backgrounds, and students who attended these organizations and are now sharing how these experiences have affected them so far.

In order to understand the relationship between elected officials, nonprofit arts organizations, and the communities they both serve I interviewed members of each group about their experiences. The reason to include interviews of the three groups was to capture the opinions and thought process of each participant. Government officials allocate funding; therefore, they inherently hold a certain amount of power over arts organizations. However, directors and

administrators of arts organizations are potential voters or supporters of government officials, therefore there is a mutual desire to build a relationship that is beneficial to both parties. In order to capture the different layers of this relationship it is fundamental to ask both groups about their experience. The results of this partnership or lack thereof impact the students of these arts organizations that might receive funds from government entities. The experiences, testimonies and demographics of these students are often used as advocacy tools to request funding. Several of the organizations that seek these funds describe part of their mission as the delivery of a valuable arts education to students that might otherwise not have an opportunity to experience the arts. Asking the students about their participation in these programs can help answer whether the presence of funding was impactful and illustrate some of the effects of an arts education.

The interviews were divided into three groups: government representatives, non-profit arts organizations, and art/dance students.

Government Representatives

- The first group includes elected officials or members of their staff from the City of Los Angeles and Santa Ana. It also involves Directors and coalition members of Arts Orange County, and Arts+Culture: San Diego, which serve as advocates and representatives for arts organizations. The questions included in the interviews were designed to illustrate the reasoning behind the funding allocations that elected officials make, their relationship with arts organizations, and the resources they have available to the art community.

Non-profit Arts Organizations

- The second group was formed by the Directors or Founders of several non profit arts organizations located in Southern California. These organizations provide dance education as one of their services and most of them receive funding from the local government. The list of interviewees includes The Wooden Floor, California Dance Institute, Backhaus Dance, and Orange County Music and Dance. This group's questions investigate the advocacy strategies of arts organizations, their perspective regarding the level of support they receive from local government, and the effect this has on their ability to perform their mission. Their responses either aligned with or contradicted those of their elected officials and offered their point of view on how their relationship could improve.

Art/Dance Students

The third and final group represents the students that participate in the programs offered by nonprofit arts organizations. The interviewees are over eighteen years of age and attended nonprofit art schools or organizations as part of their dance education. Students were asked to share their experiences while participating in these programs, if they acquired any particular skills, and if their experience was valuable to their career path. They also shared what an artistic education and the opportunity to express themselves through art means for them and how it has impacted their lives. Three of the interviewees in this group participated as dancers and co-choreographers in a performance that displayed the findings of this research (see chapter 4).

All interviews took place in the United States, with invitations sent via email and live conversations taking place through Zoom. All participants within a single group were asked the same questions, with room for further discussion based on their answers. Interviews lasted between 35 minutes and an hour. Each interview contained nine to fifteen questions (Appendix A, B, and C). The questions were determined based on the topics that arose in the research I conducted previously. My main inquiries for elected officials and arts organizations involved advocacy strategies, communication of needs and priorities, level of financial support, and condition of relationship. In comparison, the main topics involving students were; relationship with the arts, benefits and challenges in their experience, and support provided by the organization. I repeated a few of the questions in each group to understand how the answers could vary depending on the interviewee. Although the interview was based on the preestablished questions, the process was led by the conversation and left room for comments and experiences the interviewee was willing to share.

Based on the answers delivered by each group of interviewees, I discovered similarities and differences that could result in a pattern regarding the themes previously discussed. A few themes that emerged in each group during the interviews were the following: The impact of nonprofit and public dance organizations, skills acquired through dance, mentorship as an asset, government grants and funding opportunities, the COVID pandemic, the difficulties of the grant application process, the relationship between government and arts organizations, advocacy and fundraising, the role of the community, and diversity.

THESIS BODY

In this research I aimed to explore the relationship between government officials and arts organizations, as well as their mission and manner of operating. My objective was also to determine the impact these arts organizations have on their target audience and how dance affects their students. I interviewed four college students that had each attended a free public high school that included dance in their curriculum. Student A moved to Santa Ana, California from El Salvador to pursue her dream of becoming a dancer. Student B started her dance education at the age of three in Mexico City, where her family lived before she moved to Los Angeles, California when she was four. Student C attended the Los Angeles County High School for the Arts with the support of both her parents who are Cuban and Mexican. Student D was born in Spain, where she started flamenco dancing when she was three years old. After that she moved to Virginia where she learned ballet, and later on she moved to Japan where she incorporated hip hop, contemporary and tap to her dance education. Once her family relocated to California, she continued her education at the San Diego School of Creative and Performing Arts. I asked the four students a set of questions relating to their experience in dance (Appendix C student questions). Additionally, I interviewed four directors of arts/dance organizations located in Southern California regarding their experience with government funding and advocacy (Appendix B arts organization questions). Finally, I spoke with two government representatives and two arts liaisons to understand the funding process and their relationship with their community (Appendix A government representative questions).

Mission and Role of Organizations Teaching Dance

According to Americans for the Arts' *National Statistics Report*, "nonprofit arts and cultural organizations and their audiences in the United States are a \$166.3 billion industry—one that supports 4.6 million full-time equivalent jobs and generates \$27.5 billion in government revenue (Lynch, 2017)." All these organizations operate with a variety of budgets and towards different objectives. The four organizations that I researched are located in Southern California and provide free or accessible dance education to children and youth. I asked the Directors of said organizations to share their mission and information about the population they serve.

Carole Valleskey is the Director and Founder of the California Dance Institute (CDI), which is affiliated with the National Dance Institute created by Jacques d'Amboise (California Dance Institute, 2022). Valleskey shared her institution's mission statement prior to our interview, it states the following, "California Dance Institute (CDI) is an in-school and after-school non-profit arts education program that teaches life and learning skills through dance and music. CDI's mission is to motivate children to develop a personal standard of excellence by instilling confidence, discipline and focus through the rigor and joy of dance."

I asked Valleskey to describe it in her own words and she said, "educating the whole child; mind, body, and spirit." Valleskey explained that cognitive functions are improved by dance. They work in partnership with the movement students perform during their CDI classes, which is "intensely physical" or "non-stop movement" as she describes it. "Spirit is the joy, teamwork, and the camaraderie that they get from working together as a group and performing," Valleskey explains. This implies that dance education is not only a physical practice, but also develops the mind and creates a spiritual connection when children are involved in an artistic process. CDI is in 5 to 7 schools in Los Angeles for the duration of 24 to 28 weeks in an in-school program. They

also have an after-school program called the Scholarships for the Willing Achieving and Talented (SWAT) Team. These programs are free for all the students that participate.

My second interviewee, Douglas Freeman, is the CEO of Orange County Music & Dance (OCM&D), a nonprofit community performing arts school that offers music and dance education to over 400 children within the ages of 18 months and 18 years. The school provides financial assistance to 54% of their students (Orange County Music & Dance, 2022). Unlike the CDI, Orange County Music & Dance has its own classrooms in Irvine, California. In addition to their dance program, they also offer music classes for children and adults. OCM&D's vision states that, "every child, regardless of his or her financial circumstances, will have the opportunity to develop his or her innate talents, learning from the most accomplished professionals, encouraged by peers, family, and community, and with access to instruments and facilities that enable each student to reach his or her personal best (Orange County Music & Dance, 2022.)"

