Women's arts management education and voluntary labor in the arts – A case study

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Rationale and Background

Explore the relationship between women's arts education and volunteerism, and how the development of formal arts management education has impacted women's experiences as professionals and volunteers in arts nonprofits.

- The nonprofit and voluntary sector is a critical asset in contemporary society. The sector continues to grow in all fields and its workforce accounts for approximately 12.3 million jobs across America [2].
- Education has been essential in women's participation in the arts as volunteers, entrepreneurs, and leaders. Whether it be from a friend, coworker, or even oneself, learning has shaped the way women contributed to the arts industry throughout history [4].
- Educational upbringing nurtures leadership skills that promote social consciousness and civil engagement [1].

Aims and Objectives

Understand role of education → Identify needs in women's experiences → Promote sustainable practice

- Understand the role of formal and informal arts education in the context of professional and voluntary leadership in the arts.
- Identify specific experiences that indicate the educational, voluntary, and professional needs of women in arts and culture organizations.
- Assess how arts management programs can adapt to promote effective leadership that contributes to a sustainable arts sector.

Broader Research Overview

This research is important to arts nonprofits and the nonprofit sector as a whole. Nonprofit organizations rely on capable leaders who serve their missions sustainably. Women continue to succeed in leadership roles in nonprofit organizations (especially arts nonprofits) and this research affirms the need for quality arts management education. As these education opportunities expand, this research provides insight on women's educational needs and how access to those needs affect the future of organization.

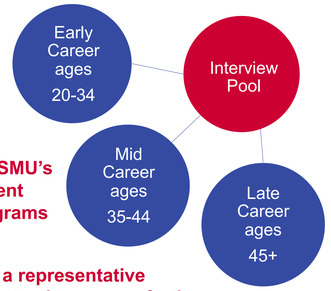
"We have an incredible amount that we need to learn. We need opportunities that provide that learning and that inspiration to help everyone do their jobs better... so we're really on the front side of change." (Interview 9, Mid-Career)

Methodology

Conduct interviews → Coding and intercoder reliability → Understanding women's arts sector participation

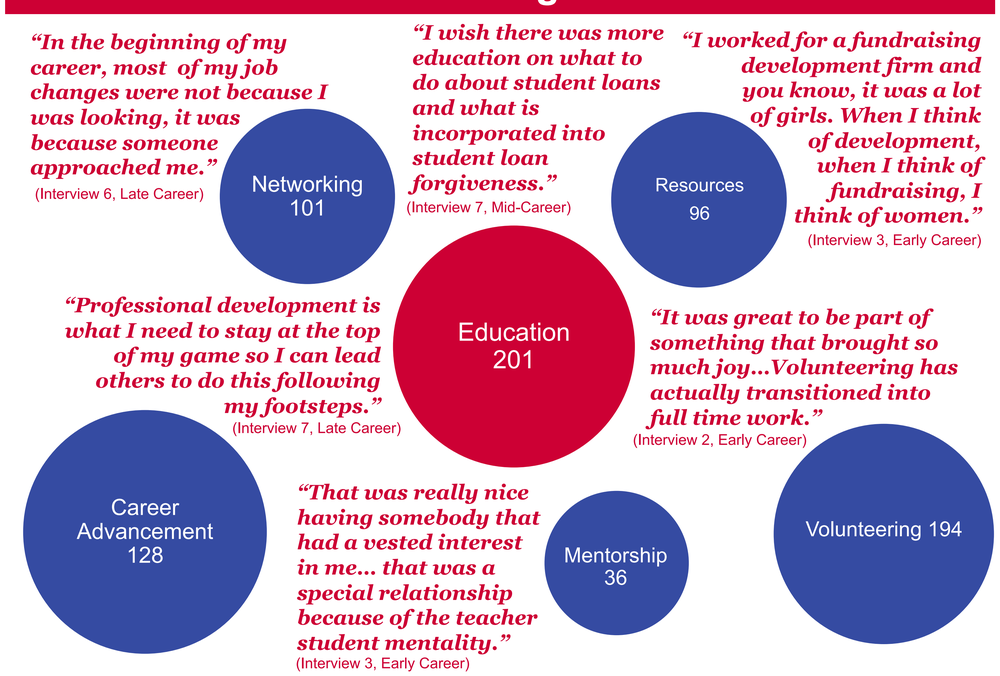
- Phenomenology produces unbiased, qualitative data.
- Create a list of codes that define experiences. Validate data collection through intercoder reliability.
- Observe common experiences and themes between interviewees.

Interviewed 9 alumnae from SMU's arts management education programs



In order to get a representative sample, the 9 interviewees are further divided evenly between early, middle, and late stage careers [5]

Findings



Positive Impact of Education

- Reliance on strong networking and mentorship opportunities to advance in their careers.
- Provision of tactical skills that are instrumental to success early on in the workforce.
- Informal education from voluntary action is associated with expanded networks and experiential learning which lead to growth in the sector.

Gaps and Challenges in Education

- Formal education is expensive and has a low financial return on investment.
- There is a lack of access to post-graduation resources including weak alumni networking opportunities.
- There are minimal professional development resources available to women already in a career.

Discussion

- Each interviewee was involved professionally or voluntarily in fundraising activities. What is the significance of women taking on these roles?
- Women mention dedication to life-long learning. How can education programs provide alumnae with growth-oriented resources beyond graduation?
- There is as significant association of career stages with a woman's age. How do we consider late life career changes?
- There is a financial challenge to obtaining formal arts management education. How do we justify spending on a degree that does not result in a high return on investment?

"How are we going to be able to sustain developing the next generation of managers when nobody can afford to go to school for it?" (Interview 9, Mid-Career)

Conclusion and Future Directions

Education is an essential element that provides invaluable professional and voluntary opportunities to women in the arts. Effective arts management programs deliver opportunities for networking, mentorship, tactical skills, and resources for continued growth which can translate into career advancement opportunities. Based on educational needs, further research is required to determine how arts management education programs outside of SMU can best serve their students and alumnae.

"If we want to do more, if we want to have a better, deeper impact on our community... If we want to be more accessible and grow our programs, then we know we have to change." (Interview 9, Mid-Career)

Acknowledgements

SMU Meadows School of the Arts

This research was partially supported by SMU Meadows School of the Arts

This research was principally funded by the Office of Engaged Learning. Engaged Learning Fellowship provides funding and resources for undergraduate research at SMU.

This project would like to acknowledge the help received from Dr. B. Kathleen Gallagher.

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