ART IN COMMUNITIES: UNITING OR DIVIDING?

By Dawn Carr

Arts opportunities implicitly reflect theoretical frameworks and assumptions related to the role of the community, the field of art, and older adults in society. The purpose of this study was to examine the nature and scope of arts opportunities in a single community, employing theoretical frameworks from gerontology to understand current arts programming for older adults. The principal investigator performed an in-depth community case study of arts opportunities including interviews with 36 arts organizations, 6 older adults, and 3 instructors. These interviews resulted in thematically derived descriptive criteria: setting, funding sources, cost to participants, age-segregated/integrated programs, role of participants, role of experts, and purpose of the programs. Additionally, five prototypical, mutually exclusive categories were identified: Engaged-Learning Environment; Activity-Oriented-Learning Environment; Class Stratified Environment, Peer-Driven Environment; and a Cohort-Centered Environment. The emergence of and differentiation among these categories is discussed from the perspective of activity theory and the political economy perspective.
Art in Communities: Uniting or Dividing?

A Thesis

Submitted to the
Faculty of Miami University
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Gerontological Studies
Department of Sociology and Gerontology

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2005

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This work is in memory of:

My mother, Sandra Engelhardt, who supported me in all of my endeavors.

It was her death that taught me to value each day like it is the last,

it was her life that taught me to value each life like it is my own.
Acknowledgements:

Suzanne Kunkel, my thesis advisor, for sharing your energy and enthusiasm, and having confidence in me.

Britt Carr, my husband and my best friend, for supporting and loving me unconditionally, making me laugh, and keeping me grounded.

Jon Engelhardt, my father, for your inspiration and guidance throughout my life.

My professors, for empowering me with knowledge, and sharing your passion for learning.

My family, for supporting my journey.
PREFACE

Research is often rooted in personal experiences. These experiences are a valuable asset to both the passion that drives the research and the perspective by which that research is explored. As I began this work, I realized that embracing these experiences made my research richer and provided a point of departure that was grounded in a deep desire to understand the complexities of arts programming available to older adults.

I loved music even before I learned how to create it, because it provided meaning in my life and moved me like nothing I had never known, and by age 13, I realized that I wanted to become a professional trumpet player. I was successful and happy playing the trumpet and had extremely supportive parents. Growing up in a musically inclined family as well as having some talent, a strong work ethic, and passion for the arts, gave me all I needed to explore a life of music. The sky was the limit.

I had a successful college career, focusing on orchestral music and solo performance, and when it was all over, I set out to change the world with my music. The life of a musician, however, does not always involve landing a big orchestra gig and getting paid a respectable income to spread the wealth of talent and culture to enrich society, at least not in this country. Being a talented musician in the United States is not always appreciated. Very few people have the combination of luck, talent, and timing to get into a great group and get paid a decent living. The jobs available to musicians are not plentiful; it is often a fight to make ends meet, requiring supplemental work just to survive. These experiences led me to question why it is so difficult to enrich society with the arts.

However, finding work that was appreciated was part of the problem, but there were more influences that contributed to my perception of the lack of support for the arts in general. Over the years, I looked into the eyes of the audience from my chair on stage and continually identified familiar faces, performance after performance, year after year. The patrons of these concerts were almost exclusively my colleagues, my family, and most significantly, people with gray hair. I began questioning whether the arts are truly integrated into our value system, or if they have come to be considered unnecessary and irrelevant in society?
Attending artistic performances is still important to certain people, however, and I felt that looking to those people might help me wrestle with how the arts fit into our society today. Having been a musician for close to two decades, I have had the privilege of working with all kinds of people, including many older adults. During personal conversations as well as during previous research, the older adults with whom I have interacted have, on numerous occasions, passionately discussed the importance and meaning of the arts in their lives. Some of those individuals are the faces in the audience at performing arts events, some are colleagues, and others include those who have their radio tuned to NPR’s classical music station, go to museums regularly, or take classes to learn more about the arts. It may seem obvious why older adults might be the ones in the audience; they are the ones with the time, freedom, and resources to cultivate an interest in artistic activities. However, it would be naïve to assume that when people get old, they take art classes and start going to the symphony. There are obviously more factors to consider.

Exploring the arts through the experiences available to older adults to further understand the way arts function in our society should be helpful not only because older adults are the most prevalent group in attendance at many art performances, but also because understanding the assumptions behind the existence of arts organizations available to older adults has the potential to provide some insight into the future of art in our society. The assumptions that provide the foundation for such arts organizations may also provide insight into the beliefs and values of the current and future patrons of the arts.

Finally, exploring arts opportunities for older adults may serve as a window to identify the dominant values and priorities of our changing society. The interaction between the way older adults are viewed by society and the way they approach aging is a direct result of the culture of aging created by our society. Understanding the way the arts fit into the lives of older adults and our communities is a method for identifying greater social challenges that face older adults, the arts, and society as a whole.
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

This study seeks to understand the assumptions that drive the development of arts opportunities for older adults in an effort towards understanding past, current, and ultimately future arts programming. Previous research has provided a foundation for this study and has led to the unraveling of this rather daunting task of understanding the personal, social, and/or psychological factors of arts participation as they relate to and/or influence theory, research, and policies developed for older adults. Furthermore, it is my objective to allow this exploration to provide insight and a broader understanding of the values and priorities of our society.

A base of gerontological research has provided a strong foundation with which to build upon. Several important factors relate to arts participation among older adults: theories that investigate and further articulate the concept of activity; research that discusses the importance of leisure; and research that discusses the benefits of creative and artistic expression. Additionally, some research has attempted to further understand and articulate the important social factors associated with the arts, including the emotional and social benefits of bringing older adults together with common interests, the values ascribed to the arts, and the challenges associated with providing opportunities for all individuals regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, geographic location, or economic status. Each of these lines of investigation each contributes to a partial understanding of the way the arts fit into the lives of all Americans, and older adults in particular.

Gerontological Theories as they Relate to Activity

Early on, the field of gerontology recognized that participation in certain activities could have a profound effect on older adults. In fact, during the early development of gerontology as a field of study, articulation of gerontological theories was based on research about how older adults spent their time, as was noted in the Kansas City studies that occurred in the 1950s (Hendricks, 1994). Three notable gerontological theories provided the groundwork towards a
greater understanding and exploration of the influence activities have on the lives of older adults. These include activity, disengagement, and continuity theories. These theories specifically support the goal of promoting “successful” aging (Rowe and Kahn, 1997).

Activity theory may be linked to the explorations of the “problem” of aging identified with role transitions in later life, and ultimately role theory in general (Marshall, 1996). Research on role transitions was anchored in symbolic interactionism, and was designed to investigate personal adjustments that older adults face as they age (Ferraro, 2001). In 1953, Havinghurst and Albrecht described the need for older adults to have a meaningful role in society in order to attain a positive sense of self (Ferraro, 2001). Extending many of the ideas set forth by role theory, activity theory explored the necessity of social engagement through participation in activities to have a better old age (Maddox, 1995). Activity theory was the first theoretical exploration that attempted to understand whether or not being active had any influence on the aging process. Its tenets posited that participation in activities had a positive effect on aging, and it suggested that certain activities can and should replace old ones so that a person can understand and relate with their new role in retirement/old age (Katz, 1996; McCormick, 1999). Being active was assumed to be very important because it was believed that the more active a person was, the more “successfully” they would age (Rowe and Kahn, 1998; Fry, 1996).

Disengagement theory, developed during a similar time frame as activity theory, articulated a different perspective. According to Cumming and Henry (1961), disengagement is a natural process that occurs as a person ages. In relation to activity theory, disengagement theory posits that people slowly disengage from all activities as a part of “normal” aging (Katz, 1996). Both disengagement theory and activity theory provided innovative thinking about a new period of life that had never before existed, retirement and active old age. These theories first explored: how people coped with the “problem” of being old, what old people did with their time, and the kind of life roles people assumed after they no longer contributed to society through “productive” work. These theories opened the door to understanding many of our assumptions about age and aging that had never been explored before this time. However, these theories were based on certain assumptions about older adults and the way they decided how to spend their time that have since been challenged.
Continuity theory, articulated by Robert Atchley, moved away from the role theory perspective to an investigation of self and identity (Marshall, 1996). Continuity theory explored another important observation relating to activities in older adults: people tend to continue participating in their preferred activities and behaviors across the lifespan (Atchley, 2000; Atchley, 1999; Atchley, 1993; Atchley, 1987). This theory incorporated some of the tenets of the life course perspective related to activities, which provided a new lens to explore the reasons behind the way people choose to spend their time in retirement. It also provided the first real attempt to understand why an individual chooses certain activities in older age. Unfortunately, continuity theory suggested that people base their choice of activities on earlier life experiences, without taking seriously the implications behind the minority of older adults who participate in new activities (McCormick, 1999).

Continuity theory does not address the factors that facilitate participation in activities such as opportunity/access, social surroundings, or the culture of aging in general. Additionally, as was sidestepped in disengagement and activity theories, continuity also focused too much on understanding the activity itself, and not enough on the associated value of the activities and participation (Maddox, 1995). Activity theory became a widely accepted concept in response to the pessimism associated with disengagement theory; however, it confused meaningless ‘busyness’ with meaningful fulfillment (Katz, 1996). It is through understanding the meaning behind activities that older adults enjoy that we can truly begin to explore how such activities enrich and enhance their lives. Finally, through understanding meaningful activities, we can begin to understand why certain arts programming exists for older adults, and how those programs influence their lives.

**Meaningful Activities and Leisure**

Leisure has become a major industry in the United States over the past hundred years and has become an increasingly dominant part of the lives of older adults, particularly in relation to activities. Although “leisure” has been defined in a variety of ways including non-work activities, free time, discretionary time, or described in terms of state of mind (Freysinger, 2000; Moody, 2000; Kelly, 1996; Kraus, 1994; Lawton, 1993) the most valuable definition of leisure, useful in understanding activities as associated with the gerontological theories, includes leisure
as *meaningful* activity (McGuire et al., 1999). Meaningful activity refers to the activities that contribute to a person’s quality of life, overall happiness, and general well-being.