Similar to OCM&D, The Wooden Floor (TWF) located in Santa Ana, California also has its own location, and it recently opened a second one in that same city. Dawn Reese is the CEO of TWF, an organization that provides students with a 10-year educational journey from third grade through high school. They combine dance education with academics, college and career readiness, and social services in order to support those students all the way through elementary, middle school, and high school. Reese states that the mission of TWF is to transform the lives of young people and low-income communities, the power of dance and access to higher education. She states, "Our ultimate goal is to help children reach their fullest potential, and we hope that for them this is positive decision making, and one of them is Higher Education... we want all students to graduate from high school and go on to higher ED, and since 2005, 100% of our students have done that for 17 years in a row..." TWF serves 475 students year-round at two locations.

The effort of leading students to pursue higher ED goes hand in hand with the organization's mission to break the cycle of poverty. Rese mentioned that, according to research, "the number one benefit to get out of poverty, still today is a degree in higher ED. If you have a high school degree, your income is about a million dollars (lifetime income). If you get a bachelor's degree it's around three to \$5 million, if you get a Master's it's between five and \$7 million." Especially when it comes to first generation college students. That first-generation child that goes to college will then change the trajectory for their children when they get their degree.

A different type of organization is Backhaus Dance, a professional contemporary dance company located in Orange County. Backhaus Dance works in the Segerstrom Center for the Arts Dance Teach Program, where they create content for students through different subjects, such as, aesthetics of dancing, science through dance, and dance for kindness (a new program about empathy and social emotional learning). The company also partners with McCallum Theater in Palm Desert, CA teaching dance as a community building tool for students K-12. Jennifer Backhaus is the Founder and Artistic Director of Backhaus Dance.

The company also works on putting dance in places where one wouldn't normally see it. For example, the Sherman Library and Gardens in Newport Beach or the Orange County Museum of Art. This happens in the form of lecture demonstrations, open rehearsals and performances. The company also works with the Santa Ana Parks & Recreation department in the Moving Santa Ana program, which offers free dance classes for all ages in the local parks. They started offering these classes as an independent contractor funded by Parks & Recreation, but now they offer the classes regularly through the Parks & Recreation department. Several of these programs are funded through the City. Dance for Kindness is a program that teaches problem solving, cooperation and empathy to elementary school students. Schools were asking for a program of

this kind because students seem to be emotionally struggling and have conflict resolution issues after the pandemic, and Dance for Kindness seemed like a perfect fit. The program is currently in two Newport Beach schools that received the funds through COVID relief.

The objectives that the arts organizations I interviewed have in common are to educate, develop, and help children reach their full potential through dance. They do this through a variety of programs that defer in logistics, instruction level and funding, but they all ultimately rely on the belief that their mission can be accomplished through accessible dance education.

Impact of Nonprofit and Public Dance Organizations on Their Students and Communities

Skills acquired through dance

When asked about the impact that an arts education has on his students, Freeman listed building confidence and self-esteem first. “You create competency, and when you create competency you facilitate confidence, and this leads to self-esteem.” The goal is to give them a sense that they can achieve their best. Reese has a similar opinion, as she stated the following, “we believe dance is the center of student transformation... it's about co-creation, critical thinking, innovation, creativity, collaboration that happens through the dance-making process.” Dance helps children see themselves, both inside and outside of the studio and how they apply artmaking at all times. Reese explains, “we help the students see how they can use those dance concepts and lessons in all parts. So that presence that comes with dance, how do you apply that to presence in the classroom? Your leadership profile, how you walk, how do you walk into a room, how do you present yourself? That's all about presence.” She continues to state, “our philosophy is to bring the best for our students, and they rise to their best.”

One of the college students I interviewed (Student D), who is a dance and science major at UC Irvine, mentioned this principle as the main skill that she developed through dance. Student D answered, “Definitely discipline. From dress code, to wearing no rings, no nail polish, those types of things can be annoying, but they prepare you for real life.” She explains that when one is young rules are strict but it’s easier to relax a bit later on, once you have mastered that focus and discipline. “My whole experience there was eye opening because you don’t know how to act in a rehearsal space, you don’t know how to act in an audition, you don’t know how to act with a certain choreographer, and that’s what I learned there. That also goes on to real life, at my work or even in class, you learn how to be professional.” Her discipline also helps with the classes in her science major. Students at her school had a hair class, stage makeup class, and a portfolio class. They also got headshots and received help to build their resumes, “I use that resume to this day,” she stated.

Student C, another student interviewee, also mentioned presence and leadership as important consequences of her dance education. She learned professional skills that she describes as follows, “how important it is to present yourself in the way you want to be perceived, especially with work ethic.” When asked to elaborate she continued, “always do my best, that’s the only thing I can do. The only thing I can do is do my best and be honest about who I am.” Later in her interview, Student C mentioned advocacy as one of the skills she learned. “I really learned how to advocate for myself and how to ask for what I need, even though sometimes it’s really tough.

Students recognize that the arts taught them to be a better person overall. They apply the skills they learned to other aspects of their lives, whether it’s a second major, a job, or their personal relationships. A few of the skills mentioned by the interviewees were: resilience, dedication, discipline, professionalism, and perseverance. When asked why the arts are so important, Reese answered that, especially in our rapidly changing digital economy set around

artificial intelligence, the business community needs to advocate for the support of children. Reese states, “in Orange County, some districts are doing really well, and some districts are still scratching the surface...” Student A lived in the same City where TWF is located, but her experience was somewhat different to the other student interviewees when it came to her dance education. Student A and her family moved to California from El Salvador to pursue her dream of becoming a dancer. She explains that after a few years in a private ballet studio, where she received a full scholarship, her options were few and she opted to seek an affordable and close source of dance education. She states, "a better route was to continue my training at my high school which is a public high school in Santa Ana (Century High School) ... I joined the dance team of my high school that year. The dance teacher was a new teacher."

Student A explains that the dance program in her public high school didn't have enough resources to support her dance training. The teachers weren't very experienced and didn't receive enough funding for uniforms or proper supplies. She wanted to apply to dance programs in colleges and knew her lack of training would be an obstacle that she would have to overcome with her own resources and persistence. She states, "I think I learned to put in my own work and dedication, being resilient and not really depending on others." Student A talks about dance as something that brightens her day and gives her hope. "I think it gave me the opportunity to meet more people... if you're dancing everything's better." She continued to share other benefits of her dance experience, “the arts teach you how to be a better person, a better worker, a better adult in general." Student A mentions that she relates all her learning experiences to dance and the skills she has obtained from her training. She takes things one step at a time and has learned to see opportunities without apprehension. If one of them doesn't work out there will always be something else.

The fourth student interviewee (Student B) mentioned the following dance related skills: discipline, determination, persistence, responsibility, and leadership. She describes the beginning of her relationship with dance as follows, “when I was seven years old dance was a big commitment that I made, and it taught me how to be persistent.” In relationship with other career paths dance taught her to interact with different age groups, which also helped her with other jobs. Student B states, “I feel like dance brings a sense of accomplishment and self-respect that is hard to obtain from other experiences and activities... and even if others don't see that, you see that for yourself and it's a sense of motivation.”

Mentorship as a valuable asset

Another advantage student interviewees mentioned was the mentorship offered by their teachers. Some students had their parents’ support, while others had to advocate for their artistic careers. Most of them found mentorship and guidance in their teachers, who provided valuable information and support. Their teachers would help them with college applications, inspire them with their own career experiences, provide teaching and leadership opportunities, and would encourage them to pursue dance by reassuring their potential. Student B, who attended Ramon C. Cortines School of Visual and Performing Arts had a close relationship with her teachers. They supported her and sent her applications for summer intensives, colleges, workshops, etc. She describes her experience as follows, “talking to my teachers about their journey and how they became dance teachers at my high school and hearing their stories is what made me want to continue dancing and also get my education degree.”

