Toward the Future of Philanthropy: The Disruptive Vision of the Memphis Music Initiative

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Executive Summary

What do diversity, equity, and inclusion in arts funding and practice look like? Over the past several years, many authors—including arts practitioners, academics, and funders—have put forth theories and frameworks that provided guidance for, but few extant examples of, what arts equity looks like in action. Since early 2014, the Memphis Music Initiative (MMI) has engaged in a unique form of arts philanthropy that is a promising approach for equity and inclusion. Using variety of qualitative methods, this study evaluates the funding and programmatic practices of MMI in the broader context of arts education, youth development, arts funding, and community empowerment, to discern the fundamental elements of the model, its effectiveness, and the lessons that other funders who are committed to equity might learn.

Arts Philanthropy and Racialized Communities

The meaning and practice of philanthropy has evolved over time. Philanthropy today is defined as “the practice of organized and systematic giving to improve the quality of human life through the promotion of welfare and social change” (National Philanthropic Trust, 2017). Although there have been seismic shifts in the demographics of the United States, these have not been mirrored in private foundations nor in their grantmaking practices (Kasper, Ramos, & Walker, 2004). Large foundations still give only a modest amount of funding to nonprofit organizations that are rooted in racialized communities.

Contemporary arts philanthropy follows the archetypal trends of the larger non-profit philanthropic landscape; responsive, place-based, and collective impact initiatives can all be found within the arts sector. Regardless of model, arts funders are increasingly focusing on relationship building, technical assistance, capacity building (including continuing training for arts leaders), collaboration, innovation, and donor involvement. Funders are also increasingly encouraging nonprofit arts organizations to move to becoming more market-based, with a focus on audience development and fee-for-service as core revenue streams.

While these approaches may be efficacious for mainstream arts organizations, it is not so for culturally based, folk arts, or community-based arts organizations. Traditionally, responsive funding in the arts has focused primarily on building institutions to preserve and present arts and culture based in the classical European canon. Place-based and collective impact arts funding initiatives primarily have focused on fostering economic and community development that serve dominant community interests. If the funders have equity-related interests at all, they often focus on importance of arts engagement to provide access to “high arts” to racialized communities.

For racialized communities, both the public and private mainstream approach to arts funding...
generally, and diversity, equity, and inclusion specifically, are insufficient. A multitude of structural and institutional criteria impact the ability of racialized arts organizations to attract funding, especially transformative funds. These include (1) what is considered to be art; (2) the perceived purpose of the arts in relationship to communities, society, and the nation; (3) the requirements put in place to receive funding; (4) how, and whether, diversity, equity, and inclusion should impact arts ecosystems, funding, and programming; and (5) the “value” of arts organizations based on subjective criteria including size, budget, composition, mission, and impact.

This **philanthropic redlining** has resulted in a chronic lack of resources and lack of access to funding networks among racialized organization, which tends to make them much more vulnerable than mainstream arts organizations. Racialized organizations have been historically excluded from circles of wealth, and this is acutely reflected in Memphis.

<table>
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<th>Philanthropic Redlining</th>
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<td>Philanthropic redlining is a set of funding practices in which an organization’s size, racial or ethnic constitution, demographic served, artistic designation (e.g., “high art” or “community art”), and/or geospatial location results in: (a) exclusion from funding altogether, (b) grants that are substantially lower than comparable organizations; and/or (c) forms of funding that discourage capacity building. Such practices also preclude the funding of organizations that may need substantial development and/or wraparound services that would ensure their viability. A particularly pernicious reality is that the very foundations that ostensibly exist to reduce inequity continue to reproduce its practices and effects through forms of philanthropic redlining. Philanthropic redlining is an institutionalized and normative feature of funding that tends to disadvantage organizations that are deeply embedded in disinvested, highly impoverished, and racialized communities that lack services, resources, and other types of support. Moreover, because these organizations are underfunded and may operate with values that diverge from the mainstream, they are excluded from considerations of best practices, from participating in important conversations around funding, and from important networks of funders and peer organizations. Thus, philanthropic redlining is a practice that overwhelmingly limits opportunities and possibilities for racialized communities. While many funders espouse a commitment to racial equity, and may have initiatives or staff members dedicated to issues of diversity, the choices they make in grantmaking, and the parameters they set for the procurement of dollars, do little to challenge—and in fact tend to reproduce—gross inequities in funding allocation.</td>
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**Identifying a New Model: Disruptive Philanthropy**

Disruptive philanthropy is a practice of conscious giving—that is, a practice informed by an awareness of how traditional strategies of philanthropy exclude communities, organizations, and/or practitioners that do not meet certain privileged criteria, *even if their inability to meet said criteria is a result of historical neglect from both the public and private sector*. Disruptive philanthropy:

- Starts with the understanding that institutional and structural racism shapes (arts) funding and produces inequities in resources and opportunities
• Assesses how resource and opportunity inequities manifest (e.g., transportation barriers, technology disparities, professionalization gaps, lack of access to professional and funding networks, absence of key organizational components such as a board, lack of remuneration for full time staff).
• Includes sensitivity to the particular history and development, mission and scope of each organization and to the communities they serve and eschews “one size fits all” approaches.
• Shapes funding practices to eradicate the barriers that result from entrenched forms of discrimination, including racism, geospatial location/zip code, and size.
• Creates tools to evaluate effectiveness of models implemented. This allows responsiveness to extant needs, pivots in real time, and tailored approaches.
• Measures impact.

This practice of aware, informed, and conscious grantmaking disrupts normative standards of giving in the broader philanthropic landscape and models a new way of understanding philanthropy with a “racial equity lens.” It is an anti-paternalistic model of giving that supports communities and organizations in expanding their capacity. Ultimately, it privileges group autonomy. In the final analysis, disruptive philanthropy is a funding practice that intentionally reveals, critiques, challenges, and seeks to upend philanthropic redlining.

The Transformative Practice of Disruptive Philanthropy: The MMI Model

MMI uses the arts, specifically music, to address issues of access and participation, relationship building, and equality in a bidirectional and sustained way. It has incorporated several types of music engagement, including band, orchestra, choir, and hip-hop production. Such diversity allows responsiveness to the interests of youth, schools, and the community at large. Music education and programming become tools for youth development and community engagement as opposed to products or commodities imposed upon or inserted into the community.

MMI operates within the unique context of Memphis and Shelby County, Tennessee. The city and county in which MMI is located have a profound impact on the mission, vision, and philosophy of the organization. The history and context both shape and inform MMI’s work: Memphis is a majority-minority city, with socioeconomic challenges that are informed by the confluence of its negative racial history, its ambivalent relationship to Black cultural capital, and the city’s labor market. Most relevant to this study is the systematic neglect of Black residents that constitutes the political economy of Memphis. Trends in educational policies, housing, and employment in Memphis reveal how opportunity in this city—or lack thereof, in the case of Black folks—continues to be plagued by ghosts of the city’s past.
Despite the strong cultural assets in Memphis, many barriers, including the socioeconomic climate, undermine youth success. MMI is critically aware of how historical trends of racial discrimination have come to bear on wealth accumulation in the city, on arts giving, and on youth access to quality arts education. Its grantmaking reacts, responds, and seeks remedy to the gross maldistribution of Memphis’s abundant resources.

**Challenges to Youth Success**

Despite Memphis’ strong cultural assets, many barriers undermine youth success:

- Racial and socioeconomic segregation continues in Shelby County, with Black families, particularly those that have a low-income, less likely to live near new expanding job opportunities in outlying areas.
- 40 percent of Memphis youth live below the poverty line, which is nearly double the national rate.
- Neighborhoods with high poverty rates tend to suffer from under-performing schools.
- More than 26 percent of youth in many of Memphis’ most underserved neighborhoods don’t graduate from high school. (Urban Child Institute, 2013)

MMI uses existing cultural assets to address the pressing needs. It has used four primary strategies to encourage youth success:

1. MMI hands provided in-school programming to sustain existing music education and expand instruction through partnerships with local musicians. MMI works directly with students, parents, school and city leadership, and nonprofit professionals and musicians (MMI Fellows) to support and strengthen existing in-school music education.
2. Through its strategic growth grants, MMI has supported extended learning to expand high-quality out-of-school time programs to reach more youth and remove barriers to youth engagement and participation. The grant program fostered and supported high-quality music-engagement-based youth development opportunities by lowering barriers to success and making targeted investments in program growth, planning and support, and transportation.
3. Through its community cohort grants, MMI has supported innovation spaces in collaboration with community leaders, organizations and musicians. These sites spur innovation where youth can hear, learn, and play music. Essential to this strategy is both bringing quality programs to communities and identifying, elevating, and growing existing music programs and activities that are already happening in those communities. Cloud 901, located at the Memphis Public Library, is one innovation site that attracts a significant level of youth participation. Through both approaches they seek to ensure that each of Memphis’ many communities have places where youth can jam with local musicians; learn, play, and hear music; and contribute to (and benefit from) the city’s important musical and cultural legacy. MMI brings music instruction into neighborhoods, community centers and churches to remove
barriers to participation for Memphis youth and to ensure that the city’s cultural products remain true to its communities.

4. Through its Institute for Nonprofit Excellence (INE), MMI focuses on executive-level leadership and organizational development within community arts organizations.

Lessons learned from past work leads to changes and innovations to its work. New initiatives, such as MMI Works arts apprenticeship program, MMI SummerBeat creative youth development programs, and a Program Development Institute reflect organizational learning, wherein staff use data and analysis to support new program development.

**Disruptive Philanthropy**

Disruptive philanthropy is a practice of conscious giving—that is, a practice informed by an awareness of how traditional strategies of philanthropy exclude certain communities and organizations that do not meet privileged criteria, even if their inability to meet said criteria is a result of historical neglect from both the public and private sector. This practice of aware, informed, and conscious funding disrupts the normative standards of giving in the broader philanthropic landscape and models a new way of understanding philanthropy with a racial equity lens. It is an anti-paternalistic model of giving that supports communities and organizations in expanding their capacity. Ultimately, it privileges group autonomy. In the final analysis, disruptive philanthropy is a funding practice that intentionally reveals, critiques, challenges, and seeks to upend philanthropic redlining.

Through its work, MMI builds coalitions and develops strategies that challenge the norms of arts philanthropy. As a funder, MMI is at the forefront of innovative funding techniques that provide not only dollars but also professional and organizational support, access to funding networks, space for peer organizations to interface, and development services. In this way, MMI is integral to the cultivation of a sustainable, racially conscious, arts ecosystem in Memphis. More importantly, for MMI the community is an integral part of the arts ecosystem, not separate from it. The MMI practice of disruptive philanthropy is comprised for five key components, which are summarized on the following pages.

**Challenging the High Art/Low Art Dichotomy: Valuing All Art**

Across the interviews conducted for this study, the theme of high art versus low art manifested in a variety of ways. Historically, mainstream organizations that center what is considered to be “high art,” such as ballet, classical music, and painting, have received meaningful sums of financial support. These “legacy organizations” (the symphony, the orchestra, the ballet, the art museum, the opera) have often been supported and held as the standard of what is considered valuable, quality art. Meanwhile, art forms that were historically developed by African Americans—commonly referred to as community art—have been underfunded and considered “low art,” even as many of these art forms have served meaningful humanistic purposes such as storytelling, cultural memory, and resistance.

Not only did MMI fund organizations that have a range of musical practices, but their Music...
Fellows taught a variety of music programs in schools. For instance, MMI Fellows were observed leading in-school classes ranging from piano lessons and orchestra to hip-hop lyricism, gospel, and soul music. As MMI works to develop a Black arts ecosystem, their effort is not to replicate what mainstream arts ecosystems look like in most major cities, which often trace traditional high art/low art binaries. Informed by a historical consciousness of inequity in the arts, MMI makes available a wide range of arts opportunities that they believe offer unique cultural capital for empowering communities and inciting social change.