As a field of study, gerontologists have become increasingly aware of diversity among older adults, and now more than ever gerontologists realize it is important to understand the *similarities* among older adults and also to celebrate the *differences* that affect and describe their lives (Dannefer, 1988; Ferraro, 1990; Mobily, 1992). In order to more fully understand how activities influence the lives of our elders, we must look beyond exploring general participation in activities and begin looking at those activities that are meaningful, further exploring some of the ways people’s lives become richer and more fulfilling in later life. In order to understand how society is affected more broadly, it is important to explore how the meaning and value of art is interpreted and integrated into the lives of older adults.

Individuals choose their leisure activities based on opportunity, motivation to participate, and ultimately satisfaction with certain activities (Losier et al., 1993). There are many different ways that leisure activities may prove satisfying, but according to Gordon and Gaitz, leisure should provide the following five objectives: relaxation, diversion, self-development, creativity, and sensual transcendence (McGuire et al., 1999). A new overarching paradigm in the aging field, the wellness model, supports similar ideals, recognizing that individuals have unique needs. In order to achieve holistic wellness, people should address the multiple ways life satisfaction is influenced by their activities. This model includes six dimensions of personal wellness: social, emotional, intellectual, vocational, spiritual, and physical (Assisted Living Success, 2003; Armbruster et al., 2001). Creative leisure activities, and artistic activities in particular, have the potential to address all six dimensions of wellness described by the wellness model, as well as the five objectives described by Gordon and Gaitz.

**Creativity and Artistic Expression**

Creativity is often a subset of what we think of as leisure (Lawton, 1993), and is often associated with “successful” aging (Adams-Price, 1998). Creative activities are invariably meaningful, and can provide opportunities for growth and socialization among many other benefits. Osgood (1993) stated:
“High-level wellness is a condition of feeling alive, vibrant, and energetic and possessing a true sense of joy and a real zest for living. Participation in the arts stimulates the imagination and provides an avenue to high-level wellness for older adults.”

Creativity itself is a certain thinking process (Carlsen, 1991), but creative expression often occurs in the form of specific activities, which take form in specific products. The arts are one of the products that result from creation expression, which benefits those who participate as well as the rest of society.

The creative arts, defined for the purpose of this study, refer to: visual art (painting, sculpture, etc.), music, literature (writing), theater, and dance. Creative arts have been used as a form of healing since prehistoric times (Osgood, 1993). For instance, in ancient Egypt, Egyptians used music to heal nervous disorders (Theosophy, 1953), and a myriad of societies have used various forms of the arts for their healing properties over the last several hundred years (Hogan, 2001; Birnbaum, 1979). We also know that creativity is helpful through its ability to prevent physical health problems or help people recover from illnesses, as is used by art/music therapists, and noted by researchers who study the benefits of arts participation (New Horizons Band, 2004; Tims and Bruhn, 2000; Clair, 1996). For instance, Gene Cohen (2001) suggested that research on a group of older adults participating in creative activities indicates that “Sustained creativity can promote recovery from acute health problems such as infections and injuries as well as improve the course of chronic or even terminal illnesses.” We also know that centenarians reveal participation in creative endeavors in significant proportions. As was noted during the Nun Study, the older adult nuns who had a decrease in the symptoms of Alzheimer’s Disease, or generally improved cognitive well-being, and increased longevity, had participated in activities that required creative thinking (Snowdon, 2001).

People have valued the creative arts for several thousand years. The arts provide a way for all people to expand their minds, increase awareness between mind and body, and increase overall wellness (Cohen, 2000). Arts require those who participate to become more in tune with their senses, and contribute to their sense of identity (Clair, 1996). Through participating in creative activities, older adults often come to view themselves as active, vital, and useful (Osgood, 1993). The future holds many possibilities with life expectancy increasing and...
anticipation of many years of healthy old age. The creative arts may prove essential to the well-being of many people in later life, and may provide a crucial ingredient to a healthy and happy old age.

**Social Factors and Context**

The benefits of modern day participation in leisure activities, particularly creative activities, include increased productivity, health, and community values, noted in numerous studies (for example, Brown, Driver, and Petersen (1991) in “The Benefits of Leisure”). However, unlike most industrialized countries, the United States does not have a governmental organization responsible for culture and the arts, and therefore, it may be inferred that our nation values certain types of leisure activities more than others and believes that leisure is an individual’s choice, not the responsibility of the government (Kelly and Freysinger, 2000). However, when Title III of Older American’s Act was enacted in 1973, the government took a step toward providing life enhancing and enriching activities and a social environment for older people (Biegel, et al, 1994).

The types of activities in which older adults participate may range from gardening, to watching television, or taking a dance class. These activities that people choose are influenced by several different variables including income, health, and living situation (Atchley, 2000; Mobily, 1992; Wilson, 1980). People who are economically well off in retirement are not likely to find it difficult to participate in activities they enjoy and are more likely to remain in good health, therefore having the freedom to enjoy their retirement. On the other end of the spectrum, individuals with economic disadvantages may not have the opportunity to participate in enjoyable activities and will more likely suffer from chronic health problems that limit their ability to enjoy fulfilling activities (Atchely, 2000). All older adults should be given the opportunity to explore meaningful activities and have a fulfilling life in older age. However, providing such opportunities to all older adults is not simple; it requires us to look broadly at our society as it influences our values as well as to the kinds of opportunities that are available. We must also understand the influence of social status and the life course stage on preferences and access to the arts.
Conclusion

Despite the promise of early gerontological research on activities, the study of the arts and creativity in gerontology has not kept pace with work on health, policy, caregiving, and cognitive psychology. This may be due to a lack of credence given to artistic activities on quality of life in old age; studying what people do in their spare time may seem frivolous when compared with exploring the causes of Alzheimer’s Disease or prevention mechanisms for certain diseases. However, among the benefits associated with arts participation, growing evidence supports the connection between meaningful leisure activities and associated physical and mental well-being (Chiriboga and Pierce, 1993; McGuire et al., 1999), which may become an increasingly critical research topic as our population ages.

Seventy-six percent, or 168 million, adults cultivated the arts in a one-year time period according to the National Endowment for the Arts Survey of Public Participation in the Arts for 2002 (www.nea.gov). Forty percent of those adults participated in, personally performed, or created art during that time. These statistics are encouraging for many reasons, but most importantly, they demonstrate that Americans value the arts. However, it isn’t just the arts that are of importance, but also what the arts do for people and communities that is worthy of exploration.

In order to become knowledgeable about artistic forms, it is important to commune with others. As a result, personal exploration of the arts is dependent upon the institution of art and we therefore need to understand the public support and social infrastructure of the arts. This can lead to a greater understanding of how the arts fit into our society and may describe social and institutional support, providing a deeper understanding of American values. It may also provide insight into the necessity and influence of arts participation and opportunities available to older adults as they explore generativity opportunities, and other ways of using their skills, talents, and experience to positively influence society.

Developing a broader understanding of the implications behind arts opportunities that are available to older adults will help attain a greater understanding of the values that shape the availability of such enriching opportunities to older adults. The most thorough way to understand the underlying values that shape arts programming is to explore the influential theoretical frameworks and/or dominant paradigms that have influenced such organizations, and the manifestation of those values in the form of specific arts programs.
My background and experience in both the arts and the field of gerontology shaped my assumptions about the subject and nature of this research. At the start of this project, I had several assumptions that guided this research. I sincerely believed that the arts are beneficial and an important part of society in general, and of older people specifically. Such benefits of arts participation are supported by research that has shown that arts activities are beneficial to older adults in a number of ways (Cohen, 2001). Therefore, there was no attempt to extend this postulation, but instead, such research and assumptions were used as a place of departure. My research was further guided by the belief that all older adults deserve to have a high quality of life and that our society has the obligation to provide resources to assist in this quest in later life, and will benefit in the process.

My experiences with older adults have indicated that in general, they enjoy being active in the community and greatly benefit from high quality arts opportunities. My assumptions were guided not only by my experiences, but also by systems of beliefs that have shaped my perceptions. Thus, this project was directed by an interest in the theoretical influences and dominant beliefs, especially those described, articulated, and researched by gerontologists, on arts opportunities and the assumptions that have contributed to the creation of arts programming for older adults, explored through reflexive analysis. This exploratory project serves as a preliminary step to further understanding greater social challenges that face Americans as they age. This research also attempts to extend research that supports the need for understanding the value that older adults bring society and the ways society can empower older adults.
CHAPTER TWO
STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Kuhn (1962) described knowledge as a shared understanding, agenda, and set of goals that are implicitly driven by paradigms. Among many well-respected scholars, there is a consensus that paradigms exist within fields of knowledge, not only within each field of study, but also within society as a whole. Kenyon (1988) argues that paradigms and theories are driven by our *assumptions*. The field of gerontology has been influenced by such paradigms, theories, and assumptions. Therefore, the resulting empirical findings from this research should reflect and challenge dominant perceptions of aging and the arts. This is because our “facts” create a “collective intellect” about the value of the arts and older adults in general, and as gerontology develops and matures, it becomes increasingly important to question such assumptions because they guide our research and shape our theories. According to Kenyon (1988), there must be a coming together of our different disciplines; instead of focusing on individualized pieces of the “puzzle” of aging, a cohesive interpretation of aging must be explored so that we may continue contributing to a broad base of knowledge.

My assumptions about older adults and the arts are directly related to my own personal experience but also to such “collective intellect.” This “collective intellect” results from the base of research on gerontology (activities, leisure, retirement, policy), the arts (creativity, artistic expression), and society (community, government systems, national values). However, researchers have the responsibility to incorporate a greater understanding of the systems of beliefs as they relate to extending such knowledge and building on the erudition that the gerontological field employs in an effort to better understand society and the people in it. By utilizing the assumptions that have shaped arts programming for older adults in the United States, it is possible to contribute to a greater understanding of gerontology, the arts, and our society.

Older adults and the arts provide a window to better understand greater social issues and overarching values. It is this assumption and those created by personal experiences that have influenced the creation of three questions, formulated to guide and shape this exploration:
A) What kinds of arts opportunities are available to older adults?

B) How do gerontological frameworks explicitly or implicitly help us understand the types and amount of arts opportunities available for older adults?