Student C, who attended the Los Angeles County High School for the Arts (LACHSA) describes her mentorship experience as follows, “knowing what my teachers had done in their

careers was kind of mind blowing. To know that those people are now at this nonprofit high school teaching us, where we didn't have to pay for that... I really thought it was an amazing place. “ Student C also shared that teachers would often offer assistance with applications for intensives or write emails to their connections on behalf of their students. Student D is also very grateful for her mentor, who she describes as her “second mother”. She states, “she was the one who supported me in all my dance endeavors. She basically took care of me. She was my ballet teacher in 9th grade... She has a Dance MFA and experience with companies so I would always pick her brain and she would see the potential in me. That’s when I was like ‘somebody believes in me, and this is something that I want to do’ ... she’s the one that helped me apply to colleges.”

Prior to having this mentorship, a few of the students struggled to navigate the college application system or had little understanding of the professional opportunities that a career in the arts could offer. Students mention the phrase “I didn’t know better” when describing their high school selection process, or when referring to dance as a serious career path. Some of them learned about their high school through word of mouth and for others it was a natural transition from their previous school, or it was simply close. Student C states, “companies, concert dance, professional dancing, I didn’t know that those things existed. When they gave us master classes with people from all over and guest choreographers for shows... that’s when I thought ‘I want to pursue this’.” On a similar tone, Student A states, "I didn't know any better, so I had to work with the things that happened. Hopefully administrations of schools that don't have a strong dance program can realize that maybe without dance I wouldn't be able to go to college. I couldn't have found a career without dance.”

Government support and understanding of the arts

Regarding support from the government, Freeman (OCM&D) states that what is missing is an understanding of the value of the arts. One of the things that arts organizations stressed while advocating for funding during the pandemic was the financial contributions in the form of taxes and employees, but also the development of the creative side of our population. Freeman explains that creativity is nurtured and Orange County is dependent on the creative composition of its residents who have been in music, dance and the visual arts and find themselves as engineers, scientists, and physicians because they have gained both knowledge and physical skills, so they really understand the world of creativity. Freeman states, “it really is about innovation, and innovation is based on creativity. Innovation is what's going to get us out of a mess,” the mess being the COVID pandemic. He continues, “it's about creating a different kind of employer and employee for this Community, that is creative, confident, focused, and disciplined, these are all the qualities of an artist.”

There is a direct correlation between the impact of a dance education and the financial accessibility of the programs offered by arts organizations. When I asked Student D what the main reason was for her to attend a Performing Arts High School, even though her parents didn't support a dancing career, her answer was, “It was free.” Student D explains that she never felt any concerns regarding funding or the administration of her school, “we didn't have to worry about anything... I definitely think that I would not be here if I hadn't gone to that school. Student C started her dance education in a private studio, and she highlighted a few of the differences. She states, “The amount of money that is spent in that kind of training is outrageous... and once I went to high school suddenly, I was training and we didn't have to pay for any of it, and it was quality training.” She recalls a very specific instance in which she made a choice between attending her private

catholic school or her dance studio. Student C chose dance, and she claims it was an easy decision to make. Student B stated the following regarding this subject, “I do think that, if I would’ve had to go to one of those studios that are pretty pricey, I probably wouldn’t have continued dancing... The dance studio and the high school were really great, but what really made it possible for me to continue were the teachers, because they were the ones that really looked out for me and really pushed me to continue.”

Taking the skills acquired through dance, the mentorship opportunities, and the valuable lessons into consideration, the advantages that an arts education can bring to its students and community are plenty. However, the follow-up question would be, do others who aren't involved in this process understand these advantages? When asked if she considered whether the elected officials saw the true value of an arts education, Backhaus responded that, “a lot of people in bureaucracy have zero idea of the impact of dance.” She mentioned that the company invites their government representatives to their shows, but they never attend. Similarly, Valleskey from the CDI explains that she invites elected officials to her shows and tries to have a positive relationship with them. “I think government entities should ‘go to the videotape’ because you can put anything you want down on paper but you have to see what's actually happening.” When asked if elected officials have ever attended a CDI show, her answer was also “no”.

Government Grants and Funding Opportunities

Government perspectives

Ben Espinoza has been an Arts Manager in the Department of Cultural Affairs in the City of Los Angeles for three years; he currently works in the Grants Administration Division. Espinoza helps administer a portfolio of approximately \$4 million, based on recent budget years, and

investing in primarily local nonprofit arts organizations with some support for individual artists. The grants are to ensure free and low-cost arts and culture opportunities for the residents of the City of LA. Espinoza states, “We're a very small team, the grants administration division, we consist of three full time in place. Meanwhile, we support over 350 arts organizations across the region... I feel personally invested in these organizations.” Regarding his relationship with the arts he shared the following, “I grew up in Los Angeles, and my first entry into the arts world was the free music and arts lessons brought into the A grade school environment, experiences I don't think my family have been able to afford on our own, so I saw firsthand as I grew up, the value of having the arts, especially in the education setting.”

Espinoza mentioned that he believes the arts are an essential service. “The arts promote shared understanding of one another, they serve as an important outlet for creativity and expression. Our investment in the City of LA ensures that all sorts of communities range of groups and individuals have access to free and low cost arts experiences. Our role is to make sure that everyone has access to it.” According to Espinoza, the arts have shared goals and intersect beautifully with other things considered essential services, such as health and safety, public education, health and wellness, and community pride. He explains how they contribute to the intersectionality of these issues, “we play an important role in ensuring that our local arts community is active in all of those sectors as well.” The arts also produce many jobs in LA. The arts are a job maker, creator and sustainer. Espinoza states that “there is a direct connection between the arts and cultural investments and the jobs that they are supporting.” Recognizing this can make a huge difference for voters. As the Department of Cultural Affairs, they view their role as a major contributor to sustaining the economic health of the city.

I also interviewed Jonathan Ryan Hernandez, a Councilmember for the City of Santa Ana representing word five. Word 5 is made up of little Texas, which is the largest black community in Santa Ana, it comprises some of the oldest neighborhoods, and it has been a home for segregated communities since the 50s and 60s. Councilmember Hernandez started playing in the school orchestra in 6th grade. His father was an artist, and his brother was a poet. At the age of 23 he founded a nonprofit that would center the arts and intervention and allow them to intersect, he called it “roses in concrete.” Councilmember Hernandez shared how he has used art to help heal his community. He tells the story of Victoria Barrios and Brandon Lopez, who were victims of gang violence and police brutality. Hernandez worked with the community to use art to create a mural for the victims to immortalize their stories and bring the community together.

Councilmember Hernandez states, “in the City of Santa Ana, we recognize arts as a catalyst for change in our city and as well as enhancing the quality of life for residents and it is an economic boost for businesses too... It doesn't only serve to beautify communities, but it also increases safety, and it minimizes criminal activities and it minimizes the criminalization of people of color.” He continues to say, “funding for the arts can also be seen as an investment, since art activities generate money for the city, even free activities bring in an average of \$17 per person in the form of parking downtown, or eating in restaurants, or buying gifts.”

Both Espinoza and Hernandez express an appreciation for the arts and dedicate their professional careers in part to the service and advocacy of the artistic community. In order to facilitate a profitable and positive relationship between local government and arts organizations, there are several coalitions and arts councils in place, two of which were interviewed for the purpose of this research.