Cultivating a Black Arts Ecosystem
The leadership and partners of the Memphis Music Initiative stressed the importance of a thriving arts culture for matters of social justice and also for youth development. In its efforts to support the arts and artists in Memphis that are invested in community uplift, MMI has stressed that this can not be an individualistic endeavor for single artists or a few independent arts organizations. Therefore, this organization has been intentional in their vision to build a “Black arts ecosystem,” taking a communal approach to their vision of blending the arts and community vitality in Memphis.

Commenting on this aspect of MMI’s giving practices, a grantee highlighted MMI’s Institute for Nonprofit Excellence cohort model as useful in forging relationships that might serve as a foundation for this arts ecosystem. As this person stressed, there is value in sitting at the table with similarly aligned organizations that invest in arts with broader community development outcomes in mind. Through this approach and many others, MMI has forged strategic partnerships with both established non-Black arts organization and historically underfunded Black arts organizations. By facilitating these relationships, MMI has provided high quality and engaging arts education for young people in underserved communities. The vision is to incubate relationships and organizations that can have longevity in their mission of empowering Memphis communities through the arts, particularly those Memphians that have been overlooked.

Being Invested in Community Versus Investing in Communities
Given its vision of cultivating a Black arts ecosystem, MMI has offered wraparound services not only for its grant recipients, but also for the larger community it serves. This translates into an asset-based approach that (1) values arts organization’s unique strengths and contributions, (2) provides assistance to expand organizational capacity (in areas such as operational infrastructure and strategic planning), and (3) simultaneously offers creative community programming that helps to increase arts literacy in the communities on MMI’s radar. While MMI’s tactic is to fund community arts initiatives and organizations, it is first and foremost invested in the wellbeing of the local community and in imagining a more vibrant future through forms of arts practice.

Having a Dual Structure: Grantmaker and Programmer
One of MMI’s advantages is that even though they are a grantmaker, they also implement their
own programs that allow them to apply their funding philosophy and to assess its effectiveness. Program include the In-School fellow program, the Program Development Institute, and MMI Works, a program that provides summer employment in the arts sector to Memphis youth. The dual process of resource allocation and implementing programming promotes theorizing informed by practical experience, research and development, data collection, and program revision based on experience, practice, and feedback. This makes the organization not only more efficient but also more responsive to community needs. By developing best practices with other organizations, MMI is able to make strategic pivots in real time.

Using Data to Support Practice
In MMI’s model, data analysis is an embedded and essential component. It realizes that evaluation is necessary for quality improvement, ensuring the effectiveness of the programs, and for administering the best organizational support possible. In a nonprofit landscape that is moving increasingly toward evidence-based practices, MMI prepares its grantees to be competitive for other organizations by providing them with knowledge, skills, and tools for data collection. As data and evaluation become standard requirements for receiving philanthropic dollars, MMI is ahead of the curve in its own practices, and in the services it provides to its grantees and partners in this area.

The Challenges and Opportunities of Scaling Disruptive Philanthropy
This report has described a model that holds promise for other organizations seeking to transform philanthropy to bring about true diversity, inclusion, and equity in the arts. Although they may be challenging, the MMI’s promising practices provide a framework for others to adapt. The challenges to implementing the MMI model are numerous, not least because it requires tireless commitment, steadfast dedication, genuine reflection, and substantial resources. Nonetheless, as MMI demonstrates, disruptive philanthropy is a worthwhile—and essential—endeavor for those who care about real equity and social justice.

Disruption is not a one-size-fits-all process; the specifics must be tailored to the vision, mission, and aim of an organization, and to the communities it seeks to serve. Answers to the questions below, strategies, and tactics must be derived from a genuine understanding of what exists and what is possible.

- What is the the unique artistic and cultural heritage of racialized groups in the geographic area?
- What is a critical need in the community that the cultural assets can be mobilized to address?
- What are the historical and contemporary dynamics?
● How does the arts dichotomy manifest?
● Who owns disruption--the organization or the community?
● What is the current state of linkages between and among culturally specific arts organizations? Between the arts organizations and the community?
● What are the unique strengths and needs of individual organizations? How do we best support them?
● What specifically do we hope to achieve with disruptive philanthropy? How will we know we achieved it?
● What will a thriving arts ecosystem look like?

Disruptive Philanthropy is an accountability practice informed by knowledge of historical trends of wealth accumulation and exclusion that has been shaped by structures of power that reinforce a multitude of oppressive hierarchies. Prioritizing the incubation of community organizations to expand their capacity for re-imaging themselves and helping them to meet their own needs is essential in an increasingly austere climate.
Introduction

What do diversity, equity, and inclusion in arts funding and practice look like? Over the past several years, many authors—including arts practitioners, academics, and funders—have put forth theories and frameworks that provided guidance but few practical examples of what arts equity looks like in action.

Since early 2014, the Memphis Music Initiative (MMI) has engaged in a unique form of arts philanthropy that is a promising approach for equity and inclusion. Using variety of qualitative methods, this study evaluates the funding and programmatic practices of the MMI in the broader context of arts education, youth development, arts funding, and community empowerment, to discern the fundamental elements of the model, its effectiveness, and the lessons that other funders who are committed to equity might learn. The analysis is situated in a larger discussion of (1) the effects of race and place on access to funding and resources, what we call philanthropic redlining; and (2) the sustained and good-faith commitment to combat this phenomenon through the practice of disruptive philanthropy.

Toward the Future of Philanthropy is divided into three sections. The first, Arts Philanthropy and Racialized Communities provides the context for this study and describes the key frameworks that will be used throughout. The second, The Memphis Music Initiative Model, describes MMI programming and outlines the ways in which MMI has challenged dominant modes of philanthropic giving through (1) challenging the high art/low art dichotomy, (2) cultivating a Black arts ecosystem in Memphis, (3) being invested in communities as opposed to merely investing in them, (4) acting as both a grantmaker and a programmer, and (5) using data to support practice. Such policies, practices, and methods reflect their embeddedness in and responsiveness to the communities they serve. The final section, The Challenges and Opportunities of Scaling Disruptive Philanthropy, presents a set of questions that can be tailored to the specific vision, mission, and aim of an organization to cultivate and guide disruptive practices.

This report is for persons that directly participate and have a stake in arts philanthropy, specifically those who are invested in making it more accessible, inclusive, and supportive for artists and organizations that have been historically marginalized and overlooked. More specifically, foundation leaders and program officers, arts service organization staff, and others interested in issues of equity will benefit from the information found within.
Arts Philanthropy and Racialized Communities

The meaning and practice of philanthropy has evolved over time. Philanthropy today is defined as “the practice of organized and systematic giving to improve the quality of human life through the promotion of welfare and social change” (National Philanthropic Trust, 2017). Currently, there are three general approaches to grantmaking: (1) responsive, (2) place-based, and (3) collective impact.

Although there have been seismic shifts in the demographics of the United States, these have not been mirrored in private foundations nor in their grantmaking practices (Kasper, Ramos, & Walker, 2004). A study conducted by the Greenlining Institute (Gonzalez-Rivera, Donnell, Briones, & Werblin, 2008) is instructive. They examined the 25 largest national independent foundations by asset size and concluded that (1) while there has been a modest increase over time, giving to minority nonprofits remains notably low, and (2) minority nonprofits receive a larger number of grants in relationship to grant dollars, which means they are receiving smaller grants when compared to mainstream organizations. The study found that nationally:

- 12 percent of the grants sampled were given to minority-led organizations
- 8 percent of grant dollars were awarded to same.
- 2.3 percent of grants and 2.7 percent of grant dollars were received by African-American organizations.

Of the 25 foundations sampled:

- 14 gave less than 10 percent of grants to minority-led organizations
- 18 organizations gave less than 10 percent of grant dollars to same.

Contemporary arts philanthropy follows the archetypal trends of the larger non-profit philanthropic landscape. For example, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation is a large national funder that engages in responsive grantmaking in the arts. Artplace America, a collaborative of 15 national funders, is the leading organization engaged in creative placemaking, a subset of place-based philanthropy. The National Endowment for the Arts engages in collective impact grantmaking, along with responsive and place-based approaches across its four funding areas.

Regardless of model, arts funders are increasingly focusing on relationship building, technical assistance, capacity building (including continuing training for arts leaders), collaboration, innovation, and donor involvement. In the context of decades-long decreases in public funding, especially for arts education, funders are also increasingly encouraging nonprofit arts organizations to move to becoming more market-based, with a focus on audience development.

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and fee-for-service as core revenue streams, and increasing the role of the artists and arts organizations in cross-sector issues.

While all of the above may be efficacious for mainstream arts organizations (read, “high art” organizations), it is not so for culturally based, folk arts, or community-based arts organizations. Traditionally, responsive funding in the arts (i.e., cultural patronage) has focused primarily on building institutions to preserve and present arts and culture based in the classical European canon. Place-based and collective impact arts funding initiatives primarily have focused on fostering economic and community development that serve dominant community interests. If the funders have equity-related interests, they often focus on importance of arts engagement to provide access to “high arts” to racialized communities.

Racialized" is used as the preferred term over others, including "minority," "of color," and "underrepresented" (although these terms appear in the paper when quoting or referring to other sources). "Racialized" connotes that the construction of racial meaning is ongoing, and has particular effects according to group, time period, and location. Persons and groups that are racialized tend to have a modal experience of marginalization, discrimination, structural and material lack, and diminished life chances.

**Table 1. Arts Funding in US by Largest 50 Private Foundations, 2012**

**Table 2. Top 50 Recipients of Foundation Arts Funding, 2012**

**Table 3. Top Recipients of Foundation Arts Funding Among Arts Organizations in Racialized Communities, 2012**

**Table 4. Public Arts Funding, 2012**

**Mainstream analyses of equity in arts philanthropy fall short.** The discrepancy between mainstream and racialized organizations is reflected in giving practice: in 2012, 29 percent of foundation giving in the arts went to organizations with budgets of $25 million or more—in other words, to less than 1 percent of arts organizations.

Mainstream approaches to evaluating arts funding tend to focus on four dimensions: (1) the relevance of the arts to economic development, especially its ability to generate employment, tourism, and tax revenue; (2) the ability of the arts to enhance the quality of life, especially in the realm of leisure; (3) the role of the arts in reproducing the nation; and (4) the “social” value of the arts—especially its ability to improve the moral or political climate. This is especially true for public funding of the arts, which tends to heavily influence the philanthropic sector. Given this perspective, the approach to equity and inclusion tends to center on the “two m’s of diversity: morality and the market” (Kasper, Ramos, & Walker, November/December 2004), and
on encouraging voluntary action and initiatives among foundation leaders (Bearman, Ramos, & Pond, 2010). As such, policy recommendations have generally included five broad strategies: (1) embracing different culturally relevant experiences and backgrounds; (2) promoting and advancing the careers of diverse employees; (3) creating an accommodating—not isolating—environment for diverse staff; (4) getting more racialized folks into the audiences of programs implemented by mainstream organizations; and (5) increasing the arts participation of racialized communities.

There have been several studies commissioned, position papers written, and working groups formed to analyze the sustainability of organizations and the role of arts philanthropy in fostering a healthy ecosystem. Much of the inquiry centers on how racialized organizations compare to mainstream ones, and the implications for diversity, equity, and inclusion.

