The role of the community, arts, and culture in healthcare.

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Art can serve as a means of communication and self-expression, allowing people to explore and express their emotions, experiences, and perspectives in a non-verbal way. For the purposes of this essay, I will utilise different art pieces to discuss my points of view regarding the role of community, arts, and culture in healthcare. Communities around the globe have a significant impact on healthcare and the way in which it is provided and accessed. From shaping the healthcare landscape through the sharing of data and information, to serving as a source of support for healthcare providers, the community plays a vital role. In addition, the cultural and social context in which a community is located can greatly influence attitudes towards healthcare and the willingness to engage with healthcare services. It is important to consider the role of community in the future of healthcare and to explore ways in which it can be involved in shaping sustainable healthcare solutions through culture and art.

Community

This painting 'The Gleaners' by Millet (1857), depicts three peasant women collecting leftover grains of wheat from a field after the harvest, demonstrating the importance of communal support and cooperation in times of need. The concept of community and a sense of belonging and connection among individuals has been present throughout human history. Community plays a vital role in shaping the healthcare landscape in several ways. Firstly, community is a key source of information and data that can inform the design and delivery of healthcare services (World Health Organization, n.d.). For example, community surveys can provide valuable insights into the health needs and preferences of the people living within a particular area, which can help healthcare providers to tailor their services accordingly. Furthermore, the community can be a key source of support for healthcare providers, both in terms of fundraising and volunteering efforts. Community groups and organisations can help to raise awareness of health issues and promote healthy behaviours, as well as providing practical support to healthcare providers through fundraising initiatives and

volunteering efforts. However, the community is not just a passive recipient of healthcare services. The community can also be an active participant in the design and delivery of healthcare, through processes such as community consultation and participatory planning. This can help to ensure that healthcare services are responsive to the needs and preferences of the people living within a particular community, which can in turn help to increase uptake and improve outcomes.

The role of the community in healthcare is also influenced by the cultural and social context in which it is located. Different communities may have different cultural norms and values that influence their attitudes towards healthcare and their willingness to engage with healthcare services (Klabunde, 2017). In traditional Chinese medicine, there is a strong emphasis on preventative care and natural remedies. Acupuncture and herbal remedies are often used to prevent and treat illness (Traditional Chinese Medicine World Foundation, n.d.). This approach to healthcare can help to reduce the reliance on costly and potentially harmful pharmaceuticals and can be a more sustainable solution in the long term. In other cultures, there is a greater focus on Western medicine and pharmaceuticals. For example, in the United States, prescription drugs are often the first line treatment for many health conditions. This approach can be effective in some cases, but it can also lead to overuse of medications and the development of antibiotic resistance. Ayurvedic medicine, focuses on holistic care, addressing the physical, emotional, and spiritual aspects of health. Practitioners use a combination of herbal remedies, dietary changes, and spiritual practices to promote overall health and well-being (National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health, n.d.). This approach can help to prevent illness and promote sustainable health in the long term. In some cultures, there is a strong reliance on traditional healers or spiritual leaders for healthcare. For example, in many indigenous communities, traditional healers are the primary source of healthcare. This approach can be effective, as traditional healers often have a deep understanding of local plants and their medicinal properties. However, it can also lead to a lack of access to modern medical treatments and facilities. By taking a culturally sensitive approach, healthcare providers can better understand the needs and preferences of the community, and design solutions that are more likely to be adopted and effective in the long term. Understanding the cultural context of a community can therefore be crucial in developing healthcare services.

Homogenisation and commodification of communities, art, and culture.

