

DISSERTATION

EMPOWERMENT, RESILIENCE AND IMPACT:  
UNDERSTANDING WOMEN ARTISANS' LIVES AND  
LIVELIHOODS IN AFRICA

Submitted by  
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## ABSTRACT

### EMPOWERMENT, RESILIENCE AND IMPACT:

#### UNDERSTANDING WOMEN ARTISANS' LIVES AND LIVELIHOODS IN AFRICA

This three article dissertation shines a light on women artisans and examines the often-overlooked role they play in establishing and maintaining resilient communities in developing countries. While women's empowerment and opportunities through entrepreneurship has received significant attention through the lens of sustainable development and poverty alleviation, little scholarship has examined the unique attributes of the artisan sector, the second largest employer in developing countries. Artisan craft work not only meets women's economic needs as necessity entrepreneurs, but also creates significant social, environmental, and cultural impacts locally, nationally, and globally. Therefore, I present three unique studies and establish a conceptual framework to explore the ripple effect of artisan entrepreneurship in the craft sector. I further connect the social work and social entrepreneurship literature and explore the role social work can play in supporting and advancing artisan work as empowering work for women.

Study one is a systematic literature review (SLR) that identifies the critical role artisan employment plays in empowering marginalized women in Africa and defines how social workers can engage in effecting change with women artisans experiencing poverty. Study two provides an instrumental case study of an artisan social enterprise in Zambia exploring the values and practices of the organization that contributed to community resilience, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. The final study employs a sequential explanatory mixed methods approach to identifying and exploring the social and environmental impact of artisan ventures in

Zambia.

Taken together this research highlights the importance of artisan craft employment for women in Africa, illustrates the impact of artisan enterprises on community resilience as well as social and environmental impact, and presents critical areas for future research exploration, as well as the policy and practice implications of this important sector.

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## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the thousands of artisans I've had the honor to work with around the world over the last twenty years, especially women and those in Zambia whose lived experiences inform this dissertation. It is my sincere hope that these words help amplify the worth of their vital work in the world and celebrate their creativity, tenacity, resiliency, and artistry. So many have welcomed me into their lives, homes, and livelihoods and have shown me how much beauty lies in every corner of the world, especially inside each person. I'm forever grateful.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### DISSERTATION INTRODUCTION

Ending extreme poverty for women is pivotal to the wellbeing of individuals and families, as well as to a nation's economic success and progress towards achieving gender equality. Yet according to the United Nations Development Programme (2020), no nation on earth treats women as well as it treats men. The World Bank (2020) reported that countries that discriminate on the basis of gender harm their societies at large, experiencing slower economic growth, weaker governance, and a lower standard of living for all citizens, yet women everywhere continue to have fewer opportunities for economic participation than men, less access to education, fewer property rights, greater health risks, less personal safety, and less political representation. Gender inequality denies women their voices, their choices, devalues their work, and positions women as unequal to men in society (Olawajun & Fernando, 2020).

Globally more women than men live in poverty, and gender inequality, in its many forms, predisposes women and their children to lives of extreme poverty (UN Women, 2017). Even within households, many husbands live above the poverty line controlling the household's economic resources, including those earned by their wives, while wives live below the poverty line and are deprived of the resources to meet their basic needs (Christensen, 2019). This poverty gender divide is often referred to as the "feminization of poverty," a term coined by social worker Dr. Diane Pearce in 1978 (Pearce, 1978).

Creating economic opportunities for women is one vital step in disrupting the feminization of poverty. This dissertation centers around addressing extreme poverty for women

in Africa, and more specifically in Zambia, through artisan work which offers a low barrier of entry and the potential to foster empowerment, resilience, and impact among individuals and communities (Edgar, 2011). African women continue to be disproportionately represented in the most vulnerable and insecure types of informal work, including subsistence farming, domestic work, and informal trading which are all linked to high levels of poverty (Ulrichs, 2016). Over 89% of working women in Africa work informally (ILO, 2018). The informal economy and the informal sector are terms used to describe insecure employment in developing countries including self-employment, smallholder farming, family-run micro-businesses, day laborers, sub-contracted pieceworkers, as well as employment without formal registration where the employer does not provide appropriate social protections (Henley et al., 2009). In many African nations discriminatory legal systems and a lack of property rights further inhibit women's ability to engage in the formal economy (Hilson et al., 2018). These conditions leave too many women across Africa without social protection from economic, health, climate, or lifecycle-related shocks.

### **Artisan Employment as Women's Empowerment**

Identifying sources of empowering work is a critical element of the global women's agenda seeking equitable access to society's rights and resources (Kabeer, 2020). Worldwide approximately 300 million people, predominantly women, rely on artisan craft work for their livelihoods (Alexander et al., 2020). In fact, artisan activity is the second largest employer in developing countries behind agriculture (Chappe & Lawson Jaramillo, 2020). Craft sales also act as a livelihood safety net for low-income and rural households between harvests or during times of economic hardship (Thondhlana et al., 2020).

Artisan entrepreneurship is traditionally situated within the cultural entrepreneurship field and considered part of the creative economy (Pret & Cogan, 2019). In the context of this dissertation, an artisan is defined as someone who makes handcrafted cultural goods and artisan craft as a handmade product created by an artisan for utility, fashion, art, or décor. Crafts serve as tangible elements of cultural heritage and are strongly connected to the economic lives of women in Africa (Koumara-Tsitsou & Karachalis, 2021). As the three studies in this dissertation demonstrate, artisan entrepreneurship in the handmade craft sector provides women not only a source of income generation, but the potential for increased personal agency, social support, cultural preservation, skills and training, gender empowerment, meaningful work, and strategies to mitigate climate change, thus warranting greater attention and examination.

Research shows that economically empowering women brings positive and lasting change to communities (Buvinic & Furst-Nichols, 2016; United Nations, 2018). This is, at least in part, because women have been found to spend their earnings differently than men, investing in their children's health and education, which reduces poverty and helps break the cycle of entrenched extreme poverty for the next generation (Buvinic & Furst-Nichols, 2016). However, the literature says very little about which employment opportunities available to women in extreme poverty create progress towards sustainable livelihoods. Artisan craft sales contribute an estimated 500 billion to the global economy annually (Alexander et al., 2020), yet the sector has been chronically underestimated in its potential to alleviate extreme poverty, combat gender inequality, and empower women. Female artisan entrepreneurs in developing nations, whether operating individually or collectively in cooperatives or artisan social enterprises, are largely ignored by policymakers and under-served by investment, training, digitalization, and access to



finance and markets despite their significant contributions to positive social impact in their communities and to the environment (Alexander et al., 2020; van Bergen, 2019).

Still utilizing craftwork as a vehicle for economic development and empowerment for women yields critics from two sides. First, particularly in the field of social work, concerns about perpetuating neoliberalism and colonialism through predatory capitalism draws concerns around any market based intervention, particularly with vulnerable populations. However, women are over-represented in the informal sector with over 740 million women worldwide make their living in the informal economy (Bonnet, n.d.), and an estimated 30% of households are solely supported by women (Thierry, 2007). Without the wages from informal work, many families are at risk of not meeting their basic needs. A South African study of women in the informal sector asked women about surviving on their daily activities. One woman said “living in an impoverished community means that daily our lives are filled with insecurity” (Raniga & Ngcobo, 2014). Work, even when informal, is vital to meeting basic needs. Recognition, growth, and investment in the artisan sector has the potential to move informal artisans into formalized social enterprises that can provide greater income stability and social support.

Alternatively, some argue that craft work for women actually perpetuates the feminization of poverty, trapping women in low wage work without significant opportunities for growth. However, artisan employment can generate positive impacts within families and communities by providing income generation, access to resources, and by building social capital that can be translated into personal agency for individual women and collective power for groups of artisans working together. Additionally, informal artisan work may provide access to formal markets and economies and/or be a springboard to formalization. Where artisan cooperatives and social enterprises are introduced in a community, craft work has the potential to provide

sustainable formalized employment with the social protections of employment benefits. Until more radical political and economic changes occur, artisan work can be a critical pathway to support women's economic development. This is particularly true for women who have low levels of education and limited local job opportunities, but who possess valuable indigenous knowledge and heritage craft skills. Recent research also indicates that craft provides meaningful work (Bell et al., 2018; Pratt et al., 2013) and meaning is something not measured in money.

The world needs systemic changes that give women the full spectrum of choice in employment. To make that possible we, as a global society, must work to achieve gender justice through gender equality, access to quality education, decent work and economic development, and no poverty which are all current objectives under the UN Sustainable Development goals (Embry et al., 2022). Until this change is pervasive, I embrace the paradox that while craft work may not move all women artisans out of poverty, for many women it can be a stepping-stone on the path to formal employment and more security. I believe in the “both/and” of advocacy for systemic gender equality, opportunity, and justice for women, while utilizing pragmatic actions to meet the needs of women where they are today.

Across three unique studies, this dissertation highlights the ways artisan employment empowers women both economically and socially, builds resilient communities, and scales social and environmental impact programming for women and communities in Africa, with the second and third study focused specifically on artisan enterprises in Zambia. These studies aim to address the shared global grand challenges laid out in the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2030 and the Grand Challenges for Social Work, which together aim to improve individual and family well-being, to develop a stronger social fabric, and to create a more just society.

## **Importance of the Problem to Social Work**

In recent years scholars in the social work field have taken a renewed interest in the ways social workers interact with people experiencing poverty, highlighting the importance of poverty-aware social work practice (Saar-Heiman et al., 2017; Krumer-Nevo, 2016; Deka, 2012). A poverty-aware approach to social work asks practitioners to develop a deep understanding of poverty's impacts on the individuals and communities they serve, and create interventions rooted in social justice, emphasizing human rights, democratic principles, inclusion, and mutual respect (Krumer-Nevo, 2016). Poverty-aware social work grew out a rights based perspective fueled by the critical work of development economist Amartya Sen on the relationship between poverty and human rights which highlighted the differences in entitlements, opportunities, freedoms, and poverty experienced by individuals (Deka, 2012). Sen asserted that his field of development economics was flawed in focusing only on country level economic growth to solve poverty, responding with a new theory of human development focused on human well-being called the capabilities approach that considered individual freedoms, functionings, and capabilities (Den Braber, 2013). The capabilities approach defines poverty in terms of capabilities deprivations (Stoltenberg Bruursema, 2015). For social workers, the capabilities approach helps explain poverty as social exclusion that creates economic and social vulnerability (Deka, 2012).

Further, international social work has emerged as a growing specialization in the profession. In response, the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) created a Global Commission that looked at the critical values and beliefs underlying international social work practice and defined international social work practice as “a discrete field of practice within social work that seeks to improve the social and material well-being of people everywhere” (Estes, 2010). The Commission categorized international social workers into two practice types

which included those engaged in development-focused social work and those engaged in practice specialization focused work. The former aligns with macro and community social work practice, and the latter is more closely aligned with clinical practice with individuals and groups (Estes, 2010). International social workers are often engaged in initiatives aimed at empowering women in livelihood initiatives designed to reduce extreme poverty for women and their families and increase community resilience (IFSW, 2018).

While economic empowerment initiatives align with social work's call to uphold human rights, improve human health and well-being, and create a more just and equal society through innovation and collaboration (IFSW, 2018), these interventions also face scrutiny from many in the field due to widespread concern about furthering neo-liberalism (Den Braber, 2013). Neoliberalism, a prominent feature in capitalism today, is characterized by market deregulation and low trade barriers that incentivizes corporations to seek low cost labor solutions in developing economies (Venugopal, 2015). Feminist scholars have pointed out that women have provided much of the low-wage labor factories require, but have also remained responsible for the unpaid reproductive and caring labor in families creating a "gender subsidy" that makes women's labor artificially cheap (Radhakrishnan & Solari, 2015). Further, many anti-poverty programs aimed at empowering women have focused solely on driving income generation, ignoring women's unpaid care work which creates a gendered double burden without building the necessary societal supports (Chant, 2014). However, social worker scholars and practitioners alike have underscored the importance of not perpetuating neoliberalism when using economic empowerment interventions, instead partnering for initiatives that are community driven, based on mutual relationships guided by respect, empathy, interest, and responsiveness of all parties (Turner & Maschi, 2014).

Connor and Bent-Goodley (2016) assert that support of economic empowerment by social workers is essential to fostering community development. Based on their global research and practice, these authors contend that social workers are in a unique position to work with individuals where they are, to understand the context of their entrepreneurial ventures in vulnerable settings, and to support these entrepreneurs in reaching their goals. In addition, they advocate that empowerment work should include advocacy at the institutional level for policy change that drives social change.

South African social work scholar Tanusha Raniga has used Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD)s, a participatory action research method that addresses the structural causes of poverty and is grounded in Sen's capabilities approach (Stoltenberg Bruursema, 2015), to try to discover what constrained women working in craft cooperative in South Africa from exercising their capabilities (Raniga, 2018). Raniga stated that, "focusing on the capabilities, the vital human, physical, financial, and social capitals that already exist in low-income communities, poor women would be able to realize their human capacity development" (Raniga, 2017, p. 219). She recommend best practices to enhance the sustainability of economic development cooperatives including using a holistic approach to addressing the feminization of poverty, mobilizing social workers to collaborate with other development stakeholders, lobbying government for policy changes, and providing accountability and transparency in NGO led cooperative businesses (Raniga, 2017).

### **Addressing Global Grand Challenges**

Poverty-aware social work and social entrepreneurship scholarship helps to address the shared global grand challenges laid out in the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2030 and the Grand Challenges for Social Work, which together aim to improve individual and

family well-being, to develop a stronger social fabric, and to create a more just society. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) provide a global framework for advancing sustainable economic, social, and environmental development through 2030 (Esquivel & Sweetman, 2016). The SDGs are made up of 17 intersecting, and overlapping goals meant to create a more prosperous and sustainable future for both people and planet (Nilsson et al., 2016). While all of the SDGs address human needs the goals thought to particularly advance the most urgent needs of women include SDGs 1 no poverty, 2 zero hunger, 3 good health and wellbeing, 4 quality education, 5 gender equity, 6 clean water and sanitation, 7 affordable and clean energy, 8 decent work and economic growth, 10 reduced inequalities, 12 responsible consumption and production, and 16 peace, justice and strong institutions (Esquivel & Sweetman, 2016). The SDG's are the driving force by which today's international development researchers are defining problems and measuring impact. The United Nations has called on all countries to work to eradicate the global feminization of poverty as part of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2030, with SDG 1 no poverty and SDG 5 achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls (Esquivel & Sweetman, 2016).

The Grand Challenges for Social Work aim to organize the social work profession to address today's most entrenched social problems (Fong et al., 2018). The grand challenges create a platform for engaged conversation, scholarship, collaboration, and innovation (Uehara et al., 2017). The profession identified 12 societal challenges that require a broad and ambitious social work agenda issues including: 1) ensure healthy development for all youth, 2) close the health gap, 3) stop family violence, 4) advance long and productive lives, 5) eradicate social isolation, 6) end homelessness, 7) create social responses to a changing environment, 8) harness technology for social good, 9) promote smart decarceration, 10) reduce extreme economic

inequality, 11) build financial capability for all, and 12) achieve equal opportunity and justice (Gehlert et al., 2017). Social workers advocating for and working with female artisan in Africa intersect most clearly with the last three goals to reduce income inequality, build financial capabilities, and achieve equal opportunity and justice, however fostering healthy youth development, ending family violence, responding to climate change, and harnessing technology for social good are also vital to artisans and artisan enterprises.

### **Aligning Social Work with Social Entrepreneurship**

In practice, social workers are driving artisan initiatives through both non-profit and for-profit social enterprises. As social entrepreneurs, social workers play an important translational role between social and environmental justice and prevailing market forces for artisans and artisan enterprises. In a recent example, COVID-19 demonstrated the power of international networks led by a social worker to effect change for artisans. Social worker turned social entrepreneur, Rebecca van Bergen, founded Nest, a nonprofit artisan guild and support organization, guided by the belief that craft can be a lever for community and social change particularly for women and families in developing nations (*Nest Artisan Guild*, n.d.). Nest has built a network of approximately 1,000 artisan ventures with a footprint in 110 countries. When the pandemic took hold globally, Nest realized that members of the micro and small businesses in their network were going to be the most vulnerable to both the economic and health implications of COVID-19 since there are large portions of the artisan community without consistent access to health care.

Nest hosted several virtual town halls where they invited members to report what they were seeing, feeling, and hearing in their communities as the pandemic unfolded. Those calls were the basis for Nest's COVID-19 relief plan which primarily focused on transitioning artisan

textile producers to create personal protective equipment (PPE) during the time of the global shortage. Nest approached corporate and philanthropic partners, such as Mastercard, Etsy, Amazon, and Target, to raise a million dollars in funding within three weeks for artisan produced PPE. Nest was able to deploy funding to artisan businesses to produce masks in 18 countries and asked that the masks be donated locally within the artisan's local communities to frontline health workers, essential workers, or at-risk community members. A significant portion of the masks made in Central America that were able to be imported to the United States were distributed to the United States Postal Service, New York City Public Housing Authority, and to several hospitals. In total, artisan businesses produced over 200,000 masks with Nest funding, critical both in terms of trying to flatten the pandemic curve and also in sustaining artisan employment.

As global factories shut down it was empowering to see these artisans able to mobilize and be resilient, producing masks for local and global use. This response system provides unique insights into the ability of artisan workers to revive old models of production, like homebased employment, to deploy solutions through modern technology and coordination. The second study in this dissertation highlights Tribal Textiles, a craft-based social enterprise in Zambia, who is part of the Nest Guild and benefitted from Nest's COVID-19 mask project. Members of the artisan sector are poised to be leaders and guides what that future should look like as there is increased call for local action to respond to global crisis (Embry et. al., 2019). When the global community mobilized around the artisan sector, women artisans were able to have an incredible impact on their families, their local communities, and the global community, responding with agility and resilience.

This example clearly speaks to the collaborative nature of this sector, including artisans, buyers, non-profit organizations and donors, and calls for research at the individual,



organizational, and institutional levels. This work will shine a necessary light on how to mobilize inclusive employment that drives social impact as well as treads more lightly on the planet in response to growing threats from climate change.

### **Positionality**

In social work science and in feminist research it is critical that scholars exam the role of power in research and practice as well as their own power and positionality. In studying women artisan entrepreneurs in Africa, and specifically in Zambia, I believe the voices of Black and Indigenous women must be the leading voices elevated on this subject, first through their own scholarship, but also when outside research centers on this community of entrepreneurs. Many of the sources quoted throughout this dissertation come from African scholars. As a White, American, cisgender female scholar, I acknowledge my power in having the privilege to study countries and cultures that are not my own. I am a social worker, turned social entrepreneur, turned scholar. I have spent almost thirty years in community practice, first in direct social work practice with women, children, and families in the US, followed by seventeen years in the field of social entrepreneurship, and three years in academia and consulting working globally with women artisans and artisan organizations.

From 2002-2019 I founded and ran a social enterprise that imported and marketed handmade goods in partnership with over 250 women's craft cooperative and businesses from 40 countries. I focused on mutual partnership and transparency in order to mitigate power imbalances that come from someone in a developed country working in a developing one. I co-branded all products sharing the names of the artisan business promoted, unlike most US brands in this sector at the time that shared artisan stories but did not credit the sources. Still as a

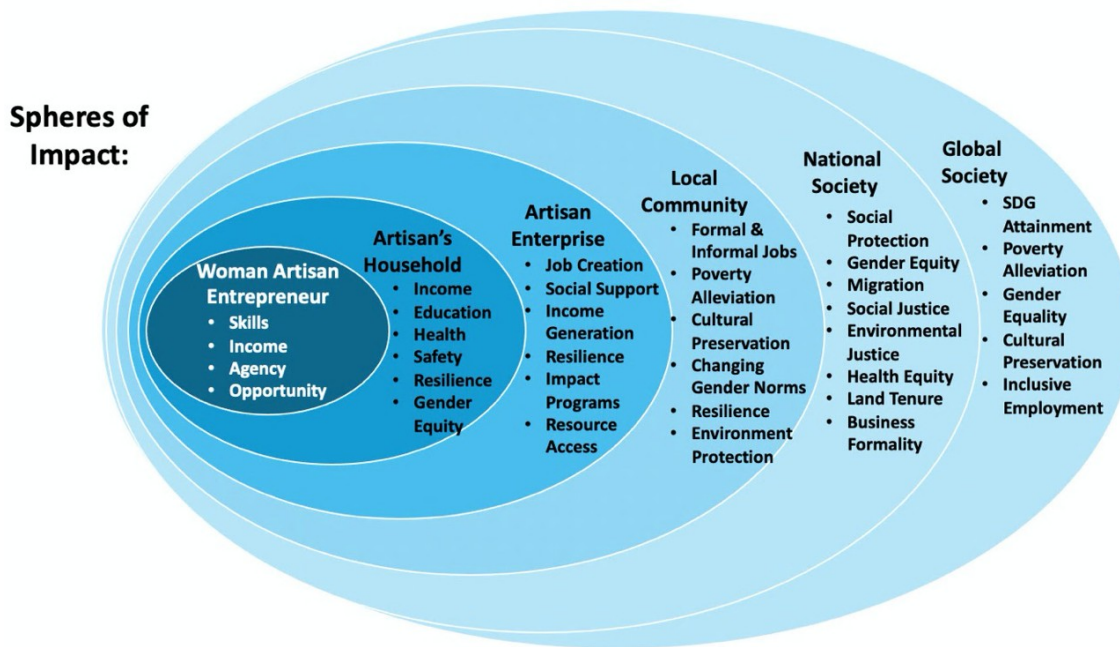
researcher from the US, despite my close relationship with the artisan community around the world, my insights will always be from an outside vantage point.

Even so, my many years of global fieldwork in communities with women artisans in addition to my work in capacity building, program development, and research with global government agencies and NGOs including USAID, US Department of State, US Dept. of Commerce Commercial Law Development Program, UK Aid, AgExport Guatemala, the Office of Handicrafts Tunisia, TFO Canada, Prospero Zambia, Trade + Impact Association, SWIFT, Aid to Artisans, and Care International have provided deep insights into the impact artisan employment has women's lives and livelihoods. Thus, I present a model and guide for how engaged scholarship can strengthen our knowledge and understanding of the unique attributes of artisan employment to address extreme poverty for women.

### **Conceptualizing a Ripple Effect of Artisan Entrepreneurship**

When women employ their cultural knowledge and creativity through artisan craft work, this work can be a catalyst for economic, social, and environmental impact with the potential to ripple out as far as the global community. A positive ripple effect that starts with income generation for a women artisan, often times working in her own home, has the potential to improve the lives of her family, her community, and our world. Despite the many barriers faced by female artisans in developing countries, there are empowering opportunities at the individual, organizational, and institutional levels. With access to information, resources, and support artisan employment can create positive impacts for households, communities, and society at large. Informed by 20 years of international field work, a systematic review of the existing literature base, the theoretical framework that follows, and my in-depth research with artisan communities, including the instrumental case study and sequential explanatory mixed methods studies

presented in this dissertation, I have developed a conceptual model that identifies six spheres of impact for artisan entrepreneurship. Figure 1 outlines the ripple effect model of artisan employment and demonstrates the forward momentum that is possible when a necessity/survivalist female entrepreneur starts using craft skills, available resources, and hand production for income generation for herself and her family.



*Figure 1.* The Ripple Effect of Artisan Entrepreneurship

Each sphere in the model creates an impact with the potential to ripple forward starting with the life of the artisan herself, moving to her household, to her participation in a craft cooperative or enterprise, to the social and environmental impact of artisan endeavors on the local community, to the economic and social impact nationally, and finally resulting in the potential of collective impact on a global scale. Each of these spheres provides a roadmap for a research agenda necessary for understanding the positive role of artisan employment in women's lives and livelihoods, especially among women experiencing extreme poverty.

As demonstrated in the ripple effect model, the impact and influence of artisan employment has the potential to reach further than just the individual artisan and her household. Therefore, the impacts of female artisan entrepreneur require empirical examination at the individual, organizational, community, and institutional levels. The conceptual model further highlights the ways women's lives, their communities, their nations, and the wider global community are impacted when women are empowered, communities develop resilience factors, and together artisans create programming around social, health, and environmental impact in their communities.

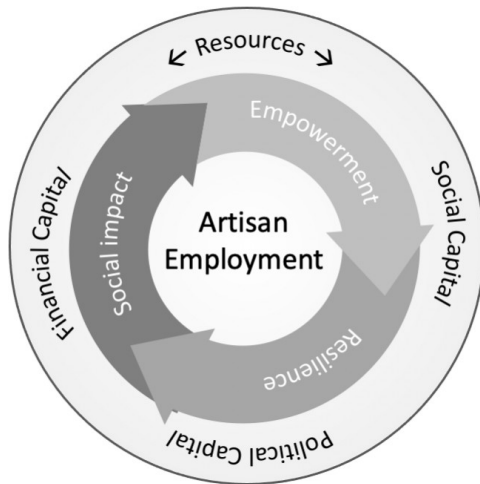
The primary beneficiary is the woman herself, sphere one. Through working as an artisan entrepreneur, she not only gains the skills for the craft and business knowledge, but also economic income and personal agency. Relatedly, the second sphere of impact is the artisan's household benefitting from her income and increased agency, which directly correlates to increased opportunities for education and health for her family. Further, her skills, increased agency, and income may help provide resilience to her household as well as gain her greater gender equity inside her family.