A 2015 study by the DeVos Institute of Arts Management found that arts organizations in racialized communities are, in general, much less secure and far smaller than their mainstream counterparts. According to the report:

[T]hese organizations, the funding community, and everyone who values a diverse, vital cultural sector must: build stronger boards that lead arts organizations of color; invest in management education and effective staff leadership; prioritize great art rather than new buildings; and encourage responsible philanthropy that promotes long-term growth and fiscal health.

These organizations are absolutely essential to the American arts ecology. In addition to producing remarkable art, they provide access to the arts for communities of color, bring arts education programs to children who have lost access to it in their public schools, and offer training for emerging artists, ensuring a pipeline of talent that will continue to reflect distinctive perspectives and experiences that may not otherwise be seen in mainstream or Eurocentric arts. They may also defy expectations, correct historically propagated racial stereotypes, or simply delight their audiences (DeVos Institute of Arts Management at the University of Maryland, 2015).

In response to the DeVos study, the Southern Methodist University National Center for Arts Research (NCAR) explored the extent to which the form and function of culturally specific (racialized) organizations differ from that of mainstream organizations, and assessed the implications of concentrating funding in a smaller cohort of culturally specific organizations (Voss, Voss, Louie, Drew, & Teyolia, 2016). Their findings were numerous. Regarding form and function, they found that culturally specific organizations tend to predominate in areas that have smaller average budgets, including community-based art, arts education, and multidisciplinary performing arts; and tend to be underrepresented in sectors that have larger budgets, including museums, operas companies, and orchestras. They also found that these organizations tended to
be younger in age than mainstream organizations. However, controlling for age and sector, budgets and physical facilities—two indicators of security—tended to be equivalent between culturally specific and mainstream organizations. Moreover, while culturally specific organizations tend to have performance characteristics that set them apart from mainstream organizations, specifically less spending on marketing, less earnings from subscribers and members, lower trustee giving, and higher support from public/government sources, this is more a reflection of their comparative age than of their weakness or unsustainability. In other words, their distinctiveness can be attributed to their newer organizational form. Thus, the NCAR study is extremely important because it takes culturally specific organizations on their own terms, and disproves the contention that they are smaller and comparatively unstable.

In 2011, the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy (NCRP) challenged funders to embrace equity as a part of their missions:

> Each year, foundations award about $2.3 billion to the arts, but the distribution of these funds does not reflect the country’s evolving cultural landscape and changing demographics. Current arts grantmaking disregards large segments of cultural practice, and consequently, large segments of our society....

Regardless of its history or primary philanthropic focus, every foundation investing in the arts can make fairness and equity core principles of its grantmaking. It can do so by intentionally prioritizing underserved communities in its philanthropy and by investing substantially in community organizing and civic engagement work in the arts and culture sector. By doing so, arts funders – individually and collectively – can make meaningful contributions toward a more inclusive and dynamic cultural sector, and a fairer, more democratic world (Sidford, 2011).

NCRP suggested that funders could move toward supporting arts equity using a variety of strategies including: working harder to ensure that funds for preserving the Western European canon directly benefit underserved communities; recognizing and supporting work in cannons outside the European tradition; nurturing new works, including those focused on social change; expanding arts education for those with the least access to it; integrating artists and the arts into community planning, especially processes that engage underserved communities.

Grantmakers in the Arts (2017) released a revised public statement on its commitment to making “racial equity in arts philanthropy a primary focus of the organization” and to addressing institutional racism and structural inequities through their educational and funding activities. To follow their lead, they suggested that grantmakers “consider root causes and systems to understand historic inequities in funding ALAANA [African, Latino/a, Asian, Arab, and Native American] artists and arts organizations” and “execute a course correction with explicit intent to structurally change funding behaviors and norms compensating for past neglect and move...
forward with equal opportunities resulting in better funded and supported ALAANA communities, artists and arts organizations.”

In its report *Creating Change through Arts, Culture, and Equitable Development*, PolicyLink (2017) offered six strategies for using policy to support arts, culture, and equitable community development in racialized communities: (1) map artistic cultural assets with a focus on endogenous cultural resources; (2) evaluate economic conditions, including current investments in public works, arts, and culture; (3) identify barriers to resources and restructure processes to engender access; (4) work with artists, designers, young people, and culture bearers to engage the community and inform equity-driven processes; (5) expand equity-focused arts and culture investments across public agencies; and (6) ensure that governance and staffing are representative of the populations served.

Another effort focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion was the Diversity in Philanthropy Project, which was developed by presidents of several large foundations including the Kellogg Foundation, The Rockefeller Brothers Fund, and the California Endowment. The primary aim of this 3-year campaign was to “exemplify diversity, inclusive practice, and attention to social equality in foundation board and staff composition, operations, and grantmaking” by focusing on three primary strategies: voluntary diversity and inclusion initiatives at the individual and field levels; developing a national system of data collection, analysis, and accountability; and encouraging the creation, coordination, and dissemination of “knowledge resources.” Since the campaign’s organizers knew that the philanthropic sector’s commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion was “lackluster,” they were satisfied with raising awareness, expanding the representation of racialized folk in mainstream organizations, increasing the engagement with racialized communities in mission statements and practical work, and expanding the field’s capacity for change. In other words, the overwhelming emphasis was on educating mainstream organizations, encouraging them to track and measure diversity, and holding them accountable in doing so (Bearman et al., 2010).

**Assessing the Problems Inherent in Arts Funding**

For racialized communities, both the public and private mainstream approach to arts funding generally, and diversity, equity, and inclusion specifically, are insufficient. A multitude of structural and institutional criteria impact the ability of racialized arts organizations to attract funding, especially transformative funds. These include (1) what is considered to be art; (2) the perceived purpose of the arts in relationship to communities, society, and the nation; (3) the requirements put in place to receive funding; (4) how, and whether, diversity, equity, and inclusion should impact arts ecosystems, funding, and programming; and (5) the “value” of arts organizations based on subjective criteria including size, budget, composition, mission, and impact.
With respect to philanthropic and nonprofit foundations, “large, conservative, Eurocentric arts organizations” receive the lion’s share of funding, and this is justified because they satisfy extant evaluation criteria. Thus, “the sector’s definition of what legitimately constitutes ‘the arts’ doesn’t reflect America’s evolving demographic” (Horwitz, 2016).

Racialized organizations are more dependent on public funds than mainstream organizations. Indeed, funding from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) has been integral to the ability of “community” or “grassroots” organizations—often coded language for racialized or rural organizations—to attract private dollars: “Over the last five decades, the NEA nurtured grassroots organizations that existed off the radar of private donors, while bringing prestige and attention that has helped them raise their profiles” (Gilbert, 2017). More often than not, public grants put racialized organizations on the radar of philanthropic organizations. This is particularly problematic, given that funding from the NEA, as well as state arts agencies, are perennially under threat. Moreover, the dedication of mainstream philanthropic foundations to diversity tends to be mercurial, and times of crisis, such as economic downturn and the concomitant reduction in resources, rationalize a turn away from issues of diversity (Bearman et al., 2010).

For Black communities in particular, art is not meant to be a life-enhancing form of leisure; art, in many ways, is an expression of life itself. Art necessarily serves the function of combating racial discrimination, shaping a sense of identity and community that fortifies against the gross inequities of everyday Black existence, and rejecting mainstream values and depictions that denigrate Black life. In other words, art tends to be inextricable from social justice. Black music, because of its originality, ingenuity, and intimate connection with Black reality, has been especially important. For the mainstream society, art can be a powerful way to keep a polity together. However, for those whose citizenship and belonging has been ambivalent or dubious at best, art has been the means to not only challenge their foreclosure from the state, but also to create their own counter-publics (Dawson, 1994). In effect, the arts are a form of world-making. And, because Black art is often an expression of dissent and the struggle for liberation, it is more likely to challenge or disrupt the moral and political climate than to “improve” it. Furthermore, Black arts organizations do not want only representation in mainstream organizations and increased arts participation. They also seek also to develop audiences for their endogenous arts programming; to increase the number of racialized professional artists—in other words, those that are able to make a living as an artist; to build the capacity of racialized organizations; and to secure support for racialized artists’ entrepreneurship (MeWe306.com, n.d.).

Critiques of place-based arts funding echo this schism, especially as it relates to the concept of creative placemaking—which often assumes that place is a blank slate to be written upon—versus creative placekeeping—which assumes that each place has an extant culture and cultural resources.
At a moment when cities are rapidly being transformed, I worry that the people proposing and implementing policies are not thinking about spatial justice. That the speech of the poor and of communities of color is not heard is in part because of a devaluation of an expressive aesthetic… which does not jibe with the entitlement of the white spatial imaginary that dominates the understanding of the public sphere (Bedoya, 2014).

Disparities in the very understanding of the purpose of arts, and the funding criteria derived from such understandings, result from the reality that, “Large, mainstream arts institutions, founded to serve the public good and assigned non-profit status to do so, have come to resemble exclusive country clubs. Meanwhile, outside their walls, a dynamic new generation of artists, and the diverse communities where they live and work, are being systematically denied access to resources and cultural legitimation” (Horwitz, 2016). The outcome has been an entrenched practice of philanthropic redlining insofar as the “grassroots,” “community,” or “low-art” perspectives of racialized organizations undermine their contention for funding from private foundations, or circumscribe Black possibilities in the arts, e.g., there is funding for Gospel but not for opera, or Blues but not orchestra. What is more, because racialized organizations tend to be more “creative and entrepreneurial” as opposed to “traditional” or “classical,” they struggle to attract long-term investments (MeWe306.com, n.d.).

GH, staff of an organization that provides high quality music opportunities and mentoring to young African American women, argued that one of the biggest barriers faced by racialized organizations is fundraising, given the overemphasis on and preference for mainstream arts organizations. Because of this challenge, the longevity of her organization, like so many other community-based cultural organizations, has continued to be in crisis. This precarious position is a result of the lack of resources and lack of access to funding networks.

Right now because of certain barriers [to] grant opportunities or other things that have been stumbling blocks for fundraising, I would say yea, that affects us a lot in retaining full-time choir directors, full-time executive team. That's been our biggest obstacle... That's why it's kind of our goal for the next few years to retain more full-time employees so that we can be in a position to share the paradigm with others. So that's been a stumbling block, yes. There are certain circles that we just don't feel we can get into, we don't know exactly why, or what it is… so it's been kind of a struggle the past few years.

This chronic lack of resources and barrier to funding access is not uncommon for racialized organizations, and tends to make them much more vulnerable than mainstream arts organizations. Racialized organizations have been historically excluded from circles of wealth, and this is acutely reflected in Memphis. The latter has real effects on how, and if, they exist as

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1 Throughout this report, interviewees are referred to by pseudonyms. A descriptive list of interviewees is provided in Appendix A.
Naming the Problem: Philanthropic Redlining

Philanthropic redlining is an analogy to the historical practice of redlining in which banks and other institutions would deny access and services—including home loans, insurance, business ventures, and health care—to particular neighborhoods based on their racial, ethnic, and class constitution. Conceptualized by the Home Owners’ Loan Corporation (HOLC) in 1933, maps would literally be color coded to categorize level of risk and desirability, with red lines demarcating areas that would be denied funding. The effect of this capital disinvestment was low property values, entrenched racial segregation, and the concentration of poverty.

Philanthropic redlining is a set of funding practices in which an organization’s size, racial or ethnic constitution, demographic served, artistic designation (e.g., “high art” or “community art”), and/or geographic location results in:

(a) exclusion from funding altogether,
(b) grants that are substantially lower than comparable organizations; and/or
(c) forms of funding that discourage capacity building.