Frank's (1958) series 'The Americans' captures the homogenisation of American culture in the 1950s.", as the country was undergoing rapid modernisation and globalisation. The image depicts a sense of loneliness and isolation in the face of mass culture, parallel to the homogenisation of culture within today's society. Traditional medicine and healing practices can often be more affordable and accessible to underserved or marginalised communities and may be more culturally appropriate for these populations (Kreps, 2018). The loss of these practices due to globalisation and the proliferation of Western medicine may have negative consequences for the health and well-being of these communities. Globalisation has also been criticised for promoting a Western, capitalist model of culture that can displace and marginalise local and traditional cultural practices (Harman, 2016). On one hand, these forces have made it easier for cultural practitioners to share their work and reach a global audience and have facilitated the exchange of ideas and cultural practices across borders. Nevertheless, globalisation and urbanisation have led to the erosion of traditional communities and culture, as people become more mobile and more likely to live in diverse and dispersed populations (Wellman, 2001). Despite these changes, a sense of community and the desire for social connection are still important to many people. Research has shown that individuals who are actively engaged in their communities and have a sense of belonging tend to have better mental and physical health outcomes (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). In addition, communities and culture can provide support, resources, and a sense of identity for individuals, and can play a crucial role in addressing social and economic issues.

Rise of mass media
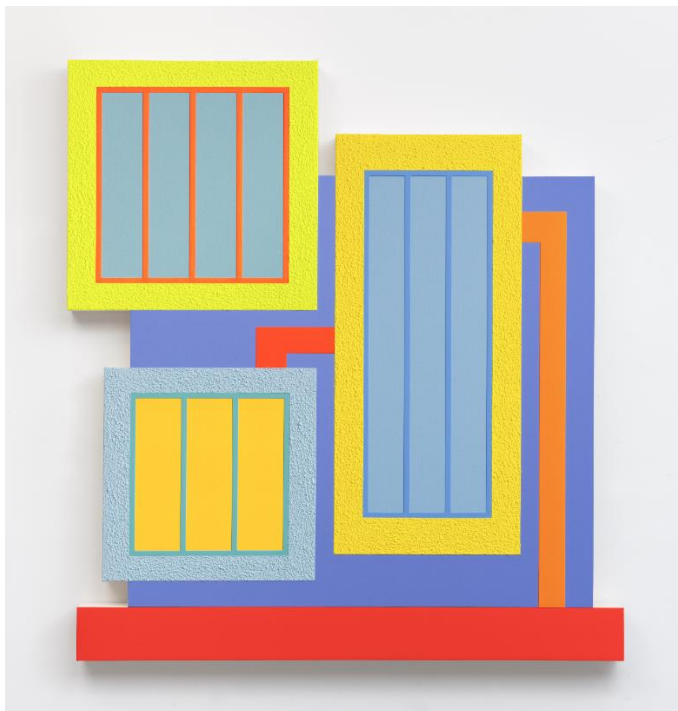
'The Grid' by Halley (2021) shows a grid of interconnected cells, representing the ways in which modern society is interconnected and mediated by technology. Online communities, facilitated by the rise of mass media and technology, can provide access to a wealth of information and support for people with health conditions and can be an important source of social support for those who may be isolated or marginalised. However, they can also be a source of misinformation and fear mongering, which can have negative consequences for public health. A study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) found that a significant proportion of the health information shared on social media is inaccurate or misleading (Brennan et al., 2019). This can lead to people seeking out unproven or potentially harmful treatments or avoiding necessary medical

care. Social media and online communities can also contribute to the spread of fear and panic around health issues, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic when misinformation and conspiracy theories were spread online (Nguyen et al., 2021). Despite these concerns, social media and online communities can also be used for health promotion and disease prevention, as they allow for the rapid dissemination of accurate and up-to-date information (Liu et al., 2018) and can provide support and resources for people with health conditions (Gleason et al., 2016).