Beyond the artisan herself and her family is sphere three, the artisan cooperative or artisan enterprise. Artisan enterprises often start with a single entrepreneur, but many quickly grow to become cooperatives or provide employment opportunities for others which can lead to a positive impact on community social capital as well as community job creation, sphere four. As the enterprise develops growth in incomes, social support, networks, and social protection benefits follow. This creates the building blocks of resilience for the organization, the individuals involved, and their surrounding community. Further, artisan organizations have the potential for national and global impact, spheres five and six respectively, as their collective work contributes

towards achieving gender equality through changing norms and perceptions and laws in their own countries and through contributing to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 1 no poverty, 5 gender equality for women and girls, and SDG 8 good jobs and economic growth.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The studies in this dissertation are grounded in a theoretical framework that utilizes an inter-disciplinary approach, combining theories from social work, development economics, and entrepreneurship from the field of management, to understand the role of artisan employment on gender and economic justice in Africa generally, and more specifically in Zambia. Through theories of empowerment, resilience, and scaling social impact, a cycle emerges around artisan work to illustrate the necessary and symbiotic nature of these concepts in creating a positive impact on individual women, their households, and their communities (Figure 2). Women's individual and collective empowerment builds personal and community resilience, which creates positive social impact. If one of these elements is missing, the cycle of positive impact will stall or stop. In addition, each stage in the cycle requires resources comprised of social capital, political capital, and financial capital to stay in motion. These resource requirements are addressed across multiple theories in my framework.



*Figure 2. Cycle of Empowerment, Resilience, and Social Impact*

The concept of empowerment for female artisans is informed by empowerment theory from social work and the capabilities approach from development economics. Community resilience draws on both the capabilities approach and Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological theory but expands beyond the individual to the collective, for which I use the nine elements of community resilience identified by Patel, Rogers, Amlot, and Rubin (2017). Artisans and artisan cooperatives’ ability to scale their social and environmental impact is understood through the theories of opportunity vs. necessity entrepreneurship, and through Han and Shah’s (2020) ecosystem of scaling social impact theory from the business management literature. In applying theory to the problem, I will additionally rely on feminist theory to undergird my framework, fundamentally keeping gender equality as the central reason for social work to pursue strengthening artisan employment opportunities for women.

### **Empowerment Theory**

In the field of social work, empowerment theory understands human problems must be addressed within the social, political, and economic context in which they exist in order to

counter societal oppression of marginalized groups and individuals (East, 2021). Though there has been some debate among social work scholars as to whether empowerment is a theory or a process (Turner & Mashi, 2015; Carr, 2003; Carrol, 2004), there is a difference between practicing empowerment through interventions with groups and communities and the underlying framework and principals for understanding empowerment (Zimmerman, 2000). According to Jean East (2021), “empowerment theory situates human problems in a person-in-environment perspective not only recognizing the interdependence and mutual influence of individuals and communities, but also proposing that successful interventions to human problems occur at the intrapersonal, interpersonal, and community levels simultaneously” (p. 374). In the first study in my dissertation, I use empowerment theory to identify six elements of empowerment created through artisan employment.

### **Capabilities Approach**

The capabilities approach, like empowerment theory, is a development theory that stresses not only income and capital accumulation, but also personal agency, cultural norms, freedoms, and social justice in deciding personal and community well-being. The capacities approach, first proposed by economist Amartya Sen in 1980, says that happiness is based on an individual's ability to attain the kind of life they desire (Sen, 1999). To that end, the theory asserts that the most essential factor to examine when assessing well-being is not what a person possesses, their wealth, or even their subjective satisfaction, but what people can actually be and do. The method focuses on the individual's ability to achieve a decent quality of life. Sen's key notions of "functionings" and "capabilities" are used to assess this quality of life (Nussbaum, 2003).

Sen defines functionings as states of "being and doing," which encompass all of a person's actions as well as states of being, including positive states such as being nourished, sheltered, or educated, as well as negative states such as being starved, homeless, or illiterate (Carlson et al., 2016). Capabilities are a person's actual freedoms or opportunities to accomplish their goals (Nussbaum, 2003). Capabilities have been defined as the options available to a person, regardless of whether they take advantage of them. Sen emphasizes in his book *Development as Freedom* that people can choose to pursue or avoid certain functions when given the opportunity, but capacities are the key freedoms that give people the ability to make those choices (Sen, 1999). Poverty, a lack of rights, underdevelopment, and racial or gender discrimination are all considered capabilities deprivations in the capabilities approach (Deneulin & Clausen, 2019). While the theory stresses human skills, it does not neglect the importance of institutions, acknowledging that individual capabilities are influenced by external influences such as politics, economics, and culture (Carlson et al., 2016). As a result, the capabilities perspective is valuable in determining whether our social systems and institutions are best suited to supporting human flourishing by offering the required freedoms for individual functioning (Vogt, 2005).

### **Community Resilience**

Resilience is a widely employed and highly relevant strengths-based concept in social work research and practice that recognizes, respects, and promotes local capacity by utilizing resources available or able to be developed within individuals or communities (Brodsky & Cattaneo, 2013). To establish collective resilience in the event of a disaster, a community must act to decrease risk and resource imbalances, engage community members in mitigation, create



organizational links, preserve and increase social supports, and demonstrate flexibility in the face of unknowns (Norris et al., 2008).

Bronfenbrenner, an early scholar in resilience science, developed the bioecological theory, which says that social context and interactions with family, neighbors, and institutions influence human well-being (Boon et al., 2012). Resilience science has progressed beyond understanding individual resilience, to suggesting that communities can be more or less resilient to crises or change as a whole. Despite the fact that community resilience has become a frequently used term, multiple definitions and meanings are applied across disciplines. Authors Patel, Rogers, Amlot, and Rubin (2017) define nine elements of community resilience based on a systematic review that aggregated findings from 80 studies in an article titled *What do we mean by community resilience?* Despite the differences in definitions, fields of study, or settings where community resilience was studied, the authors discovered that the characteristics of community resilience emerged regardless of the differences in definitions, fields of study, or settings where community resilience was studied. In my second study, I use these nine elements of community resilience as guides for looking at the elements of resilience present in a Zambian social enterprise during the COVID-19 pandemic, which include local knowledge, community networks and relationships, communication, health, governance/leadership, resources, economic investment, preparedness, and mental outlook (Patel et al., 2017).

The collective adaptive capacities for economic development, developing and preserving social capital, information and communication, and community competency all contribute to a community's resilience during and after a crisis (Norris et al., 2008). Rare and catastrophic events are unpredictable, posing a challenge to typical community decision-making (Mkubukeli & Cronje, 2012). Understanding and developing interventions around community resilience is a

strategy that social workers can use to help marginalized and underserved populations both before and after a disaster (Brodsky & Cattaneo, 2013).

### **Necessity vs. Opportunity Entrepreneurship**

The theory of necessity vs. opportunity entrepreneurship asserts that there are two main reasons that people decide to become entrepreneurs; they are either driven by necessity due to adverse circumstances or pulled by opportunity because of their expertise and skills or an opportunity that presents itself (Stoltenberg Bruursema, 2015; Mkubukeli & Conje, 2018). Necessity entrepreneurs have also been referred to as survivalist entrepreneurs. Survivalist entrepreneurs are driven by necessity because they live in under-resourced communities (De Witte Hans et al., 2020). This theory helps understand the motivation of entrepreneurs to meet their basic needs (Bacq et al., 2015). Artisan entrepreneurship in Africa is primarily categorized as a form of necessity entrepreneurship at least until individual necessity entrepreneurs join community cooperatives or social enterprises which can amplify their work as well as provide increased access to social protections and social support.

Research on livelihood choices among female artisan entrepreneurs in Nigeria found that most artisan businesses were born of necessity (Igwe et al., 2018), and followed the boundary conditions of the necessity entrepreneurship theory of working to meet basic needs as defined by Dencker, Bacq, Gruber, and Haas (2019). Like empowerment, the terms necessity entrepreneur and necessity entrepreneurship were common throughout the literature on women artisans in Africa and help explain women's motivation for seeking artisan employment.

### **Ecosystem of Scaling Social Impact**

Scaling a business is commonly thought of as the process of increasing a company's sales, revenue, market share, and workforce, but scaling a social enterprise is grounded in

increasing an organization's influence on the social problem it seeks to solve (Han & Shah, 2020). J. Gregory Dees, a pioneer in the field of social entrepreneurship, defined social impact scaling as "expanding a social-purpose organization's influence to better match the enormity of the social need or problem it wants to address" (Dees, 2008, p.16). Value creation for social businesses is focused on positively impacting lives, livelihoods, the environment, and the communities they serve, rather than on firm size or profits. Even still, scaling social impact is regarded as one of the most difficult tasks that an organization can do (Han & Shah, 2020). Results might be difficult to assess depending on the impact goals and identifying the full impact or effect can take years (Bradach, 2003).

In the literature, there are several models for scaling social impact.

Staffing, communicating, alliance building, lobbying, earnings generating, replicating, and stimulating market forces, for example, are seven different drivers of scaling social impact identified by the SCALERS model (Cannatelli, 2017). Dees, Anderson, and Wei-Skillern (2004) proposed a three-pronged approach to scaling social impact: dissemination, affiliation, and branching. Dissemination entails the dissemination of information and technical help, affiliation encompasses the development of a relational network, and branching involves the expansion to several local sites under the guidance of a parent organization (Han & Shah, 2020; Dees et al., 2004). Financing is the most well-known social impact driver (Han & Shah, 2020; Bacq & Eddleston, 2018). This is because having access to funds, whether through earned income, loans, grants, or contributions, enables for investments in social impact activities, whereas not having access to funds restricts those investments (Han & Shah, 2020).

Han and Shah's (2020) ecosystem of scaling social impact theory goes beyond looking at social enterprises at the organizational level and considers the systems in which they function.

Including systems is an especially important consideration for women who are necessity based entrepreneurs in Africa. The constraints of women-led artisan enterprises in Africa go beyond organizational constraints to societal constraints based on gender norms and rights. The ecosystem of scaling social impact includes organizational level factors like access to financing, access to technology, organizational governance and strategy, but also considers the impact of institutions and government policies on an enterprises ability to scale their positive impact (Han & Shah, 2020). The third study in my dissertation seeks to understand how Zambian artisan social enterprises scale the impact they are making for their artisans and the surrounding community as well as the barriers these organizations face in making a positive impact.

### **Feminist Theory**

Finally, feminist theory, like the social work profession, is concerned with addressing power dynamics, oppression, and injustice, particularly around issues of gender (Jones & Mattingly, 2016). Feminism clearly recognizes importance of social, political, and economic systems on individuals and groups, and stresses that gender matters when examining the effects of oppression and power (Turner & Maschi, 2014). Feminist theory extends feminism into the theoretical and philosophical discourse, seeking to understand the nature of gender inequality (“Feminist Theory,” 2021). Feminist social work scholarship and practice aim to connect the personal with the political, advocating for equality between genders (Anand, 2021). In all three of my dissertation studies, I apply a gender lens to examine the progress and barriers women artisans face in striving for empowerment, resilience, and social impact for themselves and their communities.

## Dissertation Structure

Utilizing the ripple effect of artisan entrepreneurship conceptual model alongside my theoretical frameworks, this dissertation is organized as three studies examining artisan employment and the ripple effect artisan work creates for women in the first four spheres of impact at the individual, household, organizational, and community levels. The cycle of empowerment, resilience, and social impact are seen as the studies move from what is known about artisan entrepreneurship for women's empowerment in Africa, to the ways one artisan enterprise in Zambia has built resiliency that has been tested during the COVID-19 crisis, and finally how Zambian artisan enterprises and cooperatives have been able to scale their social and environmental impact in their communities and where they continue to experience challenges to creating social impact.

Table 1 Dissertation Study Elements

	<b>Study 1</b>	<b>Study 2</b>	<b>Study 3</b>
<b>Method</b>	Systematic Literature Review	Instrumental Case Study	Sequential Explanatory Mixed Methods
<b>Research Question</b>	1. What is currently known about the economic and social impacts of working in the artisan craft sector for female artisans in Africa who have experienced poverty and inequality?	1. When and how does a social enterprise contribute to building community resilience? Specifically, what core elements of community resilience are established and reinforced by the social enterprise 2. How do the unique attributes of craft and creativity contribute to resiliency? 3. How do organizations build and reinforce the capabilities of women to be resilient in a crisis?	<i>Quant:</i> 1. Who makes up the artisan enterprises operating in Zambia? 2. How many social and environmental impact efforts are Zambian artisan ventures engaged in? 3. What resources drive or prohibit the positive economic, social and environmental impact of artisan ventures? <i>Qual:</i> 4. How do artisan enterprises perceive their ability to make a social and

			environmental impact on the community?
<b>Level of Analysis</b>	Individual	Organizational	Organizational, Institutional
<b>Primary Theories</b>	Empowerment Theory, Capabilities Approach	Community Resilience, Capabilities Approach	Necessity vs Opportunity Entrepreneurship, Scaling Social Impact
	Feminist Theory		

## Study 1

The first study is a systematic literature review (SLR) that identifies the critical role artisan employment plays in empowering marginalized women in Africa and defines how social workers can engage in effecting change with women artisans experiencing poverty. The purpose of this study is to identify and understand the critical role artisan employment plays in empowering marginalized women both economically and socially in Africa. It further aims to define how social workers can engage in effecting change with women artisans experiencing poverty. Here, I ask the question: what is currently known about the social and economic impacts of working in the artisan craft sector for female artisans in Africa who have experienced poverty and inequality?

This study utilizes the Bronson and Davis (2012) seven step SLR process for social work beginning with defining the problem, research question, and search protocol. A Boolean search strategy was then used to identify the available literature and two distinct sets of search terms were used across social science/social work databases (APA Psych Info, Society and Family Studies Worldwide, and Social Work Abstracts), business sources (Business Sources Complete, Business Premier, and EconLit), and Web of Science. A total of 270 articles were identified, data

from each article was systematically abstracted, and the pool of articles was narrowed to 18 that met the study's inclusion and exclusion criteria. Using the matrix method of content analysis each of the 18 included studies were analyzed for patterns of meaning which emerged as themes. The identified themes were synthesized into factors of empowerment and barriers for women artisans in Africa and reported with recommendations for use in practice and policy.

This study contributes to social work research by adding to our understanding of artisan work as an empowerment vehicle for women experiencing poverty and gender inequality. It aims to bridge the gap between social work and social entrepreneurship research in order to advance the field of social work research and practice around social innovation. It further contributes to the literature on poverty-aware social work practice. With greater understanding of the impact of artisan employment on marginalized communities, social workers can effect change for women artisan through livelihood stabilization, increased social support, strengthening women's voice and agency, combating gender inequality, and preserving indigenous knowledge in Africa and around the world.

## **Study 2**

The second is an instrumental case study of a thirty-year-old artisan social enterprise in Mfuwe, Zambia that is designed to explore their efforts to build community resilience over time, as well as how that resilience has been both tested and proven during the COVID-19 pandemic. An instrumental case study is the study of a case to facilitate understanding of a particular phenomenon or issue, draw generalizations, or build theory (Grandy, 2010). With the rising need for resilience in the wake of the global pandemic, climate change and pressing grand challenges, it is critical to understand the role of all actors in establishing and maintaining community resilience.

This instrumental case study of the *Zambian craft-based social enterprise, Tribal Textiles*, explores the unique attributes that artisan enterprises contribute to community resilience. Through a lens of capabilities theory (Teece, 2017; Sen, 1999) applied to the nine core elements of community resilience established in the systematic review by Patel et. al. (2017). This case examines the unique aspects of a craft social enterprise that strengthen not only the organization, but also a community when faced with a time of crisis, namely the COVID-19 pandemic.

This study makes several important contributions to our knowledge on artisan social enterprises and craft. First, it expands the understanding of how artisan social enterprises embed values and practices during normal times that enable them to respond quickly and resiliently to crisis in ways protective for their community. It also highlights the importance of artisan social ventures for providing formal employment through craft, expanding beyond the existing literature that examines craft employment primarily in the form of necessity and informal entrepreneurship. This study implies that there are a clear set of elements social enterprises supporting vulnerable populations can lean on and activate - including resources, mental outlook, community networks/relationships and economic development - to contribute meaningfully to community resilience through organizational capabilities. It further suggests that creativity is a critical, yet overlooked, aspect of how artisan social enterprises and their artisan employees effectuate mission and strategy that furthers resiliency. Finally, this case study adds to the literature on how women's vulnerability to community crisis can be mitigated by organizations through distributive justice in resource allocation, leading to the individual capabilities.

### **Study 3**

The final study employs a sequential explanatory mixed methods approach to identifying and exploring the social and environmental impact on communities created by informal vs.



formally registered artisan businesses in Zambia. In Zambia unemployment stands at 40%, with a 60% unemployment rate for youth (Mukosa et al., 2020). A persistently high poverty rate of over 60% means most Zambians are excluded from the benefits of the country's economic growth (Ministry of Community Development, 2014). Many Zambians living in poverty seek their livelihoods in artisan craft. The study uses a quantitative, non-experimental descriptive design to analyze the results of an artisan survey distributed to artisans across Zambia (n = 81) followed by in depth interviews with 66 Zambian artisans from 6 provinces.

In developing countries like Zambia where informality is high and social protection is low, sustainable employment itself is a core social impact. Creating pathways to formal sector work is essential because formal sector jobs can provide predictable wages, benefits, social protection, and personal agency that informal sector jobs do not (Chen, 2008). Whether formal or informal, the majority of the Zambian artisan social enterprises are making tremendous efforts at providing social impact and environmental programming aimed at alleviating poverty, opening opportunities for marginalized women, and creating sustainable environmental practices in addition to generating vital employment. This study contributes to the social work literature on international community practice as well as the social entrepreneurship literature on scaling social impact.

## **Conclusion**

Taken together, the three studies of this dissertation aim to contribute to the social work literature on empowering women, particularly those experiencing extreme poverty, creating resilient communities, and scaling social impact in Africa. Women artisan entrepreneurs are a positive force for economic and gender empowerment in many developing countries, but their contributions remain nearly absent in the literature. Once highlighted, supported, and connected,

artisan businesses provide an immense opportunity for job generation and social impact. The COVID-19 crisis shed light on the strengths of women artisan entrepreneurs and their capacity for resilience. Women artisans are building back better, using the practices they put in place long before the pandemic.

Developing a body of research that seeks to understand the benefits as well as barriers to artisan empowerment through social work intervention and social entrepreneurial endeavors is vital in our efforts as a global community to end extreme poverty for women in Africa. Structural barriers and entrenched biases around gender continue to hinder economic and social inclusion for women and girls everywhere. Combating poverty for women and children in developing countries requires finding pathways to economic opportunities and economic justice for women. Women's exclusion in all realms of society is a social justice issue, and righting women's economic exclusion is a driving force behind the concept of economic empowerment for women. My research aims to highlight the power of artisan employment in providing an avenue to empowerment, resilience, and positive social impact for women and their communities.

## CHAPTER TWO

### ARTICLE 1 - DOES ARTISAN ENTREPRENEURSHIP EMPOWER WOMEN IN AFRICA?

#### A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

##### **Introduction**

The importance of women's empowerment and women's entrepreneurship in Africa has received much attention in the efforts around poverty alleviation (Kimmitt et al., 2020; Lee, 2016). Income generation is vital for women forced to wage a daily battle against consequences of extreme poverty for themselves and their families. However, the proximate cause of female poverty goes beyond a lack of income or assets and is squarely seated in the social exclusion of gender inequality which limits women's access to information, education, rights, assets and opportunities (Bradshaw et al., 2019). Vulnerability to gender inequality and subsequent poverty in Africa is second only to that of Southeast Asia, and the depth of poverty women endure, which is measured by how far incomes fall below the poverty line, is greater in Africa than anywhere else in the world (McFerson, 2010).

Empowering women economically is essential to realizing women's rights and to achieving poverty reduction and improved health, education, and social welfare outcomes (Haugh & Talwar, 2016). Artisan entrepreneurship in the craft sector has the potential to provide empowering employment that increases a woman's knowledge, skills, personal agency, and bargaining power in her household and in society (Edgar, 2011), yet it is largely ignored in the literature. There is overwhelming evidence that women's economic empowerment directly impacts poverty reduction, family well-being, and accelerates economic growth (UN Women,

2017). However, the existing literature on women's employment in Africa provides a limited understanding of the types of employment available to women living at or around the international poverty line that truly impact women's lives and livelihoods. While many women across Africa use craft sales for income generation, there is even less known about the economic and social impact of the craft sector on women experiencing extreme poverty. Generally, there is also a lack of research on ways the social work can help empower women economically, and how economic empowerment can lead to greater economic justice and gender justice.

The purpose of this study is to identify and understand the critical role artisan employment plays in empowering marginalized women both economically and socially in Africa. It further aims to define how social workers can engage in effecting change with women artisans experiencing poverty. This study contributes to social work research by adding to our understanding of artisan work as an empowerment vehicle for women experiencing poverty and gender inequality. It works to bridge the gap between social work and social entrepreneurship research in order to advance the field of social work research and practice around social innovation.

### **Gender Inequality, Poverty, and the Potential of Artisan Employment**

Globally gender inequality and poverty are intrinsically linked. Around the world more women than men live in poverty, and gender inequality, in its many forms, predisposes women and their children to lives of extreme poverty (UN Women, 2017). Gender inequality across Africa is demonstrated in the labor market where over 89% of employed women work informally (ILO, 2018). Informal employment is work that is unregistered and is typically low-wage, inconsistent, and without social protections for workers (Chen, 2013). Still, whether formal or informal, paid work has the potential to be transformative for women experiencing poverty and

marginalization. Development economist Naila Kabeer calls this “empowering work” and asserts that paid work opens new opportunities for women, along with greater voice and decision-making power inside their families and society, and more control over their own bodies (Kabeer, 2008). Kabeer believes that “empowering work” is critical to the larger women’s empowerment agenda which includes social, economic, and political empowerment around political participation, women’s property rights, education, access to credit, social protections, skills training, and equitable access to all other societal resources (Kabeer, 2020).

While artisan work is often overlooked, undervalued, or considered an “outmoded form of manufacturing, a lesser cousin to fine or contemporary art, or as a sequestered domestic leisure activity” (Jakob & Thomas, 2017, p. 495), in reality artisan entrepreneurship is empowering work that provides critical income in vulnerable communities. In addition to primary income generation, craft sales act as a safety net during times of economic hardship, providing a livelihood cushion to many poor households, rural communities, and women with limited income generation options (Thondhlana et al., 2020).

### **The Role of Social Work in Economic Empowerment**

It is the primary mission of the social work profession to help people meet their basic human needs and to enhance human well-being. The profession gives particular attention to the empowerment and needs of the most vulnerable who suffer poverty and oppression and who need our efforts towards greater social justice globally (Banerjee & Canda, 2012). According to the International Federation of Social Workers, “social work is a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that facilitates social change and development, social cohesion, and the empowerment and liberation of people.” (IFSW, 2021).

Empowerment is defined as efforts to increase the agency, knowledge, resource access, skills, and capabilities of individuals so that they can participate in leadership, decision-making, resource allocation, and collective action in their lives, families, and communities (Gupta, 2021). In the field of social work, empowerment theory understands human problems must be addressed within the social, political, and economic context in which they exist in order to counter societal oppression of marginalized groups and individuals (East, 2021). While the terms economic empowerment and economic justice are similar, they are not fully interchangeable. Women's economic empowerment aims to create financial inclusion and sustainability by addressing a woman's opportunities, knowledge, skills, and confidence to address her own financial well-being (Postmus et al., 2013). Economic justice assumes that individuals will reach a sufficient level of material and financial foundation to thrive and that a country's economy will be more successful if it is fairer (Hayes, 2020).

Economic justice is part of the critical mission of the profession (W. Lee, 2016). Since the 1960s, social workers have recognized economic development as a vital element of community practice and social work education (Raniga, 2017). Economic justice seeks to address economic inequality not only through the empowerment of individuals, but systematically through policy and cultural change. Many social workers encounter the devastating effects of severe economic inequality in their daily practice (Goldberg, 2012). Thus, advancing opportunities for women experiencing both gender inequality and economic exclusion clearly fits the mission of the social work profession, as does pursuing macro level interventions around economic justice aimed at changing policy and society.

Still, many social workers remain leery of venturing into the realm of economic development despite the need and appropriateness of collaborating with the business sector on

behalf of vulnerable populations (Lee, 2016). Over two and a half decades ago social work scholar James Midgley (1996) advocated for economic interventions by the profession but noted that social workers were uncertain of how to make an effective contribution to economic development. This thinking remains largely unchanged. The emergence of social entrepreneurship has helped advance the idea that business practices can provide a vehicle for social impact, but the social work profession is only slowly starting to embrace market-oriented strategies (Lee, 2016; Bornstein & Davis, 2010). The dual cultures of social work (and the larger non-profit sector) and business are at play in the field of social entrepreneurship and the blended values of the two professions provide a pathway to social problem solving and innovation that can propel economic and social impact for communities (Dees, 2012).

One concern for the profession in using market based strategies with vulnerable populations in international settings is the perpetuation of coloniality, which is defined as the imposition of power using Western epistemologies based on structural inequalities of race-based and gender-based hierarchies (Rasool & Harms-Smith, 2021). There is also a concern that economic interventions by social work practitioners further perpetuate neoliberalism globally. Still everywhere in the world, for the majority of humankind, income is earned through employment and work has the added potential of providing meaning to people's lives in addition to meeting their basic needs.

### **Addressing Neoliberalism in Craft Work and Women's Economic Justice**

The term neoliberalism describes the widespread global market deregulation, privatization, and declining social and environmental protections which escalated in the 1980s and 1990s and have become entrenched in today's understanding of capitalism (Venugopal, 2015). It is also associated with the historical movement of corporations seeking low cost labor

in developing countries by building low-wage factories that required the labor of poor and working-class women (Radhakrishnan & Solari, 2015). While employment opportunities have been created, accelerated globalization of the neoliberal age has further brought about an unequal distribution of wealth and resources, with a widening disparity that profoundly affects many people's daily lives (Horn, 2010). The jobs linked to the global economy available to women in developing countries are generally low-wage positions in poor working conditions that leave them no better off than opportunities in the informal economy (Menéndez et al., 2007; Standing, 1989). Women's unpaid familial care work has also been ignored, causing time poverty for women who are providing cheap labor at work and free labor at home (Radhakrishnan & Solari, 2015).