Such practices also preclude the funding of organizations that may need substantial development and/or wraparound services that would ensure their viability. A particularly pernicious reality is that the very organizations that are funded specifically to reduce inequity continue to reproduce its logics and effects through forms of philanthropic redlining. Thus, according to IJ, an MMI leader, philanthropic redlining is: “a systemic process of gerrymandering funds so that certain people don't have access to them, or the creation of barriers to limit individuals from having access to funds.” The effects of this lack of access accumulate over time.

Funding criteria such as 501(c)(3) status, legacy status, size and composition of a governing board, and type of programming further philanthropic redlining by intentionally or unintentionally excluding groups that have been historically marginalized. AB, the founder and executive director of an MMI grantee, observed that the newness and size of the organization, as well as its lack of 501(c)(3) status, precluded access to certain funding pools. While there was a pressing need for a full-time staff and executive team to implement more programming and to “share the[ir] paradigm with others,” AB understood that barriers to grant opportunities presented “stumbling blocks” for fundraising.

The lack of access to resources was a common concern. IJ stated, “…[E]ssentially we have funders who at this moment are like, ‘Hey, I could only fund organizations who have a least $1 million-a-year budgets.’ In order for an organization to have $1 million-a-year budget, then in most instances they probably have existed for at least ten years, and they've gotten support in someway for at least ten years from a multitude of sources.”
EF, executive director of a grantee organization located in South Memphis, emphasized that the small dollar amounts of the grants received from funders led to a small operational budget, which forced the organization to focus most of its attention on arts education. Additionally, the organization was focused on creating programming that could generate revenue instead of focusing on efforts that promote sustainability, such as building a vision and outlining goals. The dearth of grants available to small minority-led organizations for capacity and strategy building presented EF with formidable challenges.

Yet another form of philanthropic redlining is the funding of initiatives focused on getting racialized populations “engaged” as audience members of mainstream arts organizations while simultaneously neglecting the support and development of endogenous ones. Stated differently, the effort is not to provide longevity for racialized forms of arts practice but rather to use “diversity” to buttress mainstream visions of inclusion. In such initiatives, philanthropic dollars continue to provide strong and rich support for mainstream organizations while only superficially serving racialized populations.

Philanthropic redlining is an institutionalized feature of grantmaking, which disadvantages arts organizations that are deeply embedded in disinvested, impoverished, and racialized communities that lack services, resources, and other types of support. Moreover, because these organizations are underfunded and may operate with values that diverge from the mainstream, they are excluded from considerations of best practices, from participating in important conversations around funding, and from important networks of funders and peer organizations. Thus, philanthropic redlining is a practice that overwhelmingly limits opportunities and possibilities for historically underrepresented communities. While many funders espouse a commitment to racial equity, and may have initiatives or staff members dedicated to issues of diversity, the choices they make in grant making, and the parameters they set for the disbursement of funds, do little to challenge the gross inequities in funding allocation.

**Identifying a New Model: Disruptive Philanthropy**

Disruptive philanthropy is a practice of conscious giving—that is, a practice informed by an awareness of how traditional strategies of philanthropy exclude communities/organizations/practitioners that do not meet certain privileged criteria, **even if their inability to meet said criteria is a result of historical neglect from both the public and private sector**. Disruptive philanthropy:

- Starts with the understanding that institutional and structural racism shapes (arts) funding and produces inequities in resources and opportunities
- Assesses how resource and opportunity inequities manifest (e.g., transportation barriers, technology disparities, professionalization gaps, lack of access to
professional and funding networks, absence of key organizational components such as a board, lack of remuneration for full time staff).

- Includes sensitivity to the particular history and development, mission and scope of each organization and to the communities they serve and eschews “one size fits all” approaches.
- Shapes funding practices to eradicate the barriers that result from entrenched forms of discrimination, including racism, geospatial location/zip code, and size.
- Creates tools to evaluate effectiveness of models implemented. This allows responsiveness to extant needs, pivots in real time, and tailored approaches.
- Measures impact.

This practice of aware, informed, and conscious grantmaking disrupts the normative standards of giving in the broader philanthropic landscape and models a new way of understanding philanthropy with a “racial equity lens”. It is an anti-paternalistic model of giving that supports communities and organizations in expanding their organizational capacity. Ultimately, it privileges group-autonomy. In the final analysis, disruptive philanthropy is a funding practice that intentionally reveals, critiques, challenges, and seeks to upend philanthropic redlining.

### Three Examples of MMI’s Transformative Practice

**Example 1.** If an organization has demonstrated a commitment to arts education and social justice, but doesn't have 501(c)(3) status, disruptive philanthropy means providing the resources to help said organization secure an interim fiscal sponsor, or assistance to establish a board of directors, filing paperwork to secure a 501(c)(3) status, and support in establishing a strategic plan. Emphasizing this point, MMI senior leadership team member IJ shared, “MMI thinks about what needs to be true in order for the idea, for the organization, to exist and provides every single one of those services.”

**Example 2.** Disruptive philanthropy means creating the conditions for a grantee organization to thrive by helping them build a sustainable infrastructure. This requires not only dollars but also tangible resources, including support services, consultation, and access to professional networks. As KL explained, “[MMI’s] funding has been phenomenal. I was able to get instruments, that was another thing, we didn’t have instruments for students… I suddenly had enough instruments for everybody, but that was one worry I didn’t have. When it comes to music, I spend $1000, $1200 out of my pocket in a heartbeat for music. I don’t have to do that now… It’s like I have a backing now, it’s like I have a foundation now. Whereas I was just ‘winging’ it before, because it was all on me. I have somebody backing me now and I am able to bring in one of your best violinist from some other part of the country to give these children a workshop. I am able to bring in an African American string player because you don’t see a lot of them, but I am able to show these kids there are other African American string players… I had three interns that they sent to help me. That was a big help, because all you had to do was tell the interns what you needed, and I could be in two places at one time. It was like extra arms, that was a big part of the success of my camp this summer.”
Example 3. Creating real and meaningful relationships with grantee organizations based on their needs and visions counters the norms of philanthropic giving. MN, an executive director, reflected on how MMI functioned as more than just a funder. "I feel like with MMI we have a partnership," MN stated. "They go so much further than just a check. I mean, to me the check is um, last on the list. It’s the experiences, the connectivity, the training, the teaching, that they are giving us that excites me more than the check does." MN found that the wrap-around services MMI provided were so tailored to the organization’s need that she "[felt] selfishly like this [MMI] was just created for our group." These services included providing a lawyer to help secure a 501(c)(3) status, providing the supports for the organization to hire some full time staff to solidify daily operations and organizational stability, helping them to build in assessment protocols to measure their success and identify areas where they might want to improve.

Disruptive Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Diversity, equity, and inclusion in the service of disruptive philanthropy includes several components. First, it entails the recognition that enduring racialized governing policies, institutional practices, and societal norms, both conscious and unconscious, have resulted in unequal access to funding, services, and other resources for historically marginalized organizations and the communities they serve. Second, it maintains a commitment to building opportunities for all populations and cultures to contribute their art forms and to participate in arts programming, because all contributions are essential to a rich and vibrant understanding of humanity. Third, it harnesses the unique tools of artists and arts organizations from a multitude of backgrounds to the identification, critique, and struggle against inequality, discrimination, and injustice. Finally, it requires the explicit action of public and private funders to change behaviors, norms, ideas, and practices that reproduce social inequalities that exacerbate the conditions of racialized and underrepresented communities.

Those who are deeply committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion in the service of disruptive philanthropy, must give up all forms of privilege that reinforce inequality, oppression, exclusion, and domination.

Key Definitions: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion

Diversity: The representation and incorporation of individual differences, including language, culture, and life experiences; and social differences, such as race, ethnicity, class, gender and sexual identity, sexual orientation, country of origin, and ability status, as well as cultural, political, religious or other affiliations in all facets of an organization’s composition, policy, and practice.

Equity: The eradication of barriers and the creation of opportunities for historically underrepresented populations to participate in organizations and on boards; to have equal access to funding and resources; and to participate in quality and culturally relevant programming. Equity also requires a level of cultural competency, or awareness and sensitivity of one’s own cultural location; the recognition of cultural differences and subject locations, and attitudes toward them; the appreciation of and respect
for different cultural practices, norms, values, and worldviews; and empathy and awareness in cross-cultural interactions.

*Inclusion:* The conscious, intentional, and sustained engagement with diversity in an effort to increase awareness, knowledge, understanding, and ultimately opportunities for populations that have historically been marginalized and excluded.

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### The Memphis Music Initiative Model

Founded in 2014, MMI is a growing organization with a staff of fifteen (as of May 2017). MMI uses the arts, specifically music, to address issues of access and participation, relationship building, and equality in a bidirectional and sustained way. Music education and programming become tools for youth development and community engagement as opposed to products or commodities imposed upon or inserted into the community.

MMI has incorporated several types of music engagement, including band, orchestra, choir, and hip-hop production. Such diversity allows responsiveness to the interests of youth, schools, and the community at large. This is important for several reasons:

1. Memphis is a city that has a strong musical legacy. Therefore, a variety of genres of music should be represented in music programming.
2. Insofar as the population that MMI serves is primarily Black and Latino students—many of who have had little exposure to real instruments—exposure to musicians who look like them or who, for instance, play violin, clarinet, bass, or trumpet, significantly impacts perceptions of what is possible.
3. Students are introduced to a multitude of life and developmental skills related to music engagement.
4. A variety of arts practitioners throughout Memphis are engaged, bringing a diverse wealth of knowledge and skills.

Moreover, it is important to note that the majority of MMI’s leadership positions are staffed by artists and people of color.

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### MMI Mission, Vision and Core Values

**Mission**

MMI is a community initiated and developed grantmaking initiative to use high-quality music engagement to drive student, youth, and community outcomes.
Vision
Memphis invests in its youth, its communities, and its musical legacy by broadening and strengthening existent music engagement offerings in and out of schools and supporting youth-centered, community-based music spaces.

Core Values
Impact. Music and the Arts are essential elements for social impact. At MMI, we commit to promoting music and arts engagement as a tool for communities to make relevant, local change.

Voice. At MMI, we commit to honoring the voices of the communities that we serve. We believe that community members are uniquely positioned to offer solutions to the problems that they face. This means creating spaces, processes, and celebrations that encourage every level of partnership to impact the work in our communities.

Equity. At MMI, our investments are designed to use music and arts engagement to create equitable access to opportunities and experiences, particularly in historically underserved Memphis communities.

Change. Meaningful change requires discomfort. At MMI, we challenge ourselves and our partners to engage in difficult conversations about equity and access for Black & Latino communities in Memphis arts communities.

Impact Statement
Memphis cultivates a thriving arts and culture ecosystem that enhances the quality of life of residents, provides critical developmental opportunities for youth, and ensures the growth and vibrancy of the city.

The Work: Empowering Youth and Families Through Music
MMI operates within the unique context of Memphis and Shelby County, Tennessee. The city and county in which MMI is located have a profound impact on the mission, vision, and philosophy of the organization. The history and context both shape and inform MMI’s work. The confluence of context and approach are described and explored below.

Figure 1a. Memphis Demographic Map: Race
Figure 1b. Memphis Demographic Map: Median Household Income
Figure 1c. MMI Grantees by Council District

Addressing Race, Culture, and Socioeconomics in Memphis, TN
Memphis is known for its innovation and creative cultural capital. However, it does not fit neatly
into an easily identifiable regional category. As a city in the “mid-south” that is historically understood as the capital of the Mississippi Delta, it is neither the deep south nor the urban north. *As such, the city’s unique positioning in the historical and economic landscape mean that it is not your typical southern city.*

Memphis occupies a peculiar historical identity; it is perhaps best known for its iconic racial history that informs the city’s identity in a global context. Particularly noteworthy are the activism of the renowned anti-lynching activist Ida B. Wells, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s support of the sanitation strike and subsequent assassination in 1968. According to Zandria Robinson, “Memphis is a place where you can examine snippets of ‘old’ and ‘new’ South as they collide with one another in urban space. It’s where the things that we popularly think make southerners southern intersect with the things that we popularly think make black folks black” (Pop South 2014). Today, “Memphis occupies a unique status as a distribution center in the global economy, but the city continues to struggle with social and economic inequalities as well as its collective identity” (Rushing, 2009).