Arts in healthcare
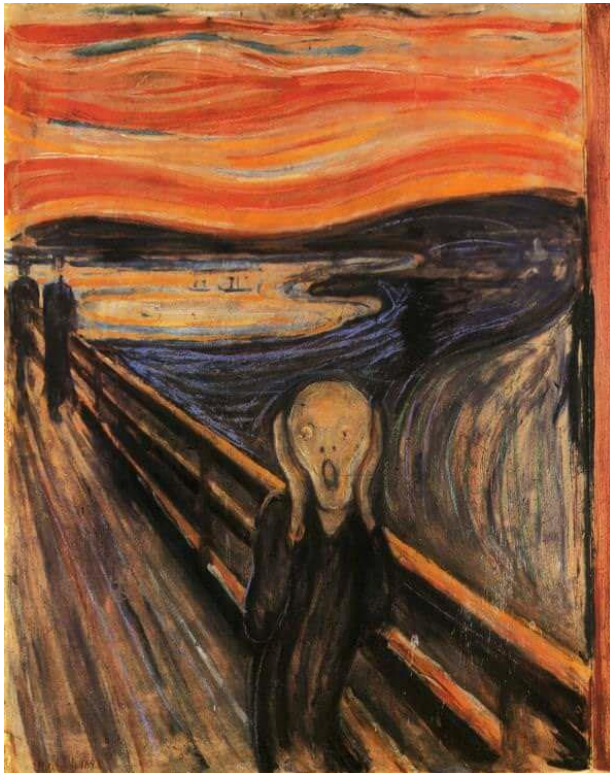
Munch's (1893) 'The Scream' depicts a figure with an open mouth and wide eyes, expressing a sense of primal fear and isolation. It has become an iconic image of mental distress and bas been used to raise awareness about issues such as anxiety and depression. Art throughout history has often been used to express and address issues related to healthcare and wellbeing. Research has shown that participation in arts activities can have a range of health benefits, including improving physical and mental health, reducing stress and anxiety, and promoting social connections and engagement (Garcia et al., 2017). Arts and culture can also provide a sense of meaning and purpose in life, which can be particularly important for people living with long-term health conditions or disabilities. In terms of the delivery of healthcare services, arts and culture can also play a valuable role. For example, the use of music therapy and other creative therapies can help to reduce anxiety and pain, as well as improving communication and social skills (Garcia et al., 2017). The use of art in healthcare settings can also create a more welcoming and calming environment, which can be beneficial for both patients and staff (Wright et al., 2018). The role of arts and culture in healthcare is also influenced by the cultural context in which it is delivered. Different cultures may have different approaches to the use of arts and culture. Art has long been used as a means of healing and expression in healthcare settings. Throughout history, various cultures and societies have utilised art in a range of ways to promote physical and mental well-being. In ancient Greek and Roman cultures, art and architecture were believed to have therapeutic properties and were often incorporated into the design of hospitals and other healthcare facilities. The ancient Greeks, for example, believed that

the ornate decorations and sculptures found in the Asclepion, a type of healing temple, had the power to promote physical and mental health (Foster, 2002). In the Middle Ages, art was often used in the treatment of mental illness. In the 13th century, the monk Guigo II described the use of music, dance, and other forms of art as part of the treatment regimen at the hospital of Saint-Paul-de-Mausole in France, which was renowned for its care of individuals with mental illness (Rollet, 2011). More recently, the use of art in healthcare has gained increased recognition and support. In the 20th century, art therapy became an established profession, with trained art therapists working in hospitals, schools, and other healthcare settings to help individuals cope with physical and mental health challenges through the use of art (Malchiodi, 2012). Today, art is frequently used as a means of expression and therapy in a variety of healthcare settings, including hospitals, hospices, and rehabilitation centres.

Art can play a role in sustainable healthcare solutions by raising awareness and educating the public about health issues and preventative measures. For example, art exhibits or public art installations can be used to educate communities about environmental health risks (Gemmell et al., 2015). Artistic interventions, such as theatre performances or murals, have been shown to be effective in promoting health behaviours and reducing stigma and discrimination related to health issues (Poulter et al., 2015). Art can also be used to promote healing and well-being in healthcare settings through art therapy and other forms of creative expression, which have been shown to have benefits such as reducing stress and anxiety, improving self-esteem and social skills, and promoting physical rehabilitation (Malchiodi, 2012).

As healthcare continues to evolve and change, it is crucial to consider the role of community and to involve it in the decision-making process. By considering the diverse cultural and social contexts in which communities exist, it is possible to create healthcare solutions that are sustainable and responsive to the needs of the people. This could involve utilising traditional and alternative forms of medicine, such as acupuncture and herbal remedies, as well as engaging in preventative care and promoting healthy behaviours within the community (Kreps, 2018). By valuing and involving the community in the healthcare process, it is possible to create solutions that are both effective and culturally appropriate (Harman, 2016).

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