C) Is there a more effective and integrative theoretical framework for understanding arts participation among older adults?
CHAPTER THREE
AN HISTORICAL EXPLORATION

“The underlying purpose of art is to make the hidden visible.”
- Dr. Philip Allen (Allen, 2004)

Introduction
Throughout history, art has served as a very important link in the succession and development of many cultures and communities, as can be observed in most art and history museums. Additionally, art may be the most reflective mechanism societies use to present and further understand social challenges and problems. This study seeks to further understand the theoretical influences and dominant beliefs that have had an impact on current arts opportunities for older adults, in an effort to inform, and collaborate with, related issues: changes in society, changes in the role of older adults, and changes in the role of art in American communities.

In order to fully understand the assumptions and influences that have shaped art opportunities for older adults, this study requires a multidisciplinary approach. My background is limited to music and gerontology. As a result, I explored the questions that guided this research through the eyes of experts in related fields. I interviewed ten experts in the fields of: architecture, classics, leisure, sociology, art history, public policy/gerontology, and communication in an effort to understand how the assumptions behind arts programming developed over the last several decades. These experts were all university professors, and were interviewed informally, in a free-form discussion, either by phone or in person. Each interview lasted from 30 minutes to 2 hours, and provided insight into the development of the following historical, idiographic exploration of the development of influential belief systems that have evolved over many years. This initial investigation provided the groundwork for understanding the nature of the arts opportunities that currently exist for older adults, and guided me towards a greater understanding of how communities and older adults in particular are connected through the arts. Related literature supplements the aforementioned interviews with experts, which in
combination, create a holistic understanding of the historical development of arts programming for older adults in our society.

**Art as it Reflects Societal Values**

From as far back as art was first identified, around 35,000 B.C., art has told the story of the lives of people and societies (De La Croix et al., 1991; Jansen, 1991). It has provided samples of historical events, political and social beliefs and priorities, and has provided evidence of cultures full of thinking, intelligent beings that saw the value in creating symbols of their lives through art. It is through art that scientists and historians have pieced together an understanding of the lives and lifestyles of those who came before us.

Many societies and cultures existed before any written records were available to learn about them. When paintings and sculptures were discovered in caves or on pottery, among other mediums, and evidence of certain architectural structures were identified, we were able to begin to understand and investigate the culture, lifestyle, values, and beliefs of ancient societies (De La Croix et al., 1991; Jansen, 1991). For instance, the pyramids of ancient Egypt and the art and artifacts found inside of them, show evidence of slave labor and aristocracy. Additionally, the art collected from that time supply us with evidence of religious beliefs, social structure, and cultural values that defined that society.

The role and importance of leisure and the arts has been noted since Greek and Roman civilizations incorporated it as a dimension of life and of the social system. Although it has been nearly 2700 years since the Greeks were the dominant society of the western world, their history perhaps elicits the clearest example of the way the arts describe the values of that society. What is most known, their large-scale architectural projects including the large sculptures and buildings that remain today, provide evidence of a specific class system, governmental structure, and certain aesthetic preferences (Clarke, 2003). Moreover, the Greeks reified their religious values through their sculptures of mythical entities, their political values through their government buildings, and their value of bringing people together to share the experience of art through their expansive theaters (Pollitt, 1986). The art they left behind provides indication that having a strong sense of order was of utmost importance, and further notes the steps they took to build and maintain a strong government and democracy (Jansen, 1991; Pollitt, 1972). Just as
their art reflected and “mimicked” the characteristics and icons in their society, it also reinforced their influential beliefs and values (De La Croix et al., 1991; Jansen, 1991; Pollitt, 1972).

The Romans, who took their cue from the Greeks, also created a very controlled society, filled with art, religion, government, and what they were most famous for, leisure (D’Ambra, 1998). The Romans were well known for their bathhouses, gladiators, and other large-scale community “programming.” Much of their culture involved the arts, like that of the grand theater productions, (Clarke, 2003; Kelly and Freysinger, 2000; D’Ambra, 1998) and grand murals painted on the walls of public buildings and the homes of wealthy members of that society (De La Croix et al, 1991; Jansen, 1991). Even more so than the Greeks, Romans used art for political statements, reinforcing certain ideas set forth by the rulers of the time (Kelly and Freysinger, 2000; D’Ambra, 1998; Kraus, 1994). Art often served the purpose of representing and creating religious symbols and telling religious stories, in addition to reinforcing social structures and characteristics. Throughout the years following the Roman Empire, art has continued to reflect, and often exaggerate, the ideas, beliefs, and values of the times. Art has been used to create order in the lives of the people by providing symbols that reinforce and support social control, political structures, and religiosity (Stalley, 1999; De La Croix et al., 1991; Jansen, 1991). A powerful example of the way art has reflected and propelled social values during modern times can be noted by the art funded and commissioned by the Nazis; art was used to articulate a narrative of the collective identity defined by Hitler (Goldstein, 2005).

**Art as a Reflection of Social Change**

According to Anderson (1989), art conveys culturally significant meaning, and is made within a style tradition that reflects the values of its provenience. Therefore, the nature of an artist’s mastery is a function of cultural context (Anderson, 1989; Becker, 1982; Anderson, 1976). The United States has been strongly influenced by European and western belief systems. The Renaissance (occurring during the 15th, 16th, and early 17th centuries) was a period of time marked by the increasing popularity of both religious and secular art as a part of everyday life. This period of “rebirth” and revitalization of the human spirit was marked by the creation of humanist values that gave momentum to the questioning of certain ideas and exploration of long held assumptions about the world (Lowry, 1971). It was a period of intellectual and artistic discovery, where there was renewed appreciation of Greek and Roman antiquity, sparking
creative advances in a number of fields including: painting, sculpture, and architecture (Muhlberger, 1999). As a result, this period blossomed with the artistic, literary and scientific achievements of a number of geniuses in the science and philosophy fields such as Galileo, Newton, and Descartes, who began providing the world with new truths, questions, and perceptions of reality (De La Croix et al., 1991; Jansen, 1991). The field of art followed suit, responding to science and other disciplines, continuing to redefine itself based on social issues, concerns, and values. The interrelatedness of western art and other disciplines that influence changes in beliefs and values has resulted in the increased need for contextual knowledge to understand and appreciate art (De La Croix et al., 1991; Jansen, 1991; Becker, 1982; Peterson, 1976). This may have contributed to the critical discernment driving the identification of certain art being construed as more valuable than other art; the enterprise of art is linked to cultural and community values (Kraus, 1994; Becker, 1982; Peterson, 1976).

Art became more widespread in the 19th and early 20th century, which altered the way it was valued by society and changed the way it fit into people’s lives. The Industrial Revolution provided innovations that led to the mass production of pianos, paint supplies, cameras, and other materials necessary to create art that had never before been so affordable and accessible (Janson, 1991). As a result, art became reproducible and readily available, and the materials used to create the arts became affordable and accessible to a wider range of people (Peterson, 1976). The culture of the “high arts” was challenged and altered; it no longer existed predominantly in museums or private collections, it was affordable and plentiful enough for the middle class to enjoy in their homes. At the same time, the “common” folks could experiment with the creating art, which provided a very different form of art consumption. As a result, such experimentation led to more strict guidelines and definitions of “art,” in an effort to distinguish professional from non-professional art.

The availability of art materials and reproductions of art changed the way art was consumed, but the creation of leisure in this country is also the result of individuals having the time, interest, and money to enjoy activities like the arts. The Industrial Revolution produced technologies that made life easier, it brought people into the cities where life was more convenient, provided a push to the economy, and ultimately resulted in creating more time for leisure activities. The Puritan work ethic that propelled the Industrial Revolution was challenged when government policies were implemented to limit the number of hours individuals were
allowed to work (Kelly and Freysinger, 2000; Kraus, 1994). The Industrial Revolution, Roosevelt’s New Deal administration, labor laws, the rise of the middle class, and the creation of leisure policies between the 1900s and 1950s, initiated a change in work culture in the United States (Kingson and Williamson, 2001; Kraus, 1994). The result was that people had the time and the resources readily available to explore the arts on a scale not possible earlier.

In addition to the creation of labor laws, the 20th century brought many changes in the structure and role of the government. When the stock market crashed in the late 1920s and the Great Depression ravaged a large proportion of Americans, the government functioned as a social support system for the needy and older adults in particular in a more progressive way than ever before (Dobelstein, 1985; Coll, 1973). Although there had been almshouses and other such methods for helping the less fortunate members of the population, the Great Depression was widespread and required a more aggressive approach (Coll, 1973). Social policies were born in response to this changing ideology about the role of government in the lives of the people (Kingson and Williamson, 2001).

Early in the 20th century, when the government became increasingly invested in the well-being of its citizens, life expectancy increased as did the number of older adults (Blakemore et al., 1994). These factors among others influenced the increasing need and attention on aging as a field of study, and the field of gerontology began to take root. The assumptions that created the need for gerontology at its inception were due in large part to certain beliefs that developed early in the 20th century: that our nation had a duty to provide for the needs of older adults; that older adults were a “problem;” and that aging itself imposed “problems” that needed to be fixed or coped with. These beliefs evolved into the creation of public policies targeting older adults aged 60-65 and older, beginning with Social Security in 1935, and continuing with Medicare, Medicaid, and the Older Americans Act (OAA) in 1965 (Hudson, 1994; Binstock, 1994).

**Social Policy as a Support Mechanism for the Creation of Art Opportunities**

Social Security and Medicare helped create the concept of retirement, while the Older Americans Act helped create a way of “coping” with retirement. These beliefs influenced the way aging was viewed in the United States, and influenced the kind of research that was done with older adults. The formulation of activity theory, as described in Chapter One, reinforced and resulted from many of these same beliefs about older adults, aging, and retirement.
Although informal arts opportunities have existed for older adults for many years, it was the creation of the Older Americans Act and the implementation of programs driven by activity theory that truly gave rise to arts programming specifically designed for older adults in the early 1970s, which became particularly popular in the newly created senior centers and community centers (Sunderland, 1976).