Memphis is a majority-minority city. Both its adult and youth populations are overwhelmingly Black: 65 percent of all Memphians and 71 percent of children are African American. Despite these demographics, the city’s power relations are reminiscent of the “Old South”—a time and space in which white rule ensured the economic exploitation, social subordination, political disempowerment, cultural relegation, and second-class citizenship of its Black inhabitants. One of the city’s great paradoxes is that “black urban demographic dominance and middle class status do not often translate into broadly useful public political power.” Memphis is reflective of a cohort of “Soul Cities” that are characterized by “expansive and rich white canopies with wider, poorer black bottoms” (Robinson, 2014).

The current socioeconomic challenges faced by Memphians are informed by the confluence of its negative racial history, its ambivalent relationship to Black cultural capital, and the city’s labor market. Most relevant to this study is the systematic neglect of Black residents that constitutes the political economy of Memphis. Trends in educational policies, housing, and employment in Memphis reveal how opportunity in this city—or lack thereof, in the case of Black folks—continues to be plagued by ghosts of the city’s past.

The deep racial and economic divisions of the city are significantly reflected in the city’s schools. Pohlmann (Pohlmann, 2010) points to, among other things, the racial implications of the redistricting of Shelby county schools; the hodgepodge nature of the district, which is comprised of various charter organizations and ever-changing educational governing entities, and that has the most negative impact on Black and marginalized students; and the poor academic performance of Memphis/Shelby County Schools. One example of the deeply troubled nature of these schools is that in 2016 Shelby County had an average composite ACT score of 16.8, with seven percent of these students being college ready. This is in contrast to Knoxville County
Schools, the highest performing district in the state, which has an average composite ACT score of 20.5 with 24 percent of its student being college ready (Boehnke, 2016).

Figure 2. Memphis Schools Map

Another indicator of the racial and economic divisions that plague the city is the shutting down of Memphis public housing as part of new strategies for city planning and development. It is primarily low-income Black families that are being displaced in this process. Moreover, the “selling [of] Memphis” by city officials “offering typically southern industrial recruitment incentives, marketing cheap land and natural resources, and maintaining a low-wage labor market, have generated and reproduced inequality.” According to Rushing (2009), “The city’s high level of poverty and low level of educational attainment are deeply rooted in the city and regional economic structure, as well as historic patterns of rural-urban migration and ties to agricultural and industrial development.”

MMI is critically aware of how historical trends of racial discrimination have come to bear on wealth accumulation in the city, on arts giving, and on youth access to quality arts education. QR, a member of MMI’s leadership team offered the following:

What's unique about Memphis that you might not see in other places is that even though you have this great poverty, you have extreme wealth here, which makes it even more perverse because we're one of the only Southern cities that has so many large large large foundations. And in a city with so many large foundations there is still a disconnect between who gets funding. If you're in New Orleans, you have less foundations so there becomes a scarcity of resources conversation that exists. In Memphis, it's never really a scarcity of resources conversation. It might be positioned in that way, but there is lots of money going around.

MMI grantmaking reacts, responds, and seeks remedy to the gross maldistribution of Memphis’s abundant resources.

Challenges to Youth Success
Despite Memphis’ strong cultural assets, many barriers undermine youth success:

- Racial and socioeconomic segregation continues in Shelby County, with Black families, particularly those that have a low-income, less likely to live near new expanding job opportunities in outlying areas.
- 40 percent of Memphis youth live below the poverty line, which is nearly double the national rate.
- Neighborhoods with high poverty rates tend to suffer from under-performing schools.
- More than 26 percent of youth in many of Memphis’ most underserved neighborhoods don’t graduate from high school. (Urban Child Institute, 2013)
Using Community Cultural Assets to Address Community Needs

MMI uses existing cultural assets to address the pressing needs. It has used four primary strategies to encourage youth success:

1. MMI hands provided in-school programming to sustain existing music education and expand instruction through partnerships with local musicians. MMI works directly with students, parents, school and city leadership, and nonprofit professionals and musicians (MMI Fellows) to support and strengthen existing in-school music education.

2. Through its strategic growth grants, MMI has supported extended learning to expand high-quality out-of-school time programs to reach more youth and remove barriers to youth engagement and participation. The grant program fostered and supported high-quality music-engagement-based youth development opportunities by lowering barriers to success and making targeted investments in program growth, planning and support, and transportation.

3. Through its community cohort grants, MMI has supported innovation spaces in collaboration with community leaders, organizations and musicians. These sites spur innovation where youth can hear, learn, and play music. Essential to this strategy is both bringing quality programs to communities and identifying, elevating, and growing existing music programs and activities that are already happening in those communities. Cloud 901, located at the Memphis Public Library, is one innovation site that attracts a significant level of youth participation. Through both approaches they seek to ensure that each of Memphis’ many communities have places where youth can jam with local musicians; learn, play, and hear music; and contribute to (and benefit from) the city’s important musical and cultural legacy. MMI brings music instruction into neighborhoods, community centers and churches to remove barriers to participation for Memphis youth and to ensure that the city’s cultural products remain true to its communities.

4. Through its Institute for Nonprofit Excellence (INE), MMI focuses on executive-level leadership and organizational development within community arts organizations.

Figure 3. Map of MMI grantees

Combined, these strategies offer a comprehensive approach to arts engagement and arts education that puts into practice the organization’s theory of change. By investing in, supporting, and building the capacity of schools, individual musicians, youth and community arts organizations and their leadership, MMI will ultimately impact youth and families, schools and school districts, and the community as a whole.
The Value of Arts Education

Arts advocates have long extolled the benefits of arts education for children. According to research, arts education prepares students for school success by:

- Instilling motivation to learn and substantively engage with the curriculum
- Improving performance in language art and literacy more broadly
- Increasing math performance
- Cultivating and encouraging critical thinking skills
- Strengthening student relationships with school culture

Arts advocates also posit that arts education prepares students for success in work and life, with a focus on so-called 21st century skills. Arts education:

- Promotes creativity
- Develops problem solving skills
- Promotes cooperation and communication
- Builds leadership potential
- Encourages persistence and patience,
- Facilitates cultural sensitivity, understanding, and appreciation
- Instills a sense of community responsibility and delayed gratification

The key issue is that not all students have equal access to arts education, and those with access do not always receive high quality arts education.

Figure 5. Arts education funding in US
Figure 6. Arts education funding in Memphis

If we believe in the benefits of arts education, then it makes sense to ensure that youth, students, and communities, especially those in underserved areas, have access to quality arts education.

Engaging in Arts-based Youth Development

MMI’s specific focus on youth development through the arts is an attempt to redress the racial and socioeconomic ills of the past through deliberate investment in the city’s future. Research shows that arts-based programs can help youth to develop the skills, attitudes, and behaviors needed to overcome these barriers and succeed in school and life. Yet, less than 5 percent of Memphis youth have access to after-school music programming compared to 15-20 percent in similar cities.

Youth development is one of MMI’s key objectives, in part to address the lack of opportunities for Memphis youth. LM, an MMI staff member, summarized the need:
What does it mean for there to be a whole city that just hasn't looked at young people as valuable enough to invest in them? Very specifically, young people who happen to be Black, and happen to be just people of color because as we know, historically, Shelby county doesn't have an issue creating opportunities, because if you look at municipalities [cities] for example, you have less than five or so municipalities and those are well-funded municipalities who create opportunities, and when there is any opportunity for individuals from various socioeconomic classes to interact with each other via physical location, there's definitely a white-flight narrative.

Positive youth development is defined as an intentional, prosocial approach that engages youth within their communities, schools, organizations, peer groups, and families in a manner that is productive and constructive; recognizes, utilizes, and enhances young people’s strengths; and promotes positive outcomes for young people by providing opportunities, fostering positive relationships, and furnishing the support needed to build on their leadership strengths (“Positive Youth Development,” n.d.). All of the strengths of arts education correlate to the research and evidence-based best practices related to youth development.

In positive youth development, practitioners seek development or improvement of knowledge, attitudes, abilities, or behaviors in several key outcome areas: youth self-esteem and self-efficacy, youth personal and social development, strong family interaction, enduring and respectful relationships with adults, investment in schooling, positive interpersonal skills, sensitivity to community needs and issues, productive and responsible decision making, academic excellence, and preparation for careers and the job market.

In both its in-school and out-of-school programming, MMI creates positive developmental settings in which youth experience physical and psychological safety, developmentally appropriate structure, supportive relationships, opportunities to belong, positive social norms, tools to build self-esteem, and opportunities for skills building.

**The Transformative Practice: Disruptive Philanthropy**

The philanthropic landscape in Memphis is part of a historically constructed imbalance of power and wealth. The trends in arts giving in Memphis parallel the political-economic history whereby Black people have been excluded from equitable opportunities to garner resources. The circulation of arts philanthropic dollars in the city reproduce the trend of egregious neglect of the city’s largest demographic.
Disruptive philanthropy is an insurgent practice that fundamentally challenges philanthropic redlining. MMI uses five key strategies in its practice of disruptive philanthropy:

1. Challenging the high art/low art dichotomy;
2. Cultivating a Black arts ecosystem in Memphis;
3. Being invested in community as opposed to merely investing in a community;
4. Having a dual structure in which they operate as both a grantmaker and a programmer; and
5. Using data to support programming.

This section details MMI’s approach.

**Challenging the Arts Dichotomy**

Across the interviews conducted for this study, the theme of high art versus low art manifested in a variety of ways. Historically, organizations that center what is considered to be “high art,” such as the ballet and classical music, have received meaningful sums of financial support. These “legacy organizations” (the symphony, the art museum, the ballet, the theatre, the opera) have often been supported and held as the standard of what is considered quality and valuable art. As IJ notes, “Your symphonies, your older, established organizations, which is essentially coded for your White organization[s] [are well-funded]. If you aren't necessarily in that space, then what it means is that you only have access to small dollars, you only have access to $5,000 at a time, or $10,000 at a time, and that's if you created something that's really good.” In other words, art forms that were historically developed by African American communities have been underfunded and recognized as “low art,” even as many of these art forms have served meaningful humanistic purposes such as storytelling, cultural memory, and resistance. MMI is woefully aware of this reality and intentionally disrupts the dichotomy by funding organizations and programs that support a wider range of artistic expression and that do not stigmatize art forms based on this worn logic.

Poignantly speaking to this point, QR offered that irrespective of historical trends in what has been valued and not valued in the mainstream art world, Black artistry has been about survival. MMI is interested in a Black arts ecosystem to support efforts to eradicate oppression; therefore, they intentionally evade traditional arts binaries because they do not reflect their core mission. “So, if you talk about high art and low art,” he stated, “on the plantations, slave owners were paying someone to play the flute at dinner and violin and that was art in the Big House. Slaves were back in the fields singing spirituals. And that's, like basically,…the start of American music culture, right?” With a historical understanding of the arts in America, MMI brings different
evaluative thinking about why art is valuable and the work it does and can do in communities. UV, an executive director, shared the following:

I think that Memphis doesn't appreciate the oppressive roots of its culture. And it's really hard for you to talk about and appreciate what's beautiful about your culture if you don't want to accept that fact that it's rooted in oppression. But, Black American culture is rooted in oppression...Black Americans have been on the avant-garde of every artistic movement because we use art as a way of surviving...whereas within a white community there you think of art as a form of distraction.