Likely in response to neoliberalism, women's empowerment and economic development programs aimed at rural populations have proliferated in developing countries since the 1990s, due largely to an influx of international donor funds and the global expansion of microcredit organizations (Cook, 2021). Globally, handcraft production has become an alternative income source for rural communities as a form of economic development. The subdivision of family farm plots, over-use of the land, and climate change have negatively affected incomes from agriculture, leading more people into the craft sector to avoid urban migration (Durham & Littrell, 2000). Governments, development organizations, and social workers have recognized the positive economic impact sales of handmade products can have on communities. Social work scholar Robert Polack (2004) notes, in a "global system in which the world's people are bound together in a complex web of economic relationships," (p. 218) seeking wider global markets is inevitable and social work should support economic empowerment solutions that provide "more equitable distribution of resources and fair treatment of workers" (p. 289).



Economic justice alone cannot solve complex social or environmental problems. Colonialism's legacy on global economies, especially developing countries, requires acknowledging the exploitative and extractive practices that led to today's unjust outcomes (Polack, 2004). However, women's empowerment towards economic and gender justice through artisan entrepreneurship and artisan cooperatives has been achieved through grassroots initiatives in many places (Gupta, 2021). The realities of neoliberalism require that social workers use available means of income generation to help meet individuals' and families' basic needs alongside advocating for more just and equitable economic, gender equality, and social protection policies. Social work can act as a support service to women-led entrepreneurial ventures and as community partners to help mobilize resources, share information, create opportunities for training and capacity building, linkages, and provide policy education and advocacy.

### **Systematic Literature Review**

A systematic review of the literature was conducted to explore the state of artisan craft work as an employment option for women experiencing poverty and inequality in Africa. The research question guiding the systematic literature review (SLR) asked: what is currently known about the economic and social impacts of working in the artisan craft sector for female artisans in Africa who have experienced poverty and inequality?

Effective social work practice requires a clear understanding of best practices, including “what works, with whom, and in which settings” (Bronson & Davis, 2021, p. 3). This review used an interdisciplinary approach, drawing on three major bodies of literature including social work, international development, and the entrepreneurship field from the management literature. Because of the complexity of the problem of gender and economic inequality in employment

opportunities for women in Africa, it was critical to examine the current evidence on the problem from these three intersectional perspectives which together represent the social, political, and economic factors required for women's economic and gender empowerment in the craft sector.

### **Method and Data Collection**

This SLR was conducted according to the seven step process outlined by Bronson and Davis (2012) for social work scholars including defining the problem, stating the research question and search protocol, retrieving the relevant literature and screening out studies that do not meet the inclusion criteria, systematically abstracting data from each article, critically appraising each study included, synthesizing the information, and reporting the findings translationally in a way that will be useful for practice and policy. Unlike traditional literature reviews which are usually done in an ad hoc nature, using a systematic approach significantly increases the rigor, validity, and generalizability of the review's findings.

Boundaries for the review were created through inclusion and exclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria was comprised of peer reviewed journal articles published between 2010-2021 consisting of empirical studies, both quantitative and qualitative, on women working in artisan craft projects, craft cooperatives, or as craft entrepreneurs in Africa. The exclusion criteria included articles not published in English, research based on countries outside of Africa, articles that were not specifically about craft work, historical articles not tied to present day practices, purely conceptual or theoretical papers, white papers, reports, books, and non-peer reviewed literature.

In March of 2021 a Boolean search strategy was utilized to identify the available literature and two distinct sets of search terms were used across social science/social work databases (APA Psych Info, Society and Family Studies Worldwide, and Social Work

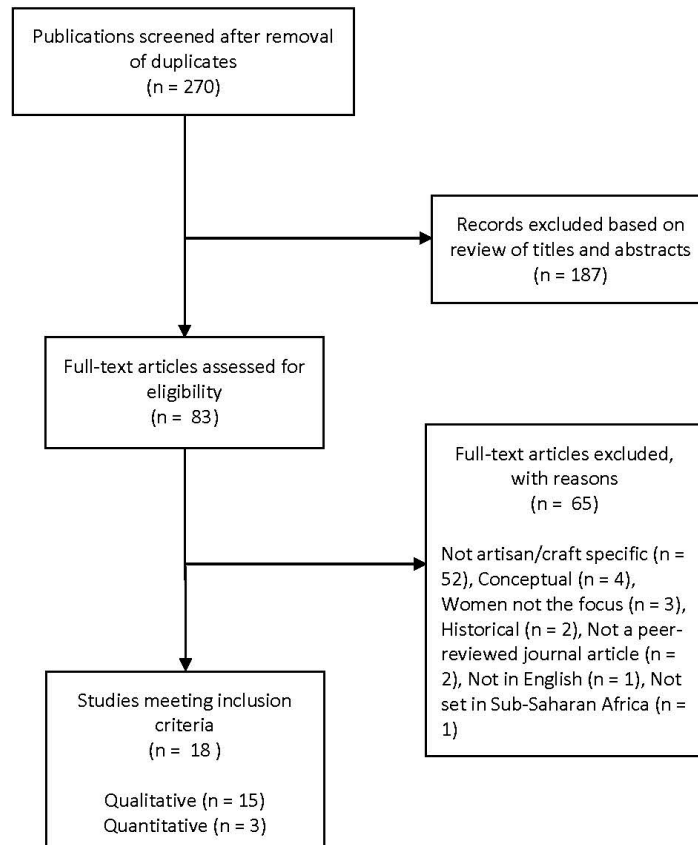
Abstracts), business sources (Business Sources Complete, Business Premier, and EconLit), and Web of Science. As shown in Table 2, the first set of search terms used were women\* AND (economic\* OR “sustainable livelihoods”) AND (development\* OR empowerment\*) AND Africa\* AND (entrepreneur\* OR cooperative\*), which yielded 131 records. The second set of Boolean terms searched were (artisan\* OR craft\* OR handicraft\*) AND women\* AND Africa\*, which located 164 sources.

*Table 2 Boolean Search Terms and Results*

Search terms	Social Science Databases	Business Databases	Web of Science
<i>Search 1:</i> women* AND (economic* OR “sustainable livelihoods”) AND (development* OR empowerment*) AND Africa* AND (entrepreneur* OR cooperative*)	n = 8 articles	n = 63 articles	n = 60 articles
<i>Search 2:</i> (artisan* OR craft* OR handicraft*) AND women* AND Africa*	n = 23 articles	n = 23 articles	n = 118 articles

After removing duplicates, 270 records remained for screening. As shown in the Prisma diagram in Table 2, after reading the titles and abstracts of the 270 articles, 187 were excluded for not meeting the initial inclusion criteria. Interestingly the most common reason for exclusion at this stage was due to the wide ranging use of the word “artisan” which several studies used to describe small scale mining and fishing operations in Africa. The remaining 83 articles were read in full to determine if they contributed to the knowledgebase on women and artisan craft employment in Africa. Here the most common reason for exclusion was that the articles were not specific to craft employment and may have only mentioned craft once in the article, unlike those where craft employment was a central component of the study. After full text consideration 18

articles were included in the final review, 15 qualitative and 3 quantitative. The included articles came from seventeen different journals across a broad range of fields including social work, international development, business, psychology, arts and humanities, medicine, archeology, and tourism.



*Figure 3. Prisma Diagram*

The literature revealed three broad categories of artisan employment in the craft sector including individual entrepreneurs, community cooperative businesses, and craft enterprise employers. Individual entrepreneurs are largely characterized as necessity entrepreneurs working informally, selling their goods in their local or tourist market or providing subcontracted

piecework (Mudemba et al., 2020). Community cooperatives are businesses created by women in the community, through government partnerships, or through NGOs which are run democratically and typically have a social or environmental mission (Grigsby et al., 2015; Raniga, 2018). Finally, craft enterprise/social enterprise employers are formally registered private sector companies that produce and market handmade goods (Dhurup & Makhitha, 2014).

Using the matrix method for data identification across the sample of journal articles, key findings were identified and then organized into salient themes of empowerment factors and barriers. Six themes of empowerment emerged from the literature along with several barriers to artisan success. Women artisans in the studies were empowered through income generation and job creation, the validation of their indigenous knowledge, the creation of shared spaces, being part of a community of women, and finding their voices and sense of agency by discovering and utilizing their talents both for themselves and in a way that was valued by others which is leading to both awareness and achievement of greater gender equality in families and communities.

### **Income Generation and Job Creation Theme**

Crafts can serve as tools for women to create economic opportunities (Connor & Bent-Goodley, 2016). Earned income was the top reason for women's participation in the craft sector across the identified studies. On the Tanzanian island of Zanzibar the average annual income is equivalent to \$327 per year with 49% of the population living below the poverty line and 13% below the food poverty line where their caloric intake barely meets their need for survival (Connor & Bent-Goodley, 2016). Here social work scholars Ronya Foy Conner and Tricia Bent-Goodley interviewed 15 female social entrepreneurs in Stone Town and discovered that income generation and community development were the driving forces behind the women's businesses. Social entrepreneurship in craft businesses contributed to income generation, asset accumulation,

and human capital development, with study participants noting that their success at increased earnings was fostering more interest in entrepreneurship among vulnerable populations in their community which the entrepreneurs saw as the key to poverty alleviation in their area.

In a study of 86 female basket weavers in Botswana, Hilda Jaka and Elvin Shava (2018) examined women's livelihood activities for poverty alleviation and economic empowerment in semi-arid regions of Zimbabwe using a purposive sample of 40 women primarily working in subsistence agriculture or crafting pottery. The authors found that diversifying livelihood strategies and opportunities for income, like agricultural workers can do with craft production and sales, helps increase family incomes and build resilience to economic and climate shocks. Income from craft was especially important in years with low crop yields.

The focus on income generation throughout the literature affirms necessity as a driving force for the majority of female informal sector entrepreneurs across Africa. In fact, the adoption of craft skills was found to be negatively correlated with formal employment (Mudemba et al., 2020). As women achieve employment in the formal sector, they increase their earnings and access to modern technologies which led them to either not consider or abandon craft for income generation. Mudemba, Taruvinga, and Zhou (2020) found that craft work provides the most benefit to unemployed and informal women entrepreneurs experiencing poverty by providing a source of cash income, and therefore should be used to combat extreme poverty for women who are unemployed or working informally.

Participatory action research (PAR) was used with a group of 11 South African women receiving state social grants but who still had very limited incomes (Raniga, 2017). The participant researchers self-selected to work with the primary researcher and the project involved starting a craft cooperative. All of the participants were doing individual craftwork to earn

supplemental income prior to joining the cooperative. The researcher used assets based community development (ABCD) and sustainable livelihoods frameworks to identify the individual and community assets and strengths the women could build from and helped them legally register their craft cooperative with the government. After 18 months of participation the research found that participating in the cooperative positively contributed to the women's human capacity development, social support system, and economic self-sufficiency.

In another study, a sample of 10 rural Kenyan women who were members of the 40-year-old Kaimosi Cottage Industry Craft Enterprise shared the benefits and challenges they experienced in producing crafts for the local and global market with all ten citing income generation as their primary motivation for membership (Grigsby et al., 2015). It was noted that this group of women had low levels of formal education but had craft skills that could be leveraged to help support their families. The older members of the group had originally been motivated to join the enterprise pay for their children's primary education, but the younger members did not have this same challenge since Kenya started providing free public education for students in grades 1-8 in 2002. That shift did not make their earned income less vital; instead, it simply enabled their spending on other necessities including food security and family health.

A quantitative study that interviewed 4,430 MSME (micro, small, and medium enterprises) leaders across Ghana, of which 64.8% were female, found that craft was one of the top six sectors for MSMEs in the country, and that 75% of the businesses were informal with 62% of participants classified as necessity entrepreneurs who started a business as a means of economic survival (Asare et al., 2015). The majority of these businesses were self-financed with only 10% able to obtain credit from formal banks in the country. Their incomes helped enable their families' survival but did not necessarily move them out of extreme poverty.

The future of young African women's ability to earn an income was also represented in the literature. Young female fashion entrepreneurs across Africa are capitalizing on the earnings potential they see in the continent's rich textile traditions. These cultural or creative entrepreneurs are designing products for modern African consumers while employing informal sector women to create their designs, providing increased income generation across their value chains (Langevang, 2017). They are also helping revitalize the once booming African apparel industry which has been crippled over the past twenty-five years by imports of donated second-hand apparel from countries in the global north (Langevang, 2017).

In Lesotho, a large portion of a generation of youth have lost their parents to the HIV/AIDS crisis, leaving them poor, vulnerable, and often forced into or left to resort to transactional sex work to survive (Berry et al., 2013). With the second highest HIV infection rate in the world at 23%, just behind Eswatini, creating income generation alternatives for young women in Lesotho was presented as paramount in a study of the Girls Empowerment Programme (GEP) Camp which introduced entrepreneurial training, life skills, women's empowerment, and HIV/AIDS prevention to 40 young women ages 17-22 (Berry et al., 2013). Roughly 25% of the participants planned to start craft businesses upon completion of the program, a second 25% planned to grow or sell produce, and the other 50% were unsure. A year after the program ended 50% of the young women had started and were continuing in small businesses they founded, sometimes together. The study concluded that capacity building training for income-generating activities coupled with women's empowerment programming yielded positive economic results for young women, though they also recognized their purposive sampling approach may have biased the results as participants had been identified by community members as potential leaders. One suggestion for equitable distribution of this knowledge was to introduce income-generation



activities, including teaching craft skills, in schools. This suggestion aligns well with the next theme of valuing and elevating indigenous knowledge.

### **Indigenous Knowledge Theme**

Indigenous knowledge (IK) has been defined as “unique local traditional knowledge specifically developed by a given culture and community long before the inception of colonialism,” (Mudemba et al., 2020, p. 1). Indigenous knowledge empowers women artisans when craft skills as well as local knowledge are valued, expressed, shared, and preserved. A community’s IK serves as vital social capital, especially for poor or marginalized populations, but is often overlooked or undervalued by the global society at large. Indigenous knowledge, developed over years and passed on across generations, is also informed by the ebb and flow of social, political, economic and environmental changes and challenges across generations (Connor & Bent-Goodley, 2016). In Nigeria women making traditional adire dyed textiles credit their parents with passing on IK about the craft through oral tradition, equipping them with a skill to earn their livelihoods (Olu-Owolabi et al., 2020).

The Mogalakwena Craft Art Development Foundation (MCADF) created a story cloth embroidery project to preserve women’s IK as well as to document women’s histories which have largely been ignored and erased in South Africa due to women’s marginalization since colonial times (Van der Merwe, 2014). A story cloth is a narrative, pictorial textile artform presenting a single scenes or sequence using embroidery or appliqué (Van der Merwe, 2014). Throughout history the ability to create historical records has depended on social, political, and economic factors that privilege some people, primarily white males, at the expense of others, in this case black females. Written histories supersede oral histories not just by chance but intentionally. As scholar Adele Perry pointed out in her investigation of black women’s

exclusion from history, this deletion was “borne of and perpetuated by violence and radical inequalities” that consider literacy as civilization and orality as savagery (Van der Merwe, 2014, p. 792). The MCADF uses embroidered story cloths to help illiterate and low-literate women create visual histories of their lives, their stories, and their communities in post-apartheid South Africa.

A study set in the Amathole district of South Africa on the use of IK technology, defined as the application of information and skills unique to a given culture, found that unemployed women were more likely to utilize and earn income from IK based technologies in handicrafts by employing skills passed from generation to generation (Mudemba et al., 2020). The authors of this study suggested programming and policy be aimed at driving awareness and adoption of craft IK technologies for poverty alleviation in rural communities. They highlighted the importance of women’s empowerment programming to build confidence, ownership, and agency around the value of women’s craft skills, both for income generation and heritage preservation. This is also vital in striving for gender equality and achieved by elevating women’s IK in policy and society.

Indigenous knowledge is also being used by women to combat the climate crisis in Africa. In Botswana, baskets are a cultural symbol, a popular tourist souvenir, and a gendered example women’s work, creativity, and natural resource use (DeMotts, 2017). With conservationists working to address the destruction and overutilization the area’s natural resources, women’s local indigenous knowledge was considered intrinsically valuable in sustainable development of the environment and the local economy. While women’s voices and IK have largely been excluded from government resource management and conservation decisions, weaving groups are committed to conservation of natural resources and creating

informal conservation networks to share best practices. The article contends that including women's IK formally would improve national and international environmental efforts in Botswana and beyond.

### **Space Theme**

Space, or having a shared safe space or place to work, find support and engage in conversation, learning and creativity, was an unexpected theme that emerged from the literature. Women in several studies noted their pride in ownership of the spaces in which they met and worked. Many women saw their meeting places as safe spaces both physically and mentally. In Kenya, women had taken out loans to build or improve a workshop and felt great pride and connection to the place where they worked together (Grigsby, 2015). One women commented "we have a special connection to that building, we built it and paid a loan for it" (Grigsby et al., 2015, p. 1151). Similarly, in an ethnographic study of pottery workshops in Limpopo, South Africa, tensions arose among artisans when workshops moved and spaces previously associated with craft learning and community had to be abandoned (Fredriksen & Bandama, 2016).

In addition to a physical space or location, space was described as an opportunity for expression. The women embroidery artisans at MCADF have what author Ria Van der Merwe (2014) calls a rhetorical space where they can make their own stories and voices heard. Africana studies professor Carole Boyce Davies asserts that location dictates the power to speak and be heard and says black women occupy the "boarder spaces" between public and private life struggling to find a rhetorical space between the societal "limits of spoken language" and the "possibility of expression" they both need and deserve (Van der Merwe, 2014, p. 793).

Providing space for collective examination of gender norms as well as sharing information about HIV prevention and treatment proved critical in a South African women's

beading project. The project worked to triangulate the aims of income generation, HIV education, and community building for marginalized women (Leclerc-Madlala, 2014). This study's example of linking services with income opportunities in one place provides an important demonstration of place-based interventions that work to create community through shared safe spaces.

### **Community Theme**

In the same study the South African bead workers expressed that working with other women in the project fulfilled their sense of “Ubuntu”, a Bantu word that means humanness and is based on the idea that “people are people because of other people” (Leclerc-Madlala, 2014, p. 1204). Their social relationships and sense of community were important in building collective agency to combat the HIV crisis in their community and, for many, in their own lives or the lives of their family members. Similarly, the women from Kaimosi felt they were empowered by being part of an all-women's organization that was built on the principles of supporting one another and their families (Grigsby et al., 2015).

Expanding beyond the tight knit communities women build inside their own artisan collectives, cooperatives, or businesses, women stated that it was important to share information and resources with other craft groups and entrepreneurs (Connor & Bent-Goodley, 2016). Increasing collaboration instead of competition yielded mutual benefit in growing an artisan community and contributed to gender equality, community development, increased incomes and sustainability.

### **Voice and Agency Theme**

Craft can be translational history for unheard or silenced voices. Beadwork was used by women artisans in South Africa as a medium to teach others in the community about HIV/AIDS,

with beaded human figures called tableaux used as “mouth openers” or conversation starters about difficult topics (Leclerc-Madlala, 2014). In three articles referencing story cloth creation, the authors all note how giving women a visual voice through embroidery increased the women’s sense of personal agency (Van der Merwe, 2015; Van der Merwe, 2014; Segalo, 2011). These studies emphasize the importance of finding opportunities in which women’s agency becomes evident, where women can communicate, create, and form an understanding of their role in the larger human story, despite a lack of education or income status (Van der Merwe, 2014).

Access to opportunities outside of women’s own communities was also considered empowering. Getting to know foreign visitors and selling in markets outside of their village gave women a sense of being part of a wider world of people and experiences and the agency to explore sales opportunities outside their home district (Grigsby et al., 2015). Women in this study felt empowered to seek wider markets for their products outside of their rural community, traveling to urban areas of Kenya and reaching out to export customers abroad.

### **Gender Equality Theme**

The studies reviewed consistently found that being part of a craft cooperative gave women a sense of greater equality with men as well as more confidence that their goods and their lives had value. Women became aware of the injustice of these inequalities by witnessing their own capacity to make and market products as effectively as did men, to build a building, and to contribute financially to their households (Grigsby et al., 2015). Nigerian adire artisans’ financial contributions to their families survival are shifting traditional gender roles in families, leading authors Olu-Owolabi, Amoo, Samuel, Oyeyemi, and Adejumo (2020) to conclude that the economic empowerment of the women in this textile industry is contributing towards progress in meeting SDG 5, gender equality, for women in Nigeria.

The East Rand story cloth project has enabled the women to think of their possible selves and what they want to be, with several stating that the project helped them “unleash their talents”, utilize their skills to earn money to support their families, and offered them a sense of freedom (Segalo, 2011). The group emphasized the importance of not being dependent on their husbands for income and that some have even seen shifts in power in their households once their husband’s experience the benefit of the income their wives are contributing to the family through craft work. As one of the women named Sellwane pointed out, “my life has changed a lot...also I am free, I feel like I have a lot of money” (Segalo, 2011, p. 232).

### **Barriers to Artisan Success**

Several barriers to African women’s success as artisan entrepreneurs were identified throughout the literature. In a cross-sectoral study on MSMEs in Ghana, of which craft was one of the six sectors examined, barriers to entrepreneurial success included lack of capital, education and training, raw materials and equipment, and access to markets, as well as poor roads and transportation, unstable electric supply, insecure land tenure, and issues related to climate change (Asare et al., 2015). Craft businesses in this study also had difficulty in meeting international quality standards resulting from lack of capacity and lack of access to technology.

These themes were found across multiple studies and are summarized in Table 3 below.

*Table 3 Barriers to Artisan Success*

Informality	Access to capital or credit	Access to training	Access to markets	Power	Policy
De-legitimized contribution, causes lack of access to resources	Gender & sector discrimination	Education, skills, marketing, business	Often reliant on others to reach markets	Gender, literacy/class, colonialism, neo-liberalism	Gender, property rights, business regulation & sector support
Structural: Gender discrimination, lack of political representation & climate change					

Necessity entrepreneurs working informally often do several different types of work to make up their annual income. In Botswana researchers found that women's informal livelihood strategies shifted between farming and craft production, but that due to the timing of crop production craft work was often done at times that did not align with tourist demand which left women producing without earning (DeMotts, 2017). Even in places where informal craft sales happened year round, benefiting from local markets was a challenge due to the competition and repetition of products in the marketplace (Halkias et al., 2011). Further, government institutions who set the "rules of the game" continue to marginalize women in poverty through regulatory systems that restrict or create barriers for women seeking formal business ownership and registration (Langevang et al., 2015).

Access to funding was an enormous barrier for women starting or growing craft businesses. Donor funded artisan ventures faced sustainability challenges if donor funds decreased or were withdrawn before the venture had grown their sales enough to support the business (Connor & Bent-Goodley, 2016). Most tragically, the women felt a sense of hopelessness when donors and volunteers abandoned the projects they had encouraged the women to start (Grigsby et al., 2015). Further, even when women started their own businesses most artisan entrepreneurs are necessity or survivalist entrepreneurs and either have not access to finance at all or cannot wait long time periods for payment which excludes them from most export market opportunities because bridge financing is virtually nonexistent in the sector (Malema & Naidoo, 2017). Market access was further hindered by artisan's insufficient access to capital, lack of experience and lack of buyer connections (Van der Merwe, 2015).

A lack of access to training or information also hinders women artisans. Throughout the literature low literacy and educational achievement levels were noted for many of the women

artisans studied. For example one study noted that 88% of women entrepreneurs in Uganda were found to have low levels of formal education and 63% of female necessity entrepreneurs studied in Nigeria had no formal education (Chauke, 2015). Women in Kenya noted that they felt they lacked knowledge of consumer preferences outside their own country, while markets in the country were highly competitive and getting more so with the influx of mass manufactured Chinese goods now being imported (Grigsby et al., 2015).

A final common barrier was inequality in policy. The SLR demonstrated the need for policy change that amplifies women's voices and provides a legal framework to empower women's agency in their families and workplaces. It has been argued that increasing women's entrepreneurship will improve gender equality, however gender equality depends on structural preconditions adopted culturally and through policy (Tillmar, 2016). In Tanzania in-depth interviews were conducted with 12 female entrepreneurs, 3 of whom specialized in craft, in the capital city of Dar-es-Salaam to assess women's access to commercial justice, which was defined as "the ability to safeguard one's rights in terms of property as well as the rights to fair and equal treatment in business" (Tillmar, 2016, p. 103). The study found that gendered family practices, gender-biased judicial systems (particularly customary law), gender discrimination in the marketplace, and requirements for "transactional sex" were barriers Tanzanian female informal entrepreneurs faced that need to be addressed through both policy and legal enforcement. The impunity of gender discriminatory customary law prevailing over common law that grants women's legal equality but doesn't enforce those rights needs to end. A country's lack of gender equality policies or the lack of enforcement of those policies is seen as barriers to women's economic empowerment and economic justice.



## **Discussion**

In summary, the studies in this SLR maintained that artisan work helps women support their families and become more resilient to life-cycle and climate shocks. Artisan employment was found to be empowering in many ways including in generating vital income, creating a sense of community, valuing women's voices, improving women's personal and collective agency, combatting gender inequality, and providing a safe space for women both physically and mentally. Employment in the craft sector was shown to pose potential for both economic empowerment as well as personal and community empowerment for women.

Still, women's economic empowerment efforts of all kinds intersect with power dynamics of the market and risk the perpetuation of historical colonialism. The widespread success of economic and gender equality for women in Africa will require individuals, communities, NGOs, companies, support organizations, and countries to tackle the entrenched barriers of women's informality, women's lack of access to finance and credit, education and training, and markets, as well as structural power dynamics and oppressive outdated policies. Further, the legal impunity of gender equality and women's human rights must also be addressed, and craft cooperatives and enterprises can help bring collective voice to these issues at the organizational level to influence change at the institutional level.