The underlying beliefs that drove arts programming for older adults in the early 1970s can be exemplified by the initiation of a relationship between the JFK Center for the Performing Arts and the National Council on the Aging. Together, they formed a distinguished advisory committee in 1971 to explore past and current efforts of creating a lasting and meaningful relationship between the arts and older adults with the hope of sparking programs to bring older adults into stimulating environments that promote creativity and communication to enrich their lives. David Salten, the President of the National Council on the Aging, and Roger Stevens, the chairman of the board of trustees for the JFK center for the Performing Arts, stated in the 1973 prospectus, “Older Americans and the Arts” (Sunderland, 1976):

“…there is an aspect of creativity in all people and that many elderly individuals are free to draw this talent out of its dormant state, and to use it as a tool for self-fulfillment, an engrossing interest and challenge, and perhaps in some cases, as a means to significant artistic achievement” (pp. 5).

They go on to say that:

“The Council believes that the arts can add significantly to the lives of aging people and, in a very meaningful and satisfying manner, help fill a vacuum which exists in their lives” (pp. 5).

The intentions that drove the creation of arts programming in the early 1970s were positive, enthusiastic, and innovative; the purpose behind them was initiated by the belief that older adults needed a method for dealing with the “problem” of retirement. However, the push for utilizing art as a method for helping older adults create value in society and in their lives exemplified some of the first steps taken towards using creativity as a proxy for empowerment and social
value. A review of related literature from the late 1960s to the early 1980s showed indication of a strong passion for this subject on the part of researchers as exemplified through the sheer quantity of research produced during this time. Many organizations were grappling with the challenges of working with older adults as capable and changeable human beings, celebrating their potential. However, the 1980s were marked by a dramatic decrease in arts and aging literature, research, and programming.

An increase in physical, emotional, and economic well-being of older adults resulted from the social policies and social programming that had developed during the half century before the Reagan administration. This success, combined with a change in ideology about the role of the government, and economic instability, resulted in a change in the image of older adults from the deserving poor and frail to “greedy geezers.” The Reagan administration sought to “shrink the beast” with regard to the dominance of the government in the lives of the people, and as a result, funding for the arts was dramatically cut, and the funding for arts programming for older adults was given little attention. The momentum that had built during the 1970s came to a screeching halt.

With increasing attention being given to creativity, wellness, and ultimately empowerment for older adults, the future of the arts rests on the assumptions that drive the programs that are created for older adults and for people of all ages. By looking historically at the assumptions that guided society, the arts, and older adults, provides a strong foundation for understanding the development of current arts programming. It is particularly important to understanding the way the enterprise of art is linked to the cultural, community, and political values of our society through exploring current arts programming.
CHAPTER FOUR
METHODS

Introduction

There is an increasingly powerful body of research that provides support for the positive effect that the arts have on people of all ages, particularly older adults (Cohen, 2001; Hoffman, 1992). Additionally, research on the arts as they function in communities exemplify that the arts are valued by many communities throughout the country, regardless of participant age, background, education level, or other characteristics, suggesting that the arts are appreciated by people of all ages (Kopczynski & Hager, 2004). The goal of this project was not to further explore the need for art in the lives of older adults or in a community setting in particular, but to enhance our understanding of the theoretical frameworks and underlying assumptions that have shaped the creation and continuation of arts opportunities that currently exist for older adults.

Methodology

Exploring something as broad as the assumptions that guide and shape arts programming requires a thoughtful approach that promotes scrutiny of historical influences on present day programs and current practices. According to Breytspraak (1984), the self is the means by which a person is engaged in the social world; the person and society are bound together. It is through the eyes of individual “experts” that a broader understanding of the societal influences and beliefs can be more clearly articulated. This kind of ecological approach requires the use of key informants in a partnership of exploration. Evaluating arts programs with this sort of approach lends itself naturally to the methodological richness of a case study.

In a field that is “data rich and theory poor” (Birren and Bengston, 1988), case studies such as this one may be useful in theory building (Stake, 1991). However, case studies are most powerful for their ability to include both a process of inquiry about the case and the product of that inquiry (Stake, 2000). Although this particular study does not intend to produce a change in the way arts programs are integrated in society, it does attempt to serve as a preliminary step
towards identifying factors that may provide inertia for producing positive changes to such existing programs.

According to Stake (2000, 438-439) “Case researchers seek both what is common and what is particular about the case, but the end result regularly portrays something of the uncommon drawing from all of the following:

- The nature of the case;
- The case’s historical background;
- The physical setting;
- Other contexts (e.g., economic, political, legal, and aesthetic);
- Other cases through which this case is recognized;
- Those informants through whom the case can be known.”

This case study utilized these characteristics of exploration with an emphasis on historical background, physical setting, and key informants. Case studies are holistic and concerned with context and the way different conditions or parts fit together (Schutt, 2001). The goal of this project was to create a broader understanding of the connection between influential belief systems and the creation of arts programming by combining knowledge about the historical influences on the arts, society, and older adults with a broader understanding of the way society values the arts and older adults.

**Procedure**

Exploring arts programming for older adults in a case study format assumes a semi-structured approach that is focused and introspective. An in-depth community case study supports a broader exploration of the interrelationships within the community as well as the characteristics that define the programs. Rather than studying a handful of arts programs in depth, I determined that a community case study would help me more effectively grapple with the kind of underlying assumptions that drive arts programming for older adults.

This case study involved several steps of exploration. First, I explored arts opportunities for older adults from a broad perspective, identifying those opportunities that exist nationally and the national organizations that support the arts. I used the Internet to learn about the kind of
programming that existed and the way older adults were integrated into the programs (i.e. either as a focal point or as an age-irrelevant member of the community). I also spoke with a handful of organizations by telephone in order to understand the way they involved older adults in their activities and their general philosophy about arts programming for older adults. This preliminary step informed the approach and focus of the community case study, providing a clearer perception of the kinds of characteristics that were most salient and valuable to understanding the underlying assumptions driving the organizations.

Choosing a Case

Perhaps the most important part of case study exploration is choosing the case with which to focus. Huberman, Miles, Yin, and Malinowski describe their focus on choosing a case based on its ability to provide the best possible explanations of phenomena (Stake, 2000). Choosing a case involves purposive selection based on understanding the opportunities for intensive study. In exploring communities nationally and looking at their respective arts programs for older adults, certain characteristics and themes proved relevant and insightful for this case study. As a result, I identified six criteria with which to evaluate the community case to be explored in-depth. These include a community that should:

- Be of a large enough population to provide sufficient numbers of opportunities;
- Have a high proportion of older adults;
- Be economically stable;
- Be sufficiently multi-ethnic and diverse;
- Exemplify support for both older adults and the arts;
- Provide easy access for the principal investigator.

Demographics

According to the 2000 U.S. Census (www.census.org), the chosen community has a total population of around 845,000, with almost 61,000, or about 7.25%, over the age of 55. Approximately 13% of the community members are non-white. When compared with the national average, the community has about the same number of older adults per capita and is only slightly less diverse.
This community is economically stable with a poverty rate of 11.8%, which is only slightly lower than the national average (12%) (www.census.org). The community also has a diverse group of businesses, including small and mid-sized companies, in addition to several fortune 500 businesses.

Support for Older Adults and the Arts

The chosen community provides strong financial support for the arts. Three forms of financial support were recognized as significant: support for older adults, use of Title III dollars, and strong financial involvement. Many of these funding streams have developed over the last four decades; however, certain families made a strong financial commitment to the arts over the last two hundred years, which created a strong support structure long before the government and other more formal structures were involved.

This community exemplifies innovative approaches to supporting their older population. They have a well-known and highly respected Area Agency on Aging (AAA) that looks out for its older population, and works to provide their older adults with the respect and opportunities they deserve. Financial support given to arts programming for older adults is a result of the attitude and values set forth by this AAA.

This community uses Older American’s Act Title III funding, distributed by the community’s AAA, to support certain arts programming for older adults. This use of Title III dollars is not typical, and thus suggests that this community values arts programming for its older adults. The connection between Title III and specific arts endeavors for seniors is a unique indication of community support for the arts as well as specific support for older adults’ abilities to express themselves artistically and/or learn about the arts in a more comprehensive way. For instance, Title III funding contributes to special programming for some senior centers beyond the kinds of activities that are usually available at such facilities. The National Endowment for the Arts recognized one particular program in this community, funded partially by Title III funds, that provides art programming to various organizations that cater to the older population, both with educational and interactive (or participatory) programming. Due to its particular method for contributing arts programming to older adults, this organization is unique in its ability to provide creative learning opportunities to older adults from all walks of life and all backgrounds.
This community has several foundations that provide funding for various types and forms of arts programming to all members in the community. One foundation in particular has an annual fundraiser specifically designed to support several of the largest arts organizations. During 2004, this foundation raised more than 10 million dollars, distributed to support arts organizations across the community. This particular organization is extraordinary in its capacity to provide grants to arts organizations community-wide, and keeps many of them in business. Local businesses contribute to this fund, and ultimately provide the bulk of the contributions that are distributed to the arts organizations. Many businesses provide several thousand dollars each year, with the most generous businesses contributing as much as $500,000 or more.

A handful of other foundations offer funding for smaller arts organizations, such as grants available for programming. Some organizations are specifically targeted to support smaller arts organizations, or specific age groups. These funds are less visible to the community members, but nonetheless are an important cornerstone in the fabric of this community.

In addition to the other types of funding, personal donations occur in significant proportions in this community. The strong base of personal donations may be due to the deep rooted commitment certain wealthy families have exemplified over the years. However, personal donations of all sizes are prevalent, and provide evidence of personal investment in the arts in this community.

Conclusion

The community chosen for this case study is a relatively large, ethnically diverse city, and has an average number of older adult citizens. It is economically sound and provides financial support to older adults and the arts. These criteria have helped identify a community that has the capacity to provide answers to the guiding research questions.

Becoming Familiarized with the Community

I began my investigation by familiarizing myself with the arts community as much as possible before speaking to the “experts.” A focused Internet search allowed me to understand the community in general and helped me learn about some of the arts programs available. I used search engines to identify city and government sites, and other information describing additional characteristics of the community. Unfortunately, specific arts organizations in the community
were difficult to learn about on the Internet alone, therefore I was unable to explore as much about specific organizations as I had hoped prior to gathering data.