**MMI Music Fellows Program: The Five Strategies in Action**

*Challenging the Arts Binary.* Not only did MMI fund organizations that have a range of arts practices, but their Music Fellows taught a variety of music programs in schools that disrupt the arts binary. For instance, MMI Fellows were observed teaching classes ranging from piano lessons and orchestra to Hip Hop lyricism, Gospel, and Soul music. As MMI works to develop a Black arts ecosystem, their effort is not to replicate what mainstream arts ecosystems look like in most major cities, which often trace traditional high art/low art binaries. Informed by a historical consciousness of inequity in the arts, MMI makes available a wide range of arts opportunities that they believe offer unique cultural capital for empowering communities and inciting social change. While art forms historically associated with Eurocentric ideas of artistic expression have been on the receiving end of philanthropic dollars historically, MMI intentionally has funded art forms that are meaningful to the community they are invested in and that have the capacity to touch the lives of those most in need.

*Black arts ecosystem and Being Invested in Community.* The MMI Music Fellows Program is reflective both the commitment to building a Black Arts Ecosystem and to meeting the community where it's at through wraparound services. Recognizing the lack of exposure to arts education in the underserved communities of Memphis, MMI developed the Music Fellows Program to support in school-based arts education for youth. This program places music professionals in classroom settings to provide high quality music engagement for youth across the city, particularly in the areas of highest need. The term “engagement” is used rather than arts education to underscore the difference in their approach to quality. These factors include size of class, breadth, depth, and scope of experience, and partnerships with school staff. This reflects MMI’s deep investment in the community and commitment to exposing young people to high quality art.

The program moves students beyond appreciation to participation and skills building. The fundamental mission of the Music Fellows is to offer Memphis youth meaningful exposure to the arts in a way that is engaging and developmentally positive. To this point, FF, a Music Fellow, shared, “That’s the part they [MMI] really focus on—with engagement. It’s the music, that’s the tool, but the engagement is the important part.” MMI makes community engagement, high quality art, and an aggressive definition of equity it’s primary concern. This is the lens that shapes what they understand as meaningful funding towards a Black arts ecosystem in Memphis.

*Having a Dual Structure.* An important benefit of MMI’s dual role is that it allows them to be innovative and creative in how they engage their grantees and the larger community. This was manifested in the way they paired music fellows with schools in which they would be working. To match fellows with
school sites, they organized a “speed dating” event where fellows met representatives from partnering schools; in the process fellows and schools had the opportunities to select their top choices and MMI identified matches. In describing the process, one fellow offered, “So they went through the process and they did a fellow match… speed dating thing… The funny thing is that I could have never imagined myself at a Catholic school. … And, the Catholic schools wanted me! And, so, I was like, ‘Wow.’” MMI was successful in their approach because as a grantmaker, they were able to bring together different community interests, and as a programmer, they were invested in creating the best possible outcomes for the fellows, the schools, and the broader communities they serve.

Using Data to Support Programming. The MMI Music Fellows program began as a pilot project. Findings from the evaluation, conducted by external evaluators, indicated that the fellows are having a significant influence in three key areas: (1) helping young people develop a clearer sense of self, (2) providing them with a pathway for healthy self-expression through music, and (3) coaching them through more pro-social interactions with peers and adults, while also exposing them to local professional music networks (Happel-Parkins, Bullock, & E, 2016). Thirty-one recommendations were made for program improvements, which were used to refine the program in year two.

Cultivating a Black Arts Ecosystem

The leadership and partners of the Memphis Music Initiative stressed the importance of a thriving arts community for matters of social justice but also youth development. In its efforts to support the arts community in Memphis that are invested in community uplift, MMI has stressed that this can not be an individualistic endeavor for single artists or a few independent arts organizations. Therefore, MMI is intentional in their vision to build a Black arts ecosystem, taking a communal approach to their vision of blending the arts and community uplift in Memphis. Speaking to this point, QR offered the following:

What's distinctly missing here in Memphis is there is no ecosystem—particularly for Black arts organization—of organizations serving the Black community. Memphis is this very oddly majority Black city with no Black infrastructure…I think that the work is about creating an ecosystem of functional, quality Black arts organizations and organizations that serve the Black community who understand the value and the importance of it. And, really look to celebrate those communities and the cultural attributes that they have as being enough and more than enough, from a cultural perspective, which is very unique within the city.

With this mission in mind, MMI has been intentional in its grantmaking processes. This social mission has led to MMI financially support varying degrees of arts organizations and efforts to socially engineer a Black arts ecosystem. To this end, MMI has not simply waited for organizations and artists to reach out to them as a funder, but MMI has aggressively sought out organizations that reflect the mission of their principled giving. In short, the “Black arts ecosystem” MMI envisions is a collection of mutually sustaining arts organizations, artists, and arts pathways that are informed by the community it is embedded in and that are intentional in

FINAL DRAFT
maintaining an enduring life cycle of a thriving and evolving Black arts community.

ST noted, “Their [MMI’s] funding has been great as well as just having somebody to talk to and talk about my dreams and they understand. You talk to some people that know nothing about an orchestra and they think ‘why even bother,’ but Memphis Music Initiative understands what music can do for children. Memphis Music Initiative understands that there is something about teaching music that actually helps children academically, something about it.”

IJ commented how the need to incubate a Black arts ecosystem became strikingly apparent early on. “As we were doing the work, initially we were focused moreso on youth development outcomes …we realized very quickly that in order for us to create a critical mass of opportunities for young people, we would also need to get into business of building organizations, building ideas, but also supporting organizations that already existed.” In order to create meaningful opportunities for youth development in relationship to the arts, MMI recognized the need to curate a community of organizations, artists and initiatives that formed an interconnected system of arts, youth development, and community empowerment.

WX, a grant recipient, highlighted that MMI’s cohort model was useful in forging relationships that might serve as a foundation for this arts ecosystem. As WX stressed, there is value in sitting at the table with similarly aligned organizations that invest in arts with larger missions of community development in mind. “My current cohort group…I think it's only five of us now. That particular cohort is represented by most of the major arts organizations in the city. I was shocked to even be asked to come to the table to be on this.” WX emphasized how the cohort meetings provided an opportunity to recognize how peer organizations face similar challenges and it also created opportunities for collaborating across the aisle to support the larger vision that they all care about—empowering their communities through the arts. Comparing the current state of Black arts in Memphis to MMI’s desired end, WX stated, “I look at now where we are in the city…it's a lot of separation and division when it comes to the African American arts period to me. Everybody has their own thing, their own audience.” But WX is hopeful that “if we pull together and it becomes what it probably should be,” a thriving Black arts ecosystem can be a powerful tool in mobilizing the community.

Many of MMI’s grantees commented on the benefits of the Black arts ecosystem vision and model. For instance, YZ, a director of an orchestra in South Memphis, stated:

I had three interns that they sent to help me. That was a big help, because all you had to do was tell the interns what you needed, and I could be in two places at one time. It was like extra arms, that was a big part of the success of my camp this summer. When you got 93 children and you got them ages 6-18, you need extra people, you need eyes for security. You need somebody with the little ones at all times, even if they are just going to the restroom. With the big ones, you need people up working with them, you need eyes
YZ’s comments capture how MMI provides wrap around services to ensure that its funded organizations have all the resources they need to thrive. MMI is intentional to forge partnerships between local artists and Black arts organizations because it understands these pathways and partnerships to have long term benefits for the local community.

Similarly, MMI Works was a program started in 2016, where high school student-artists were placed in summer internships exposing them to various career paths in the arts—ranging from media production to archiving records at STAX Museum. Many of these students were also participants in other community spaces funded by MMI, thus capturing the Black arts ecosystem in motion. For instance, a tenth grader at Douglass High School took classes with a MMI Music Fellow at her high school, worked as an administrative assistant for STAX Music Academy through MMI Works in summer 2016, and is now a participant in the STAX Music Academy after school program.

The purpose of the Black arts ecosystem is to embed high quality arts education and opportunities within the broader context of the community, especially for purposes of youth development. Thus, MMI has forged strategic partnership with both established arts organizations and historically underfunded Black arts organizations. By facilitating these relationships, MMI works to provide high quality and engaging Arts opportunity for young people in underserved communities. The vision is to incubate relationships and organizations that can have longevity in their mission of empowering the Memphians communities through the arts, particular those Memphians that have been overlooked.

**Being Invested in Community Versus Investing in Communities**

Given its vision of cultivating a Black arts ecosystem, MMI has offered wraparound services not only for its grant recipients, but also for the larger community it serves. This translates into an asset-based approach that values each arts organization’s unique strengths and contributions. MMI meets organizations where they are, providing assistance to expand organizational capacity. It simultaneously offers creative community programming that helps to increase arts literacy in the communities on MMI’s radar. This approach is particularly important because, “In many instances, these are people of color who are starting organizations, [and] they aren’t necessarily starting it from a seed funding of $500,000 or something. In many instances, it’s an individual who’s putting it on their back and saying: I’m going to do this thing because I think it; s important. What they immediately see is that there is no support and help with their 501(c)(3) status.” While MMI’s tactic is to fund community arts initiatives and organizations, it is first and
foremost invested in the wellbeing of the local community and in imagining a future that looks better than the contemporary reality.

CC, a grant recipient, noted:

I have never in the history of what I do, ever seen an organization that is so hands on from a supportive standpoint…. They provided us with consultants throughout the entire process. They came through, maybe every other week, just to make sure everything was okay. They provided us with interns. They provided us with someone that would assist us as far as program management. Or not so much just program management—more of a fellow. They attended both performances. They strategized with us….That extra bit of encouragement and training and instruction is, I think, the one thing that will help an organization that is striving to increase their capacity get it, the know-how to increase their ability to sustain themselves…So, this organization, to me, as a funder, is more than a funder…They fund, but they help you strategize. They help you become successful.

CC’s account is indicative of how MMI takes a holistic approach to incubating the organizations it supports. The full burden is not on the organization to prove their ability to grow and expand. Instead, MMI has demonstrated a commitment to partnering with community arts organizations to help them identify opportunities for growth. MMI funds arts organizations in a manner that helps them expand their capacity; thus, demonstrating an investment in the longevity of a Black arts ecosystem and a recognition of how certain barriers have previously prevented this from happening.

Leaders of MMI are conscious of the various barriers that have kept Black arts organizations from receiving transformative sums from traditional foundations and philanthropic organizations. They are also sensitive to the effects that these barriers have had on the success of small Black arts organizations. AA, a grant recipient shared, “…I was doing everything out of my pocket, and when I didn't have the money we just couldn't do it, because so many of them [the youth] couldn't come up with the money. So, if we had a big performance, for instance, when we performed for President Clinton, I took my money and had the girls' hair done, because nobody else was going to do it. I took my money and made sure the guys had tuxedo shirts and those who already had one, I made sure they were clean and white…”

Thus, MMI is intentional in creating a different type of funding criteria, and standards that include artists and organizations that are in and of the communities they want to impact most. Standard eligibility criteria are not used as the primary evaluative measures of a potential grantee’s merit, such as: 501(c)(3) status, minimum figures for operating budgets, or established board of directors who financially contribute to the organization. Given the historical patterns of wealth accumulation and philanthropic giving, to use said unduly exclusive criteria would be inconsistent with MMI’s practice of disruptive philanthropy and would instead reproduce the
status quo in arts funding.