The research on women's craft employment for economic and gender justices is sparse and dispersed across many disciplines. Throughout this SLR the quality of the studies varied, and while this could be due in part to the variety of disciplines, there are many gaps in understanding the value of craft employment for income generation and for women's empowerment. The lack of theoretical grounding in many of the studies reveals gap in the application of theory to the problem. Where theory was presented the diversity of theories applied shows a possible need for

a theory or conceptual framework for understanding artisan work for women's economic and social empowerment in the future. More research is needed on the social and environmental impacts of craft work and artisan ventures to understand what works to help scale these positive impacts. We also need to learn from the lived experiences of women artisans and including what motivates them to participate in craft work, the impact of that work on their lives and livelihoods, and the meaning they derive from being an artisan and creating craft.

### **Conclusion**

Social workers globally have been called to respond to complex issues of women's empowerment and gender justice while navigating changing funding streams and environmental challenges (Connor & Bent-Goodley, 2016). Meeting this task requires social innovation to support and promote women's entrepreneurship for poverty alleviation. Promoting and supporting artisan entrepreneurship and cooperatives in the craft sector is a means of stabilizing women's livelihoods, creating communities of support, strengthening women's voice and agency, combating gender inequality, preserving indigenous knowledge, and moving women out of extreme poverty where the most basic levels of food security, health, and safety are tenuous. With greater understanding of the impact of artisan employment and social enterprises on marginalized communities, as well as the barriers artisans face, social workers can effect change for women artisan in Africa and around the world.

## CHAPTER THREE

### ARTICLE 2 - CRAFTING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE: A ZAMBIAN ARTISAN ENTERPRISE INSTRUMENTAL CASE STUDY<sup>1</sup>

#### **Introduction**

In the Northeastern Province of Zambia, along one of the area's only paved roads, the rural village of Mfuwe sits at the entrance to South Luangwa National Park. Safari tourism fuels the local economy, which is otherwise largely dependent on subsistence farming and informal trading. Artisan craft provides the second largest formal industry in Mfuwe, led by the long-standing craft company Tribal Textiles. An artisan social enterprise now in its 31<sup>st</sup> year of operation, Tribal Textiles employs 87 local artisans formally and has also established a local and global market for 50 artisans necessity entrepreneurs paid by piece rate.

While the dominant businesses in Mfuwe laid off their employees in light of the loss of tourism during the COVID-19 pandemic, Tribal Textiles leaned into their core values to not only remain in operation but increase their support of the community. This study examines how this established women-owned, artisan social enterprise found itself in a critical role in building and maintaining community resilience. Historically, community resiliency studies have focused primarily on the role of public actors in the wake of a crisis. Yet, immediate response typically comes first from the impacted community. Thus, we use the case of Tribal Textiles to deeply examine when and how social enterprises contribute to community resilience. Further, we explore the unique attributes that the enterprises' craft work contributes to this resiliency. Finally, we look at the implications of organizational support during crisis on Zambian women.

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<sup>1</sup> Stacey Edgar and Elizabeth Embry

Tribal Textiles produces hand-painted African textiles and crafts for local tourist market and global export. The company was established in 1991, through a female entrepreneur's vision to use the specialized local textiles to improve the lives of the artisans and their families. The organization changed ownership to a team of three female leaders and has expanded its product offerings to include handcrafted home décor made from recycled glass, wood, and natural grasses. The company aims to provide sustainable employment in the local community and support wildlife conservation efforts.

Over 60% of Zambians live in poverty (Gashongore, 2019) and in rural areas of Zambia like Mfuwe the poverty rate rises to 78%, with women and adolescent girls particularly vulnerable due to entrenched gender inequality (*Empowering Rural Women in Zambia to Move out of Poverty*, n.d.). Tribal Textiles estimates that their average employee supports ten family members through their wages, highlighting that the ripple effect of artisan sector earnings have an enormous impact on families and communities (Mastracci & Edgar, 2020). Tribal Textiles holds a primary objective to provide employment for women, which is challenging in a community where patriarchal norms provide women few formal opportunities, though many work informally as necessity entrepreneurs. Currently one third of Tribal Textile's artisan workforce is female.

### **Artisan Livelihoods**

An estimated three-hundred million people globally, primarily women and rural communities, depend on artisan craft work for their livelihoods (Alexander et al., 2020, van Bergen, 2019). Broadly defined, artisan craft is the creation of unique and useful goods, handmade using heritage skills and embodying artisans' personalities and cultures (Garavaglia & Mussini, 2020; Abisuga-Oyekunle & Fillis, 2017). While craft employment in Africa is thought

to be largely informal and therefore insecure, artisan social enterprises help move necessity entrepreneurs into formal employment providing increased market access, reliable wages, and social support programs (Mastracci & Edgar, 2020). Social entrepreneurs and their organizations create value for and with vulnerable populations, and while their activities involve creating economic means, these organizations prioritize nonfinancial outcomes including social and environmental impacts (Ruskin et al., 2016; Austin et al., 2006; Dees, 1998). Thus, artisan social enterprises serve as a bridge connecting communities, craft, economics, and impact, creating a radically different paradigm than traditional market logic in defining how value is generated (Khaire, 2019).

Crafts hold message and meaning beyond their tangible form for both makers and consumers (Sedmak, 2017). Where markets commodify goods and value uniformity and efficiency, cultural craft products acquire value through sense-making and story, transforming materiality into intangible symbolic worth (Khaire, 2019). Because of this phenomenon, craft has the potential to provide meaningful work (Bell et al., 2018; Pratt et al., 2013) as well as meaning to purchasers (Garavaglia & Mussini, 2020), while treading lightly on the planet through sustainable production methods (Weber et al., 2008). Artisan craft can be a force of change for communities (Al-Dajani & Marlow, 2013), with many women-led artisan businesses contributing significantly to the social and economic performance of their communities and provide work for tens, hundreds, and in some cases, thousands of people (Edgar, 2011).

Although artisan craft work has been largely overlooked and undervalued in comparison to fine or contemporary art, and often considered an “outdated model of manufacturing” (Jakob & Thomas, 2017, p. 495), in reality, craft work empowers vulnerable communities through critical income and social support (Thondhlana et al., 2020). Around the world, women have

relied on craft work as a means of economic empowerment, creative expression, tactile storytelling, cultural preservation, social gathering, and community mobilization (Ewah, 2019). Yet, the past two decades of increased mass production of cheaper, factory made goods have overwhelmingly replaced items made by skilled artisans (Ditty, 2019). Fortunately, recent increases in consumer demands for transparency from companies is slowly starting to reverse this trend. Through all of this, the craft economy has largely been ignored in the management literature. Therefore, this instrumental case study strives to help make visible the strength of women-led artisan social enterprises and the unique role they play in their communities.

## **COVID-19**

The COVID-19 pandemic proved to be catastrophic for many artisan businesses, resulting in not only economic loss, but also significant weakening in the social safety-net these ventures provide. The height of the crisis in Zambia brought both housing and food insecurity with limited social support from the government, especially for women (Mathew et al., 2020; Renzaho, 2020). However, Tribal Textiles was able to leverage its core values and foundation to remain in operation and provide community support, helping to fill in the gaps in social support and food security where the government failed. Thus, this unique, positive deviance case study presents a prime opportunity to explore when and how entrepreneurial ventures, specifically artisan social ventures, contribute to community resilience. Through a lens of capabilities theory (Teece, 2017; Sen, 1999) applied to the nine core elements of community resilience established in the systematic review by Patel et. al. (2017), we examine the unique aspects of a craft social enterprise that strengthen not only the organization, but also a community when faced with a time of crisis.

Specifically, this study explores the unique attributes of the social enterprise that establish and maintain community resilience. The need to understand resilience in and through organizations has recently been brought to light in the literature (Raetzke et al., 2021). Defined as the ability to maintain, cope and withstand adverse circumstances (Munoz et al., 2022), resiliency is essential to consider in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, and the interconnected grand challenges of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). While most research in this area has centered on the role of governments and public actors (Mair & Marti, 2009), the focus on institutions has obscured the localized solutions made manifest by social enterprises in communities facing institutional voids. Social enterprises act creatively and resourcefully to fill market-based gaps in the provision of social good to their communities (Ruskin et al., 2016). Further, the overall effects of the pandemic on communities and their ability to respond with resilience has not yet been sufficiently addressed (Munoz et al., 2022). Thus, we extend the literature by exploring how the unique processes and practices of artisan social enterprises create resilience for communities.

To do so, we sought to address three research questions: 1) When and how does a social enterprise contribute to building community resilience? Specifically, what core elements of community resilience are established and reinforced by the social venture? 2) How do the unique attributes of craft and creativity contribute to resiliency? 3) How do organizations build and reinforce the capabilities of women to be resilient in a crisis?

## **Theoretical Perspective**

### **Resilience Theory**

Resilience is a strengths-based attribute available or able to be developed within individuals, organizations or communities (Brodsky & Cattaneo, 2013). Resilience is also

described as the process that enables individuals or organizations to establish and maintain “positive adjustments or adaptability” (Sutcliffe & Vogus, 2003, p. 99) when faced with challenging circumstances. Originally conceived in the field of psychology (Kantabutra et al., 2021), resiliency became a cross-disciplinary concept in fields including social work (Fraser et al., 1999), environmental science (Nelson et al., 2007), development economics (Manyena, 2006), and gaining awareness in management and organizational studies (Raetz et al., 2021).

Resiliency theory is rooted in Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model which asserts that individual well-being is influenced by social context and relationships with family, neighbors and institutions (Boon et al., 2012; Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Overtime, resilience science has developed to provide a broader understanding of how individuals, organizations, and communities can become more resilient to crisis or change. While there are variations in the definition of resilience, it is consistently viewed as a positive attribute associated with increased capacity, social support, and resources, which improves communications, minimizes risks, and decreases trauma.

### ***Community Resilience***

Community resilience recognizes, respects, and promotes localized capacity to respond to disaster by utilizing available resources (Boon et al., 2012) and having an established process for retaining resources in a form “sufficiently flexible, storable, convertible, and malleable” (Sutcliffe & Vogus, 2003, p. 98) to address the impact of a disaster. It is important to note that these resources are not only material needs, but also in the form of cognitive, relational, emotional, and structural support (Williams & Shepherd, 2016). The United Nations defines disaster as a “serious disruption affecting a community or population, causing deaths, injuries, or damage to property, livelihoods, or the environment, that exceeds the ability of the affected



community to cope using its own resources” (Boon et al., 2012, p. 383). In addition to disasters, communities are also negatively impacted by economic disruption, political and civil instability, and communicable disease spread. For a community to build collective resilience prior to or in response during a disaster, they must reduce risk and resource inequities, engage community members in mitigation, create organizational linkages, preserve and expand social supports, and show flexibility in the face of unknowns (Norris et al., 2008).

Given the cross-disciplinary nature of community resilience, Patel and colleagues undertook an extensive systematic literature review across fourteen disciplines, to find consensus in how community resilience is defined and operationalized (Patel et al, 2017). Through their study, they identified nine elements of community resilience: local knowledge, community networks and relationships, communication, health, governance and leadership, resources, economic investment, preparedness, and mental outlook. Additionally, the authors found 19 sub-elements detailed in Table 4. In our instrumental case study of Tribal Textiles the nine elements of community resilience and corresponding sub-elements provide the deductive methodological framework and theoretical guide for understanding the role of social enterprises in building resilience, particularly for artisan enterprises in Africa.

*Table 4* Nine Elements of Community Resilience

<b>Element</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>Local Knowledge</b>	Local Knowledge in community resilience means that disaster could be mitigated if the community understands its existing vulnerabilities.
<i>Collective Efficacy and Empowerment</i>	A community's shared belief of its ability to overcome potential hardships from disasters. What the community knows about its own process to endure and respond to disaster.
<i>Training and Education</i>	A community's practices in community education about disasters, early warnings, public communication, using media, communicating with vulnerable populations. Capacity building trainings to build community knowledge.

<i>Factual Knowledge Base</i>	Factual knowledge base of the community means the information, education, and experience the community has about managing a disaster including specific learnings, preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery.
<b>Community Networks and Relationships</b>	Communities can respond positively in a disaster when they are connected and cohesive. A community's social network is defined by the linkages in the community between members based on social relationships. The cohesion of these relationships is based on the strong or weak social ties within these networks.
<i>Cohesive</i>	The community's cohesion is based on the strengths of their relationships, whether strong or weak ties.
<i>Connected</i>	Social network of community members based on social relationships.
<b>Communication</b>	How the community communicates around issues of disaster for community resilience including using effective communication, risk communication, and crisis communication.
<i>Crisis Communication</i>	Crisis communication should provide the community with up to date information about the on-going disaster or relief efforts.
<i>Risk Communication</i>	Risk communication provides accurate information about possible threats.
<i>Effective Communication</i>	Effective communication for community resilience uses common meanings, understandings, opportunities for community members to share their views and needs, and opportunity for open dialogue.
<b>Health</b>	The pre-existing health of the community and the health services after a disaster are important to community resilience. Understanding and addressing health vulnerabilities.
<i>Mental Health</i>	Addressing trauma of the event, and secondary trauma from PTSD, depression, anxiety. Public health campaigns to bolster mental health.
<i>Physical Health</i>	Treating people's physical health quickly and with a high quality of care.
<i>Health Services</i>	Delivery of health services
<b>Governance and Leadership</b>	Governance and leadership shape how communities handle crisis.
<i>Public Involvement and Support</i>	Local participation and representation in strategic planning, response, and recovery
<i>Infrastructure and Services</i>	Infrastructure to have processes in place to handle incoming information about a disaster, send instructions, and implement a response.
<b>Resources</b>	Resources available to the community including natural, physical, human, financial, and social resources. Fairness of resource allocation (distributive justice).
<i>Financial, Social, Physical, Human, Natural</i>	Financial – money and capital Social – connections, networks, relationships, norms

	Physical – physical assets Human – people Natural – natural resources
<b>Economic Investment</b>	Investing in the disaster recovery including distribution of financial resources, economic programming, and economic development. Proactive investments to rebuild the economy.
<i>Economic Development</i>	Efforts to create economic opportunities, according to the review article this is particularly focused on the post-disaster infrastructure and increasing the diversity of economic resources. This can be achieved through proactive investments to rebuild the economy. Assessing a community's current economy and developing its ability to sustain economic growth were also noted as important areas of concentration after a disaster.
<i>Economic Programming</i>	Programming aimed at fostering economic development. The review article also defined this as ensuring that interventions are cost-effective.
<i>Distribution of Financial Resources</i>	Ways financial resources were equitably distributed (focused on distributive justice).
<b>Preparedness</b>	Community resilience also depends on the preparedness of individuals, families, organizations, and governments. Disaster planning, risk assessment, and mitigation measures.
<b>Mental Outlook</b>	Attitudes, feelings and views when facing uncertainty. Different than mental health, which is personal well-being, mental outlook is attitudes towards uncertainty.
<i>Adaptability</i>	The ability and willingness to change.
<i>Hope</i>	The expectation that things will improve.

It is important to note that while these elements of a resilient community are beneficial in the wake of a disaster, they also establish a foundation for a positive, healthy, and productive community in normal circumstances. Further, fostering increased community resilience is an important mechanism for specifically supporting marginalized and underserved communities before and in response to a crisis (Brodsky & Cattaneo, 2013). Thus, the process of understanding and developing a resilient community is beneficial regardless of if, when, and what type of disaster may occur (Lerch, 2017). As the importance of community resilience is

becoming increasingly understood, the responsibility of creating resilience has largely fallen to government and public service agencies. While they are essential actors for many of the core element such as governance and leadership, they are not the only actors who can and should be directly working to create community resilience. There is a need for research on community resilience to also examine the roles and contributions of other organizations like social enterprises.

### ***Organizational Resilience***

As business environments are challenged by threats from crisis and disasters, there is a demand for organizations to be more resilient (Kantur & Iseri-Say, 2012). In the field of organizational studies the application of resilience has been found in a variety of areas including crisis and disaster management, sustainable organizations, and the corporate sustainability literature (Kantabutra et al., 2021). Resilience first appeared in the management literature when Staw et al. (1981) introduced theory on ‘threat-rigidity effects’ based on the tendencies of organizations facing adversity to emphasize well-learned dominant responses rather than respond flexibly and adaptively. In an organizational setting, resilience is said to help its members maintain a positive mental outlook, instilling hope and resolve during challenging times. Resilience suggests strength, tenacity, and the perception that abrupt situations can be managed and overcome, which helps people endure negative periods and rebound with optimism (Kantabutra et al., 2021).

Social enterprises in Africa face contextual challenges including: natural and environmental challenges (Linnenlueke et al., 2012), market failures and “institutional voids” (Parmigiani & Rivera-Santos, 2015), institutional inefficiencies and pluralism (Zoogah et al., 2015), and difficulties in developing and maintaining viable social business models (Littlewood

& Holt, 2018). According to Kantabutra et al. (2021, p.7), “mounting empirical evidence suggests that organizational resilience is related to being long-term oriented, investing in organizational members, nurturing a cohesive organizational culture, exhibiting ethical behavior, being responsible for the society, and championing innovation.” African social enterprises like Tribal Textiles sit at the intersection of organization resilience and community resilience. Using nine elements of community resilience as defined by Patel et al. (2017), this instrumental case study serves as a guide for delineating which elements of community resilience organizations employ when working with historically marginalized populations, and how they use these elements as means towards community resilience.

### ***Capabilities Approach***

Resilience is linked to capabilities, both individual and organizational. During and after a crisis resilience depends upon adaptive capacities for economic development, creating and preserving social capital, information and communication, and community competence (Norris et al., 2008). Therefore, there is a natural link to capabilities theory to understand the underlying mechanisms for these capacities and their instrumental role in community resilience.

At the individual level, the capabilities approach is a theory of development that emphasizes the importance of not only income and wealth accumulation but also personal agency, cultural norms, freedoms, and social justice in establishing personal and societal well-being (Deneulin & Clausen, 2019). Introduced in 1980 by economist Amartya Sen, the capabilities approach asserts that well-being is grounded in an individual’s capabilities to achieve the kind of life they have reason to value (Sen, 1999). Capabilities are defined as a person’s real freedoms or opportunities to achieve their functionings (Nussbaum, 2003). Capabilities have been explained as the opportunities open to a person, whether they take those opportunities or

not, allow people the agency to make those choices. Through the capabilities approach, situations such as poverty, lack of rights, underdevelopment, and racial or gender discrimination are capabilities deprivations (Deneulin & Clausen, 2019).

### ***Organizational Capabilities/ Dynamic Capabilities***

All organizations are comprised of individuals who bring their capabilities, human capital, knowledge, skills, ability, health, freedoms, as well as their barriers to the organization. Further, communities are comprised of organizations, and it is impossible to separate the health and dynamism of economies from the organizations that operate there (Teece, 2017). Accordingly, an understanding of how organizations operate and effectuate, helps us identify how the organization performs and how it impacts public policy and economic development in the community where it is based.

Organizational capabilities go beyond what the organization creates and produces, encapsulating how the organization learns, synthesizes, and orchestrates functionality that others in the market cannot easily replicate (Teece, 2017). These distinct non-market traits of an organization enable it to innovate and create unique value. Capabilities result from the individuals in the organization actively engaging in learning and integrating both tangible and intangible resources, and the leadership's orchestration of that process.

Further, dynamic capabilities are higher-level capabilities which are more strategic for the organizations positioning and agility (Teece et al., 1997). Dynamic capabilities are “the firm's ability to integrate, build, and reconfigure internal and external competences to address rapidly changing environment” (Teece et al. 1997, p.516). Strong dynamic capabilities help enable an organization to build, renew, and reconfigure resources as needed to innovate in response to crisis (Pisano & Teece, 2007).

An organization's capabilities and dynamic capabilities depend largely on the leadership team, who are responsible to detecting and exploring opportunities. But the organization's values, culture, and collective ability to change are also integral. It has been widely viewed that while capabilities can be "bought", dynamic capabilities have to be "built" over time through learning and integration (Teece, 2017). While much of the empirical analysis around the role of dynamic capabilities in establishing organizational agility has centered on competitive advantage in an industry, we extend this theory to also encapsulate how capabilities and dynamic capabilities play an integral role in organizational agility enabling resilience and aiding in community resilience.

### **Methods**

To address the research questions, we began by coding first-order themes utilizing the nine core elements of community resilience established by Patel et al. (2017). During this phase of the coding, the nine elements of community resilience along with the unique element of craft/creativity and impact on Zambia women, bounded the analysis. Additionally, we coded individual and organizational level capabilities associated with each element of resilience identified to test theory. First cycle coding is descriptive and helps categorize and inventory data (Saldana, 2022). Next to provide the specificity we assigned second-order deductive sub-themes aligned with the nineteen sub-elements of community resilience. The sub-themes were coded under the first-order themes to delineate pertinent information within each of the core elements. Notably, in deductive coding the second cycle provides a higher level of abstraction and may also be useful to explore interesting emergent themes and variation within and between themes (Skjott Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019).

All of the primary interview data were managed utilizing computer-based, qualitative analysis software MAXQDA. In addition, we maintained careful records of all documents and interview notes. All the interviews were transcribed verbatim by the first author. As data were collected, we engaged in constant comparison (Siggelkow, 2007) between prior data collected and new observations to ensure accuracy across informants given the retrospective nature of the interviews. We then followed established procedures for deductive qualitative research, creating a delimited coding frame based on prior literature. Deductive approaches provide structure and ensure theoretical relevance, while still allowing for inductive exploration of emergent codes in later coding cycles (Skjott Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019).

This study emerged from a seven-year relationship between the first author and the leadership of Tribal Textiles in her previous career roles as a craft buyer and then international market consultant for women-led craft artisan enterprises. While transitioning from industry to academia, she retained close relationships and kept a pulse on trends in the handmade creative sector. As the pandemic wreaked havoc for many enterprises, she became aware of what was uniquely happening at and through Tribal Textiles and approached them with the request of following their story as the phenomenon unfolded.

Given this positive deviance, an instrumental case study approach was appropriate as we were interested in exploring when and how artisan social enterprises contribute to establishing community resilience. Instrumental case studies are the preferred methodology for understanding these types of research questions as they facilitate understanding a particular phenomenon upon which to draw generalizations or build theory (Yin, 2003). Community resilience is a complex phenomenon, and the craft artisan sector is understudied, therefore we wanted to capture a detailed understanding of how the venture's response to crisis unfolded.



## **Participant Sample**

In-depth interviews were conducted in person and via Zoom with a purposive sample of four members of Tribal Textiles including the managing director (who is also one of three female co-owners), sales director, and two artisans. The managing director was interviewed twice, first in September 2020 at the Tribal Textiles workshop in Mfuwe, Zambia and the second interview was conducted on Zoom in August 2021. The interview that took place in September 2020 was completed by a local Zambia based research assistant trained by the first author as part of a larger study mapping the craft value chain in Zambia. Having two interviews with the managing director a year apart allowed for deeper exploration of her dynamic decision making in the ongoing pandemic. Interviews with the other three participants were conducted in September 2021 via Zoom, after the initial surge of the pandemic had moved through Zambia. Though all of the participants spoke English, for interviews with those whom English was a second language, a Zambian interpreter from Tribal Textiles helped to interpret any phrases or concepts that needed clarification. The interpreter was not one of the four interviewees but an English speaking staff member at Tribal Textiles with dual language fluency.

The interview participants were chosen through purposive sampling which is a strategically purposeful sampling technique appropriate for qualitative inquiry where a small sample of qualified participants can provide information rich responses for an in-depth study (Patton, 2015). It is considered a sound, ethical, and appropriate sampling method for qualitative research. While Tribal Textiles has 87 employees, the four purposive sample interviews provide key insights from employees representing perspectives from the vantage points of ownership, management, female, and male artisan employees. As with all studies, there needs to be clear information presented when consenting participants to take part in the study. Cross-cultural and

cross-border studies require that researchers take local languages, values, and customs into consideration, using extra caution in clearly explaining the research purpose, process, and use when gaining informed consent of the research participants (Raetze et al., 2021), which the first author followed throughout all data collection.

This research was outlined and approved by the first author's IRB process for human subjects research at their institution, specifically with adult volunteers from economically or educationally disadvantaged backgrounds. All protocols for consenting participants, both verbally and with a signed consent form, and securely storing interview audio, notes, and transcripts was followed according to the approved IRB plan.. While all participants spoke English, particular care was taken in providing a translator to be sure all questions and answers with the artisan participants were accurate.

### **Data Collection**

As case study methodology requires multiple sources of data to build a rich and reliable case (Creswell & Poth, 2016), we were able to build on site visits and conversations (in person and via email) prior to the pandemic for foundational knowledge of the organization. Then we utilized in-depth interviews to understand the phenomenon as it unfolded. Further, we utilized secondary data from media coverage of the pandemic and the venture's strong virtual presence to serve as a check on the informants' reports.

### **Data Sources**

We collected data from three sources: (1) interviews with leadership team members and artisans from Tribal Textiles, (2) field notes from site visits to Tribal Textiles before the pandemic, (3) secondary sources such as websites, social media, and documents. The interviews were semi-structured and open ended, focused on changes and decisions that occurred personally

and in the organization as a result of the pandemic. Emails were exchanged following the interviews to confirm and clarify information, as well as provide updates on any further changes that occurred.

As our data collection relied on retrospective information from the interviewees, we are aware that there are limitations in this approach. Intentional steps were used to ensure accuracy (Miller et al., 1997). First, all interviews were open-ended enabling the interviewee to only share information that they remember clearly and allowing them to return back to an answer later to clarify or add to their initial response. At the end of each interview, the interviewees were invited to share any additional information that they felt was pertinent to the study. Second, information was verified by asking the same questions across all interviews well through member checking with interviewees and as sending follow up emails to confirm and clarify. Finally, interviews were triangulated with data collected in a prior site visit and in secondary data collection as described below.