Richard Stein is President and CEO of Arts Orange County (AOC), the independent nonprofit arts council for Orange County, California. Stein has been working in the arts industry since the 70s. Stein states, “we do a lot of the traditional arts council kinds of programs and services you would see elsewhere around the country, like an arts awards event, a children's arts festival, a lecture on creativity, professional development, programs for artists and arts organization leaders, and an online arts calendar. So those are all traditional things but arts councils in large metropolitan areas like ours are typically part of local government, county or city government and therefore they have reliable sustainable funding, we do not. We’re an independent nonprofit, and so we’ve kind of always struggled financially... because almost all those programs and services are free of charge... Private philanthropists are passionate about art forms, but they're not generally passionate about art services.” Some of the services offered by AOC are cultural planning for cities, major public art projects, consulting for arts organizations, executive search services, board retreats, and strategic planning. “Most of the major organizations in Orange County have hired us at one time or another to assist them with management recruitment.” AOC also spearheads the advocacy efforts for federal state and local funding for the arts.

I also interviewed Natalia Valerdi, who has been working in the arts sector as an administrator for the last five years. She is currently a board member for the Arts+Culture: San Diego coalition, a coalition of over 100 arts and culture organizations dedicated to strengthening the diverse cultural ecosystem of San Diego and achieving the Penny for Arts² and Culture funding plan in San Diego. In anticipation of the advocacy that will take place to support the full funding of the Penny for the Arts initiative, the coalition meets every month to go over how much of it has

² According to the Arts+Culture: San Diego Coalition, in 2012, the San Diego City Council voted unanimously to approve a “Penny for the Arts” plan that would allocate 9.52% of the city’s Transient Occupancy Tax to Arts and Culture funding. Unfortunately, even though this was passed by Council, the Arts and Culture community have been pushing ever since to realize that goal.

been funded over the last few years, what they're hoping to achieve, and where they think the budget may fall, so that once the budget reports start coming out in March, then arts organizations are ready to step up and advocate for a specific number. Valerdi speaks of her career prior to the coalition, "before that I was more focused on working as an educator and an advocate, even though I was still doing some work as an administration it wasn't really full time, and so I think the last five years I've really done more work in the field and that's how I slowly got involved with the arts and culture coalition."

Valerdi states, "arts are not only essential, but a vital part of youth education." She explains that arts organizations and schools work together to bring opportunities to the youth. "Dealing with unemployment or lower levels of education, those kids benefit exponentially from being exposed to the arts, because they actually acquire developmental skills that they may not otherwise acquire." When asked about the role that the arts play in helping the community he serves, Councilmember Hernandez shared a piece of his personal story. He stated that both his grandfather and father were gang members, "the role that the arts have had on people like myself, it has provided an outlet that didn't involve repeating this vicious cycle of harming ourselves... when I met people that resonated with certain artists I formed different types of relationships with them."

Funding for the arts

In the City of Los Angeles, the Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) budget is virtually funded through the transient occupancy tax (TOT), those are the taxes collected from the hotels, motels and Airbnbs across the City. The City Council allocates a portion of the TOT funds and supports the operations of the DCA through its several branches. There's a Public Arts Division,

and a Community Arts Division that operates several neighborhood art centers around the City, all of which are funded through the TOT. The Public Art Division, however, has a separate funding stream, they have the one percent collected from the development companies. Commercial and residential developments across the city each allocate 1% toward public art, so they have that extra stream of income. The City of LA has several funding opportunities for the arts. There is the traditional grant program, also an option for individual artists, residency grant projects, master artists individual grants to create new work, and the public space activation fund open for all businesses and individuals to activate outdoor spaces in the City.

The City of San Diego has the “Penny for the Arts” plan in place. Valerdi explains, “the penny for the arts is basically a penny for every TOT dollar (the hotel occupancy tax tourism dollars) that comes into the city of San Diego... that is to go directly into the Commission for arts and culture to fund arts and cultural activities, but it's always falling short. [Elected officials are] always trying to put the money on other things that the city considers essential. So that's been the argument... if the city is a place where there is culture and tourism, why aren't the arts essential?” In Valerdi’s words, this initiative is a group of community advocates, “where arts organizations are asked to blog or produce something that talks about what's happening in the community to give people a sense of what is going on, as opposed to another report with more numbers or graphs.” So, these first hand reports kind of give a little more flavor, a little more depth to what is the true value of arts.

Espinoza also stated that the TOT revenue dropped over 80% during COVID in the City of Los Angeles, so the City Council found alternative sources of revenue to allocate to the arts. The grant funding stayed steady, despite COVID effects to tourism. The American Rescue Act signed in 2021 allocated plenty of funds to state governments, which trickled down to the arts and

arts organizations. This caused the allocations to not only cover their usual expenses, but even increase during the pandemic. Stein shared an alternative source of funding that also occurred during the recent pandemic. He stated that the California Arts Council recently received CARES Act funding and they decided to give each County's Arts Council \$15,000 to make grants to bypass organizations in their communities, so AOC got \$15,000 and made grants of \$2,000 to eight organizations. Most of these organizations were smaller and minority led.

The Covid pandemic

Stein explains that things changed during the recent COVID pandemic. He states, “we went into high gear in order to try to get relief funds for the arts community, and we were very successful... The county Board of Supervisors, who had never funded the arts, saw and understood the need for AOC presenting them with research results and they came up with \$5 million of the American Rescue Plan money.” Based on that allocation AOC is now advocating with the new chairman of the Board of Supervisors for ongoing funding moving forward for the arts community. When asked about the reasoning behind an increase of support during COVID, Stein brought up the evolving relationship between arts organizations and elected officials. “On the Federal and State level we’ve spent years really cultivating relationships with these elected officials, and they had been generally supportive of the arts, but I also think that the research that documented very clearly the disastrous financial condition created by COVID.” They suddenly realized they could lose important cultural arts institutions in their community. Stein states, “I think it relates to the long history in Orange County of self-sufficiency by the arts.” Arts organizations usually have other sources of funding besides government allocations, which can make them seem self-sufficient.

Stein explains that The California Arts Council abandoned all its regular grant programs during the pandemic, “there's a few core ones that they kept, but all their niche programs like cultural pathways for emerging arts organizations, and the impact grants which were for special projects” were gone. Stein continues to say that the CAC implied that anybody could apply, but if the organizations had a budget of \$250,000 or more, they were probably not going to get funded. Stein states, “This year they actually said nobody could apply if they had a budget of \$250,000 or more.” That is an example of assuming an organization is self-sustaining. He explains that these decisions divide the arts community and put large organizations against small ones. For about 12 years the California Arts Council had only one million dollars a year, and then there was a devastating cut that almost eliminated the Agency back in 2003.

Stein states, “I'm on the board of the California Arts Advocates and was President for three years, and we worked hard to break through, and it's now been about eight years since we were able to start getting funding again, it's built up gradually.” Particularly during the pandemic when the state had extra federal funding, they did their best to convince large organizations that they had a stake in arts funding. He explains that in the old days there used to be a basic organizational grant from the California Arts Council guaranteed to all the main institutions on the list. When the funding went away those organizations had to go elsewhere to look for money and they became disengaged and demoralized and as a result did not participate in advocacy anymore. Now the organization has built up to about \$30 million and is starting to get the interest of larger organizations who have political clout. They have large networks, who could increase funding. But they won't participate if they're not included. Stein states, “the entire spectrum of the arts community should be funded, everybody should have skin in the game, everybody should feel like they are part of the arts community and the minute you start to have winners and losers based

on size, then it's not healthy for the field and it's not healthy for the arts funding picture. If there's no place for them in the funding picture, they're going to go around the California Arts Council and get the state funding another way.”