**Developing a Strategy for Gathering Data**

Introducing myself to the chosen community armed me with information that allowed me to develop appropriate questions to ask the “experts” about their community. Due to the fact that I was not familiar with the arts community at the start of the project, the approach to gathering data required heavy reliance on those members of the community who could help me learn “what’s out there.” The phone book exposed only a handful of organizations listed under the “art” category, further requiring guidance by individuals in the arts community. As a result, I felt that “snowball” sampling would provide the best approach to gathering data and exploring this seemingly hidden community in depth. Snowball sampling is “a method of sampling in which sample elements are selected as they are identified by successive informants or interviewees” (Schutt, 2001, page 134-135).

**Developing Documents and Interview Questions**

I developed two letters for all participants to read: consent to participate and a letter describing the project. I provided these documents to those people contacted via telephone and/or in-person. The participants that I interviewed in person provided consent to participate at the time of the interview. However, those who participated by phone were provided with the consent to participate document and study description document via email or postal mail.

Several sets of questions and a list of certain characteristics to explore were developed in partial response to the preliminary national exploration. Related literature on arts programming for older adults provided additional insight into the creation of the interview questions. The first document (see Appendix A) is an example of the interview question sheet used for the phone interviews with each organization. The questions were chosen in an attempt to understand: (a) the kind of services the organization hoped to provide; (b) the target population; (c) the way the organization was funded; and (d) the associated goals and role of the organization. Additionally, further discussion helped identify the underlying beliefs that drive the organizations. Finally, each person interviewed was asked to supply as many names of other organizations that they could think of that might be appropriate to contact.
The phone interviews were designed to last 10-20 minutes, and targeted to create a profile of the organizations based on their role in the fabric of the arts community. In all, 36 phone interviews were conducted (see Appendix F for the number and specific types of organizations included in this study). The point of contact for the organizations included activity directors, managers/directors, marketing directors, or someone specializing in either arts or aging, depending upon the nature of the organization. In all cases, the point of contact was the individual within the organization that was most familiar with the beliefs and values driving the programming available to older adults. Such individuals were identified by the gatekeeper (usually a secretary or administrative professional), or the person or persons who recommended the particular organization.

In addition to the main points of contact, three teachers/directors were interviewed in-person on-site, and six older adults were interviewed either in-person or by phone. During the site-visits, I observed a class/program/event and took detailed notes. The older adult participants provided further insight into the values that drove the arts programs, and they also provided additional sources to contact as a result of their web of connections in the field. All of the documents used for interviews can be found in Appendices A-E.

I used the questions/topics as guides to help direct conversation as well as identify certain subjects. The interviews were purposively designed to promote open-ended discussion and an informal, relaxed environment. As is the goal of qualitative research, the data collection stopped when saturation occurred, in this case, saturation of particular arts programs identified. However, saturation occurred very early in the project, long before all known arts programs were identified. I noted that in many cases, informants were unaware of other arts programs, which signified that the organizations themselves were disconnected from each other and were unaware of some of the characteristics that defined “arts programming for older adults.” As a result, I “scrounged” (Groger et al., 1999) using every method I could find, to obtain additional data until dominant themes were apparent, and no new information emerged.
CHAPTER FIVE
RESULTS

Introduction
This case study sought to uncover, and identify more effective frameworks for understanding the complexities related to the system of beliefs that influence and shape arts programming presently available to older adults. The study revealed that arts programming available to older adults in the given community provides several high quality options, choices and types of activities to choose from. The data reveal that arts programming is multifaceted, influenced by a number of social factors, and challenged by poor connections and conflicting values. The analysis of the data resulted in a series of descriptive characteristics and categories that distinguish programs from one another and provide a method for making sense of the variations in the programs and the assumptions that drive them.

This study was guided by three questions (as noted on page 21):

1) What kinds of arts opportunities are available to older adults?
2) How do gerontological frameworks explicitly or implicitly help us understand the types and amount of arts opportunities available for older adults?
3) Is there a more effective and integrative theoretical framework for understanding arts participation among older adults?

These three questions were addressed through the analysis and resulting categories of the arts programming and how these categories further articulate guiding assumptions about older adults, the arts, and community. Through understanding these assumptions, it was possible to explore more integrative frameworks for understanding the arts programs available to older adults.

Inconsistencies
A lack of connection among arts organizations caused a barrier to the data collection. Snowball sampling, which was the primary tool used for collecting data in this project, did not
effectively provide access to all facets of arts programming available to older adults. This was puzzling because this particular method is noted for being an effective way to gather information about hard to reach or hard to identify “interconnected” groups (Schutt, 2001). I assumed that the organizations in this project were well aware of each other, and connected in many ways. For instance, as was described in Chapter Three, a central foundation in the community raises funds annually for all of the major arts organizations, providing evidence that such organizations serve a common purpose within the community. However, the organizations interviewed were not well connected, and when asked to identify other arts opportunities available to older adults in the community, did not identify programs that differed significantly from their own. Ultimately, the participating arts organizations aligned themselves only with organizations that shared certain characteristics.

It was not initially clear which characteristics differentiated the organizations from one another. However, formal “high arts” opportunities in general did not often recognize arts opportunities apart from spectator participation or financial investment to “the arts.” Additionally, those organizations dedicated to serving only the older population in an age-segregated environment did not always recognize opportunities that required financial resources of any kind.

Donald Hoffman wrestled with similar challenges in his book *Arts for Older Adults: An Enhancement of Life* (1992). His frustration stemmed from the lack of “high quality” arts opportunities available to older adults. He analyzed certain arts opportunities in an attempt to promote the creation of more effective and integrative arts programs, dedicated to helping older adults learn and engage. Although his focus was not related to the interconnectedness of arts programs, his analysis revealed a tension between the “high arts” and programs that involved hands-on participation of older adults. He challenged the reader to consider ways of providing opportunities that acknowledged the creative capabilities that older adults offer to the field of art. In an effort to distinguish the differences in the kinds of arts opportunities that exist, he teased out some of the characteristics that he determined were influential to the way the arts were presented to older adults. He focused on two different characteristics—the different kinds of locations that offer arts programming, and the level of expertise or investment that older adults have in the arts. This provided a first step in understanding some of the challenges behind
providing effective arts programming, but it did not attempt to address the inconsistencies that separate the arts programs from one another or examine the assumptions that guide them.

Donald Hoffman provided a provocative exploration of the way the arts are presented to older adults. He challenged those people who provide arts opportunities to older adults to take into consideration both how the arts can enhance the lives of older adults and the way older adults can enhance the field of art. However, addressing the underlying challenge of providing high quality, engaging arts opportunities requires deeper scrutiny of the complex characteristics and assumptions that distinguish arts programs from one another.

**Categories of Art Opportunities**

During the course of this study, the organizations that participated each proved to have unique and remarkable roles in the arts and aging network. The vast differences among the participating organizations demonstrated heterogeneity across the arts and aging community as a whole. However, certain characteristics were salient across multiple organizations, which together, provided a starting point by which to compare the organizations with one other; from these comparisons emerged a way to understand how the organizations relate to each other in the fabric of the arts and aging network. For instance, many organizations provide opportunities for older adults to explore painting. While some organizations provide painting classes for community members taught by a volunteer without a fee, others may provide private instruction and cost several hundred dollars to participants. Still other organizations consist of community members who share the common interest of painting, who meet informally at an individual’s home. All three of these examples of painting opportunities provide different experiences and can, therefore, address the various needs and levels of dedication among the older population who enjoys painting. The differences in the way the arts are presented to older adults in these examples demonstrate the different values and beliefs that drive these organizations. Identifying these differences in a cohesive way will provide a strong foundation for deeper analysis of the factors influencing arts programming for older adults.
**Descriptive Criteria**

The arts organizations analyzed in this study had certain characteristics that differentiated them from one another. Seven discriminatory, common characteristics were identified and analyzed among four types of programs. Identification and examination of these descriptive criteria provided a foundation from which to address the first of the three questions that guided this research: *What kinds of arts opportunities are available to older adults?*

Four types of art programs available to older adults were identified in this community: classes, clubs, spectator, and independent opportunities. *Classes* are those opportunities to bring people together for engaged, participatory learning. *Clubs* are groups of peers that get together to engage in common art activities. *Spectator* opportunities include those more passive experiences of art, less participation and more observation. *Independent* opportunities are those activities initiated by the individual in whatever capacity preferred. Every type of arts organization in this study provided at least one of these options, some provided all four in some form or another.

Seven descriptive criteria differentiated the given types of programs: setting, funding source, cost to participants, age of participants, role of participation, role of experts, and purpose. The *setting*, or physical environment and location, of the different art programs varied greatly, depending upon the kind of activities presented. The setting ranged from the home, auditorium, art supply store, senior/community center, or classroom. The *funding sources* ranged from individual donations, tickets, tuition, grants, state funding, and other non-discretionary fees. The *cost to participants* ranged from free to extremely expensive, depending upon the type of opportunity and the funding structure of the organization. Some organizations rely on the fees paid by their participants for their existence, while others rely predominantly on outside sources of funding. The *age of participants* is a bit more complex than might be assumed by the category title. Although many arts opportunities are considered age-integrated, most art programs draw a significant number of older adults together, creating an age-dominant environment. The most important characteristic of these programs is based on whether they are old age-welcoming or non-old age-welcoming rather than age-integrated or age-segregated. The *role of the participant* ranges from complete passive engagement to active participation. Some programs have a mix between the two, passive in terms of observable participation, though actively engaged in listening or observing. The *role of the experts* varies based on the kind of
activity provided. For instance, in a club, all members are the experts, while in a class, the expert(s) lead the class.