“Yeah sure, the orchestra is going to have great numbers, the ballet is going to have great numbers,” says BB, an MMI partner, “but some of these institutions [Black arts organizations], no. They have boards—they're their fellow next door neighbor. They're trying to come up with some ideas on getting people together and they're grassroots, but they don't—they're lucky if they get a few hundred dollars together.” BB goes on to challenge the process of inequity that persists in traditional giving practices, “But, how are they going to be on the same level as the ballet? Some of these institutions have so much money…And my thought is like hey, they need to start hearing that, for years and years and years you've been benefitting, now, we have got to…” Thus, there is a need to redirect and do more aggressive funding for organizations that have been historically undervalued and underserved, largely as a result of structural racism and class discrimination. Recognition of this historical trend and its detrimental impact on the development of a Black arts ecosystem in Memphis helps to drive MMI’s giving strategies and vision.

Meeting organizations where they are also means not forcing organizations to be something that they are not, or to do programs that are not in the scope of their mission. DD, a community partner, suggested that this was one of the unfortunate results of traditional arts giving practices, “I blame the funding committee. We come up with whatever the sexy thing is of the day. Whether its arts education, community arts, or community engagement, they come and twist themselves—like they create a project so that they can get that money. But then, they're adding to all the things they do, and they never really focus on what exactly they do. And I was like, that's not good for your organization.”

Given the financial need of many Black arts organizations, they often develop programming to meet criteria of whatever funding opportunities become available. This often means stretching themselves to meet certain eligibility requirements for small sums of funding, at times for projects that are not in alignment with their core vision. Such overextension is exacerbated by the fact that the amount of time and resources needed to secure and report on these small amounts of funding is, in many instances, more than the actual economic value of the grant. MMI is intentional not to reproduce this cycle. For instance, grant recipient EE shared how MMI allowed them to re-submit their grant application after they developed strategic plan and realized that the proposed programming was outside the scope of their organizations refined vision.

Having a Dual Structure: Grantmaker and Programmer

One of MMI’s advantages has been that even though they have been a grantmaker—administering transformative and more modest sums, and connecting programs to important non-monetary resources—they have also implemented their own programs that allow them to apply their philosophy and assess its effectiveness. Programs include MMI Works, the Program
Development Institute, and the in-school fellow program. The dual process of resource allocation and implementing programming has promoted hands-on theorizing, research and development, data collection, and program revision based on experience, practice, and feedback. This has made the organization not only more efficient but also more responsive to community needs.

*MMI Works* reflects MMI’s investment in building a Black arts ecosystem in Memphis, empowering youth, and creating innovative pathways. Through *MMI Works*, MMI leverages its role as grantmaker and programmer by building relationships between organizations they fund and youth in underserved communities. As described by IJ, *MMI Works* is “a summer employment program [that hires] high school students and insert[s] them in arts organizations across the city.” Given MMI’s emphasis on youth development and social justice, this program does more than just create job opportunities. The initiative places a high value on cultivating relationships between the students, MMI staff, and the arts organizations that partner with this program. Students receive advice on financial planning, college readiness, and intentional engagement in critical dialogue about themes such as art, social justice, and the future of Memphis. Stressing this last point, program staff explained, “I meet with them on a monthly basis to continue to build on workplace professionalism and to build on culture and social norms. We talk about using the arts as an access or vehicle for social justice. We talk about all these things throughout the program.” While *MMI Works* is primarily a summer program, many of the students have music fellows in their classrooms during the academic year, and MMI maintains contact with the students after the summer has ended.

Another key component of MMI’s dual role structure has been its professional development (PD) workshops. Both the music fellows and leaders from grantee organizations have attested to the thoughtfulness with which MMI selected speakers from around the country to lead seminars on organizational infrastructure, race and inequality, strategic planning, and more. Many of the fellows expressed that some of their most meaningful experiences with MMI came in these workshops. “I mean, I literally leave the sessions, like, feeling overwhelmed that these people are giving me information to become a better human being, you know?” HH, a music fellow, shared, “And, I think it’s like… an example of really the kinds of dialogue that need to be happening around the nation, you know? And, it’s just profound. Absolutely mind blowing.” Echoing this sentiment, another music fellow stressed,

> I think that the PD sessions are amazing at bringing in people who probably would never be brought in by big time organizations because again going back to getting comfortable with the uncomfortable. Those people that they bring in get comfortable with the uncomfortable. They actually gon’ question—they gon’ have PD sessions about race, on working different with other personalities.

In discussing the impact of the PD sessions, music fellows and grant recipients often stressed that these workshops were emblematic of how MMI’s funding practices represented their
commitment to reimagining Memphis and the world. Through the workshops, MMI offered more than monetary resources; they brought unconventional ideas to their grantees—which, according to the fellows, helped them to be even more engaged and effective. Thus, as a grantmaker and a programmer, MMI is able to reimagine and create the conditions for what working and operating in the city can look and feel like.

**Using Data to Support Practice**

Nonprofit organizations of all sizes often lack the capacity to systematically collect data, to turn that data into information through rigorous analysis, and to take the time to reflect on and learn from the information (Major and Brennan 2011; Morariu et al. 2016). Arts organizations that continually struggle to procure resources face significant challenges in identifying appropriate key metrics, determining how to measure them, and collecting and analyzing data (Vakharia 2013).

MMI has supported the Black arts ecosystem in Memphis by offering tools to use data effectively. JJ noted:

> MMI support in this area ranged from the assessment tests to some of the training pieces … We're really excited about measuring more of what we're doing. You know, it's kind of hard when you're an intern program to quantify, qualify, you know, to measure relational stuff. But there are other things that happen in the relational process that you can measure and so we are, we're just more, we're thinking more in those terms and I think they've [MMI] got our brains just firing up.

MMI is unique in that from its inception, it has engaged in routine and rigorous data collection related to both process and outcome measures. It has consistently used data to drive organizational learning and decision making about program updates and quality improvement:

> The in-house data driven culture for Memphis Music Initiative exists to ensure that we are achieving and meeting the mission and vision of MMI. It also serves as a best practice model for our partner organizations and hopefully as a national platform for other collaborative initiatives. The data driven culture takes a multi-pronged approach seeking to answer the following questions in order to make actionable organizational and procedural changes.

> How do we know what impact we are having on students, schools, and communities? Which practices allow for the most gains and achievements in student efficacy? What practices and methodologies are transferrable to partner organizations? What practices and methodologies can be replicated nationally? (“MMI In-Schools Program Report 2015-2016,” n.d.)
For example, MMI used a variety of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods to evaluate its Music Fellows program, including: pre- and post-experience surveys of students; focus groups with fellows and teachers; rubrics completed by MMI staff; and school student discipline data. Data reporting and analysis tools such as data dashboards are used by fellows, school partners, and MMI staff, to gain insights for future program planning.

Across time, MMI has refined its practices to strengthen its approaches on formal and informal program evaluation. Lessons learned from past work has lead to adaptations and innovations. For example:

- Two new initiatives, *MMI Works* arts apprenticeship program and *MMI Summer Beat* creative youth development program, resulted from a review of the school-based programs and extended learning programs. The result was identification of a gap and an opportunity. Youth development should not stop when the school year ends, and the summer provides an opportunity for more intensive extended learning opportunities.
- A new Program Development Institute (PDI) is in development to support mid-level managers of arts organizations in improving program design and implementation, increasing their competencies in nonprofit management. It also builds on classroom success, employing MMI Music Fellows to take what has been learned in classrooms into community organizations. Collection and analysis of data from the grant cohorts and INE helped MMI to identify both enduring and emerging challenges within arts organizations--and the arts ecosystem as a whole--related to middle management capacity.

*MMI Works*, *MMI Summer Beat*, and the Program Development Institute show different aspects of MMI’s feedback and organizational learning process. Continuous data collection and analysis, and responsiveness to critique and suggestion, allows them to strengthen existing programs, dispense with approaches and techniques that are not effective, and create new are more far-reaching initiatives that address the most pressing gaps and oversights. Additionally, consistent feedback allows MMI to create additional avenues of engagement for the artists, organizations, and youth with whom they have already built relationships, thereby fortifying the extant Black arts ecosystem. In sum, MMI’s embedded feedback loop promotes effectiveness in real time; a greater and more targeted impact on communities through new programs and initiatives; and increased opportunities for its current partners, which strengthens these relationships and networks.
The Challenges and Opportunities of Scaling Disruptive Philanthropy

This report has described a model that holds promise for other organizations seeking to transform philanthropy to bring about true diversity, inclusion, and equity in the arts. Although they may be challenging, MMI’s promising practices provide a framework for others to adapt.

MMI understands that art is critical for communities to imagine societal transformation. It emphasizes the importance of artistic expression for expanding youth’s capacity to imagine the world anew. It also makes a commitment to supporting artists as well as arts organizations. This means working to ensure individual artists are supported in professionalization, livelihood, space, and having a peer group for ongoing support. It also means working to create the conditions for arts organizations to be well-funded, to have deep roots in their communities, to have a voice in the larger philanthropic landscape, and to have the flexibility and resources to evaluate their effectiveness and to respond to effectively respond to challenges.

MMI recognizes a wide range of art practices as valuable and as cultural capital around which the local Memphis community can mobilize. In Memphis, this is music, dance, and cultural forms endogenous to African-Americans. In other communities, the cultural capital will likely be different. This means having significant and meaningful relationships (embeddedness) in a specific locality. Relatedly, MMI meets Black arts community organizations where they are and helps them expand their capacity. This means making a conscious decision to fund organizations without forcing them to adapt their mission to meet MMI’s aims in order to receive funding. Moreover, MMI encourages its grantees to build partnerships with those who may not have the same vision, but who are deeply committed to developing a viable and sustainable Black arts ecosystem.

The challenges to implementing the MMI model are numerous, not least because it requires tireless commitment, steadfast dedication, genuine reflection, and substantial resources. This form of disruptive philanthropy also necessitates ongoing knowledge of the communities, spaces, and places to which funds are being allocated, in order to ensure that best practices are articulated to the needs of those who have historically been overlooked and marginalized. Nonetheless, as MMI demonstrates, disruptive philanthropy is a worthwhile—and essential—endeavor for those who care about real equity and social justice.

Table 5 presents a set of questions that can be used to cultivate and guide disruptive practices. Such inquiry must be tailored to the specific vision, mission, and aim of an organization, and to the communities it seeks to serve. Disruption is not a one-size-fits-all process; answers to the
questions below, along with strategies and tactics, must be derived from a genuine understanding of what exists and what is possible.

