One Practice, Three Studios: A Comparative Case Study of Three Studios for Artists with Disabilities

THESIS

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Abstract

With significant changes in attitudes towards disability over the past 50 years, there has been an increase in opportunities for adults with disabilities. Arts programming for adults with disabilities has become popular in the form of specialized studio programs that provide a range of opportunities for artists who participate. Many of these programs stem from larger social services agencies like those that are prevalent in Central Ohio.

With a background in art education and a research interest in disability, I have conducted a study to explore three art studios for artists with disabilities in the Central Ohio area. This study sought to explore how these programs operate on a daily basis as well as the initial intentions of the facilitators and artists who work in them. The studios were chosen based on their location and my level of access to them as a former volunteer and intern with some of the participating artists and facilitators. The research questions explored in this study are

- How do these studios impact participating artists with disabilities?
- What are the benefits these studio programs provide?
- How do different program models affect these benefits?
- What are facilitators and artists seeking in their participation in these settings?
In order to explore the answers to these questions, data was gathered in the form of organizational histories, observations, collaborations, and interviews. Using a mixture of methods influenced by the methodologies of case study, portraiture, and action research, three portrait case studies were created. I then analyzed these portraits using a theoretical framework that incorporates disability theory and literature from the fields of art education and disability studies.

An analysis of each portrait led to the conclusion that each studio was serving a similar mission but was doing so using different methods and philosophies pertaining to art and vocational training. This study also revealed the different impacts on studio programming that were a result of the historical contexts of each organization as well as the current attitudes of the participating facilitators and artists.
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Fields of Study

Major Field: Art Education
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Chapter 1: Introduction

“I come here...to the art studio...why?...so I can see!”

-Participant at the Goodwill Art Studio and Gallery

Studios for artists with disabilities are becoming increasingly prevalent throughout the country and especially Ohio as the state now boasts up to 7 well-known programs. I began my work in this setting by working with a group of artists with disabilities in a studio called the Art Bridge Studio in Columbus, Ohio in the winter of 2007. The Art Bridge Studio was just a small facet of a social services agency called United Cerebral Palsy of Central Ohio (UCP). The studio was housed in a larger UCP facility that offered day rehabilitation programs, occupational and physical therapy, and individualized assistance for people with developmental disabilities and aging conditions.

As I spent more and more time working in the studio alongside these artists, I began to notice the different elements of their studio program and how that program in particular affected the artists it served. I grew closer to these artists and the lead facilitator there as both a volunteer and a collaborator. By 2010, this studio had been closed due to a corporate merger with a larger entity in Central Ohio called Goodwill Industries. After seeing the artists with which I worked transition into a new studio setting, the art studio at Goodwill Industries, I began to see clear differences in the models according to which these programs operated.
After seeing the product-centered model that the Goodwill studio employed in comparison to the education-based model according to which these artists were trained at the Art Bridge Studio, my research focus developed as I sought to illuminate the similarities and differences between these two programs as well as those observed in a third studio program in which I had become involved.

My main research question is how do these studio programs impact participating artists with disabilities? I also want to know what kinds of benefits artists are gaining from these programs and how differences in program models affect these benefits. In conjunction with exploring how these programs operate and their actual effects on the artists, I also want to know how the artists view themselves and their work within these programs and what benefits they are actually seeking.

This research will focus on data that will be collected from the three studio programs with which I have been involved. This research will employ a case study methodology that also contains elements of portraiture and action research principles. The data collections will take the form of observations, interviews with program staff members and participating artists, and input on research questions from the artists themselves. Through the use of a hybridized methodology that employs both methods of case study and action research informed by portraiture methodology, I will conduct a thorough exploration of the foundations and operations employed in three studio programs. With the data collected, I will create three portraits that feature organizational profiles as well as reflections from the staff and participating artists. Along with detailing how artists’ needs are being met through these programs, I also intend to
conceptualize how artistic agency and autonomy are being fostered in these studio settings as I participate in a variety of different roles ranging from volunteer to collaborator to studio facilitator.