The final characteristic is the *purpose* of the activity or organization. While some activities revealed an intention to bring people together and to empower older adults with creative experiences or learning opportunities, some activities required a separation of people either by age, education, class, or gender in an attempt to create or uphold “high culture.” All categories and characteristics identified were greatly influenced by their purpose. The purpose behind arts programs reveal their guiding intentions, and although the purpose of each program was somewhat apparent during this first level of analysis, deeper analysis proved necessary to understand the complexities. It is this particular finding that initiated deeper investigation, resulting in a second level of analysis. The purpose will be further described following this deeper analysis later in this chapter. The first level of analysis of this community case study, described by the six characteristics described above and the four types of programs identified, are presented on Chart 1 below.
### Table 5.1: Arts Program Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Club</th>
<th>Spectator</th>
<th>Independent</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>• private location</td>
<td>• community/public location</td>
<td>• community/public location</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• university or institution</td>
<td>• community/public location</td>
<td>• private company</td>
<td>• private residence</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• private company</td>
<td>• private company</td>
<td>• auditorium/theater</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• age-segregated living</td>
<td>• age-segregated living community</td>
<td>• museum</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>community</td>
<td>community</td>
<td>• age-segregated living community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Funding Source</strong></td>
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<td>• fees</td>
<td>• tickets</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• public funding</td>
<td>• private donations</td>
<td>• donations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• private donations</td>
<td>• public funding</td>
<td>• public funding</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Cost to Participants</strong></td>
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<td>• potentially expensive</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• small fee</td>
<td>• expensive</td>
<td>• small fee</td>
<td>(based on cost of materials)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• expensive</td>
<td>• expensive</td>
<td>• expensive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age Description</strong></td>
<td>• age-irrelevant</td>
<td>• age-irrelevant</td>
<td>• age-irrelevant</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• age-specific</td>
<td>• age-specific</td>
<td>• age-specific</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• old age-welcoming</td>
<td>• old age-welcoming</td>
<td>• old age-welcoming</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• non-old age-welcoming</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Role of Participants</strong></td>
<td>• active engagement</td>
<td>• active engagement</td>
<td>• passive observation</td>
<td>• active engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• passive observation</td>
<td></td>
<td>• passive observation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Role of Experts</strong></td>
<td>• leading</td>
<td>• participating</td>
<td>• leading/performing</td>
<td>• participating</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Prototypical Categories of Art Opportunities**

In combination with the desire to understand the driving purpose of the arts programs, the second question that drove this research, *How do gerontological frameworks explicitly or implicitly help us understand the types and amount of arts opportunities available for older adults?* propelled deeper analysis of the characteristics identified. Although the description and exploration of the given characteristics was helpful for understanding the variables that differentiated the arts opportunities from one another, further analysis was necessary to understand how the combination of *salient* characteristics described the programming that exists.

Through understanding the salient characteristics among the organizations, mutually exclusive, prototypical categories of art opportunities available for older adults emerged.
Although many arts programs available to older adults require, suggest, or even empower older adults to participate in arts activities independently of others, this study seeks to understand the values that drive programming and opportunities that exists for all older adults. For this reason, these categories describe only those arts programs that are social.

**Engaged Learning Environment**

An *Engaged Learning Environment* is a program or activity that is learning-based and is directed by a single person or a few people who are “experts” in a specific area. The “students” focus on learning new ideas or skills presented by such “experts.” This environment is age-irrelevant, though is old-age welcoming. The setting can be found in educational institutions, public sector institutions, or privately owned organizations. The funding is usually a mix of public and private funds, though a fee of some kind is always charged to the individual. The most important characteristic of these environments is that the participants are challenged with producing high quality art, and are strongly engaged in what they are learning and creating. The older adults that participate in these activities or programs actively seek them out.

An example of an *Engaged Learning Environment* that was identified during the community case study was an educational institution that offered various levels of art classes that could be applied toward a degree in art. The classes were taught by professional artists, and were taken by people of all ages. However, this organization created opportunities for older adults to participate more easily by offering classes in buildings that were more accessible and during times that were more convenient for that population. As a result, the students included a large number of people over age 60 as well as people of other ages. The classes were expensive, and thus limited who could participate to those with a reasonable amount of disposable income for supplies, tuition, and transportation to and from the classes.

**Activity Oriented Learning Environment**

An *Activity Oriented Learning Environment* is a program or activity that is driven by activity theory, focused on keeping older adults busy regardless of the quality or meaning behind the art activity. A single person or a few people who are knowledgeable about a specific subject or activity direct these programs. The participants focus on creating or learning about certain arts activities; however, the art is not particularly important, it is simply a method by which to
provide an activity for the older adults to participate. This environment is age-specific, i.e., all participants are older adults, and these opportunities are therefore old-age welcoming. The setting can be found in public/community-based environments, or age-segregated living communities. The funding is predominately publicly funded or funded by the place of residence, though a small fee is occasionally charged to the participants. The most important characteristic of these environments is that anyone is welcome, regardless of their interest in art itself, as long as they participate.

An example of an Activity Oriented Learning Environment that was identified during the community case study was a senior center that offered a variety of art classes, ranging from painting green ware (pre-made pottery) to learning how to draw. The classes were taught by the activity director and were taken by members of that organization. The classes were offered infrequently, and attended by a small number of individuals. The senior center charged a minimal fee for those who could afford it, and therefore the classes were not limited to anyone who desired to participate.

Class Stratified Environment

A Class Stratified Environment consists of people brought together in a common location to observe the skills/expertise of others, a passive learning environment. These organizations/programs are found in settings such as museums, performance halls, or theaters. They range from being privately funded and organized to being funded by a combination of public and private donations, grants, and other support provided by the community. These organizations often have volunteers who help run the organization, and a powerful governing body like a board of directors. The opportunities available in this category are always age-integrated, aspiring to connect artists with the community, creating a forum to bring people together to celebrate and reinforce certain kinds of art and culture within that community. However, the most important component of Class Stratified Environments include the congregation of individuals as a result of social class. For example, those participants who have a background conducive to understanding and appreciating this “high art” (i.e. are highly educated, wealthy, etc.) are willing and interested in participating in this form of art, while those who do not, are not interested or welcomed.
The older adults who participate in these kinds of arts opportunities usually spend a lot of money to attend the events or performances. Additionally, these organizations often have a strong base of private donations that come from a select group of wealthy or well-off older adults. This relationship often causes tension between older adults and the organization because the organizations need the support but resent that the support elicits preference for a certain type of performance programming that aligns with this older, “more conservative” population. As a result, even though a large number of older adults attend these events/performances, the environment is not particularly old-age inviting.

An example of a Consumer-Driven Environment that was identified during the community case study is a performing group well recognized and supported by the community. This organization supports and promotes “high art.” It receives large grant funding, private donations (predominantly by older adults), draws income through ticket sales, and has strong support by volunteers. The financial support provided by a select group of older adults has caused resentment towards this older population because the organization depends upon the support, but feels that the older population is restricting its growth and keeping a younger audience from participating. As a result, this is a non-old age friendly environment, but elicits much participation from older adults. Older adults participate only through passive observation, though some actually perform in the performing group. The difference between the participants and the observers is meant to be distinct, with life enrichment centered on exposure to specific forms of “high culture.”

Peer-Driven Environment

A peer-driven environment consists of a group of individuals who are brought together by common interests, focused on sharing new ideas and celebrating common passions. These kinds of organizations are focused on the social aspect of arts programming, bringing people together who are very similar. These programs are either privately formed and operated, and meet in private locations, or can be found in community programs funded by the organization. The privately funded organizations are funded by membership dues or member contributions and occasionally have additional support from external funding. The opportunities provided in this category are all old-age inviting, however, while some are entirely age-segregated, some groups
are intergenerational as a result of common interests. The most important characteristic of these arts programs is that they provide a community of peers to meet and learn from one another.

An example of a Peer-Driven Environment that was identified during the community case study was an exclusive art club started and run by older adults. This organization did not specify an age limit, though consisted mostly of adults over the age of 65. This group congregated on a regular basis in different locations, including individuals’ homes. The club members selected interested persons into their organizations, chosen based on their shared values, standards, and type of participation in art. This group required expensive annual membership fees or participation fees, and therefore excluded any individuals who could not afford such fees. This particular example supports class stratification (O’Rand, 2001).

A second example of a Peer-Driven Environment that was identified during the community case study was an organization that provides a place for people who are interested in writing. This group meets weekly at a designated location to share their work with one another in a safe and supportive environment. Although there is a small fee, this group is inclusive of all ages and all backgrounds. The most important component is that members share the value of supporting the creation of literature among peers. This particular example is driven by the belief that bringing people in the community together is very important, and therefore, it is very welcoming to all individuals.

A Future Category: Cohort Specific Environment

The categories described thus far provide very specific beliefs about the role of their organizations in the community. The Peer-Driven Environment provides indication that there are stark differences in the intentions behind certain organizations or opportunities. In the future, it will be necessary to provide opportunities where these differences can be bridged – where older adults can come together regardless of their backgrounds to produce high quality, culturally enriching opportunities.

Organizations that enrich the lives of older adults with the arts, through intentional use of their life experiences, provides a foundation for empowerment and successfully utilizes the unique value older adults provide society. Currently, these kinds of opportunities are sparse and are developing almost by accident in places like Learning In Retirement, or other continuing
education courses or grassroots community groups. It is the intention behind these kinds of opportunities that make them unique, and they will become increasingly necessary as the proportion of older adults grows and the connection across generations becomes more important than in the past.

The biggest challenge that lies ahead for our aging country is to explore ways of utilizing the strengths and talents of older adults, contributing to the richness of our culture. Older adults bridge the gap between the generations through connecting our society with its roots. Art has a way of being ageless, timeless, and profoundly meaningful to the human race (Anderson, 1989), and opportunities like *Cohort-Specific* arts programming have the potential to help older adults connect the generations, providing great wealth to our culture and therapy and meaning to the lives of older adults.