Unlike the CAC, Espinoza explained that the City of LA does not investigate the financial status of the arts organizations they support. He states, “like many other municipalities and other federal and state grant makers across the country we observe the Community Pure Panel Expert review process for adjudicating grant proposals. Grants are competitively awarded, and applications are reviewed by the panel, so it's a democratic process.” Specific criteria that the panelists look for includes administrative capacity, impact, ideas, and the community partnerships. The panel evaluates how capable the organizations are in delivering the projects that they're presenting, the proposed impacts on the communities they want to serve, the innovative nature of the concept of the project, and sufficient outreach with the communities they want to serve. According to Espinoza, artistic merit takes a backseat to the things mentioned earlier. ” One thing we don't look at is financial need, it is not something that we ask our panelists to consider when it comes to allocating grant money... we look more at their ability to deliver Community relevant high impact, good value, free, and low cost programming to the public.”

Arts organization perspectives and the application process

Regarding the role that government funding plays in the organization, Freeman answered, “almost no role.” He explained that it takes more time to apply for government grants and it costs more than applying to other sources of funding, such as private donors or philanthropic organizations. Freeman states, “It takes more time to apply for it on a per dollar basis, then you likely get. Now, there are organizations that live on that kind of funding, it makes a big deal for

them. But it is easier for us to go to where we know the money is and ask for the support because half of our kids are on financial assistance”

Similarly to Orange County Music & Dance, The Wooden Floor doesn't receive many funds from the government. According to Reese, the organization occasionally receives a CDBG grant³ from the City of Santa Ana or a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts every 2 years. Supervisor Do's office recently allocated a financial gift from the County. Reese states, “it's not that we don't go after government funds, it's just that they are very cumbersome and also sometimes very rigid. We like to be very nimble and innovative in how we do things, so we find with government resources that once you get a grant you have to keep doing the same thing, even though you may see that it's not really effective, and we like to be making sure that if we see things not working out we just don't continue with it.” Reese explains that grants can come and go and governments can change depending on who is running the state and national government, so the funding mechanisms change as well. Reese states, “we don't like to hire based on if we get a grant or not, we hire the position and then we raise the money.” She also mentions that the grant might not be worth applying for once you factor in the grant writer's time. On the other hand, Reese states that they find their individual supporters, like companies and private family foundations, to be very consistent.

Valleskey from the California Dance Institute has a similar opinion. When asked about local government funds, Valleskey mentioned that she doesn't apply for them too often. She states, “frankly, for me, it's a ton of work. Some of their top grants are like \$4,000- \$5,000, it's

³ According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, “the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program provides annual grants on a formula basis to states, cities, and counties to develop viable urban communities by providing decent housing and a suitable living environment, and by expanding economic opportunities, principally for low- and moderate-income persons. “

just not cost effective for me to apply. Usually, their processes are cumbersome, and they have so many hoops you have to jump through.” She explains that she could apply for a private grant in 15 hours and get \$30,000, whereas a government grant would take triple that amount of time, and she could get \$10,000 at the most. This is not feasible considering that she does her own grant-writing and doesn’t have a large administrative staff. She shares the following idea with Reese and Freeman, “private foundations are much, much easier to deal with.” I asked Valleskey to illustrate what a small grant would represent for the organization, she explained that the monthly budget is around \$20,000, so \$5,000 would support one week of operations. The cost to put the program in one school is around \$30,000, which is why going for larger grants is more cost effective.

However, CDI usually receives funding from the California Arts Council. Their first allocation was in 1999 with a \$100,000 grant, which is very different to the amount of money they allocate now (around \$10,000 according to Valleskey). She states that, “ the California Arts Council, which is a state agency, was how we originally got going, and they've pretty much funded us every year. Except this past year I don't know what's happened to them, but their grant process completely changed, and I haven't really kept up with it... Being a repeat grantee is easier, because then you kind of just go from your stuff the year before, but they're also incredibly cumbersome. We have money from LA county. I think one thing that was helpful was they made their grants two-year grants, so you only have to go through that difficult process every two years. [Regarding] the city, I haven't done that in a while, because it was too involved for too little money.”

A grant that did make sense according to Reese was the Revive Grant, by the City of Santa Ana, “designed to deliver both short-term and long-term health, financial, educational and other support to the Santa Ana community.” TWF could apply for over \$150,000 over two years, which

made financial sense for the organization, and it was well worth their grant writer's time. The Councilmembers, Supervisors or Mayors have sent representatives out and advocated for the organization. TWF received the Charter Foundation Award from the City last year.

Similar to TWF, Backhaus Dance has an Education Director that is dedicated to grant writing. When asked about her experience with grant writing, Backhaus explains, "For most of my career, I did not apply for a lot of grants and I'll tell you why, it's because they are labor intensive, and you don't get them very often." She mentions that the grants will go to the major players, such as, symphony orchestras, museums, leaving contemporary dance "at the bottom of the bottom." "You never get anything like the first couple times, you have to keep writing the grant, so it's very labor intensive." The organization's grant writer is very experienced, and she helped the company apply for more government grants. The grant writer goes to all the necessary meetings, which allows Backhaus Dance to have a seat at the table and stay informed of funding opportunities while also spreading the word about the company's work. Prior to having a grant writer, the company relied on personal donations from board members and other supporters of the organization.

Backhaus explains that they've had two grants from the City of Newport Beach. The first one was to do a live free public performance on the lawn in their Civic Plaza, and the second one was to do two residencies, one at Corona del Mar High School and one at Back Bay High School. They are currently applying for another grant from the City because Backhaus states that the City Arts Council usually likes to fund these types of programs. The City of Santa Ana Parks & Recreation Department funded Moving Santa Ana during the pandemic. The program offered an opportunity for people of all ages to engage in physical activity through dance in an open space. Backhaus describes this as a "silver lining" during the pandemic. The city grants are the easiest

to get if they know “the players” because they are within their reach. Arts Orange County tells them when grants are available County wide.

All the arts organizations that I interviewed mention a lack of accessibility and a high-demand low-reward situation when it comes to applying for government grants. The level of financial support that they receive varies and it comes from different government agencies. Some of them depended on that funding to start their organizations, while others consider the funding a bonus and don't necessarily rely on it for their day-to-day operations. Despite the issues with the grant application system, the relationship between arts organizations and government agencies is deep, complex, and has several issues to tackle.

Relationship Between Government Representatives and Arts Organizations

When asked about the feedback the City receives regarding the application and funding process, Espinoza mentioned that more money is the number one ask from grant applicants. “By design our grants cannot pay for an entire project. We have a one-to-one minimum match requirement for our grants, generally speaking, so more money is often requested.” Applicants also ask for a far easier application process, easier reporting, less emphasis on project based grants and more general operating grants, and an easier contracting process once the grant is awarded, “it's a very lengthy contract packet with lots of standard forms that you would expect to see from a large bureaucracy.” Espinoza also explains that considering their 4 million budgets, it's a strategic position to tie the smaller grants into very project specific deliverables.

Espinoza explains that although the DCA has no control over the contracts determined by the City Attorney's office, the department has implemented other measures to support the

community. Some of the responses include the Arts Workforce Empowerment Program that targets key employees at arts organizations who have missions specifically to serve marginalized, fragile populations. The DCA also offers one on one support for each of their applications.

I asked Reese what could improve the funding of the Southern California artistic community, and she pointed out that the California Arts Council started with 2 million dollars, and people never think that Orange County needs funding. There has never been a fixed pool of funds to support the arts. Something like a fixed percentage of the sales tax for the arts would be ideal. According to Reese, the creative economy of Southern California is \$538 billion, and the number one driver of that is the arts.