Field observations from the first author's 2018 visit to Tribal Textiles in Mfuwe, Zambia provided context and understanding of the organization's structure, production processes, business practices, and values prior to facing the COVID-19 crisis. The site visits, while not originally intended for this research, provided a background and baseline to understand the organization prior to the pandemic.

Additionally, online sources and document review were used to compile a rich case, strengthening the study's construct validity through multiple sources of evidence (Yin, 2018). These secondary data sources included Tribal Textile's website (*Tribal Textiles*, n.d.) which includes core business practices and also a blog where stories of the business, the artisans, the

products, and the community. The Prospero Zambia website (*Prospero Zambia*, n.d.) also served as a secondary source, as did two industry reports from the Prospero site.

None of these sources were coded for the nine elements of resilience, instead acting as evidence to understand, explain, or corroborate the coded data that emerged from the primary interview data. Data checking with secondary sources provides rigor in deductive analysis (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006).

### **Data Analysis**

All coding was conducted by the first author, as she had hosted the interviews and had the pre-existing relationships with which to identify and code for both verbal as well as non-verbal signals. Both of the authors met regularly to discuss the codebook, code definitions, and corresponding themes from the data, but the second author did not engage in the coding itself. The second author, helped ensure the trustworthiness of our findings based on the evidence presented testing the codebook and code logic (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Trustworthiness was further achieved through member checking the coded data with the interview participants.

From this coding, we compiled and created an account of the events that took place as they presented each of the core elements. Additional member checking was done to assure accuracy and trustworthiness. We then examined the relationships amongst our codes and connecting the resiliency and capabilities literatures. Moving between our narrative account, the data, and theory on resiliency and capabilities, we were able to observe patterns related to individual and organizational decisions and actions that enabled the establishment of resiliency. This is translated through thematic analysis into the community resilience themes outlined.

## **The Emergence of Community Resilience**

Through qualitative analysis, four core elements of community resilience emerged from the data as the primary elements Tribal Textiles used to mobilize and create resilience in their community in response to the COVID-19 crisis. These elements included resources, mental outlook, community networks and relationships, and economic investment. In combination, these elements were vital to sustaining the business and the livelihoods of artisans and their families. These four elements also were aligned more frequently with organizational capabilities over individual capabilities. By and large, these elements of community resilience were linked to the company's ability to apply the concept of organizational bricolage, which can be broadly defined as an organization's ability to "make do" by combining their resources at hand to apply them to new opportunities or challenges (Bacq et al., 2015; Mair & Marti, 2009).

Tribal Textiles touched all nine of Patel et al.'s (2017) elements of community resilience in some manor, however the remaining five - local knowledge, leadership and governance, communication, health, and preparedness - were secondary and found in the data to be more closely aligned with the actions or inactions of public actors or individuals.

### **Resources**

The most prevalent element of community resilience Tribal Textiles employed was resources. Resources encompass the social, financial, physical, human, and natural resources available in a community during a crisis, as well as the use of distributive justice in resource allocation (Patel et al., 2017). According to our data, financial resources were the most important resource for sustaining lives and livelihoods at Tribal Textiles during the pandemic. Tribal Textile's managing director noted that the organization's first response was to provide financial resources to assure their 87 employees could meet their families' basic needs stating, "it was

about feeding people.” She further explained that when COVID-19 forced business closures and social distancing Tribal Textiles originally kept a core sewing team of 20 people working full time, while providing monthly stipends for an additional 67 employees:

*I had a lot of the company at home on a stipend, just a living stipend. I had my sewing team working and they were being paid full wage. So they were on full salary, including benefits, and the rest of the company was on this 500 Kwacha a month stipend. We did that for quite some time.*

The artisans interviewed placed great significance on both the monthly stipend Tribal Textiles paid them during lockdown and on income generated from the work the organization was able to provide once they were able to restart production.

*This pandemic which is called COVID-19 has been suffered for us for a long time because we have not worked thoroughly. For example, last year, we didn't work almost for five months there just because of this COVID-19. But the company [Tribal Textiles] they pay us 500 kwacha [a month]. But for this year, at least they have started having the work so it's nice. Rather than sitting at home like it was last year. If we are working, the company gives us a money. Then we will have money to go and buy. We are able to go buy some food from the shops. There are more many people depending on us here when we are working rather than staying at home.*

Work also continued for the 50 piece work artisans making fiber crafts for Tribal Textiles but who do not work on formal contracts. The company was able to keep orders flowing to these artisans even though they were not regular salaried employees. These informal piece work artisans were still positively impacted by Tribal Textiles:

*With that we have been helped cause it's [Tribal Textiles] giving us a small orders through the internet. At the moment I have 50 people working full time. We are so many people and we are also very much busy.*

Tribal Textiles sales director, added that since pandemic restrictions eased, after approximately five months, and people could come back to work, the company has been able to keep people working while most of the dominate tourism businesses in the area either let people go or dramatically decreased wages:

*They [the artisans] have been kind of fully employed nearly all the time at their full wage, which is pretty unheard of in South Luangwa, because most lodges have either not employed or kept people employed, but at 25 or 50% of their wages, which we haven't had to do.*

In addition to providing financial resources, Tribal Textiles was also able to tap into social and human resources to remain sustainable. Through their social resources the company was able to secure a grant from Prospero Zambia, a business support organization funded by UK Aid, for approximately 25,000 USD to cover salaries. The managing director helped mobilize social resources to bring 87 workers back full time.

*And then we got the Prospero grant for which had a productivity element, so we brought everyone back at that point. So we had, 87 people working, it [the Prospero grant] covered three months for everyone on full salary across the board.*

They also received a small grant from the German government. As part of a global initiative to produce masks for local communities, Nest, which is a NY based non-profit artisan support organization, provided funding for Tribal Textiles to create masks for local community distribution in Mfuwe.

Outside of COVID-19 relief grants, Tribal Textiles called on their global social resources and network connections to garner increased export orders to both wholesale partners and individual customers via their website. They received a large décor order from the US brand Home Goods and orders for masks grew as consumer demand for cloth masks rose globally.

*There was a global chain of solidarity and people placing mask orders that kept us busy. I mean, in three months-time we did what we normally do in a year of online shop sales.*

This speaks to the importance of using internet technologies in craft-based ventures to access world markets (Sasaki et al., 2021) when there is a loss of local consumers as seen when tourism dropped during the pandemic.

To conserve the organization's financial resources, the company made adjustments to their physical resources, ceasing to rent the site they had inhabited for close to twenty years. They negotiated a price to buy a smaller plot of land but with a better location. One of the three owners agreed to finance building a new headquarters to house a new shop, production facility, office, and artisan space. While this forced the artisan team to be dispersed, working partially from the new space, from the home of the sales manager, and from their own homes, Tribal Textiles was able to keep utilizing their vital human resources to keep craft production levels high which provided critical income for their artisan workforce and their families.

Finally, with disruptions in supply chains for accessing some of the materials necessary for production, Tribal Textiles capitalized on the global demand for home décor and expanded their use of natural materials grown and sourced locally. Further, the artisans recycled glass waste into new décor items while the textile unit worked to develop natural dyes and emulsions.

Overall, the organizational capabilities of Tribal Textiles to garner financial support through both grants and global sales by using their social resources provided them with the human capital to maintain production at pre-pandemic levels, while exploring more natural resources to avoid supply chain shortages. Collectively, these resources were vital contributors to community resilience, particularly for Tribal Textile artisans and their extended families. Mobilization of these resources was rooted in Tribal Textile's pre-pandemic values and practices.

### **Mental Outlook**

On par with resources, mental outlook played a commanding role in building and maintaining resilience through the COVID-19 crisis. Both sub-elements of mental outlook, adaptability and hope, were clear and consistent messages expressed across the data. From the



literature adaptability was defined as the ability and willingness to change and hope as the expectation things will improve (Patel, 2017).

Tribal Textiles expressed dynamic capabilities, adapting their business by making quick and agile changes to remain solvent with their mission of job creation remaining central to their choices. In the early days of the pandemic the company quickly adapted their product line, learning to produce cloth masks which were in growing demand. Shifting primary sales channels from tourist markets to online sales, Tribal Textiles increased outreach to their customers and social media followers which resulted in increased orders on the company website. The organization did an online appeal and sought grant funding to provide masks for their local community which was meaningful to both management and the artisan team, demonstrating how craft work is tied to meaning-making, and in the context of the pandemic, tied to hope.

The management team exercised creative problem solving and decision making when faced with pandemic challenges. Once online orders increased, Tribal Textiles had to create a work around for the transpiration, due to problems caused by airline shutdowns and cancelled flight routes. According to the managing director:

*We've had to get taxis to put orders in a taxi to go to Chipata, where it goes to a DHL agent who gets it to Lusaka because there were no flights from Mfuwe to Lusaka. It was a mission. We would get online orders and have to charter a cab twice a week, three times a week.*

The company also had to be extremely resilient and quick at cutting costs. Still, management noted that in many ways this was positive because it forced the team to make decisions they had been reluctant to make pre-pandemic when they had more options. Particularly, both the managing director and the sales manager cited leaving the original Tribal Textiles production and sales site as positive adaption. When asked about the move the sales manager stated:

*So somehow it made it unavoidable, inevitable, which is a good thing because we would never have been able to navigate those two years if we had not cut our costs tremendously. And one of the major costs was stopping the big shop, stopping the rent on that place. So we moved all our office and workshop in different places that cost nothing. I literally open my kitchen and the artisans are in front of my window every day. We put all our stock in what used to be a bedroom and we never thought that could work, but it works somehow. So we have things up to the roof, but it works.*

The managing director also pointed to the workshop move as vital to the resilience of the organization. She noted that by being willing to pivot, the organization will save 40,000 USD annually, which increases the health of the business, not only during the crisis but also into the foreseeable future.

*Whilst COVID has been far from ideal, it forced us as a business to think outside the box and make decisions that would not otherwise have been made. We will actually end up in a better place as a business I think, with land assets that will provide a future rental income and an all-weather building on land we own which provides long term security and gets rid of the need to pay rental.*

Adaptability allows for experimentation and optimism, and for entrepreneurial effectuation, utilizing the resources and information at hand. When asked about the adaptability of the individual artisans the managing director explained:

*Here are things all around that present challenges. Getting your crops to take, relying on the rains and trying to feed your family. And this, by comparison, it's a virus... instead of trying to control the surroundings, you know Westerns we love to be in control, and we'll fight nature, but Africans are way too smart for that. I am in awe of people's ability here to just get on with things.*

Tribal Textiles sales manager provided an example of artisan agility and adaptability when facing a shipping challenge as orders for large handwoven grass lamps increased during the pandemic. The lamps were large and needed to be packed in crates to ship to South Africa:

*You know, you feel like there's a problem, an issue. You don't know how to solve it. And then your approach an artisan and they say... 'we can make crates ourselves.' I'm like, what do you mean we can make crates? [Artisan,] 'yeah I've got a bit of wood here a bit, a bit of nails there and sisal and we can make a crate.'*

*[Upon seeing the crate] oh, okay. That's not a crate that I would air freight with, but that's a crate you can completely do road trips with, because it's not like fully lined with wood but there's the framing wood and sisal all around so that the things don't go out. And that's great, so everything is protected. It works fine. I mean, it's absolutely fine. Do you know, sometimes you'd drown yourself into a glass of water with questions and they [the artisans] come up with solutions that are quite amazing.*

This speaks not only to the artisans' adaptability but also to their creativity. The artisans interviewed also spoke about their own adaptable mindset. In speaking about securing formal employment at Tribal Textiles the female artisan said:

*I'm strong just because I'm able to find something which my other fellow friends they're not finding, but on my own myself, sometimes I find it. That's why I'm saying I'm strong. Those who are doing fine in this pandemic are those who are strong.*

Not only are both the employees and the organization adaptable, but they are also hopeful. Throughout the data both management and artisans noted that they were “lucky,” “busy,” and “grateful.” They were forward looking both in their personal goals and in their goals for and with the organization. The artisans were particularly community focused, hoping to keep working and that employment could expand to bring more people into the company as the pandemic subsides. The female artisan commented that she hoped:

*I'm seeing maybe this next year, this thing will be okay. I can be appreciated when we next year start early working and we can have more orders so that our fellow friends come and work together. We can see how things can go on this because we're helping more many people.*

Additionally, the artisans saw craft as a way to eliminate some of the current harmful behaviors in the community. The male artisan was also hopeful about creating more job opportunities:

*I can have artists, people whom I'm working with to help the family to sustain. They [currently unemployed men] may kind of stop doing punching, as I say, even drinking beer and sort of many, many, many things. At least the people can be as busy. It is busy, busy. I have a feeling or a plan of how more, more than 50 people, full time working solidly, we keep. Which means that helps their family at the back whom they're helping. So that is my idea.*

The managing director compared running an artisan enterprise during a pandemic to riding a roller coaster. Still, she considers herself a naturally optimistic person and has stayed energized through small wins during the pandemic like achieving the Nest seal of approval (an audited certification for handcraft businesses), getting a new unexpected order for masks, having a large brand like West Elm sample their textiles, and being able to tell artisans there is additional work to complete. She also notes that nature and the organization's impact helps her remain hopeful:

*Little things can give you the biggest boost. I have elephants in my garden. Every day I get to come home to elephants in my garden and beautiful sunsets. The important thing is that the company is surviving, the artisans are supported, and we're continuing to consolidate and develop the business.*

And the sales manager spoke of how having a deep connection to nature and the artisans gives her hope:

*I think I realized by being in South Luangwa, I actually connected with nature. And a time that was slowing down, a consumerism that was off the grid as an option. And that it actually suits my person and not only, my body, my soul, everything. I felt that I was breathing again, basically.*

Hope for the future paired with the adaptability to pivot when necessary, has created organizational resilience for Tribal Textiles, personal resilience for individuals inside the organization, and has led to resilience for the community at large through the earnings and attitudes of the Tribal Textile shared by the team.

### **Community Networks and Relationships**

The third element of community resilience presented in our findings was the importance of community networks and relationships. Communities gain the ability to respond positively in a disaster when they are connected and cohesive. Linkages within the community between members based on social relationships and the cohesion of these relationships is based on strong or weak social ties make up a community's social network (Patel, 2017).

People in Mfuwe live as extended families in large groups. This made social distancing during the pandemic largely untenable. Reliance on tourism in South Luangwa meant people depend heavily on visitors for their incomes, but those are weak ties with tourists who have less of a long-term committed proved to be problematic. Safari companies shrank in response to COVID's negative impact on tourism, leaving many people in Mfuwe without jobs. Local Zambian culture places a high level of importance on familial and communal sharing of resources, which obligated those who still earned incomes to support extended family networks. This was demonstrated through several comments made by the artisans:

*But those who are don't working, they [are] just depending on you.*

*When you take out the things from the field, then I can help my friend with food...but the big, big help is came from when I have something, something like money is when I can help someone.*

*Because now the community are depending on me.*

The artisans valued the relationships built with Tribal Textiles and the support they received from the company:

*I didn't see any help from the government excepted, from my company.*

*I've really enjoyed working at tribal textiles because my family they're depending on me. Most of our family. I have one, my brother, he's doing grade eight also it's me who's giving them money to go to school. So I'm really very appreciating when tribal textiles call me to come and work together here.*

*We are lucky because of the company like Tribal.*

This relationship between the artisans and the company is a reciprocal one, with the managing director saying of the team:

*They're amazing to me, you know, we all look after each other.*

Core to the organization's founding philosophy, the company respects the voices of their artisans and involved them in the decision making around how people would be paid during the

pandemic, and also in their decision to move locations. Further, the company engaged with the local tribal leaders as well as other local businesses to be sure everyone involved was satisfied with the company's decision to move locations after twenty-five years in the same place. In response to the move the managing director noted that "it was heartening" when speaking of the support they received from the artisans and the larger community in making the move:

*It was a community effort, everyone chipped in an, one of the local lodges lent us trucks and staff to come and load stuff up and take it.*

This sense of community cooperation extends to the company's competitors in the local craft industry as well.

*I think there is room for everyone in this market, but we have to work together. We have to have different offerings and we'd have to be collaborative. And I think we need to market collectively as well.*

Both the artisans and the organization referenced the network of buyers who purchase their products. This extended network of the artisans, the organization, local tourists, and global buyers provide a symbiotic relationship where each benefit from the success of the other at a time when connection mattered most. When asked if there was anything else she would like to share, the female artisan made a plea to the first author and more generally to buyers:

*Just look for us more orders here at tribal textile so that next year we can employ more and more people that's because some of us are depending on tribal textiles. So you're putting more hands to help each other, so that our fellow friends which are at home they come can come back again and work together.*

So we see that through cooperation, mutual consideration, respect for local culture, and commitment to one another, Tribal Textiles strengthened both local and global network connections making these relationships protective factors for the community during the crisis.

## Economic Investment

Economic investment is a long-term strategy employed by organizations. In the case of Tribal Textiles, the company has been investing in the local community for over thirty years and continued to do so in the face of great challenges. They bought land for a new production facility, an action that builds trust within the community by demonstrating that the company will continue to be long term employer and robust contributor to the local economy. They also contributed to income generation through stable employment, when jobs in the community remained scarce.

As the first formal craft employer in the region, Tribal Textiles has put economic programming in place to formalize craft employment and stabilize sector earnings. According to the managing director:

*This work is paid at full gross salary rate on a normal contract. Everyone is paid on a salary package with full benefits and allowances. Even those people who might work part time or only for a short time are paid in this way.*

This has proven to be important in equitable distribution of financial resources. Likewise, the company maintains clear policies with their clients to be sure that payments are timely and that artisans are compensated for their time and creative outputs. Export orders pay a 50% deposit at the time of the order and the other half upon delivery. First time exporters are asked to pay 100% up front. When customers want to sample new goods the company has a strict minimum for custom goods:

*We require the minimums for bespoke stuff. If they want us to design something from scratch we have a fixed fee of \$200 for sampling, and that gets you up to three different designs.*

In addition to investments in their facilities and their people, Tribal Textiles has made investments in building their online platform so both individual and wholesale customers can

purchase online, and orders can ship directly from Zambia to anywhere in the world. Their sales manager explained that DHL has made shipping small orders possible and so she has tried to capitalize on that opportunity by putting time and resources into the website:

*I'm trying to automate and process more and more and more things basically to simplify or process what can be processed or automated online. So online it's mostly individuals and last year has been our bread and butter. March, April, May, and June we did double what we normally do.*

All of these economic investment are clearly paying off for the company, which was profitable in 2021 despite the lingering impact of COVID-19 on global tourism. Of their investments in the business and in their staff during the pandemic, the sales director shared:

*I was feeling also, I was having an impact, because it's not a lie when we said that one person earning a living here basically makes up for 10 people in their household. So when you employ 80 people, you contribute to help 800 people live. It's not giving money...but sustainable social impact business.*

### **Unique to Craft: Creativity**

In addition to the nine elements of community resilience that made up our deductive coding framework, we looked at craft and creativity as a unique element contributing to community resilience. This ties back to craft as a form of meaning making. The organization and individual artisans employ creativity in their daily lives through their products and in response to challenges. It is through the work of their own hands and the creativity borne through their crafts that artisans earned income when little other trade or tourism was happening in Mfuwe. Craft also provided a purpose, a creative outlet, and a pathway to productivity artisans pointed to throughout the data. Purpose breeds hope, and crafting gave people purpose, in generating beauty and providing for their families, at a time when many in the community were facing scarcity and uncertainty. According to management:

*I think there's really something building up in them [the artisans], a confidence that what they do is an art and that they can make something with that art.*



*I don't know if I'm lying to myself, but I have a feeling a sense of dignity and pride in what they do. I think being artisans for some of them doesn't mean much, but for some of them means more and more because they realize that they can actually be something they can be proud of.*

*I think the craft and the artisanal work gives them [the artisans] a sense of purpose, but I think they are resilient to begin with.*

The organization employed creative problem solving in in solving their resource constraints by moving and in reaching global markets but enhancing their website and social media presence. They creatively mobilized resources using distributive justice in sharing resources and providing stipends for the short time the business had to be close to shut down.

When Tribal Textiles was first able to reopen production it was through a grant to make masks for local distribution. All of the interviewees mentioned their pride in being able to contribute to providing personal protective equipment (PPE) for their community through their own creation. “We got masks for our community,” the managing director said with pride, and the artisans commented on both producing and distributing the masks locally. On creativity the team shared the following comments:

*I like working with creative people.*

*They [artisans] come up with solutions that are quite amazing. The fact of having a constraint makes them very creative in terms of finding solutions.*

And the community is responding to the success of the artisans at Tribal Textile. The sales manager said this of one of the artisans:

*Everyone in the village was laughing about him when he said he was an artist, and now people are looking at him like a successful person. So he really changed his life in a meaningful way.*

That artisans shared:

*I feel it's true artistry.*

And it is. Artistry turned into livelihoods that supports families through creativity, through handmade products that create meaning for both the maker and the purchaser. This cycle of meaning and earning through creative endeavors is a driver of community resilience for those involved in artisan work. Where people find meaning in and through their creative work, that work will survive over time as demonstrated in the longevity of the Tribal Textile organization.

### **Building Women's Resilience**

Finally, we note that Tribal Textiles played a central role in fortifying the capabilities of women in the community to respond with resilience. It was clear from the interviews that women's wellbeing and gender equality declined during the pandemic. When asked how women were being treated since the onset of COVID-19 responses included:

*I can say its [women are] treating worse. Boys go to school, the girls don't. Girls marry young.*

*[It's a] patriarchal society, which is very present. The fact is that women are completely under regarded under valued, given no opportunities.*

*We are not treated fairly. For us girls, we are suffering because girls they're just depending on their husband, but some they're depending on each own, finding how to eat.*

However, through affiliation with Tribal Textiles, they were able to return to critical employment sooner than others in town, able to rely on the company for a living stipend and support during the crisis, and able to exercise their personal capabilities. One artisan used part of her stipend to start a small informal cooking business she could do while waiting to go back to her formal job:

*Since when they gives me 500 last year I started a short business selling fritters.*

The impact of formal employment on women to provide solidarity and sustainable income, while also supporting individual capabilities that provide women with agency to make choices was critical for women artisans at Tribal Textiles.

## **Discussion and Implications**

Of the nine elements of community resilience we coded in the data, it was no surprise that the theme and sub-themes of resources were the most prevalent across the interview data. In a resource constrained community like Mfuwe, Zambia access to resources - whether financial, social, physical, human, or natural – can make a substantive impact on human health and wellbeing. Financial resources were critical in combating food insecurity and meeting basic needs caused economic shocks brought on by the pandemic. Social resources were also vital in mobilizing financial resources. Effectuation, through the use of natural and regenerative resources points towards a more environmentally friendly form of production with rising demand among consumers. This is a promising trend and one that artisan organizations can capitalize on as consumers place greater value on thoughtfully made, artisan small batch production.

In any crisis, hope and adaptability are key to maintaining a resilient mindset. The mindset of both management and artisans to adapt and remain hopeful helped support them in all aspects of dealing with trauma and uncertainty. Mindset is also tied to meaning-making, and craft manifests value from meaning making. The unique attributes that the enterprises' craft work and creativity contributed to this resiliency of the community by using artisan skills to create income opportunities, provide a mental release through creating, and to bring meaning through making, as noted by all participants when talking about having the opportunity to create PPE for their own community. Further, women who lost ground during the pandemic in the quest for gender equality were supported and able to exercise personal agency, creativity, and find social and financial support through their association with Tribal Textiles, showing the particular role craft organizations can play in women's resilience to economic shocks.

Local knowledge, leadership and governance, communication, health, and preparedness were all ancillary findings to the four core elements of community resilience organizations create and employ. Local knowledge, while important for organizations to understand and use adaptive practices to respect and incorporate, ultimately comes from the community itself.

Leadership/governance, communication, and health, in the context of a disaster, are largely in the realm of public actors. While private companies can have some impact on fortifying the resilience of communities in these areas, to a large degree these elements is outside of their sphere of influence. Despite an emphasis from prior research on the importance of preparedness as vital to community resilience (Ridzuan et al., 2020), in our study preparedness trailed the other eight out of nine elements of community resilience presented in the data. We posit that this is primarily because the community in South Luangwa deals with challenges constantly, making themes of planned preparedness less relevant to those working and living in the community. It could be argued, however that the high level of resilient mindsets demonstrated along with leadership for resource mobilization is what creates preparedness in the context of Tribal Textiles.

## **Limitations**

While this instrumental case study has provided a strong foundation from which to explore the unique role of craft social enterprises to contribute to community resilience, we acknowledge that our study is not without limitations. We believe that our findings from Tribal Textiles establishes a baseline from which to test our findings across other artisan organizations who may vary in their organizational age and stage of development, physical or geographical locations, for example urban verses rural communities and in locations beyond Zambia. As Tribal Textiles is a well-established artisan enterprise, it would be worthwhile to examine a

younger organization's process of developing these necessary values and capabilities to become a resilient organization. Further, as community resilience is not only necessary in response to a pandemic, but to other external circumstances such as natural disasters, and political and civil disruptions, there is an opportunity to explore how our theoretical findings manifest in the face of another type of crisis.