Table 5. Disruptive Philanthropy Practices and Key Questions

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<tr>
<th>Empowering through the arts</th>
<th>Important Aspects</th>
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<td><strong>Key Questions</strong></td>
<td><strong>What is the unique artistic and cultural heritage of racialized groups in the geographic area?</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Understand community cultural development</td>
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<td>• Evaluate cultural resources of a given community</td>
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<td>• Recognize the importance of history and of contemporary reality to artistic production</td>
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<th>Using community cultural assets to address community needs</th>
<th>Important Aspects</th>
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<td><strong>Key Questions</strong></td>
<td><strong>What is a critical need in the community that the cultural assets can be mobilized to address?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Identify cultural assets</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Identify community needs</td>
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<td>• Ensure sufficient number of professional artists within community</td>
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<tr>
<th>Addressing the dynamics of race, space and place</th>
<th>Important Aspects</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Key Questions</strong></td>
<td><strong>What are the historical and contemporary dynamics?</strong></td>
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<td>• Assess the racial history of a given place</td>
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<td>• Consider how that history impacted contemporary inequities in resource allocation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Evaluate the barriers faced by racialized and other marginalized communities based on place and space</td>
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<tr>
<th>Challenging the arts dichotomy</th>
<th>Important Aspects</th>
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<td><strong>Key Questions</strong></td>
<td><strong>How does the arts dichotomy manifest?</strong></td>
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<td>• Identify the forms of art that are considered “high” and those that are considered “community” (usually understood as “low”)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Actively work to challenge this understanding through the equitable allocation of dollars and other resources</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Promote intersections among different art forms that help to dissolve the “mainstream”/“cultural” dichotomy</td>
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| Being invested in community | |
| Who owns disruption--the organization or the community? | ● Consider how “expert” is defined  
● Understand who gets to be the “expert”  
● Evaluate which voices are heard and which are silenced |
| --- | --- |
| Cultivating an arts ecosystem | ● Create intentional links between arts organizations to strengthen community ties  
● Foster space for organizational leaders to learn effective strategies from one another  
● Facilitate critical discussions around broader visions about the relationship between art, individual development, and community empowerment.  
● Provide a full service, individualized wraparound approach  
● Fund community organizations that stimulate the community’s artistic assets that have been historically underutilized  
● Create spaces for collaboration and intersection for sustainability purposes |
| What is the current state of linkages between and among culturally specific arts organizations? Between the arts organizations and the community? | ● What are the unique strengths and needs of individual organizations? How do we best support them? |
| Having appropriate structure | ● Assess the status quo of internal and external behavior to align with democratic approaches to wielding power |
| How do we ensure appropriate “research and development”? Adaptiveness and flexibility? | ● Using data  
| What specifically do we hope to achieve with disruptive philanthropy? How will we know we achieved it? What will a thriving arts ecosystem look like? What is our capacity to collect, analyze, and learn from data? | ● Backwards planning and radical honesty - asking "what needs to be true,” taking stock of that response from multiple community embedded stakeholders and then doing EXACTLY what is necessary  
● Radical Imagination - making space for reality that potentially would have already existed had the values of equity and inclusion been present and in the room when decisions of the past were made (which ultimately creates something that is functionally and critically relevant to the lives of human beings along the spectrum of socioeconomic diversity). |
As more public good/services continue to become relegated to the private sector, vigilance in combating philanthropic redlining is increasingly important. Disruptive philanthropy is not an endorsement of the current reliance on the market; it is an effort to create more accountability in the private sector to equity when it comes to funding projects of public interest. It is an accountability practice informed by knowledge of historical trends of wealth accumulation and exclusion that has been shaped by structures of power that reinforce oppressive hierarchies of race, class, and gender. Prioritizing the incubation of community organizations to expand their capacity for re-imaging themselves and helping them to meet their own needs is essential in an increasingly austere climate.
References


MMI In-Schools Program Report 2015-2016. (n.d.).
Glossary

**Backbone organization:** An organization dedicated to coordinating the various dimensions and collaborators involved in a collective impact initiative (Collaboration for Impact, nd, http://www.collaborationforimpact.com/collective-impact/the-backbone-organisation/).

**Bidirectional:** Operating in a way that is beneficial to each party involved.

**Capacity building:** Increasing the ability of an organization to perform, yield, and/or sustain itself.

**Collective impact grantmaking:** An approach that seeks to address social complex problems by fostering collaboration across a wide variety of social sectors. It is based on five key elements: (1) a shared understanding of the problem, a common agenda for change, and a joint approach to solving it through agreed upon actions; shared data collection, measurement, and analysis for alignment and accountability; (3) a plan of action that outlines and coordinates mutually reinforcing activities; (4) open and continuous communication to build trust, assure mutual objectives, and create common motivation; and (5) a backbone organization to serve the convener coordinator for the initiative (Collaboration for Impact, nd, http://www.collaborationforimpact.com/collective-impact/).

**Community:** A social group whose members live in a specific location and often share a common cultural and historical heritage.

**Conscious:** Fully aware and sensitive to a phenomenon.

**Cultivate:** To promote or improve the growth of something through attention and direct effort.

**Dichotomy:** Division into two mutually exclusive, opposed, or contradictory group.

**Discrimination:** The unjust and prejudicial treatment of a group of persons based on social categories including race, gender, religion, nationality, and sexual orientation.

**Disruptive philanthropy:** A practice of conscious giving informed by an awareness of how traditional strategies of philanthropy exclude certain communities and organizations that do not meet privileged criteria, even if their inability to meet said criteria is a result of historical neglect from both the public and private sector.
**Disinvested:** Characterized by the withdrawal or withholding of essential investment, aid, and resources.

**Disinvestment:** The conscious process of withdrawing or withholding essential investment, aid, and resources.

**Diversity:** The representation and incorporation of individual differences, including language, culture, and life experiences; and social differences, such as race, ethnicity, class, gender and sexual identity, sexual orientation, country of origin, and ability status, as well as cultural, political, religious or other affiliations in all facets of an organization’s composition, policy, and practice.

**Ecosystem:** A system or group of interconnected entities formed by the interaction of a community with their environment.

**Equity:** The eradication of barriers and the creation of opportunities for historically underrepresented populations to participate in organizations and on boards; to have equal access to funding and resources; and to participate in quality and culturally relevant programming. Equity also requires a level of cultural competency, or awareness and sensitivity of one’s own cultural location; the recognition of cultural differences and subject locations, and attitudes toward them; the appreciation of and respect for different cultural practices, norms, values, and worldviews; and empathy and awareness in cross-cultural interactions.

**Embedded:** Incorporated or rooted in a community so as to become an essential part or component.

**Endogenous:** Derived from within or internal to a community.

**Eurocentric:** Concentration on the superiority of Europe and its cultures, peoples, and heritages that results in the exclusion and marginalization of, and discrimination against, other groups and their contributions.

**Extant:** Currently in existence.

**Grassroots:** Relevant to phenomena “on the ground” and to common, everyday people and their existence.

**Inclusion:** The conscious, intentional, and sustained engagement with diversity in an effort to increase awareness, knowledge, understanding, and ultimately opportunities for populations that have historically been marginalized and excluded.
**Individualism**: The pursuit of individual over communal or collective interests.

**Initiative**: An act, program, set of practices, etc. meant to set something in motion.

**Innovation**: Something novel or different; process by which changes in something established are introduced, especially by new methods, ideas.

**Infrastructure**: The basic underlying structure and framework upon which an organization is based.

**Institutional Barriers**: Policies, practices, and processes embedded in an organization, entities, and services that result in the systematic exclusion and marginalization of certain groups of people.

**Mainstream**: The principal or dominant tendency.

**Normative standards**:

**Organizational capacity**: Knowledge, processes, and resources that nonprofits need in order to meet their missions. Key capacities include leadership; mission, vision and strategy; program design and delivery; staffing; volunteer management; fund development; financial management; marketing and communications; technology; and strategic relationships. Capacity varies based on a range of factors such as the organization’s size, lifecycle stage, program model, revenue.

**Paternalistic**: The principal or practice of intrusive and often condescending management or governance.

**Philanthropic Redlining**: A set of funding practices in which an organization’s size, racial or ethnic constitution, demographic served, artistic designation (e.g., “high art” or “community art”), and/or geospatial location results in: (a) exclusion from funding altogether, (b) grants that are substantially lower than comparable organizations; and/or (c) forms of funding that discourage capacity building.

**Place-based grantmaking** is a process that focuses resources within a specific geographic area (as compact as a neighborhood or as large as a region) to foster long-term, sustainable change. There are several characteristics of such initiatives: use of backbone organizations; intensive engagement of key stakeholders (including community members, who are co-creators of change); inclusion of a variety of partners across social sectors; use of local data in planning and decision-making; and a long-term commitment.
**Racialized:** Persons and groups constituted by the ongoing construction of racial meaning that has particular, usually detrimental, effects. Such meanings vary based on time period, and location. Those who are racialized tend to have a modal experience of marginalization, discrimination, structural and material lack, and diminished life chances.

**Responsive grantmaking** is a process in which grants are awarded in response to proposals that are received. Ostensibly, this means that the applicants, through their “ask”, drive what is funded. A responsive grantmaker is one whose philosophy is to have grantees driving the giving agenda, for the most part. This includes accepting unsolicited proposals as well as having flexible project designs, proposal formats, and reporting. Typically the foundation will define to some extent what is to be addressed but allow significant latitude for how that issue will be tackled (Alliance for Philanthropy and Social Investment, 2008).

**Scaling:** The process of adjusting in amount of size based on the requirements of a given model.

**Structural Barriers:** Obstacles that are inherent in a context or environment and that have a negative impact on circumstances and outcomes. Examples include: poor housing, insufficient income, inadequate education, and nonexistent public services.

**Social Justice:** the equitable distribution of advantages and opportunities and of efforts to eradicate disadvantages within a society.

**Transformative funds/ transformative funding:** A sum that allows an organization to develop sustainable infrastructure--staffing, program research and development, outreach and engagement, marketing and communications, information technology, data collection and evaluation-- for long-term viability and growth.

**Wraparound services:** All-inclusive, comprehensive, and holistic services that aim to maximize the success and longevity of an organization.
Appendix – Methods

Interviews

Two researchers conducted 16 open-ended interviews with a variety of stakeholders, including executive board members (N=6), members of grantee organizations (N=5), a peer organization (N=1), state funders (N=2), and national funders (N=2). The interviews ranged from 30 – 90 minutes in length. All interviews took place at the MMI office, with the exception of four phone interviews. All interviews were transcribed for analysis.

Focus Groups

One researcher conducted two focus groups, each consisting of four fellows. Both male and female fellows participated, as well as multiple races and ethnicities. Each focus group lasted about 90 minutes, and consisted of seven open-ended questions and semi-structured discussion. The focus groups were transcribed and later analyzed alongside interview data.

Site Visits

Two researchers visited seven school sites, which included a combination of middle schools, high schools, charter schools, parochial schools, and public schools. These sites consisted of fellow-led and teacher-led programs. Researchers visited a combination of choir, orchestra, band, and music production programs. Fellows observed were of both genders and multiple races. Class sizes ranged from about ten to thirty-five students.

Researchers also conducted four MMI grantee site visits. These visits included tours of organizations’ facilities, musical performances, and observations of daily operations and the work of these organizations in practice. Field notes were taken at the conclusion of all visits.

Method of Analysis

Overall, we understand this study to be an institutional ethnography of the Memphis Music Initiative. The collection of interviews, site visits, and various degrees of social engagement with MMI over the course of ten months inform our understanding of the organization’s mission, norms, and standing within its local context. Other methods also included a structured review and critical analysis of secondary literature on relevant topics (such as philanthropy and racial equity, arts and youth development, the racial and political context of Memphis as a city); archival research of MMI’s internal documents; and a qualitative coding using Dedoose (an online qualitative analysis software).
After all interviews and focus groups were transcribed, the researchers engaged in an open coding process. To begin, researchers read the same three interview transcripts and each developed a list of codes/themes that emerged across them. The researchers then chose one interview to code independently, using the agreed upon coding scheme, then discussed results to ensure that a reliable consensus was achieved on the application of the coding scheme.

After reaching a consensus on the list of codes and their descriptions, this list of codes was uploaded to Dedoose. Codes ranged from themes such as “barriers to funding” and “Memphis as place” to “arts and social justice” and “high/low art binary.” Our coding scheme consisted of thirteen codes, which were then used to analyze all transcribed data using the Dedoose software. By coding the data in this way the researchers were able to assess relevant information across interview data in a systemized fashion. For instance, references in interviews that alluded to Black arts organizations and artists working together, or creating arts pathways for youth in the city, were coded as “Black arts ecosystem” thus permitting researchers to explore this theme across the data and hone in on this specific characteristic of MMI’s model and vision.