Councilmember Hernandez shared his own perspective about what could improve in government art funding. He states, “we can start defunding less effective programs and funding robust art programs, but I'm only one voice on the Council and I'm sure in due time more voices like mine will join and it'll make the efforts I've been fighting for easier.” Hernandez discusses his experience in arts funding. “When I brought back a lot of proposals for arts my colleagues supported it, I just think it was due to the fact that there wasn't conversation happening around arts. And I think once I brought it to the table, there was a little bit of hesitancy just because it wasn't something that we had ever really funded and us getting it funded for the first time has really brought a lot of people together.”

Advocacy and Fundraising for the Arts

It is fundamental to recognize that, in order to provide a deep understanding and an all-encompassing critique of the topic at hand, the interviewees mentioned that they had to undergo

years of experience and professional training in their field. Because of this, they can also provide valuable advice regarding the techniques of arts advocacy. Considering his many years of experience in advocacy, Stein shared the following guide, “The first thing you do is you find out what the person you want to persuade cares about, so if they're a member of Congress or a State legislator or mayor, City Council member, what are the things that they find important as a public official... [if they are] really concerned about truancy and kids not staying in school and dropping out and they're not graduating high school and when we've got the statistics to say that if you have strong arts education in the schools it keeps them engaged and it keeps them wanting to go to school every day.” Stein states that the arts are for everyone and they're also a tool in addressing some of the major social problems and human service needs that we have, and once you identify what this particular elected official cares about it's a matter of relationship building. He explains that some people perceive the arts as elitist. It's something that arts organizations are constantly battling. It is important to dismantle this idea when working with elected officials, because they serve many constituents from diverse populations. Stein mentions that many arts establishments can be intimidating or inaccessible for the general population, but it is important for these institutions to make sure their programs are available and inclusive to their communities.

Freeman states that “fundraising is storytelling,” and storytelling can be done in many ways. For example, you take prospective donors and put them in a room where they see the kids who couldn't have gotten to that studio if it weren't for financial assistance, and then you watch them sing or dance. As a board member of the California Institute of the Arts for 15 years, Freeman funded ballet, not because he was a ballet dancer himself, but because he valued the persistence and talent of ballet dancers. “I invest in grit. When I find someone who is absolutely determined and passionate and has to be the best, but can't get there, because they don't have the money, that's

who I fund.” Freeman explains that real philanthropists contribute money because they care, “They want to make a difference, they want to move the needle. And how do you move the needle? You find the people who have the desire to do it, to really grow. You find the institutions that are stewarding those resources well and teaching it properly. At the end of the day, you invest in people, you find the right people.” He states that if you research different arts fundraising campaigns “90% of the money came from 10% of the people,” which explains why it would be easier to reach out to those top donors each year instead of applying for smaller grants that fluctuate with each budget cycle.

Reese also sees the power of storytelling in advocacy. She says that, as CEO, you must be out there, meeting people and advocating for the work, sharing stories, powerful imagery and a consistent brand. Every photo has a purpose and a meaning. Reese says she picks out every color and every picture to make sure that the message gets across to their audience and donors.

The role of the community in arts advocacy

Every member of the Backhaus Dance company contributes to the dance education programs. When asked about her relationship with her community, Backhaus explained the following, “I love professional dance, I love choreography, I love putting stuff in theaters and I love to look at beautiful dancing, but I also know dance does good in the world, and for me, I can't separate those two things.” Backhaus and her company members drive more than two hours each way to Palm Desert in order to bring dance education to low-income youth. They have been doing this for 15 years. Backhaus explains that what fuels her is the students’ desire to dance. The students state in a documentary that there isn’t much opportunity for them to express themselves,

and that dance makes them feel confident and powerful. It is a two-way street because the company members are also inspired by the students they teach. They remind them of their reason to dance.

TWF also has very strong ties to the community. People sleep in line for auditions each year to make sure they can get an opportunity to join the next class of accepted students. Reese assures the crowd that everyone will get a chance to audition. “The parents advocate for us in the Community, the Community centers, the churches. People know our reputation in the Community. And the City is very supportive as well, City people support our work. They put the word out, so families know.” In a similar tone, Backhaus stated the following, “we are doing a lot more of it now than we ever had, but I also feel like one of the reasons we're doing more than we ever had is because there's more opportunities right now.” Backhaus explains that when everything shut down people realized the value of arts programs because their kids were missing it. There were a lot of lobbyists advocating for the creative community and saying that it makes a difference. This dialogue has made it into the political system, and as a result the money is trickling into cities and into education funding, generally so there is more opportunity.

During her interview, Valerdi stressed that politicians and people in positions of power get to make decisions about where the money goes and want to fund the arts. But if the voices of the community aren't there it can be challenging, because government representatives must listen to the voice of the community. It isn't so much about what they want. ”I think the role of the community is essential and that's why the arts and culture coalition exists.” But the Commission for arts and culture doesn't really have a weight or a say in the budget, “they can recommend but it's really reaching to the Council representatives, the people who are making the decisions, they're listening to the community and so you've got to have people speaking out.” Something to consider

is that getting involved takes time out of people's days. "People in nonprofit organizations are already overstretched with so many responsibilities... The leaders in the community have so many things that are going on and this process is so lengthy and involved that a lot of people in the nonprofit organizations don't really learn about it."

Prioritizing Arts Education in Schools

Valerdi recalls an experience that helped her understand how dispensable the arts can seem when competing against other necessities, especially in the school system. She states her participation in the Learning Through the Arts (LTA) program was a highlight in her career and it illustrated how important funds are regardless of the level of advocacy and the results arts programs might be bringing to local schools. Valerdi worked with Arts for Learning San Diego, (it has been renamed since and now it's called Arts Education Connection) and when she was working there it was the single largest arts education nonprofit in San Diego. Valerdi states, "the LTA program was a very specific partnership with San Diego Unified School District, under the guidance and purview of Cindy Martin... It was really kind of a matchmaking situation because I would look at the school's character and the goals that the principal wanted and try to find a teaching artist that spoke a second language or that had a certain art form, or that had experience with that certain population." She explains that affluent schools had many resources and would fully fund artists to come into their classrooms and teach their kids, while other schools would struggle to have them come once a week or to teach only one group. These schools would often have to look for other sources, but the milestones the students reached were apparent. They would demonstrate awareness of space and other learning abilities that were connected to their arts education.

Valerdi explains that the program fell apart because it was fully funded by the School District, and schools were lacking essential resources such as books, nurses, librarians, computers, etc. She states, “they didn't have the funding because property taxes were low in that region, because it's a low-income region, so we're talking mostly about title one schools.” A lot of schools pulled out of the program and decided to use the money for things that they considered more important. It was very clear that some of these schools really needed the money for something else, and it isn't that the arts weren't going to help the kids, but they weren't properly funded.” This situation highlights the importance of sufficient funding, not only for schools but also for arts programs. In certain situations, an arts program might produce significant results, but if the funds are not available it still might get canceled.

Diversity

Most of the students that were interviewed are first generation Americans. Although this wasn't intentional, issues regarding diversity and representation came up during our conversations. One of the interviewees mentions that despite a large population of Latino students, all the teachers in her school were white. Some students mentioned that they feel a sense of pressure to succeed based on their parents' effort to bring them to the United States. Others mentioned that this pressure to succeed comes from their parents not believing in their decision to pursue an artistic career. Student B states the following, “The dance department [of Ramon C. Cortines School of Visual and Performing Arts] could use some work in its diversity, because all the teachers were white and that was a big issue when I was there. I think representation is a big part of your dance education and seeing people that come from your background doing the things that you want to do. I feel like that's a big source of motivation for students.” Student A stated, "I got into like 80% of the colleges

that I applied to, which was very surprising for me, I was like I don't look like these other people that are auditioning like me. We don't look the same."