Below is a chart describing the second level of analysis of this community case study, revealed through the description of the prototypical categories of arts programs for older adults identified as a result of this study.
Table 5.2: Prototypical Categories by Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>Engaged Learning Environment</th>
<th>Activity Oriented Learning Environment</th>
<th>Class-Stratified Environment</th>
<th>Peer-Driven Environment</th>
<th>Cohort Specific Environment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educational institution</td>
<td>educational institution</td>
<td>community/public location</td>
<td>theater</td>
<td>private locations</td>
<td>community/public location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public sector institution</td>
<td>public sector institution</td>
<td>age-segregated living community</td>
<td>auditorium</td>
<td>public locations</td>
<td>theater</td>
</tr>
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<td>Private organization</td>
<td>private organization</td>
<td></td>
<td>museum</td>
<td></td>
<td>auditorium</td>
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</thead>
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<td>tuition/fees</td>
<td>tickets</td>
<td>private contributions</td>
<td>private funding</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public/private funds</td>
<td>public/private funds</td>
<td>living community fees</td>
<td>member dues</td>
<td>public funding</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living community fees</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public funding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living community fees</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public funding</td>
<td></td>
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<table>
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<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small fee</td>
<td>small fee</td>
<td>expensive</td>
<td>free</td>
<td>small fee</td>
<td>variable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expensive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>free</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small fee</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expensive</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely expensive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expensive</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely expensive</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age-irrelevant</td>
<td>age-irrelevant</td>
<td>age-specific</td>
<td>age-irrelevant</td>
<td>interest-specific</td>
<td>age-irrelevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old age-welcoming</td>
<td>old age-welcoming</td>
<td>old-age-welcoming</td>
<td>old-age-welcoming</td>
<td>interest-specific</td>
<td>old-age-welcoming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-old-age welcoming</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old-age-welcoming</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role of Participants</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active engagement</td>
<td>active engagement</td>
<td>active engagement</td>
<td>passive observation</td>
<td>active participation</td>
<td>active engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive observation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role of Experts</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leading</td>
<td>leading</td>
<td>leading</td>
<td>leading/performing</td>
<td>participating</td>
<td>participating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leading</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive observation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active participation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive observation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Purpose

The implicit characteristics that describe arts programming are helpful for understanding the variations and similarities between the different types of opportunities available. Additionally, they provide a method for making sense of the kinds of opportunities that are most prevalent and available. However, the dominant characteristic influencing all aspects of arts programming, and distinguishing all programs from one another regardless of other qualities, is
the implicit purpose behind these organizations. Understanding this purpose lead to a third level of analysis, and provided the foundation for exploring the third guiding question of this research, *Is there a more effective and integrative theoretical framework for understanding arts participation among older adults?*

Arts activities themselves, but also the opportunities and organizations that provide them, are greatly influenced by certain beliefs about their existence. The interviews, observation, and materials collected during the course of the case study paved the way towards further addressing some of Hoffman’s concerns regarding the lack of connection between high quality arts, or what I will refer to as “high art,” and engaging opportunities that challenge older adults, or what I will refer to as “applied art.” Both of these kinds of art require certain contextualized knowledge to appreciate and explore art in later life, which has been broadly explored by people like Becker (1982) and Peterson (1976) who investigated the sociological influences on arts participation. However, there are additional components to the driving force behind the nature of the arts opportunities that shape and ultimately bring into question the true mission of these organizations.

While many of the arts programs described fit neatly into categories like classes, clubs, spectator activities, or those that support independent participation, these categories alone do not separate them from one another in ways other by the forum used to bring art to older adults. During the course of the case study, certain variations were noted in the interpretations of certain terms that further distinguish the arts programs from one another. These terms include:

a) Older adults
b) Art
c) Opportunity

Even though these terms may seem inconsequential to the purpose and driving force behind arts programs, it is the lack of consistency in the interpretations of: who older adults are and what they can do, what the arts are and what their purpose is, and what kinds of opportunities can and should be available, that is fundamental to understanding how arts organizations implicitly interpret the role of art in society.
“High art” and the “applied art” that Hoffman references both assume a certain kind of art that is relevant and important to society as it influences the richness of our culture. Brian Banks (2000) in his book *Activities for Older People: A Practical Workbook of Art and Craft Projects* demonstrates a completely different set of expectations for the role of art and the kind of art being utilized and introduced to older adults. Banks exemplifies the importance of activity and social engagement above the quality of the art itself. Although the art he describes is indeed applied by nature, it is not “art” in the eyes of those who uphold traditional standards of “high art.”

These differences also further support and may indeed result from many of the changes that occurred in the field of art during the last century (described in Chapter Three) moving the field of art into a “leisure” activity in the guise of such “arts and crafts” (as referenced by Banks), and commodifying art through commercialization and mass production. However, the dominance of activity theory in the field of gerontology during the last century has exerted great influence on the creation of programming of all kinds. For example, the creation of the senior center resulted from the belief that *all* older adults deserved and needed socially enriching opportunities.

The lack of consistency resulting from the understanding about older adults, the arts, and the kinds of arts opportunities that can and should be valuable to older adults stems from a deep division in the way the arts have manifested themselves in American society. The art referred to as “high art” or “applied art” defines a category that advocates that art should be a method for celebrating culture and upholding certain artistic standards. The art that may be referred to as “arts and crafts” described by Banks supports the belief that art is a method for providing entertainment or an activity for which all people can participate.

These two resulting characteristic categories influence and shape all other characteristics involved in the creation of arts programming. The “high art” group of arts programs inherently *divide people* through education, class, income, experience, and what has been referred to as contextual knowledge about art with the hope of upholding strong artistic standards. The “community art” group of art programs promote the use of art as a method for *brining people together* because it should be for all people, regardless of education, class, income, experience, age, or gender. This group further identifies with activity theory by upholding the belief that being active dominates over the meaning behind that activity or the quality of the art itself.
While every art organization that participated in this case study did align with one of these two types of characteristics describing their “purpose,” it should be noted that not every program did fit neatly into one category or the other. Some programs indicated conflicting values that brought both characteristic purposes into play.

Conclusion

This study provides information about the arts opportunities available to older adults, and gives insight into the assumptions that drive them. Although this study was limited to one particular community, the findings provide insight to ways arts programming can continue to grow and change, exploring the potential challenges associated with arts programming available for older adults across the United States. The final chapter will discuss the implications behind the opportunities and beliefs driving the programs and will explore more integrative approaches to understanding the role of arts programming for older adults.


**Summary**

The way arts organizations interact with the community as well as with each other creates a complex arts and aging network. This network is the foundation that older adults, who aspire to participate in the arts, navigate, which has been created over the years by community members, public policies, and national values. Although it is impossible to truly portray the complexities that surround every type of arts organization that exists, it is through understanding this network that we can begin to deconstruct the kinds of arts opportunities that are actually available to older adults and the theoretical frameworks that influenced and continue to influence the arts opportunities that exist for older adults. More importantly, understanding the intention behind arts programs provides a foundation for discovering broader societal influences and challenges that face older adults as they interact with their communities and negotiate the challenges of aging in today’s society.

This study investigated the arts opportunities available to older adults in one particular community noted for its support of older adults and prevalence of arts opportunities. Lead by the first of three guiding questions of this research, *What kinds of arts opportunities are available to older adults?*, the first level of analysis involved compiling the different opportunities identified during the course of the study. These opportunities were analyzed thematically by specific characteristics: setting, funding source, cost to participants, age description, role of participants, role of experts, and finally by their purpose. These programs also revealed that they could be identified as a class, club, spectator, or independent opportunity.

The purpose behind arts programs was identified as a particularly challenging component of arts programming to fully grasp. Realizing the challenges behind understanding the driving purpose of arts programs lead to the second level of analysis, and was further initiated by the second guiding question in this research, *How do gerontological frameworks explicitly or implicitly help us understand the types and amount of arts opportunities available for older adults?* This level of analysis intentionally extended the first level of analysis, and brought the
guiding beliefs that created arts for older adults into question. It should be noted that, because this study sought to understand the social influences and nature of arts opportunities, further analysis of the intentions behind arts programming excluded those opportunities pursued by individuals on their own.

This second level of analysis revealed a combination of salient characteristics that described four categories of arts programs: Engaged Learning Environments, Activity Oriented Learning Environments, Class-Stratified Environments, and Peer-Driven Environments. The lack of opportunities for older adults to initiate their own meaningful artistic experiences revealed the need for an arts opportunity that currently is not prominent or intentional, Cohort Specific Environments. This category will become increasingly important as cohorts, like the baby boomers, manifest an interest in empowering opportunities for interacting with each other and with the community. These five categories were identified and further supported by guiding paradigms about older adults and about aging in general, implicitly aligning and supporting many of the tenets of activity theory, continuity theory, and the wellness model. However, the defining differences between the given categories initiated a broader, macro level analysis of the dominant, guiding beliefs that drive arts programming for older adults.

The final level of analysis was pursued in an effort to explore the purpose behind the arts programming, apparent as a result of the categories of arts programs identified, and was further initiated by the third guiding question of this research, Is there a more effective and integrative theoretical framework for understanding arts participation among older adults? This analysis revealed that two diametrically different characteristics describe the division in the arts programs that are currently available for older adults in the community. The first group, noted as the “high art” group, inherently divides people through education, class, income, experience, and what has been referred to as contextual knowledge about art, with the hope of upholding strong artistic standards. The second group, noted as the “community art” group promotes the use of art as a method for bringing people together regardless of education, class, income, experience, age, or gender. The “community art” group further identifies with activity theory, identifying with the belief that being active dominates over the meaning behind that activity or the quality of the art itself. Although certain prototypical categories identified in the second level of analysis may resemble either “high art” characteristics or “community art” characteristics, these two different beliefs (or purpose) are not assigned to certain types of arts programs.
In conclusion, the most astounding observation noted in this study, that many of the arts organizations that exist within this community were not aware of each other, proved to initiate the most important part of understanding the assumptions and set of beliefs that guide and shape arts programming for older adults. The exploration of this lack of connection between the arts programs lead to the discovery of specific characteristics that described the kinds of opportunities that currently exist for older adults, and lead to the identification of prototypical arts categories. However, following three levels of analysis, the most important finding was the recognition of two opposing assumptions that further magnify broader social challenges, that arts opportunities either work to bring people together without regard for artistic quality, or divide certain people in an effort to uphold artistic standards. These two opposing, guiding assumptions reinforce and articulate a political economy perspective: that the experience of aging is maintained or influenced by socioeconomic and political constraints, life experiences, and social hierarchy in general (Quadagno and Reid, 1999; Bengston, 1997; Estes, 1991; Estes, 1979). This observation supports the need for a change in the way older adults are valued and promotes the need for further exploration of what older adults offer to society.

Finally, the findings from this research support the need for a change in the culture of aging. Currently, society does not promote many opportunities that empower older adults, which may indicate that we do not value the social resources that older adults provide. We must challenge society to empower our elders with more opportunities to engage in civil society. One way we can do this is through providing arts programming that challenges older adults to engage in high quality artistic activities while promoting an interconnected, inclusive community of art opportunities.