### **Conclusion**

This study contributes to literature on community resilience, capabilities, craft, and artisan entrepreneurship. We expand the understanding of how artisan social enterprises embed values and practices during normal times that enable them to respond quickly and resiliently to crisis in ways protective for their community. We highlight the importance of artisan social ventures for providing formal employment through craft, expanding beyond the existing literature that examines craft employment primarily in the form of necessity and informal entrepreneurship. We identify four primary elements of community resilience social enterprises supporting vulnerable populations can build and activate - including resources, mental outlook, community networks/relationships and economic development - to contribute meaningfully to community resilience by engaging organizational capabilities. Further, we highlight the role of creativity as a unique and critical, yet overlooked, aspect of how artisan social enterprises and their artisan employees further resiliency. Finally, we add to the literature on how women's vulnerability to community crisis can be mitigated by organizations through distributive justice in resource allocation, leading to the individual capabilities.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### ARTICLE 3 - SCALING SOCIAL IMPACT IN ZAMBIAN ARTISAN ENTERPRISES

#### **Background**

Women's engagement in artisan work creates a positive ripple effect that starts with income generation for a woman and her household and can be amplified through artisan social enterprises linked to the global economy to improve the lives of the woman, her family, and her community. While often thought of as small or inconsequential, many artisan ventures scale in both size and impact to impressive levels with global reach (Luckman & Thomas, 2018). This study posits that artisan ventures serve as an inherent force for positive economic, social, and environmental impact and calls for a clearer understanding of the drivers that make scaling that impact possible. Understanding the contributions artisan ventures make to individual workers, communities, and the environment, as well as how these enterprises scale their positive impacts has the potential to influence policy and practice, creating a ripple effect of economic and social benefit for artisans, families, and communities.

While craft work is too often dismissed as an antiquated form of production (Jakob & Thomas, 2017), recent research in the field of entrepreneurship has argued that craft and craft enterprises deserve renewed attention and attribution (Bell & Vachhani, 2020; Kroezen et al., 2021). In fact, the economic impact of artisan craft work is approaching a critical threshold, led by consumer demand demonstrated in the success of platforms like Etsy.com (Kuhn & Galloway, 2015) and the commitment of brands like West Elm who in 2021 pledged to purchase 50 million USD in crafts certified with the Nest Seal of Ethical Handcraft (Nest, *n.d.*). Further,

artisan ventures, particularly those in developing countries, are providing non-trivial solutions to societal problems including poverty (Chappe & Lawson Jaramillo, 2020; Edgar, 2011), gender equality (Embry et al., 2022), environmental sustainability (Sikavica & Pozner, 2013), as well as providing paths to sustainable livelihoods and entrepreneurial opportunities (Stinchfield et al., 2013; Kuhn & Galloway, 2015).

Artisan work is viewed as “culturally embedded material production involving close engagement of the maker with the physical world, working with its sensory, material, spatial and environmental qualities to create objects highly related to place” (Igwe et al., 2018, p. 675). Recently scholars have also argued that craft work from artisan the sector is associated with a fundamentally alternative approach to production and consumption that prioritizes the people creating the products, protects the planet, and derives meaning for both makers and consumers (Bell & Vacchani, 2019; Kroezen et al., 2021; Suddaby, Ganzin, & Minkus, 2017). In light of global inequities and the growing climate crisis, this renewed attention on the unique ability of artisan ventures to create positive change warrants exploration. Given the vastness and uniqueness of the artisan sector, this study provides a contextualized look at the artisan sector in Zambia through an explanatory sequential mixed-methods approach. This mixed methods study uses secondary data, including both quantitative (quant) and qualitative (QUAL), from a larger assessment of artisan value chain in Zambia completed in fall of 2020 (Mastracci & Edgar, 2020).

### **The Global Artisan Sector**

Today across the globe an estimated 300,000 million people, predominantly women, earn their living in the artisan craft sector (Alexander et al., 2020; van Bergen, 2019). Behind agriculture, artisan activity is the second largest employer in developing countries (Chappe &

Lawson Jaramillo, 2020), contributing an estimated 500 billion to the global economy (Alexander et al., 2020). Artisan craft work is a growing economic opportunity predominantly driven by women (Milne & Clark, 2018), yet little is found in the literature about the benefits of artisan entrepreneurship for women and their communities. Craft-based artisan enterprises provide critical income for women, paid both in salaries and piece-work wages, in places where employment opportunities are often scarce. Yet, the unique role of the craft sector and craft enterprises in scaling economic and social impact has largely been overlooked by the social entrepreneurship literature (Vedula et al., 2021).

Establishing economic opportunities for women is essential to reducing poverty for marginalized populations (Kabeer, 2020), however many artisan social enterprises go beyond income generation, implementing programs and practices that create social or environmental value for their stakeholders, often prioritizing positive impact over company financial returns (Kerlin, 2012). To that end, artisan ventures often provide healthcare, educational support, childcare, group savings programs, emergency relief, and a host of other social and environmental impact programs for the individuals, families, and communities whose lives they touch (Edgar, 2011). Whether pulled by the opportunity to create positive impact or pushed by the necessity to create work where few opportunities exist (Dencker et al., 2021), the societal contributions of craft-based entrepreneurs and social enterprises in developing countries are vital in creating sustainable livelihoods, particularly for women.

### **Artisan Sector Barriers to Success**

Still, barriers exist to the growth, sustainability, and inclusion of artisan enterprises from developing countries in global value chains. First, many artisans are operating in the informal sector, which provides legal barriers to participation in global value chains (Meagher, 2021). At



times, these artisans are able to provide piece-work to formal business linked to global markets, but have no access of their own, and are largely invisible in the supply chain (van Bergen, 2019). Sub-contracted, home workers often fall into this category. Both informal and formally registered artisan enterprises in emerging markets also experience a lack of access to markets and access to capital, with limited or no financing options (London et al., 2010). At the same time, global buyers face a lack of supply chain transparency, due in part to companies sub-contracting handwork, as well as deficiencies in coordinated production capacity, and fragmented opportunities and mechanisms to onboard artisans into value chains (Kim et al., 2015). Bringing artisans out of the shadow economy, to recognize their talents, their businesses, and their potential will combat the sometimes dehumanizing effects of informality.

### ***Informality***

Two billion workers globally, or over 60 percent of the world's labor force, earn their living in the informal economy (ILO, 2018). The majority of the workforce in developing countries is engaged in informal employment (Chen, 2013), and despite a decline of informality in some regions, few gains have been made in reducing informality across sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America (IMFBlog, n.d.). The informal sector is comprised of individual or small-scale economic actors, both producers and service providers, whose work is often labor intensive, low-tech, and largely unregistered and unregulated. These solo-entrepreneurs, familial groups, and small enterprises are unlicensed, do not pay taxes, and cannot access formal sector employment benefits like health and safety protections, financing, healthcare, or insurance (Wilson et al., 2006).

Traditionally, workers were considered informal only when they were unregistered and self-employed, but as subcontracting and piece work on global supply chains has increased, there

has been a proliferation of informal wage workers producing for shadow employers. Martha Chen of Harvard University Kennedy School categorizes informal work as:

***Informal self-employment***—including employers in informal enterprises, own account workers in informal enterprises, contributing family workers (in informal and formal enterprises), members of informal producers' cooperatives (where these exist); and

***Informal wage employment***—employees or wage workers hired without legal or social protection by formal firms, informal enterprises, or households, including employees of informal enterprises, casual or day laborers, temporary or part-time workers, paid domestic workers, contract workers, unregistered or undeclared workers, and industrial outworkers (also called homeworkers) (Chen, 2013).

The informal economy was first recognized by scholars in the 1970s and was thought of as a transitory form of employment for marginalized workers that would shrink in size as opportunities in the formal economy grew (Benería, 2001). But many informal actors encounter significant barriers to ever entering the formal economy including capital constraints, lower levels of formal education, power differentials, lack of property rights, and weak local rule of law (Amaral & Quintin, 2006). Formalization allows workers to secure contracts, insure their businesses against risk, and access social protection programs (Chen, 2013). Informal sector artisan businesses are often relegated to sell in local markets where there is less demand or where there are wild fluctuations in demand depending on area tourism trends. Their goals for economic, social, or environmental impact are also often thwarted by the constraints of informality. Reaching global markets can help garner larger volume orders which allows artisan businesses to grow their capacity and improve efficiency. Still, accessing those markets can be elusive for many artisan ventures.

### ***Marginal Global Market Access***

Artisan businesses that do reach global markets are often times found in fair trade channels. Fair trade is defined as “a trading partnership, based on dialogue, transparency and

respect, that seeks greater equity in international trade” (Marston, 2013, p. 163). While the fair trade movement is important and often creates first opportunities for artisans to reach global markets through fair trade sales, awareness campaigns, storytelling, and advocacy for living wages, this niche market channel also brings challenges. First, fair trade certification requirements and costs are most often borne by the producers (Moberg, 2014) and can be a burden to craft ventures with slim margins on their goods. Second, as Harvard Professor and *Comparative Advantage* author Michael Porter wrote in a 2019 article:

*Fair trade aims to increase the proportion of revenue that goes to poor farmers by paying them higher prices for the same crops. Though this may be a noble sentiment, fair trade is mostly about redistribution rather than expanding the overall amount of value created. A shared value perspective, instead, focuses on improving growing techniques and strengthening the local cluster of supporting suppliers and other institutions in order to increase farmers’ efficiency, yields, product quality, and sustainability. This leads to a bigger pie of revenue and profits that benefits both farmers and the companies that buy from them (Porter & Kramer, 2019).*

The same holds true for artisan ventures. Market access must grow beyond the margins of global commerce to actually create a larger “pie” of opportunity, and therefore increase economic equity for women artisans. But, in order to create that growth, companies need the tools to be able to create shared value across their supply chains. According to Porter, “shared value creation focuses on identifying and expanding the connections between societal and economic progress” (Porter & Kramer, 2019, p.326). Connecting companies to artisan producers requires deep understanding of the needs of both the artisan businesses and buyers and requires a method for those buyers to achieve penetration into disparate artisan networks. Interventions created to build artisan capacity and facilitate market access are needed to bridge these gaps. The social sector, social entrepreneurs, and governments have a role to play in creating and facilitating capacity building for artisan ventures as well as shaping policies that facilitate greater resources for these ventures. Creating meaningful economic gains for the artisan sector will

ultimately hinge on whether the market for handcrafted goods can grow large enough to achieve a significant impact on systemic poverty (Chappe & Lawson Jaramillo, 2020).

This is why it is important to understand who is participating in artisan work, how artisan ventures operate, either as individual or micro informal sector businesses or collectively in formalized social enterprises, and where the opportunities lie for creating greater access and social support, especially for women artisans in developing countries. In doing so we can work to remove barriers and create pathways to connect artisan businesses to markets by creating capacity building interventions, crafting policies that help informal businesses formalize, and revealing the talents and capabilities of the organizations linking them to shared value chains that recognize their skills and help them scale their impact.

## **Mixed Methods**

Acknowledging the importance of gaining a multi-layered understanding this unique sector, this explanatory sequential mixed-methods study begins with a quantitative descriptive and correlative analysis of survey responses from 81 Zambian artisan businesses. Following is a deeper qualitative analysis of 66 semi-structured, in-person interviews with artisans and artisan business leaders in Zambia. In this two phase mixed methods design (Creswell, 2021; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2009), phase one asks: 1) Who makes up the artisan enterprises operating in Zambia? 2) How many social and environmental impact efforts are they engaged in? and, 3) What resources drive or prohibit the positive economic, social and environmental impact of artisan ventures? Then, to gain deeper insight drawn from participants' lived experiences in the artisan sector, phase two asks: 4) How do artisan enterprises perceive their ability to make a social and environmental impact on the community? While the data utilized is considered secondary data in this study, the original research received IRB approval for human subjects

research and followed all research protocols outlined in the approved proposal for both the survey and the interviews.

While few studies have explored the positive social and environmental impacts artisan businesses are making and what drives their ability to scale those impacts (Dencker et al., 2021; Bloom & Smith, 2010; Smith et al., 2016), this study posits that artisan ventures are an inherent force for positive social and environmental impact and calls for a clearer understanding of these drivers. Understanding how artisan social enterprises impact their communities and what is required to scale social and environmental impacts has the potential to influence policy and to inform practice for building the capacity of artisan ventures. As a result, policy and practice efforts can be better aligned with capacity building for artisan enterprises that can help them gain access to formal markets. To align with the explanatory sequential mixed methods approach, this paper proceeds in four sections: a literature review and conceptual framework, phase one methods and findings (quant), phase two methods and findings (QUAL), and a concluding discussion of the collective implications, limitations, and contributions of this research.

## **Literature Review**

### **Zambian Context**

In Zambia, a disproportionate number of women are employed informally without access to social protections from economic, health, climate, or lifecycle-related shocks (Simuchimba et al., 2020; Ulrichs, 2016). The informal economy and the informal sector are terms used to describe insecure employment in developing countries including self-employment, smallholder farming, family-run micro-businesses, day laborers, sub-contracted pieceworkers, as well as employment without formal registration where the employer does not provide appropriate social protections (Henley et al., 2009). Over 88% of Zambian workers are relegated to the informal

economy (Gadzala, 2010). Zambian women and girls face tremendous barriers to gaining formal employment due to the prevalence of early marriage, teen pregnancy, gender-based violence, HIV, lack of access to education, lack of secure formal jobs available in the country, and a discriminatory customary legal system (Austrian et al., 2020). Poverty rates in the country are also stubbornly high with an estimated 60.5% of Zambians living in poverty, and of those experiencing poverty, over 40% living in extreme poverty and too often facing food insecurity (Gashongore, 2019).

These factors leave Zambian women over represented in the most vulnerable and insecure types of informal work, including subsistence farming, domestic work, and informal trading which are all linked to high levels of poverty (Ulrichs, 2016). Forty-five percent of rural Zambian women in the labor force are unpaid family workers, laboring on family farms or informal family businesses (Evans, 2018). Further, female necessity entrepreneurs often lack access to startup capital, business training, or experience, and they face bureaucratic business registration systems that are difficult to navigate in addition to engrained gender norms that disadvantage them based solely on their sex (Silungwe & Silungwe, 2020).

Craft work has a low barrier to entry for women working informally and allows for creativity and the use of heritage handwork skills which have often been passed down through generations of crafting women. Thus, while informal craft work may be low paying and lack social protections, it still has the potential to provide meaningful work among informal employment choices available to Zambian women. However, women can derive even greater value from their craft skills working in formalized artisan social enterprises that aim to provide sustainable wages as well as social impact programming to improve artisans lives and livelihoods.

### **Social Enterprises**

The majority of research on social enterprises has examined social entrepreneurial ventures and founders primarily in the US and Europe, while the collective impact of MSME (micro, small, and medium enterprises) social enterprises, which are abundant in developing countries, is ripe for exploration (Lumpkin et al., 2018). A social enterprise is defined as an organization that uses market-based approaches to address social issues, typically by generating revenue through products and services, while prioritizing social or environmental impact over financial returns (Kerlin, 2012). Driven by a social mission, these businesses use a creative combination of capabilities and resources to attack stubborn social and environmental problems, while directly addressing pressing needs of disadvantaged populations (Seelos & Mair, 2017).

Social enterprises are often started by proximate leaders driven by a bottom-up desire to bring sustainable change (Gramescu, 2016). Social enterprises across the developing regions of Africa, Asia, and Latin America empower “the people affected by poverty directly by giving them the opportunities for income generation” (Rametse & Shah, 2012, p. 2). Artisan social enterprises uniquely contribute to their communities by utilizing heritage skills and indigenous knowledge, empowering individual artisans, fostering community resilience, and providing income generation and social value. While the social entrepreneurship literature has focused on how to scale businesses, less is known about how these ventures scale their positive impacts. A recent study by Davidsson, Recker, and Briel (2020) considered the impact of external drivers like technology, regulations, demographic trends, politics, economics, and local environments on entrepreneurial actions and outcomes. For social enterprises in developing countries who deal with contextual challenges, severe resource constraints, and/or inefficient, corrupt or autocratic governments, these external forces, or a lack of access to them, it can be difficult to grow revenue or impact creating barriers to scaling (Bacq & Eddleston, 2018).

## Scaling Social Impact

Scaling a business is most often thought of as the process of growing a company's sales, revenue, market share, and staff, yet scaling a social enterprise is rooted in growing the firm's impact on the social concern it seeks to address (Han & Shah, 2020). Dees explained social impact scaling as "increasing the impact a social-purpose organization produces to better match the magnitude of the social need or problem it seeks to address" (Dees, 2008, p.16). For social enterprises, value creation goes beyond company size or financial returns, instead focusing on positively impacting lives, livelihoods, the environment, and the communities they serve. Still scaling social impact is considered one of the most challenging tasks for an organization to execute (Han & Shah, 2020). Depending on the impact goals, outcomes can be hard to measure and recognizing the full effect of the impact may take years (*Bardach*, n.d.).

Social impact scaling has been divided into two categories, breadth and depth (Bacq et al., 2015; Desa & Koch, 2014). Social enterprises focused on scaling the breadth of their impact seek to increase the number of people impacted, their geographic coverage, or their working budgets in order to create "economies of scale" (Desa & Koch, 2014; Prahalad, 2005). While those focused on depth work to expand the number and type of impact practices, programs, or services they provide to their stakeholders (Desa & Koch, 2014; Praszkie & Nowak, 2011). Community based and grassroots social enterprises more frequently focus on expanding the depth of their impact due to the deep relational aspect of their work and the desire to "serve people well" in their home communities (Islam, 2020; Desa & Koch, 2014). Artisan social enterprises are primarily community/grassroots based and strive to create deep impact for the artisans and communities they serve.



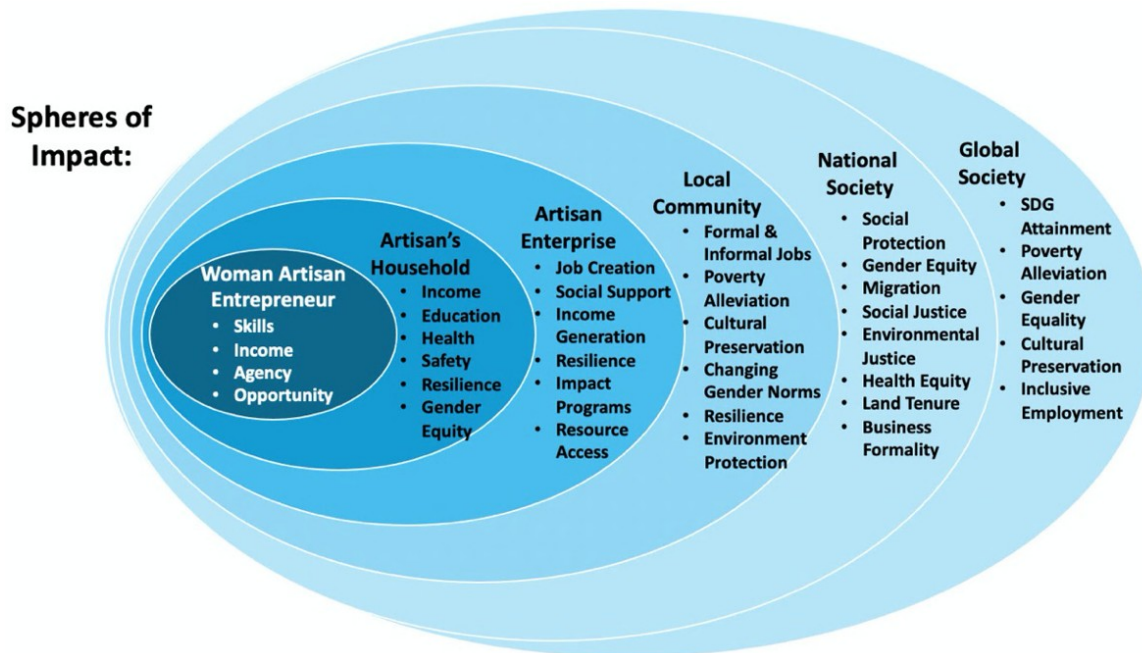
Beyond breadth and depth, several models for scaling social impact are found in the literature. Dees, Anderson, and Wei-Skillern (2004) introduced a three-strategy model of scaling social impact through dissemination, affiliation, and branching. Dissemination includes providing information and technical assistance, affiliation is building a relational network, and branching is expanding to local sites run under a larger umbrella organization (Han & Shah, 2020; Dees et al., 2004). The SCALERS model identifies seven different drivers of scaling social impact including: staffing, communicating, alliance building, lobbying, earnings generation, replicating, and stimulating market forces (Cannatelli, 2017). The most commonly recognized driver of scale is financing (Han & Shah, 2020; Bacq & Eddleston, 2018). This is because access to finance, whether through earned income, loans, grants or donations, allows for investment in social impact initiatives and lack of financing limits those investments (Han & Shah, 2020).

The ecosystem of scaling social impact, introduced by Han and Shah (2020), considers the systems in which social enterprises function. This theory of impact scaling considers organizational level factors like access to financing, access to technology, and organizational governance and strategy, but it also considers how constraints outside an organization's control affect the organization's ability to scale positive impact. Additionally this theory considers the influence of institutions and government policies on an enterprise's ability to scale their social impact. Women-led artisan enterprises in Africa face societal constraints based on inequitable gender norms and a lack of equal rights as well as organizational resource constraints like access to finance and markets, especially informal artisan ventures. The ecosystem of scaling social impact provides a wholistic look at the factors that drive or inhibit impact growth through an understanding of these organizations ecosystems (Han & Shah, 2020).

No matter the method social enterprises employ in scaling impact, those ventures in developing countries that can successfully scale their social and environmental impact defy entrenched constraints and create economic, environmental, and human well-being (Desa & Koch, 2014). In light of this literature, this study builds on the ecosystem of scaling social impact theory and introduces a new conceptual framework for examining how artisan entrepreneurs and artisan enterprises particularly scale their economic, social, and environmental impact through craft work to create a positive ripple effect at the individual, organizational, and institutional level.

### **The Ripple Effect of Artisan Entrepreneurship**

The Ripple Effect of Artisan Entrepreneurship presents a conceptual model based on inter-disciplinary approaches from the management entrepreneurship stream, international development, and empowerment theory from social work to understand the artisan sector in the context of gender and economic justice, and to illustrate the impacts of female artisan entrepreneurs and artisan enterprises at the individual, organizational, and institutional levels. According to this conceptual model, artisan entrepreneurship in the handmade craft sector provides women in developing countries with not only a source of income, but also increased potential for social change, resilience, creativity, meaningful work, and positive impact in her home, community, and beyond. This includes the possibility of increased personal agency, social support, cultural preservation, skill development, gender empowerment, and strategies to address larger social and environmental issues. Figure 1 depicts the model and demonstrates the forward momentum that can be achieved when a female entrepreneur begins to use craft skills and locally available resources to generate income for herself and her family.



*Figure 4. The Ripple Effect of Artisan Entrepreneurship*

Each sphere in the model has the potential to have a ripple effect, beginning with the artisan's own life, moving on to her household, her participation in a craft cooperative or enterprise, the social and environmental impact of artisan endeavors on the local community, the economic and social impact nationally, and finally the potential for collective impact on a global scale. Each of these spheres serves as a road map for the research needed to fully comprehend the positive impact of artisan work on women's lives and livelihoods, particularly among those living in extreme poverty. The impact and influence of artisan employment has the ability to extend beyond the individual artisan and her home. As a result, the effects of female artisan entrepreneurs must be studied empirically on an individual, organizational, and institutional level. This conceptual model also emphasizes how women's lives, communities, nations, and the wider global community are influenced when women are empowered, communities establish

resilience factors, and artisan ventures create programs and practices focused on improving social support, health, and the environment.

Sphere one, a woman herself, is the primary beneficiary. Working as an artisan entrepreneur provides her with not only income generation and market experience, but also personal agency. The second sphere is the artisan's household, which benefits from her improved income and agency, and connects to better educational and health prospects for her family. Her income may also help her household become more resilient, as well as give her greater gender parity within her family. The third sphere, the artisan cooperative or artisan enterprise, provides a pathway to formalization, collective agency, and increased market access. Many artisan ventures begin with a single entrepreneur, but often quickly expand to become social enterprises that create employment opportunities for others, resulting in a beneficial influence on community social capital and job creation in sphere four. Social support, networks, and social protection advantages grow in tandem with the enterprise's economic development. This provides the foundation for the business, the individuals engaged, and the community at large to be resilient. Furthermore, artisan organizations have the potential for national and global impact, as their collective work contributes to achieving gender equality in their countries by changing norms, perceptions, and laws, as well as contributing to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 1 no poverty, SDG 5 gender equality for women and girls, and SDG 8 good jobs and economic growth. This study aims to map the organizational level impact spheres of the artisan enterprise and its local community, as well as the institutional sphere of national society in the context of the Zambian artisan sector.

## **PHASE 1: EXPLORATORY QUANTITATIVE INQUIRY**

As evidenced by the literature review, scaling social impact is challenging and outcome data is limited. In order for a company to scale their social and environmental impact, the enterprise must be equipped with the resources, market opportunities, government policies/institutions, and knowledge that enable that growth (Desa & Koch, 2014). The purpose of phase 1 was to examine who makes up the artisan enterprises operating in Zambia, the scope of their economic, social and environmental impact, and the drivers of that impact.

### **Methods**

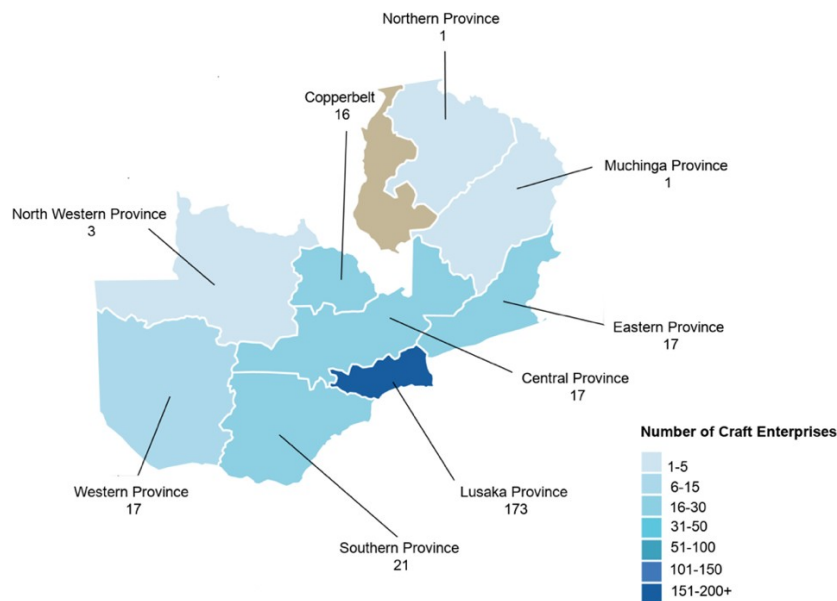
Phase 1 employed a quantitative, non-experimental descriptive design based on survey research. Non-experimental, quantitative research can provide important descriptive and correlational results (Sousa et al., 2007), while offering an alternative to experimental design when random assignment or the manipulation of explanatory variables is not feasible or desirable (Belli, 2009). While unable to make claims of causality, non-experimental research designs are still able to generalize and provide strong external validity when the accessible population is representative of the theoretical population (Morgan et al., 2019).