Regarding diversity in their organization Stein explained that several changes have been made in order to increase representation. "We've determined in recent years that we still weren't diverse enough, we should really be matching the demographics of the community... So over the past several years in our recruitment of board members we added about a dozen people onto our board, we're up to 30 now, and now we are matching [the demographic] almost exactly." AOC is also about to launch a survey on diversity, equity, and inclusion to determine how arts organizations are advancing their programs. Stein points out that in the City of Santa Ana they implemented Spanish and Vietnamese in addition to English on their website as well as on the forums themselves, where there is now a translator. The AOC website can also be viewed in 10 different languages.

Valleskey also raised the issue of inclusion for non-English-speaking applicants in the government grant process. She states, "[There are] people for whom English is a second language trying to write grants, who are doing very good work out there. But it's hard for them, really hard for them too. If it's hard for me to navigate this process, it's really hard for them." When asked about inclusion for non-English speakers, Espinoza answered the following, "at the moment, our grant applications are all only offered in English, but I recognize the immense value in being able to offer other languages... we want all applicants to be successful and we make ourselves available to help them do that through coaching webinars and accessibility via phone and email at their convenience."

Other arts advocates see diversity as a personal motivator. Valerdi mentions lack of representation as one of the reasons why she stays involved in the arts. She states, "there are such

few people speaking on favor of how the arts benefits people from diverse backgrounds and how many cultures we have here in San Diego County and Southern California that are often overlooked, but that would really benefit from having funding through the Commission for Arts and Culture, so that's one of the main drivers for me is that diversity piece.” According to Valerdi, the Commission has gone through several iterations of what it means to look at diversity, and in recent years they have taken a harder look at not just how the funding is distributed, but also how the policies and procedures are affecting equity. Valerdi explains that looking into the policies is very significant because racism is systemic, and in order to create real impact there needs to be systematic change, which cannot occur unless organizations change their policies and procedures.

Valerdi talks about the project she created while she was working at the Media Art Center in San Diego, which is an example of diversity in the arts. She states, “there's a project that I managed that got a lot of attention called Little Saigon Stories... this project was to showcase the lives of Vietnamese immigrants into San Diego and their lives here in what's called Little Saigon, San Diego. Through three installations, videos and photo archives, stories, events, and also a lecture series, people got to learn about this community.” The funding for this project came mostly from the National Endowment for the Arts, California Humanities and The California Endowment. Valerdi explains that, although the The City of San Diego's Commission for Arts and Culture wasn't part of the funding, it was a major reason why the project got funded in the first place, because they needed their support. Valerdi states, “I was really interested in highlighting not only the diversity in the artists, but also the diversity in content, so showcasing how the arts can bring out and highlight cultural diversity in the community, because San Diego is very diverse... I think arts and culture is often just woven into these communities, but often overlooked and underfunded, and so the idea is to ensure that the arts and culture don't just fund

white lead organizations of a traditional caliber, but also community-based organizations that showcase the diversity of our community.”

Councilmember Hernandez also spoke on the issue of diversity and representation. He states, “I wanted to seek to have an equitable and transparent process for all our grants and our sponsorships so that we can distribute funding through open calls with different criteria depending on grants and the priorities that we had for arts organizations... so when I became an elected I had to tread lightly, to make sure that these were projects that would serve our residents and tell their stories and stimulate economic development for the very people that live in our Community.” Hernandez also prioritizes diversity by ensuring the allocations represent all races and backgrounds in his community. He values the participation of Latinx, Native Americans and African Americans in arts and culture.

He finished his interview with the following statement, “I would just say that art is freedom work, it is the most liberating process for marginalized and disenfranchised communities, using art as our weapon, a weapon of liberation... we won't ever have as much resources as the oppressor, but we will always out create them and as long as we keep on doing that, we will be on the cusp of something revolutionary.”

THESIS PERFORMANCE

Tales of Three is a performance composed of three solos and one group piece inspired by the interviews delivered by the students involved in this research. Three of the four students that were interviewed agreed to participate in this concert with the mission of creating a visual representation of the research's findings. Several quotes were selected in order to illustrate their story and each dancer performed a solo to a recording of their interview. The recordings were paired with a musical piece created by Adam Kormondy, a composer who studied the quotes and movement of each dancer.

In order to create the movement, I collaborated with the dancers and asked them to improvise in their style of preference. As I formulated a better understanding of their personal movement, we established a choreographic piece that included symbolism and representation of their experiences with dance. The choreography was set on a platform that was 4 feet wide and 5 feet long to create a feeling of intimacy and place the dancers one foot above the audience. The platform represents the dancers reaching their goals and objectives, fighting to climb the platform or reach their dreams and helping each other get there despite the obstacles.

The performance took place at the Experimental Media Performance Lab (a black box theater) at the University of California, Irvine. The audience sat around the performers which allowed them to see the choreography from different angles as the dancers shifted their focus throughout their piece. In between each solo, I read quotes from other interviews and data highlighting the importance of accessibility, representation and support for the arts. The first solo tells the story of a young dancer who came from El Salvador and never felt supported by the dance program at her local high school. Her movements are soft, and tender accompanied by piano and violin, but transform into more determined accents and extensions to represent her determination

and growth as the piece progresses. She smiles and moves her upper body with confidence as her voice clearly states, “maybe without dance I wouldn't be able to go to college.” Once she walks away from the platform I make my first speech, which includes the following statement, “In schools that are struggling to buy books and pay their teachers, it’s hard to find ways to finance a dance program. But if the arts can be the key to a future of opportunities, isn’t it worth it to give everyone a chance?”

The second solo touches on issues of diversity and lack of representation. Accompanied by a saxophone, the dancer moves her hands through her face, arms and legs to symbolize her struggle to find herself reflected in her teachers (she mentions in her interview that all the teachers in her high school were white, while she is Latina). The dancer moves through the floor as she steps on and off the platform, this represents her becoming a teacher and instructor for others in the future, since she is pursuing a degree in education. With the saxophone playing in the background the voice of the student states, “I think representation is a big part of your dance education and seeing people that come from your background doing the things that you want to do. I feel like that's a big source of motivation for students.” As she finishes her solo, the dancer wraps her arms around the platform simulating a hug and then steps away from it as the lights fade out.

In my second speech I state the following, “Arts organizations that serve minority populations are often overlooked and underfunded... Students of color deserve to see themselves in positions of power, but also in creative spaces that tell their stories. Arts programs should not only be accessible, but also a source of support, comfort, and mentorship to the students they serve.” As the third and last soloist enters from center backstage you can hear her voice saying that her mentor believed in her talent and got her to where she is today. Her choreography is strong and shows passion and power, with a fusion of Spanish dance, contemporary ballet and movements

inspired in jazz technique. The projection in the background compliments the piece with abstract images displaying various tones of red and a flame that symbolizes the dancer's inner light and drive to follow her dream of pursuing a career in dance. Once the third solo ends I deliver my final speech, stating the following: "Regardless of their story and because of their experiences, these young women are all here today advocating and sharing their relationship with the arts. Let them dream, let them learn, let them dance." The three dancers enter the stage to perform their last piece on the platform.