**Implications and Recommendations**

This study identified demanding issues that have influenced the fields of art and gerontology, and has acknowledged broader social challenges. The interaction between economic and political forces influences the way social resources are allocated and the variations in the treatment and status of older adults, which is, in turn, reflected in current public policies and other social structural factors (Bengston, et al., 1997). The underlying difference in the purpose behind arts programming illustrates a deep tension between “high art” and “community
“High art” programs aspire to enrich society with culture and high quality, critical art; however, only a small fraction of society has access to these endeavors or the background to appreciate it. “Community art” programs, on the other hand, aspire to bring people together and provide activities to keep older adults busy. However, without considering the individual meaning ascribed to certain activities more carefully and/or by neglecting the importance of challenging older adults to create critical art, such activities run the risk of becoming meaningless to both older adults and society. It is important for arts programs to move beyond activity theory, and carefully examine the ways in which the arts facilitate meaningful opportunities and strong engagement in the lives of older adults.

As was described by the final prototypical category discussed in Chapter Seven, a “Cohort-Driven Environment” has the potential to bridge the gap and combine the benefits of “high art” and “community art,” giving older adults the power to engage in meaningful artistic activities and challenge them to create high quality art. However, this challenge of providing older adults with opportunities that positively influences their individual experience of aging while contributing to the enrichment of society does not exist solely in the arts and aging industry. The challenge of providing meaningful activities and opportunities that empower older adults resonates across the entire culture of aging in our society and is the product of historical events and patterns of beliefs that have developed over many years. Initially, older adults were viewed as a problem to society and aging and consequently, gerontology was identified as an important area of study (Cowdry, 1939). Over the years, older adults have become a prominent part of society; they have become increasingly healthy, active, and financially secure (Blakemore, et al., 1994; Bell, 1987), and therefore have the potential to experience some of their best years in retirement. The changing demographics and increasing heterogeneity of the older population drastically magnifies the importance of carefully considering the benefits older adults provide society, rather than focusing solely on their deficiencies and problems.

Older adults have been engaging in society for many years though volunteerism, political advocacy, and by helping raise their grandchildren or working in other unpaid caregiving positions. However, the “squaring of the population pyramid” (Pifer and Bronte, 1986) requires us to consider opportunities for older adults to contribute their “human capital” (O’Rand, 2001) in a more integrative and collaborative ways. This challenge has been noted by aging professionals for the last few years, and is increasingly identified as a major challenge facing our
aging nation. For instance, the Gerontological Society of America submitted a press release in August of 2004 announcing an initiative on civic engagement in our aging society. According to the director of the project Dr. Greg O’Neill:

“The potential is there for a renaissance of civic engagement in America… but we need more research to understand how to turn this opportunity into reality.”

This may at first assume that employers should focus their attention on identifying ways to encouraging older adults to remain in the workforce. This kind of financially driven reciprocity between older adults and society has been a dominant topic in the field of aging for several years and is a serious challenge that faces population aging (Serow, 2001; Henretta, 2001; Quadagno and Hardy, 1996). However, civic engagement should first be viewed more broadly as an important part of “productive aging” (Burr et al, 2002; Morrow-Howell et al, 2001). The concept of productive aging investigates both the social and economic capacities of older adults in today’s society, from which the concept of civic engagement has evolved (Burr et al, 2002).

This new system of beliefs is representative of a paradigm shift regarding the capacities of adults in older age, and the expectations of older adults in later life. It is through understanding the way these changing assumptions can be applied to current programming that the lives of older adults and society can be improved. Although we do not currently have, nor necessarily need specific guidelines for creating an environment that promotes productive aging, gerontologists might begin by looking to other fields of study that may be facing similar challenges. For instance, Stefan Toepler (2001) described how reinvigorating civil society with the arts holds the potential to help address a broad range of societal dysfunctions including the decline of community (or what we may describe as social engagement). He quoted Benjamin Barber to further support this point:

“Imagination is the link to civil society that arts and democracy share. When the imagination flourishes in the arts, democracy benefits. When it flourishes in a democracy, the arts and the civil society the arts help to ground also benefit.”

(Original page: 517-518)
By empowering older adults to engage in civil society, society also benefits by having a people with experiences, knowledge, and wisdom investing in the well-being of an entire culture. In relation to this particular study, exploring ways that arts programming can connect older adults with opportunities to engage in civil society parallels the aforementioned need for arts programs that effectively bridge the gap between the “high arts” and “community arts.” Finding middle ground between these two groups suggests the need for a model of arts programming that both brings people together and still seeks to challenge older adults to create “high quality art.” This kind of model may reflect the kind of programming Hoffman (1992) was seeking with high quality “applied art” opportunities. Culture and all of society benefits from providing opportunities for all older adults, regardless of class, gender, experience, or background, that allow them to explore different activities that challenge them to create art that is critical, creative, and interpretive.

However, using arts and aging as a method for helping older adults age more “productively” is merely one approach to helping older adults to find meaningful ways to contribute to society and the richness of our culture. Baby boomers will have different needs in old age than previous cohorts; therefore, over the next few decades, gerontologists should carefully examine such opportunities in an effort to identify appropriate methods for helping older adults engage in society. As baby boomers begin to retire, the sheer number of older adults may force society to explore and ultimately employ methods that support older adults’ ability to engage in meaningful ways.

As Estes (1991) argues, experts, policymakers, and the media have a disproportionate influence on the dominant definition of what aging consists of. She challenges gerontologists to allow older adults to guide such experts as they work to employ the different skills and talents with which they enrich society. Furthermore, the commitments that a nation makes to its citizens are only as meaningful as its national policies and programs (Dobelstein, 1985). Therefore, “social scientists must begin to evaluate the extent to which public policy derives from a consistent set of ideas or theories about old age and the aging process” (Walking, 1999, pg. 361).

As civic participation among older adults becomes increasingly important to the well-being of our society, it is important to explore the extent to which the civic activities available to older adults reflect and are shaped by gerontological theories. Future research should help
explore potential changes in the culture of aging by identifying specific benefits older adults provide society. The results should employ empowering opportunities that effectively utilize older adults’ talents, skills, and knowledge. Future research should continue to build on gerontological theories, evaluate current programming while guiding future programming, and use evidence-based research to help employ policies that support productive aging.
APPENDICES

Appendix A

Phone interview questions for key informants

1. Please describe your organization to me.
   a. What is its mission?
   b. Whom does it serve? (What is your target population?)
   c. What services do you offer?

2. What kinds of “arts” activities do you offer to your clients?

3. How are these activities funded?
   a. What are your funding sources?
   b. Where do the majority of your funds come?
   c. How do you determine how much money gets placed into arts activities?

4. How important do you feel it is to have arts opportunities available for your clients?

5. What are your future goals for arts activities at your organization?

6. Who else do you recommend I speak with about this project, what other organizations should I be aware of?

7. (Optional) Can you describe your beliefs that may influence the way you view your role in the arts community or in the lives of older adults?
Appendix B

Questions for Participants:

1. Why do you come to ________?
_____________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________

2. What kinds of arts activities do you participate in here at ________?
_____________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________

3. What do you think of the choices of arts activities offered here at ________?
_____________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________

4. If you couldn’t come to ________, would you go somewhere else to find arts activities?
_____________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________

   a. Where? ________________________________

5. How old are you?
_____________________________________________________

6. How far away from ________ do you live?
_____________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________

7. How do you get to ________?
_____________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________

8. What do you hope to gain from participating in these arts activities?
_____________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________
Appendix C

Questions for Instructors:

1. What is your background in the arts?
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

2. Why do you teach at _________?
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

3. Do you teach anywhere else?
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

4. What do you think of the arts opportunities available for older adults in the Cincinnati area?
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

5. What are your hopes for the older adults that attend your classes?
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
Appendix D

Other information gathered at site visits:

Describe the facility:
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

Describe the location:
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

Describe the general appearance:
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

Describe the spaces available for arts classes/activities:
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

Describe the attitudes of the staff members:
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

Describe any brochures or paperwork available for “clients”:
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
March 10, 2004

Dear ___________

My name is Dawn Carr. I am a Master’s student at Miami University. Currently, I am conducting research on the fine arts opportunities available for older adults in the Cincinnati area. Specifically, I am interested in compiling a detailed list and description of each organization and the specific types of fine arts opportunities that older adults currently participate in at the organization.

I am asking if you might be willing to help me by recommending any particular individuals or organizations which provide such opportunities. I am also interested in learning as much as possible about your organization and would appreciate any paperwork that describes what kinds of fine arts opportunities exist for older adults at your organization. If it is convenient, I am interested in visiting your organization to talk with you or someone you designate and possibly observe these activities. Please let me know if there is a particular time that may be best.

I am including my phone number and address so that you might be able to contact me if you can think of any additional organizations that I should be made aware of or further information about your organization. You may also contact Dr. Suzanne Kunkel, my Faculty Advisor, at (513) 529-2914. I appreciate your time in assisting with this project. I will follow up with you in two weeks to ask whether you will be able to help me. If so, I will schedule a time to meet with you or will make plans to contact the person you designate.

Thanks again!

Dawn C. Carr

(address, phone, and email listed here)
Appendix F

Description of Art Programs Represented in the Sample

Community Organization: These organizations were formed in an effort to serve all members of the community. Examples include libraries, community centers, and museums.

Private Company: These organizations were formed by private companies in an effort to promote a specific type of art for their customers or provide an environment for older adults to experience the arts. Examples include art stores, private clubs, and retirement communities.

Performance-Based Organization: These organizations consist of professional artists who perform for those individuals in the community who purchase tickets and attend specific events. Examples include symphony orchestras, theaters, and the ballet.

Education-Based Organization: These organizations who provide educational opportunities. Examples include formal and community-based education programs.

Funding-Based Organization: These organizations fundraise for arts programs and distribute funds through grants. An example is a foundation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Organization</th>
<th>Number Interviewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Organization</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Company</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance-Based Organization</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education-Based Organization</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding-Based Organization</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Kingson and Williamson, 2001 (handbook…); Kraus, 1994


United States Census. <www.census.org>