This phase of the study posed three research questions including: 1) Who makes up the artisan enterprises operating in Zambia? 2) How many social and environmental impact efforts are they engaged in? 3) What resources drive or prohibit the positive economic, social and environmental impact of artisan ventures?

### **Sample**

Data for this phase were generated from the survey responses of artisan enterprises in Zambia as part of a value chain assessment of the artisan sector throughout the country (Mastracci & Edgar, 2020). The value chain assessment identified 266 artisan enterprises,

mapped by province in Figure 4. The artisan ventures were invited to participate in the survey with a response rate of 30% of the total population surveyed, resulting in a convenience sample of 81 respondents. Sixty-five of the 81 surveys returned were completed in their entirety.



*Figure 5. Zambian Craft Companies by Region*

## Data Collection

The 41-question survey consisted of seven sections: a general company profile, workforce and impact, products and materials, market access and exporting, digital technology adoption, and Likert scales measuring of the importance vs. effectiveness of a list of business tasks and business challenges. This was a novel survey created by this author and co-authors on the Zambian artisan value chain research team. The survey was conducted through Survey Monkey software and distributed via email and WhatsApp text messages to the 266 Zambian artisan businesses identified in the artisan value chain assessment. Data were gathered during August and September of 2020 for the purpose of creating a report for Prospero Zambia (a

Zambian business accelerator that is funded by UK Aid) on the state of the artisan sector in Zambia. The results of the survey are used in this study as secondary data, which are data collected prior and for another purpose.

### **Data Analysis**

For this study, the survey data were de-identified and analyzed using IBM SPSS software. The first six sections were analyzed, excluding the Likert scales questions in section seven. The sample population was stratified in four ways for statistical analysis. First, the sample was divided by men and women, and also by Zambian owned and non-Zambian owned ventures to learn who makes up and leads the artisan enterprises operating in Zambia. Second, the data were examined based on company fiscal size determined by their 2019 revenue. Thus, the respondents were divided into two categories including those who made over 90,000 ZK annually (approximately \$3,800 USD) and those making under 90,000 ZK. To add perspective to the impact of the income artisan businesses generate, the 2019 Gross National Income (GNI) per capita in Zambia was \$1,450, meaning on average Zambian citizens earned \$1,450 annually compared to a GNI per capita of \$65,760 in the United States (GNI per Capita, 2019). Zambia's World Bank Gini coefficient, a measure of income inequality in a nation with a score of 0 indicating perfect equality and 1 indicating perfect inequality, is one of the highest in the world at 0.69, demonstrating extreme income disparities between citizens (Gashongore, 2019). Artisan businesses earning above \$3,800 are making over two and a half times that of the average individual, but even the average individual income in GNI is positively skewed towards high income earners due to income inequality in the country (Stein, 2016).

For analysis the artisan ventures were further classified by business type, whether formal or informal. Formal businesses are defined as those that are registered with the government

either as a for-profit business, company limited by guarantee, NGOs, or trusts and in compliance with Zambian registration and taxation policies. Informal businesses are those that operate informally without government registration or the benefits of government social protection. Descriptive and correlational statistics were generated.

### **Findings**

This study found that of the 81 Zambian artisan enterprises surveyed 77.3% were owned and operated by women. Over 57% of companies employed 50% or more women as artisan producers, with 24 companies employing 100% women. In a country with high informality, an impressive 65.4% of craft companies were formally registered with the government, while 34.6% operated informally. Zambian nationals owned two-thirds of artisan enterprises at 64.2%, while 35.8% were owned by non-Zambians.

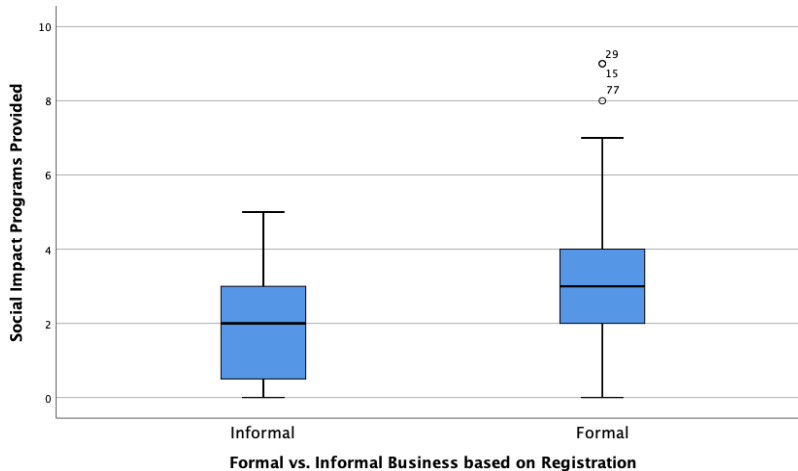
Over half of the artisan enterprises surveyed (56.1%) had been in business for 3 years or more, but 54.3% were very small employing less than three people. Only 5.7% of artisan ventures had 50 or more employees. Still, in 2019, 52.4% of businesses earned over \$3,800 which is over twice the Zambian GNI. A 2x2 crosstabulation was run to see if formally registered ventures differed from informal ventures in whether they had 2019 annual sales over \$3,800. As expected, the analysis found that of the companies that made over \$3,800 USD in 2019 only 16.7% were informal companies while 83.3% were formally registered. This comparison is not intended to discredit the value of informal artisan work, but instead to set a baseline of the gaps between formal and informal ventures' incomes that inform capacity building initiatives and policy efforts to bridge these gaps where possible.



## **Social and Environmental Impacts**

Still, despite earnings or whether formal or informal, over 85% of companies provide at least one social impact program and at least one environmental sustainability effort with a mean of 2.72 and a range of 0-9 social impact programs. Impact programs cited included childcare, savings schemes, education, healthcare, wellness programming, providing sanitary pads, skills training, entrepreneurship training, water projects, and women's empowerment projects. For environmental sustainability efforts, companies provide a mean of 1.84 and a range of 0-6 environmental impact efforts including environmental practices and certifications (organic, forest friendly, wildlife conservation), low to zero waste projects, recycling and upcycling, and ethically sourcing natural materials.

A box and whisker plot (Figure 5) was used to visualize the social impact programs provided by formally registered and informal artisan ventures. The two plots show the range, median, 25<sup>th</sup> and 75<sup>th</sup> percentile of social impact programs provided between formal and informal businesses. As might be expected, formal businesses appear to offer more social impact programming to their artisan workforce with a median of 3 programs per company and a range of 9 programs, while informal businesses median offering is 2 programs with a range of 5. Still, it is important to note that informal businesses appear to value creating impact despite being unregistered with the government and operating on a smaller scale.



*Figure 6. Box and Whisker Plot Formal vs. Informal Business Social Impact Programs Provided*

## Impact Drivers

Access to resources are thought to be drivers of social and environmental impact for artisan enterprises. To investigate the artisan enterprises' access to key resources, the companies were asked a series of questions about resource access. Starting with financial resources, companies were asked if access to finance and access to markets were challenges for their businesses. Sixty-nine percent of businesses said that access to finance was a challenge and only 54.9% of companies had bank accounts. Additionally, 76.9% said they had a challenge accessing markets. Just over 30% said that they operate a local retail location and 41.5% sell online, primarily through local Zambian online marketplaces. The majority of companies, 59.8%, had no export experience and 8.5% had only regional export experience to surrounding countries in the Southern African region.

Looking at technology resources, most of the social enterprises had regular internet access with 53.6% having 24 hour a day access, 20.3% having 6-8 hours of connectivity per day, 17.4% having daily access less than 6 hours, 5.8% gaining access 2-3 times weekly, and only

2.9% with access less than once a week. Over 75% of artisan workshops have access to an internet enabled smart phone. Still, many of the companies do not utilize digital tools to run their businesses with only 23.2% using an email list serve and 4.9% using a CRM system to market and communicate to customers. For accounting 36.6% said they use an online service including QuickBooks, Pastel, or One, 9.8% use a desktop accounting program, 34.1% use Excel, 9.8% do not use technology for accounting but outsource to an accountant or bookkeeper, and the remaining ten percent of companies track accounting manually or don't track it at all. Office software is used by 64.6% of companies and 58.8% use online document storage.

A correlation matrix was conducted to learn if there is an association between business type (formal vs. informal), challenge in access to finance, challenge in access to markets, and the social impact programs these artisan ventured provided. Table 5 shows that two of the six pairs of variables were significantly correlated. Spearman's rho statistics were computed to examine the intercorrelations of the variables. The strongest positive correlation was between challenge in access to finance and challenge to access in markets  $r_s(63) = .58, p < .01$ , which is a larger than typical effect size. This means that businesses who had challenges in access to finance were likely to also have a challenge in accessing markets. Business type, formal or informal, was also positively correlated with the social impact programs a business provided  $r_s(79) = .38, p < .01$ , which is considered a medium or typical effect size.

*Table 5* Intercorrelations for Variables Formal vs. Informal Business, Challenge in Access to Finance, Challenge in Access to Markets, and Social Impact Programs Provided

Variable	1	2	3	4
1. Challenge Access to Finance	--	.58**	-.00	.09
2. Challenge Access to Markets	--	--	-.14	.05
3. Social Impact Programs Provided	--	--	--	.38**
4. Formal vs. Informal Business	--	--	--	--

\*\*  $p < 0.01$ .

Looking at exports to international markets as a possible impact driver, simultaneous multiple regression was conducted to investigate the best prediction of companies providing social impact programs. The combination of variables business type, average export order size, and export experience to predict social impact programs provided was statistically significant,  $F(3,77) = 9.83, p < .001$  (Table 6). Note that business type and average export order significantly predict social impact programs provided. The adjusted  $R^2$  value was .249 indicating that 25% of the variance in social impact programs provided was explained by the model which is a medium to large effect size.

*Table 6* Simultaneous Multiple Regression Analysis Summary for Business Type, Average Export Order, and Export Experience Predicting Social Impact Programs Provided (N=81)

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	95% CI		<i>p</i>
			LL	UL	
Constant	1.25	.43			
Business Type (Formal/Informal)	1.12	.45	.23	2.01	.004
Average Export Order	.38	.18	.02	.74	.037
Export Experience	.19	.19	-.19	.58	.315

*Note.*  $R^2 = .28$ ;  $F(3,77) = 9.83, p < .001$ .

### Summary

From these descriptive and correlational statistics themes emerge that require deeper understanding. First, it appears women are the dominant actors in the craft sector in Zambia, reinforcing the importance of this sector for women. Women are both the majority owners and the majority artisan employees in in Zambia's craft sector, so it is important to understand their motivation as well as the particular impact this sector has on women. Artisan ventures in Zambia were more likely to be formal ventures than informal actors which was surprising considering the country's high rates of informality generally. This indicates that artisan work can be a pathway to

formal, secure employment even in places where formal jobs are scarce. Whether formal or informal, the majority of Zambian artisan ventures purposefully incorporate social impact or environmental programs and practices into the fabric of their organizations. For all artisan ventures resources, especially access to finance, are vital to scaling impact and for accessing markets. Technology access and adoption are also important drivers of scale. Access to markets is essential, with those ventures able to export to international markets found to create greater levels of social impact. Access to finance, access to markets, and technology adoption were challenges found in the majority of survey participants. These key themes warrant deeper exploration and understanding, in the way they manifest in the lived experiences of artisans and their artisan ventures.

## **PHASE 2: EXPLANATORY QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS**

### **Methods**

Phase 2 of this mixed methods study employed qualitative thematic analysis. Qualitative methods help to contextualize the quantitative findings from phase 1 and provide a deeper understanding of nuance and meaning. Qualitative methods are “flexible, context sensitive, and largely concerned with understanding complex issues” (Carcary, 2009). Thematic analysis is a widely used qualitative research design to summarize key learnings from a data set (Nowell et al., 2017). This phase of the study sought answer the research question: How do artisan enterprises perceive their ability to make a social and environmental impact on the community? To address this question the data were analyzed using deductive codes informed by the quantitative findings in phase 1 including access to resources, access to markets, technology adoption, and positive impacts (economic, social, and environmental), particularly for women. Inductive codes were also created from the qualitative data as they emerged.

## **Sample**

Artisans in 6 provinces of Zambia were contacted for in-person interviews during the original value chain assessment from which this study draws its data. A semi-structured interview guide was developed, and two Zambian residents were trained as research assistants. The research assistants traveled for one month, meeting with artisan ventures, conducting interviews, and cataloging products and handmade processes through photographs and videos. In total, interviews took place with 66 artisan ventures which comprise a convenience sample in this study. Interviews were audio recorded for transcription and the research assistants additionally took notes which were added to a secure file. These recordings and notes were used as secondary data in this study.

## **Data Analysis**

The data from the 66 interviews were transcribed verbatim, and coded and analyzed using MAXQDA qualitative software. Transcripts were read in depth with the researcher adding memos of any insights or observations as both process and reflexive notes. After multiple readings the data were coded using deductive themes generated by the quantitative findings in phase 1, as well as inductive themes as they emerged from the qualitative data to better understand the meanings the participants assigned to their experiences (Tuffour, 2017). A theme “captures a salient aspect of the data in a patterned way” (Scharp & Sanders, 2019, p. 117). Using both deductive and inductive coding together is called a “blended approach” with deductive codes providing structure and alignment with existing theory and inductive codes “giving voice” to the data and informing new theory (Skjott Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019). Two cycles of coding were used to validate and provide granularity through descriptive coding (Skjott Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019); the first cycle involved broad categorization using both the

deductive codes from phase one and inductive codes that emerged from the data, followed by a second cycle which provided more specific codes under each category and explored relationship patterns between codes. A codebook provided the definitions of each identified code.

This study used a qualitative research audit trail to provide trustworthiness (Rogers & Cowles, 1993). In addition to detailing the steps in analysis, the researcher maintained detailed records of the raw data, all fieldnotes taken by the research assistants, transcripts of all interviews, and created reflexive memos within MAXQDA, which “can help researchers systemize, relate, and cross reference data...creating a clear audit trail” in thematic analysis (Nowell et al., 2017, p. 3).

## **Findings**

The deductive code framework determined by the findings from phase 1 included the category codes: social impact (including the specific impact on women), environmental impact, and the possible drivers of impact including access to resources, access to markets, and technology adoption. Additionally, two category level codes emerged from the data through inductive coding: COVID-19 and purpose. The consequences brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic were pervasive and on-going. Purpose appeared to be the key driver of scaling impact in Zambian artisan ventures and emerged from the data as the leading code throughout the interviews.

### **Social Impact**

To begin, artisan ventures provided details on the type of social impact that they made. These positive impacts ranged from providing employment opportunities and business related impact like skills training and capacity building, to supporting education for the artisans or their children, providing group savings schemes and pension funds, helping artisans acquire land or

property, making and distributing reusable sanitary napkins for women and girls, creating clean drinking water projects, providing health clinics or health access, growing food for the community, and even providing families with bee hives and the training to harvest honey and beeswax.

Income generation was unanimously cited as the first and most important social impact. The economic benefit of artisan work among rural artisans was of particular importance in meeting families' basic needs. Education was the second most common social impact cited. Participants mentioned supporting local schools, running their own schools, funding school fees for artisan's children, as well as providing educational and literacy programming to the artisans themselves. Group savings schemes were organized to help artisans save for larger expenses or protect them from economic shocks. Most of these programs were comprised of women and were started or encouraged by the venture but ownership and governance of the savings fund was done by the group members. Many also mentioned empowerment. Empowerment was thought to be conveyed through income generation, training, social support, encouraging heritage skills, employing creativity, or through personal agency gained generally by engaging in the craft sector. Advancement in the profession and socially in society was also mentioned. Some key quotes identifying social impact made by artisan ventures include:

*The most important areas of impact we are creating is employment, and preserving the environment, but the priority is creating employment.*

*We pay school fees.*

*I've supported the artisan's families for the last 20 years. We've helped them to buy land so they can build their own houses.*

*We provide a pension and money saving scheme for our employees because a lot of them don't have bank accounts.*

*Fund the community school and promote education*



*We organize cervical cancer screenings and community health programs.*

*Fairtrade employment, environmental practices, a percentage of profits going back to school, flexible working hours, and we work with the team for skills development and training*

*Our beehive project started small. Give a family a beehive, teach how to care and use and harvest, now they can get work managing other hives and earn some additional income. Also, for hives you need trees, and this helps with conservation.*

*We run a preschool and do a little bit of farming to support the community.*

The impact of the craft sector on women specifically surfaced in over half of the interviews. Women's empowerment and creating sustainable livelihoods for women were the codes that emerged under this category and were equally represented across the data. Many of the key quotes about women's employment and empowerment also link to some artisan venture's statements of their mission or purpose. Coded segments included:

*Initially, our focus was education, building schools and infrastructure and that sort of stuff. That grew and expanded, and we started taking a bigger stance on gender and offered a safe space for girls clubs to meet and talk about important things such as consent.*

*We focus on working with vulnerable women - young mothers and child brides.*

*Empowering, seeing the women earn money not wait.*

*The original idea was to take vulnerable women in the community and bring them into offer them skills and train them up so that they could start their own businesses. That initial group is now the backbone of the workshop.*

*The focus is to make sure that the women are happy and sustained.*

*We did research on the best kinds of reusable, washable pads and created that. We now have a workshop where we make the pads.*

*The original vision is to empower women in low income areas that lack education and skills that can bring them regular income. Particularly urban and peri urban women.*

*I supply the women with the materials once a week and pay them for what they've done.*

*Success means creating something that is sustainable and empowering. Empowering women is the main drive.*

When asked how the ventures track and communicate these impacts some said that they did, and others did not track impact. Most had no official impact tracking methods but did have anecdotal methods. One shared, “we track impact by the number of people we help” while another mentioned, “we measure impact through the money artists make,” and another “I measure that [impact] through the happiness of the staff.” Some did measure particularly by tracking sales and earnings data. Another shared, “we measure impact by comparing the money women were earning before.” Still others acknowledged that while their impact is central to their venture they rarely communicate about it with customers saying, “we don’t communicate our impacts but definitely should.”

### **Environmental Impact**

Like social impact, many artisan ventures consider environmental impact as part of their core values. This is mostly demonstrated through their sourcing and use of environmentally friendly materials. Participants cited using both natural and recycled materials, and most commonly sourced those materials by hand or through local partners in the community. Natural materials included clay, natural fibers from grasses and reeds, natural dyes, and bee products. Recyclable materials included glass, fabric remnants, and reclaimed wood. These items were upcycled into new craft products. One organization even used fabric scraps as packing materials. Another built shipping crates from local wood scraps and handmade sisal rope. Keeping material sourcing proximate reduced the environmental footprint of these goods, although exporting the final products negates some of those carbon neutral gains. On environmental impact participants said:

*We go big for environmental responsibility*

*It is an ethical, all round, business practice that leans towards supporting vendors who practice upcycling to minimize their environmental impact*

*We recycled everything we possibly can*

*Use natural dyes and produce our own fabrics to reduce our carbon footprint*

*There is a fund [our sales contribute to] called the Luangwa Community and Conservation Fund and 50% of that goes back into conservation*

*We focus on biodiversity conservation*

*[We use] fallen trees, no cutting*

*The project uses upcycled materials such as fabric scraps, damaged cloth or clothes, VHS tapes, cardboard boxes, magazines, sale flyers, and bottle caps.*

## **Access to Resources**

Phase 1 of this study identified access to resources as a driver of positive impact and highlighted access to finance particularly. The participant interviews drilled down further on what resources artisan ventures felt were related to scaling their impact. Access to training as access to equipment, and government support were identified in addition to access to finance. Many were either wary of banks and bank loans or shared that they could not access formal banking channels. While some ventures were completely self-funded, others were funded by safari lodges or animal sanctuaries and parks, with the former adding to safari tourists' cultural experiences and the latter done to lessen human animal conflict and promote animal conservation. Still others had received small grants for training or equipment but relied primarily on the sales of their products to fund their operations.

Equipment emerged as a resource many ventures noted. While equipment may not seem directly tied to impact, phase 1 demonstrated that increased earnings was correlated with

increased impact among Zambian artisan ventures. Artisan ventures felt that not having the right or better equipment held their organizations back from their full earning potential stating:

*All of our equipment is ancient because we bought it second hand.*

*We use quite a bit of firewood for the kiln, so we want an electric one, but we don't have electricity here.*

*We need new equipment and training because we use very old school techniques.*

*I need gas fire kilns to be more successful. I identify the funds for that through my wage and my mum's wage. We are lucky that we don't pay any rent because it's my mum's property.*

*I want to create mirrors, but I do not have the machines to do so.*

*The sewing machines were donated.*

In addition to access to finance and access to equipment, many ventures said that they needed more access to training. Many artisans noted that they were self-taught and had received no training from anyone on craft or on running a business. One interviewee summed up the sentiment of many by stating that artisans are “hungry for knowledge and learning.” While many did not feel that they needed any training around craft skills, the need for business skills including accounting and finance management, understanding certification standards, product development and design, marketing, and creating an online presence were all mentioned.

Numerous study participants stated that they had received no support from or access to resources from the government including getting no information, training, funding, or business registration assistance. Even when they tried to engage the government to gain information they had no response. Ventures mention being members of the National Arts Council but that membership had not garnered them any support of advantage. As far as Zambian government agencies, some artisan businesses had interacted with the ministry of tourism who they said

appreciated the artisans' work, yet the ministry had not provided any of the support that the artisans were hoping to gain.

### **Access to Markets**

The tourist market in Zambia was identified as the most important market for artisans and craft-based social enterprises. Tourism sales included sales directly to tourists but also sales to safari lodges serving the tourist market. One handmade soap artisan organization was able to secure an order for 5,000 soap bars and spa products annually purchased by a safari lodge, and another was able to provide textiles and natural grass décor for several lodges. Lodge gift shops were the most common type of outlet supporting many artisans by offering a wide variety of artisan made goods. One participant noted "Our biggest market is tourism here," and another shared "we are more appreciated by foreigners." This speaks to why many artisans cited "conscious consumers" who cared about the product story and about buying eco-friendly goods as their target customer. Many pointed to the potential opportunities for growth if they expand to US and UK markets. While several participants had experimented in or wanted to participate in international markets only a few ventures had found success. Those who had were either part of the 5.7% of ventures employing over 50 artisans, or companies that had exported on a small scale through online channels or through partners who helped sell their products in the US, like friends and missionaries through local sales and home parties. A few noted selling on Etsy.com and Facebook Marketplace, but many found online marketing and payment processing a barrier.

The artisans ventures highlighted two additional large barriers to success in exporting. Finding a consistent market was a challenge. One participant said this was the greatest challenge:

*Frankly speaking, I am discouraged because what holds this business is the market. We are struggling with a consistent market.*

Additionally, shipping was a tremendous barrier to export and many study participants detailed challenges in trying to find affordable shipping channels for their goods:

*Frustrating that we have a lot of export interest, but the cost of shipping is challenging.*

*An issue is border delays.*

*The shipping we have done is very small scale, like suitcase kind of thing.*

*Our products are heavy so it's hard and expensive to ship thing internationally. Another challenge is breakage because the clay is fragile.*

*We received a massive bill from FedEx, and it was in customs for 3 weeks with no idea why. It was like quadruple the price [expected]!*

*Would love to cross borders and export – challenge because of the weight of the product.*

Artisan businesses exporting to wholesale customers acquired the majority of those wholesale importers by exhibiting at international tradeshow abroad. They note the value in trade shows for accessing international markets, but also felt that trade shows were an expensive and risky endeavors if they did not acquire a volume buyer. One participant felt the international market was impossible to access saying, “there is no opportunity for us in the international market.”

In addition to tourist and export markets, artisans identified the local Zambian market as both important and growing. However, artisans had mixed experiences selling to local Zambians. While some ventures felt that the local market supported and appreciated handmade goods, noting success selling in local shops, farmer's markets, Green Market, and at the annual ZADs artisan show, others thought the local market was very limited. Several shared the sentiment that Zambians had “small pockets” and while Zambians admired the products they wanted things at a cheap price, and only some valued handmade goods over mass produced merchandise. One artisan stated, “they don't really buy, but they admire the goods.”

## **Technology Adoption**

Technology adoption was mixed among participants. Technology adoption is understood to be integration of digital tools into a business. Under technology adoption sales tracking and technology use emerged. Many Zambian businesses are using simple spreadsheets like Excel to track their product sales either daily, weekly, or monthly. Some use accounting software to manage their finances. Participants mentioned using the software programs QuickBooks, Pastel and One. Two ventures said that they used an outside accountant who balanced their bookkeeping and helped them pay their taxes. Still others stated that they tracked their sales manually in a notebook or a ledger, and some did not track their sales at all.

In addition to sales tracking and accounting functions, interviewees said that they used technology to market their brand or products through social media or through their websites. Social media is thought to be important in sharing the brand's story or products, but only Facebook has widespread adoption in Zambia. Some artisan enterprises sought training to understand other social media channels and to create social media strategies, while others lacked the time, personnel, or online resources. While most had internet access, though sometimes inconsistent or only at certain times of the day, many were still struggling to create a website, and only a select few were able to transact on their sites. One artisan shared their much more basic desire for technology adoption saying, "I would love a computer," while another disagreed stating, "I do not use any technology, I'm into natural creation."