The group piece displays teamwork, collaboration, mutual support, and a sense of sisterhood between the dancers. They are constantly relying on each other to perform inventions, lifts, and jumps throughout the piece. They move individually and then in sync facing different angles and connecting to the audience in several directions. As the piece accelerates, the melody becomes more intense and only drums remain as all the other instruments fade. The dancers' movements respond to the percussion and the piece culminates in a series of poses that lead to a final stance where the dancers finish proudly on the platform in each other's company. The mission of this performance was to create a visual representation of the dancers' personal experiences relating to their free arts education. The speeches and quotes utilized were concise and direct, providing the audience with a striking 18-minute performance that illustrates the importance of accessible and inclusive arts education.

CONCLUSION

As I conducted my research on arts organizations that provide accessible dance education in Southern California, I discovered the large presence that the arts have in this state. There are a plethora of institutions that teach everything from movement and dance for all, to concert dance and pre professional repertory. Their resources, budgets, sources of funding, and the amount of support they receive from local governments also varies, but somehow, their mission statements are cohesive. They all strive for the same goal, the educational development and fulfillment of their students through dance. My discoveries illustrate that the arts do have an impact on their students; dancing teaches them discipline, determination, persistence, responsibility, and leadership among other life skills. Several sources also agree that the arts transcend the demands of an artistic career, giving the general population creative problem-solving skills that can prove valuable and beneficial to any industry.

Arts organizations are aware of the effect they have on their students, which is why they see arts education as a necessity. They gather information and data to represent their results and advocate for their cause so others can see the importance of it as well. What I found is that government officials don't disregard the arts during the budgetary process because they fail to see its importance, most of them have a sense of connection to a certain artform or have been to arts classes themselves. I consider that government funds aren't enough to support the number of arts programs available to their population, and the burden falls on private foundations and individual donations to subsidize a public good that is often considered optional or self-sufficient.

The lack of available funding, plus the issue of government grants often being inaccessible and demanding too much time for a minimal reward, discourages arts organizations from reaching

out to their government agencies. The applications for government grants are also not inclusive to non-English speakers, and depending on the government entity, they can sometimes discriminate against more established organizations with larger budgets or small ones that are not backed by years of experience. Without the necessary funding, government allocations can often fall short, either giving multiple grants that are too small or leaving multiple organizations without support. However, it is important to consider that government officials have a say on the budgetary process and can prioritize certain issues. Every group of interviewees calls on another group to participate, advocate and get involved in local government. Elected officials claim that arts organizations can lobby and advocate, while arts organizations explain that community support is fundamental to reach the funding goal for the arts.

Government involvement and advocacy takes time and can be a complicated process for many. This is why grant writing is an essential role in a nonprofit organization that is often more successful if there is a staff member specifically dedicated to applying for funding. However, this can be too expensive for small arts organizations. Although some artistic directors do the grant writing themselves, others have an employee that looks for available grants, goes to community meetings where funding resources are discussed, and follows up on applications.

Two topics that were not originally included in the interview questions but were revealed during the conversation are the effects of the recent COVID pandemic and the issue of diversity. Nevertheless, lockdowns due to the pandemic started only two years ago and it is important to acknowledge their effects on the arts community. The City of San Diego recently published its proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2023, and although the arts saw an increase, the amount of funding still hasn't returned to its pre-pandemic number and is still far from fulfilling the City's Penny for the Arts plan. Although the City of Los Angeles and the City of Santa Ana saw an increase of

funding during the pandemic, their budgets are small compared to the number of organizations they serve. Arts coalitions and organizations are working on using the momentum to advocate for steady funding, but although the pandemic might be a recent occurrence, their efforts have been ongoing for years.

As I asked each interviewee about their experience with the arts, the issues of diversity and inclusion came up as either something that was lacking, something that fueled their efforts, or something they were striving for. One thing is clear, representation matters. It is important for students to see themselves in their instructors, in their leaders and in their elected representatives. It gives them a sense of purpose and it inspires them to pursue their goals. Everyone deserves accessible, inclusive and quality arts education. Organizations that not only reach out to underserved communities, but also are conformed by minority groups that reflect the demographic of these communities should receive support from their local government to better serve these communities. Although an honorary mention, or a letter of support might be a start, local governments should provide financial grants and incentives for these institutions. This responsibility doesn't fall entirely on the shoulders of elected officials, since they hold their positions for a limited amount of time and must support their communities in a variety of ways. The only way to ensure continuous support is through policy, and with permanent full-time positions in departments that are dedicated exclusively to the support of arts organizations.

To finish my interview with the students I asked each of them about their plans for the future. The four of them answered that they would like to teach and "give back" to their communities. Even Student A who didn't have many resources in her program answered the following, "It was in my years in Century High School that I saw how much is needed in low income communities, and either I want to go back to Century to build a [dance] program or become

a teacher..." Student B answered something similar, "I do want to teach minorities, I don't want to go to a studio where only people who have a lot of money can afford that general education, and so my goal is to go back to high school." Student C also talks about teaching minorities. She said, "If I were to ever go into arts education I'd want to teach at a place where I know they offer opportunities to kids that wouldn't happen otherwise, that's something that really stayed with me, and I was really grateful for it." Student D would like to be a mentor for others to pass along the knowledge that her mentor gave her when she was young. She states, "I want them to know that they can do it too". This proves that dance education can be a valuable investment for future generations, since it cultivates young artists who are eager to share their knowledge and give back to their communities.

There needs to be a relationship between arts organizations and government officials, because in the end they both strive to serve their communities. However, an understanding that the arts are valuable and necessary to the cultural and creative development of communities must be present from both sides in order to build mutual support. In the long run, supporting the arts will produce a population that seeks to give back the time, lessons, and support that was once brought to them through their dance education.

APPENDIX A

Group 1: Elected Officials or Staff/ Arts Council Representatives

- State name and profession, what is your role?
- Do you have a personal relationship with the arts yourself?
- What is your opinion on the impact that the arts have on the communities you serve?
- How would you describe the level of importance given to supporting the arts during the budgetary process?
- What is your criteria when allocating these funds?
- What would you say is necessary for arts organizations to include as evaluation or evidence to advocate for themselves and apply for funding?
- What is your office currently doing to support the arts and the artistic community?
- What are some of the demands that you encounter when sitting at the table with arts organizations?
- What resources are available to you as an elected official to support these organizations?
- How would you describe the relationship between local government and arts organizations?
- How have you seen this relationship change or develop in the last few years?

APPENDIX B

Group B: Non Profit Arts Organizations

- Please introduce yourself and your role in the organization
- What would you describe as the mission of your organization?
- Do you have a personal relationship with the arts yourself?
- What are some of the impacts that you perceive an arts education has on your students?
- How have you responded to the changing needs of your students?
- How would you describe your relationship with your local community?
- How would you describe your relationship with the local government?
- What has been your experience with the government funding process? What would you change about it?
- How have you responded to the level of funding you receive from the local government, is it constantly changing?
- How much funding do you usually receive from the local government? What are these funds typically used for?
- Would you say that your organization is dependent on this funding?
- What other funding sources do you have?
- Does this funding impact your students directly or indirectly?
- What is your advocacy strategy when it comes to applying for funding?
- What do you think is needed in order to help your organization succeed in serving your students better?

APPENDIX C

Group C: Students over the age of 18

- Please introduce yourself by stating your name, age, major and school.
- What has your experience been with the arts?
- What arts education have you received and what was it like? How many times a week did you attend and where did it take place?
- How would you describe your experience?
- What are some of the things you learned?
- Did you have performance opportunities? What was this experience like?
- Did you obtain any skills that have been useful in your education, personal life or career?
- Did you receive any financial support or special opportunities from the organization?
- Looking back to this time, how do you feel about your experience?

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