## **COVID-19**

While participants noted many challenges in access to resources, access to markets, and technology adoption, the negative impact of COVID-19 was present throughout the interviews. Just like in the rest of the world, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted artisans' lives and

livelihoods in Zambia and created economic shocks and lingering uncertainties. Participants found the economic ramifications to be harsher than the health ramifications in Zambia. The slowing of tourism hit this sector particularly hard. Participant shared their concerns triggered by the COVID-19 crisis:

*We had a strategic plan, but COVID hit and rearranged everything.*

*I feel we're treading water – we shut down during COVID.*

*Corona is a huge barrier.*

*I did not take a salary this year because of COVID.*

*We are dependent on the Luangwa Community and Conservation Fund- the way it works is that lodges commit a certain percentage of every guest's bed night into this fund and then that fund is split 50% conservation and 50% community based programs. This year has made us realize that this is a fragile platform, so we've had to diversify and look at other options.*

*No idea what our profit will be because of COVID.*

## **Purpose**

Finally, purpose was the most frequently occurring category code across all of the data. This inductive code was widespread throughout the interviews and demonstrated that artisan work has motivations beyond income generation that are tied to utilizing human creativity through creating beautiful and useful goods, creating opportunities for empowerment and connection, and more generally positive impacting on the lives of others. Purpose is the “why” for artisan ventures, including why they were formed, what inspires them, and why they persist. A more granular look at purpose found that the participants identified elements of purpose through their mission, impact aspirations, and creative motivations. In the code book mission was defined as the artisan ventures’ reason for starting and maintaining in the craft sector. Their impact aspirations were the ways that they hoped to make a positive impact in the future.



Creative motivations were the ways that art, artistry, and creativity inspired their actions. To provide a more in-depth look at the coded data under purpose, Table 7 provides key quotes that reveal social purpose at the heart of the craft sector across Zambian artisan ventures. It also highlights how creativity drives these ventures.

*Table 7 Purpose: Mission, Impact Aspirations, and Creative Motivation*

Code	Key Quotes
<b>Mission</b>	Primary focus is a school provide excellent free education up to grade 9
	Making myself isn't the focus, rather supplying is the primary focus. The main focus is to empower other people to be able to make.
	I define success as making a profit but more than that for me it is seeing other people be able to start their little businesses and provide others with a source of income. For me, that's the best.
	To share with others. Keep fluid and adaptable.
	To provide small-scale arts and craft producers with the opportunity to make a livelihood from their handicrafts through the creation of a platform where Zambians can sell their products 6 days a week.
	To empower the handmade sector of Zambia because we believe that creative communities matter and they are crucial to Zambia's future.
	Creating employment is definitely our focus.
	Creating employment and preserving the environment. Educate children, football every evening, practice every afternoon.
	We create employment, conserve the environment, and increase income.
	Making money not just for self-benefit.
	To help my brothers and sisters and the community in the village where I came from.
	Our soul focus is not the shop, rather our wider project and work. Success for us on the staff side includes empowering them and delivering skills that they can take elsewhere if they so choose.
	Uniquely, we are a charity organization first and a shop second. We have really given the team a platform to raise them up and give them new opportunities and skills.
	We use little equipment as we are all about handmade, I don't want to mechanize because there are too many people who need work.
<b>Impact Aspirations</b>	I want my business to become big so I can employ many people.
	The goal is to make a living and create employment.
	I want to grow. Grow the number of youths involved, number of products, number of markets. I also want to own a building.
	We need to offer the kids something so they can learn, a trade
	I wish whatever was produced could be sold and bring an income to the school.
	Want to Grow!
	We hope to be sustainable and to uplift the community.
	Would like to teach computers.
	We would like everyone to be financially stable.
	We want to support the older people and we are kind of doing that through the baskets now and we want to do some conservation education at the school.
	I want to have transferred skills to the team and see them grow and develop.
	Want to be able to grow the team and grow orders to bring more people on board.
	I would like to see it grow, particularly through online and focus on diversity of markets. I would not like to get to the point where our production is stretched where we were spending so much time on the products that we are not able to do the pads [sanitary pad for local use by women]. Less focus on volume and diversity of products – yes but within parameters because our social impact there is so big.
	The artisans are identified as rising stars.
<b>Creative Motivation</b>	We want people to buy from us because we are making things that are unique because they come from within us.

It is because of this foundation that I feel like I'm living. Without art, I am not myself.
If I see someone on a bicycle carrying something I will design that. This is real life.
It all starts from my mind.
Everything is made completely from scratch, every item.
The women are far more skilled than us, we just do the design.
It starts with a gemstone, which is most unusual, I let the gemstone talk to me and it literally just comes out of my head.
Everything we make is bespoke so there's really no multiples, it is all original.
I doodle a lot. I am a very fidgety person, constantly doodling and drawing.
Our product itself is unique, the neutral colors are not typical in Africa, so it stands out.
No technology is used in the design process just imagination.
When people come here to buy, they are buying a memory or experience.
Staff turnover is very small because they have a skillset that you can't find anywhere else.

## Discussion

In this mixed methods study several drivers of social impact growth were identified including increased employment opportunities, formal business registration, access to resources, access to markets, increased revenues, technology adoption, exports, and purpose. Mapped to the Ripple Effect of Artisan Entrepreneurship conceptual model, artisan enterprises are reaching back to touch women's lives and livelihoods in the impact spheres aligned with the artisan herself and that of her household, and also rippling forward into the local community and even the global society through their positive impact practices and programs. These efforts at the organizational level create significant social impacts including income generation, social support, education, health promotion, and women's empowerment. The data placed a key emphasis on creating social benefit for women through incomes and empowerment. The majority of the craft workforce was found to be women which may explain why women are the majority beneficiaries of the sector's impact by default. However, a particular gender focus on women's livelihoods and empowerment may also stem from the high number of women owned/women led ventures which value gender equity and therefore prioritize creating gender parity in the economy.

Both the breadth and depth of impact provided by artisan ventures is laudable. While those inside the artisan sector have come to expect and even assume artisan ventures are grounded in purpose, it is important to note that this is not typical for most businesses. Businesses set out primarily to make a profit. While some of the artisan ventures in Zambia are officially organized as social enterprises, many are not and yet they operate under social enterprise and purpose driven principles. Purpose was found to be the greatest driver of both social and environmental impact which was informed by the qualitative phase of this study. This finding emphasizes the importance of qualitative inquiry to understand the meaning behind the numbers and to let inductive themes emerge from participants lived experiences that might otherwise be overlooked. Further, it helps explain the entrepreneurial motivations of artisan ventures in Zambia to achieve a social and/or environmental purpose despite their many resource constraints. Further research is necessary to test the universality of purpose as the motivator for artisan ventures in other developing countries.

Understanding impact drivers is critical to helping artisan ventures strategically scale their social and environmental impact. It is also important in advocating for government policy that incentivizes business and impact growth, like simplified business registration for formalization. Formality is an impact driver for artisan ventures, while informality remains a barrier. The quantitative results of this analysis suggest that being a formally registered business is a powerful driver and predictor of social impact programming provided and environmental sustainability efforts undertaken by Zambian artisan enterprises. The revenues of formally registered companies were significantly higher than informal businesses, formal businesses had less challenges in accessing finance and markets than their informal counterparts, and they provided significantly more social and environmental programming for their work force and their

communities. Policies and programs to incentivize formal registration can create an environment that can foster market access which can help scale social impact (Han & Shah, 2020). Reducing the barriers to entry for companies seeking formal registration through a clear and simple registration and taxation process can increase business formality in developing countries (deSoto, 2000). And formal employment opportunities for women provide the security and social protection necessary to move women and families out of extreme poverty.

Building on those findings, increased annual revenue also appears to drive social impact programming artisan enterprises provide. Simply put, for the social enterprises in this study higher revenues meant increased social impact programming depth. Zambian artisan ventures appear to increase both their commitment and ability to provide more depth of social and environmental impact efforts as a result of increased revenue. This was especially true for companies exporting crafts internationally. Artisan social enterprises in Zambia use revenue growth as an impact driver to scale the depth of their social impact programming, aligning financial and social goals to work in concert for stakeholders. And access to markets is also a social impact driver, particularly export markets. The combination of formality, export experience, and average export order size predicted 25% of the variance in social impact programming provided by artisan businesses.

Technology use was another important impact driver. Businesses utilizing digital tools to run their businesses were most often formally registered and had greater earnings in 2019. While this may be because formal businesses with higher earnings allow for investment in technology tools, the informal businesses in Zambia who earned over \$3,800 also showed higher digital adoption. While technology use itself is harder to link to impact, its utilization towards formalization and revenue growth, two clear social impact drivers, make it an important

secondary driver of positive impact. More research is warranted to see how technology can be used to scale social impact.

Despite the ability of Zambian artisan ventures to scale their impact on many levels, the qualitative data also found barriers to accessing resources, markets, and technology adoption as well as challenges brought on by a lack of government support and the economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. More research is needed to understand the best interventions to mitigate these challenges and how training, information, and resource allocation can improve outcomes.

In developing countries like Zambia where informality is high and social protection programs are low, sustainable employment provides direct social impact in the form of income generation. Creating pathways to formal sector work is essential for because formal sector jobs can provide more predictable wages, benefits, social protection, and personal agency than informal sector jobs (Chen, 2008). Whether formal or informal, the majority of the Zambian artisan sector businesses are making tremendous efforts at providing social impact and environmental programming aimed at alleviating poverty, opening opportunities for marginalized workers, and creating sustainable environmental practices in addition to generating vital employment. Also, women appear to benefit most from artisan employment opportunities in the country. With 77.3% of companies women owned and 57% employing 50% or more women, the artisan sector is a promising avenue for women's employment in Zambia and ripe for programming that builds capacity and therefore opportunities for women artisans.

### **Limitations and Future Research Recommendations**

This study was specific to businesses in Zambia and limited to the artisan sector. While several drivers of impact growth were identified, more research is necessary to test the

universality of these impact drivers in the artisan sector as well as in other sectors beyond artisan craft. The survey used was part of larger value chain assessment and not solely focused on measuring how artisan ventures scale social and environmental impact. Using an impact scaling framework like the SCALERS model which identifies seven different drivers of scaling social impact, may increase the learning derived from future studies (Cannatelli, 2017). Also, while the sample that responded to the artisan business survey in Zambia was made up of a majority of women business owners who provided equal employment for men and women or even preferenced women for employment opportunities, more research is necessary to learn the role of women social entrepreneurs globally in creating and scaling social, environmental impact, and employment for women.

### **Conclusion**

Craft-based artisan social enterprises provide a valuable intervention vehicle for both economic development and empowerment over oppression for women experiencing poverty in Zambia, especially those who are formally registered. Artisan ventures create jobs, provide social protections, and play a critical role in the economic and social development of communities experiencing poverty. Once highlighted, supported, and connected, artisan businesses provide an immense opportunity for job creation, income generation, social, and environmental impact. Thus, this study brings to bear the critical importance of creating programs and policies that remove barriers and create pathways to formalization. In doing so, the economic, social, and environmental impact on women, their families, and their communities can be sustained.

This research sought to identify the drivers to scaling social and environmental impact for Zambian ventures in the artisan craft sector. This study contributes to the social entrepreneurship

literature on scaling social impact and provides a framework of impact drivers ripe for further investigation across cultural contexts in the artisan sector as well as across sectors. It also contributes to the debate on the importance of formalizing enterprises, like artisan ventures in developing countries, that often function in the informal economy.

This research sought to identify the drivers to scaling social and environmental impact for Zambian ventures in the artisan craft sector. This study contributes to the social entrepreneurship literature on scaling social impact and provides a framework of impact drivers ripe for further investigation across cultural contexts in the artisan sector as well as across sectors. It also contributes to the debate on the importance of formalizing enterprises, like artisan ventures in developing countries, that often function in the informal economy. Finally, this research provides evidence that artisans and artisan enterprises in Zambia are driven by purpose to provide a meaningful avenue for formal employment and social protection support for both men and women crafters. Combating poverty for women and children in developing countries requires finding pathways to economic opportunities and economic justice for women. Understanding the contributions artisan ventures make to individual workers, communities, and the environment, as well as how these enterprises scale their positive impacts has the potential to influence policy and practice, creating a ripple effect of economic and social benefit for artisans, families, and communities.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

#### **Summary**

Artisan craft ventures are an important driver of women's employment, serving as the second largest employer of women in developing countries (Chappe & Lawson Jaramillo, 2020; Nest, 2018). Across the three studies this dissertation aimed to shine a light on women artisans by focusing on the role of artisans as entrepreneurs in Africa, particularly in Zambia, and exploring their ventures' unique economic, social, and environmental impacts.

There is overwhelming evidence that women's economic empowerment is pivotal to the wellbeing of individuals and families, as well as a nation's economic success (Duflo, 2012; UN, 2017; Buvinić & Furst-Nichols, 2016). The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) defines women's economic empowerment as 'having access to and control over the means to make a living on a sustainable and long term basis, and receiving the material benefits of this access and control' (Mosedale, 2005). The challenge often lies in how to go about creating conditions for women to become economically empowered and for their ventures to create sustainable livelihoods.

Establishing economic opportunities for women is essential for disrupting these harmful trends and creating positive change for the individual, her family, her community, and her country (Kabeer, 2020). Through my own entrepreneurial ventures, consulting, fieldwork, and scholarship, I have found artisan entrepreneurship in the handmade craft sector to be a powerful vehicle for advancing economic empowerment and gender justice for women. However, the



limited existing scholarship does not fully illuminate the larger social and cultural implications of this sector.

Female artisan entrepreneurs in developing countries, whether operating individually or collectively in cooperatives and social enterprises, are largely ignored by policymakers and under-served and under-supported via limited investment and a lack of training, digitalization, finance, and formal markets despite their significant contributions to positive social impact in their communities and to the environment (Alexander et al., 2020; Spitzer, 2019). Artisan work can be an onramp to secure, formal employment for women experiencing poverty and can also provide meaning through the creative process. The findings of these three studies indicate specific policy and program priorities that can support artisan ventures and maximize their impact. These findings also hold important implications for theory and future research.

### **Implications for Theory**

This dissertation introduced the Ripple Effect of Artisan Entrepreneurship conceptual model to advance theory. The model posits that artisan entrepreneurship in the handmade craft sector provides women in developing countries not only a source of income generation, but also a greater potential for social change, resilience, and positive impact in her home, community, national, and world. This includes the potential for increased personal agency, social support, cultural preservation, skills training, gender empowerment, and strategies to address larger social and environmental issues.

This conceptual model is ripe for testing and further theorizing to consider the interplay among and between the six spheres of impact: the woman artisan, her household, artisan enterprises, the community, the nation, and the global community and the drivers and barriers to scaling positive impacts at each level. Conceptualizing this sector as having

potential for positive global impact on poverty reduction that begins with an individual woman provides a framework to apply the theories of empowerment, capabilities, resilience, and scaling impact across these spheres. The findings of this dissertation, especially study 3, provide preliminary support for this conceptual model that artisan ventures create impacts beyond income generation on women's sense of purpose, on their families' well-being, and on their communities. Future research can continue to explore the utility of this conceptual model in identifying how artisan ventures create and sustain positive impacts on women, their families, and communities as well as how they may impact local, national, and global policies and practices toward alleviating poverty and supporting women's economic, social, and political development. This is further explored in the section below specific to future research.

### **Implications for Policy**

In the face of the COVID-19 crisis, many artisan social enterprises leveraged their limited resources through their effectual process (Sarasvathy, 2009) to respond to the pandemic with resilience. Artisan ventures shifted to mask production for local and global markets, provided community health, hygiene, and social distancing education, established social supports and food security where governments and non-profits fell short, and utilized group savings to meet basic needs. These ventures filled institutional voids, providing social protection, health information, and food security where governments fell short. Further, artisan ventures contribute valuable income generation for families and communities. Policies to invest in building the capacities of artisan ventures to further these efforts are needed at both the country and global level and must be backed by funding to realize the sector's full potential. In particular, the findings from this dissertation highlight the critical need to provide access to

formalization via removing barriers and providing pathways to creating formal business structures, access to finance and markets, and technology tools. In doing so there is the potential to have a significant impact on poverty for women and their families around the world.

In addition, as crafts are made in local tradition, with local materials and designs, they serve as a critical artifact for preserving customs and heritage from communities around the world. UNESCO considers craft as intangible cultural heritage which they define as ‘practices, representations, expressions, knowledge and skills passed down from generation to generation which provides communities with a sense of identity and is continuously recreated in response to their environment’ (MooiKwong, 2017, p. 2). Because the tourism and handmade industries are so uniquely intertwined, many governments have been propelled to create programs that invest in bolstering both tourism and artisan craft production simultaneously (Mastracci & Edgar, 2020). Additionally, crafts serve as tools for education to the global community to learn about cultures and traditions from around the world. The artisan sector plays a unique role in maintaining and restoring historical practices and local knowledge which is deserving of support through national heritage preservation funds as well as global heritage preservation efforts through government funding organizations like UNESCO and the Smithsonian Institute, as well as private foundations.

### **Implications for Practice**

Advocating for macro-level change that is backed by policy and enforced by governments is no small task, but an important one. Social workers and social entrepreneurs can help drive policy and organize artisans for collective action at the national, regional, and

global level to advance a collective agenda. Social workers can lead lobbying activities to influence policy makers and enhancing the solidarity among artisan trading organizations.

Social workers can also support craft ventures through programming and training to accelerate their income growth as well as expand social and environmental impacts. As exemplified by Rebecca van Bergen's work at Nest, social workers can provide capacity building for marginalized producers and communities as well as economic opportunities through facilitating partnerships and facilitating global linkages. Creating jobs for women in poverty that offer social protection, fair remuneration, and satisfaction targeted interventions. Social workers and social entrepreneurs primarily to employ grassroots community economic interventions sometimes referred to as 'globalization from below' (Raniga, 2017). Social workers can support grassroots artisan endeavors, providing knowledge, resources, market linkages and capacity building for artisan ventures while also helping build social programming aimed at meeting the needs of women and families experiencing poverty. Finally, social workers are uniquely qualified to become social entrepreneurs, partnering or leading ventures that work to create economic justice in the economy through artisan employment.

### **Implications for Research**

The novel Ripple Effect of Artisan Entrepreneurship conceptual model presents opportunities for future research across the social work and social entrepreneurship literature streams, with an important opportunity to study the through effect of community resilience. Each sphere of impact in the model provides a corresponding unit of analysis: individual, organizational, and institutional. Building on the findings from the studies presented in this dissertation, the model further illustrates opportunities for deeper understanding through future

empirical work to highlighting the importance of the sector's impact. Thus, I propose research questions ripe for future scholarship.

### ***Individual Level Research***

In examining the craft artisan sector at the individual level, there are two key spheres of positive impact, the artisan herself and her immediate household. The overarching research questions of motivation (Murnieks et al., 2020), *what drives a woman to become a craft artisan?*, is intrinsically linked to understanding the antecedents to necessity entrepreneurship in developing countries. Many artisans begin as necessity or survivalist entrepreneurs in the informal sector (Dhurup & Makhitha, 2014), so the more nuanced question to explore is *why a woman establishing herself as a necessity entrepreneur would choose an artisan venture?* The literature points to the need for opportunities for women to have low barriers to entry both in finance and in training (Jamali, 2009) given their lack of formal education and significant expectations of caregiving and household responsibilities (Goldín et al., 2006). It is important to explore these questions through qualitative methods that foreground the lived experiences of artisans.

While many artisan are motivated by economic gains, there is also a secondary benefit to perpetuating cultural skills and traditions through a creative outlet (Ratten et al., 2019). Creative activities have been found to have healing benefits for individuals and communities who have experienced trauma, common amongst impoverished women (Archibald & Dewar, 2010). Research has shown that craft initiatives contribute positively to personal health and reduce depression (Jokia et al., 2021), but little is known about how the craft sector improves the artisan's mental health through artisan work to include the creative outlet of the craft, sense of purpose and belonging in her venture, or overall empowerment through the process. Thus,

there is an opportunity to answer the question: *How does the craft sector improve the artisan's mental health?*

While the need to support her family's basic needs is a leading antecedent to artisan work, with steady income and support, there are also significant increases in access to education and health services for both the woman and her family. Education is widely considered an important pathway out of poverty. This is particularly true when it comes to the education of woman artisan's daughters. Girl's education has been acknowledged as a system that can further social mobility and even redistribute opportunities more equitably (Stromquist, 2001). Women artisans often use their earnings to advance their children's education which has the power to create lasting impact for their family as it is a critical step for breaking the pattern of generational poverty. The findings from this dissertation also suggest that artisan ventures themselves may provide support for not just workers but also family educational needs. Further research is needed to examine *how does artisan work contribute to the education of an artisan's children, particularly daughters?*

### ***Organizational Level Research***

Beyond the immediate benefits to the artisan and her household, there is a need to explore the sector at the organizational level through artisan social enterprises as well as their position within the local community. There are three dominant business models that comprise the artisan craft sector: individual ventures, community cooperative businesses, and craft enterprise employers. Thus, research is needed to understand: *What are the drivers leading to the adoption of one business model over another?, What are the unique opportunities and barriers that exist for each model?, and Are there differences in impact when comparing these different models?* The opportunities and challenges of each of these business models directly

informs the entrepreneurship literature focused on venture model selection and transition overtime (Dentchev et, al., 2018).

### ***Institutional Level Research***

Creating economic opportunities for women is a critical first step to establishing equity, and the artisan sector is a core opportunity. Not only does the sector help to further gender equity and economic opportunity, but it also presents an avenue for gaining social status and progress towards equal rights. As women artisans are empowered through their work and community, their collective voice and strength begins to carry weight. One cause of their generational poverty is linked to patriarchal land tenure (Harland, 2014). Through collective action, women are able to raise awareness and advocate for change. Their collective support and encouragement of one another, as well as access to consistent financial income, also directly contributes to their ability to access health services and education for themselves as well as their children. This collective action informs the emerging literature stream on the role of social workers and social entrepreneurs in social movements and as advocates for change (Leitzinger et al., 2016). Further research is necessary to examine places where social movements are improving the lives of women artisans, especially through advocacy and collective action toward institutional changes that support the success and sustainability of these ventures.

### ***Research on the Through Effect of Resilience***

While the artisan sector, in and of itself, is prime for more in-depth research, there is an additional benefit that women artisans create -- resilience. Resilience is a *through effect* in the artisan sector. Resilience, like empowerment, is a highly relevant in researching necessity entrepreneurship in developing countries. Resilience can be present at the individual,

organizational, and institutional levels (Raetze et al., 2020), and as such, how it manifests within the artisan sector warrants further examination. At the individual level, artisans overcome personal obstacles and traumas leading to their work in the artisan sector and continuing to persist after their work is established. While scholars have looked at resilience for those recovering from natural disasters (Williams & Shepherd, 2016) and forced migration (Fong et al., 2007), understanding *how and why these women were able to establish artisan ventures in light of their circumstances*, adds to our knowledge of individual resiliency.

### **Conclusion**

This dissertation has sought to amplify the importance of the handmade craft sector for women in Africa, particularly in Zambia, and to provide a roadmap for future research inside the social work and social entrepreneurship literature streams. Future engaged scholarship around women artisans in developing countries can continue to strengthen our knowledge and understanding of the unique attributes of the artisan sector. Developing a body of research that seeks to understand the opportunities and benefits, as well as barriers to artisan entrepreneurship is vital in our efforts as a global community to end extreme poverty for women, combat climate change, create positive social impact in vulnerable communities, and improve community resilience to economic shocks.

Further, this dissertation contributes to our understanding of artisan work as empowering and impactful, as well as a tool for building resilience for women in developing economies. Study 1 highlighted six evidence backed ways artisan work empowers women in Africa including providing income generation and job creation, valuing and utilizing Indigenous knowledge, creating shared and safe spaces, building community, and advancing gender equity. Study 1 also identified barriers to artisan success including lack of access to



finance and markets, lack of training, challenges with raw material sourcing or equipment, insecure land tenure, poor shipping options, low capacity, and low technology adoption; which were reinforced through the findings of studies 2 and 3. In all three studies in this dissertation, artisan resilience is apparent in both direct and implied ways. Study 2 found four critical elements of community resilience artisan social enterprises can leverage to create community resilience including resources, mental outlook, community networks, and economic investment. Additionally creativity was found to be a unique element of resilience tied particularly to artisan enterprises. Finally, in study 3 the types of positive social and environmental impact artisan ventures make on communities were highlighted and correlational statistics provided insights into drivers of positive impact in artisan ventures. Paired with qualitative findings this study highlights ways to enable artisan ventures to scale their social impact through access to resources, access to markets, technological adoption. The most critical finding is that artisan ventures are overwhelmingly driven by purpose, as demonstrated through mission and creativity, in creating positive impacts on artisans lives and livelihoods as well as the communities where artisan ventures operate.

While artisan work is often overlooked and undervalued in reality artisan entrepreneurship is empowering work that provides critical income in vulnerable communities, especially women. The COVID-19 crisis shed light on the strengths of women artisans and their capacity for resilience. Artisans and artisan social enterprises tackled pandemic challenges using the practices they put in place long before the pandemic, providing a leading example of how this women-led industry creates a resilient workforce, responds agilely to challenges, creates connections globally, and builds community. Thus, it is critical to invest in and support artisan entrepreneurship and highlight their work as artisan businesses in developing countries

provide an immense opportunity for job generation, women's empowerment, and social impact. In doing so we can work to remove barriers and create pathways to connect artisan businesses to markets by creating capacity building interventions, crafting policies that help informal businesses formalize, and revealing the talents and capabilities of the organizations linking them to shared value chains that recognize artisan's skills and help scale the impact of the sector.

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