In terms of a theoretical foundation, I have been relying on disability theory models including the individual and social models of disability as well as principles of action research and case study methods such as interviews and observation. Now I will expand on the basic foundations of disability theory which inspired this research in the first place and then delve deeper into some of the principles of action research that have served as a foundation to the questions I am asking of this research. In a later section following the methodology portion, I will present a full literature review where I examine relevant literature on the topics of disability, action research, case study methodology, and resources that focus specifically on studio programs for artists with disabilities.

My first exposure to disability theory occurred when studying art education literature on the topic of disability. One of the prominent authors that caught my attention and has yet to relinquish it was Doug Blandy (1991). Though Blandy cites some of the earliest educators and theorists concerned with disability such as Robert Funk (1987), he more clearly describes the social model of disability in the context of art education. With my focus in both museum and art education, my first application of disability theory was in the studio or classroom setting where Blandy stresses the importance of art educators’ adoption of a sociopolitical orientation to disability. Simply put, disability was a result of a disabling environment and not a single individual’s shortcomings (Blandy, 1991).
Stepping outside of art education literature, sociology offers multiple perspectives on disability. In *Exploring Disability: A Sociological Introduction*, Barnes, Colin & Mercer (1999) break disability theory into two general spheres: that of the individual and that of the social. In chapter four of this text, the authors present an overview of the main paradigms of disability theory including its origins and current formats. They begin with a historical account by tracing the origins of the disability rights movement in the independent living movement, disability policy changes that occurred in the 80s and 90s, the emergence of the disability minority and human services industry, and the disability “business” or business of rehabilitation.

Correlating to this history, the authors explain the basic components of the individual and social models of disability and their current iterations. In summary, the individual model of disability presents perspectives of disability that emphasize medicalization, objectification, and tragedy. The social model presents the position that disability is a result of environmental conditions that act as barriers to functionality in public and private spaces.

In addition to theory pertaining to disability, I have also looked to action research as both a theoretical support to my work and an influence as far as my methodology is concerned. According to Ernest Stringer (2007), theory plays a different role in action research than it does in conventional scientific research, which is an appropriate philosophy to my qualitative research efforts. In *Action Research*, Stringer states that theory of “method” actually serves to “provide clarity and understanding about the way participants enact processes of inquiry in order to achieve the practical and effective
outcomes we desire” (Stringer, 2007, p. 189). This perspective on action research as a method provides me with a guiding foundation as to how I should be asking questions and gathering information about these studio programs. He also stresses the fact that theory in action research should be comprised of a language that is pertinent and makes sense to the participants involved which in this case is both the artists and myself.

The main principles of action research that have influenced my research lie in the fact that I aim to ask questions about studio programs and explore answers to these questions provided by actual participants in the programs as well as facilitators and staff who create them. There is also an aspect of autonomy and authority that I am hoping to respect amongst the artists with which I am researching. Ultimately, my hope is to observe the theoretical supports that inspire this research as they come to life in the studio settings in which I am immersing myself.

Having established a background and rationale for this research along with a theoretical foundation that will support my work, I will proceed by briefly outlining my methodology. I am mainly interested in both Action Research principles and Case Study as a sort of hybrid methodology. I look to Action Research to delve deeper into the questions I have pertaining to the autonomy and artistic agency that are being fostered in the studio programs that I am researching. I want to incorporate the input and feedback of the artists with which I am researching as I draw conclusions about the impact of these studio programs. I also want to emphasize the importance of the artists’ input in developing studio programs that ultimately meet their needs. In order to gather information and build conclusions about how to better implement these studio programs,
I am relying first and foremost on the experiences and narratives of both the participating artists and facilitators.

In accordance with the tenets of action research, my work in this case does not seek to create a new body of knowledge or reinforce existing bodies of knowledge but to explore a living, breathing problem that exists before me based on the concerns and feedback of artists involved in studio programs. In McNiff and Whitehead’s (2006) *All You Need to Know about Action Research*, they state that Action Research emerged as a response to the traditional form of research that asks “How can this situation be understood so that I can change it?”(p.5). I have kept this question in mind as I dig into the effects of these programs and how certain models can be enhanced to meet participating artists’ needs.

In addition to action research I plan to also incorporate Case Study methods including interviewing, observation, focus groups, and site analysis to fully explore these studio programs and attempt to understand the facilitators and artists that built them. The main questions that I hope to illuminate in the interviews are:

- When and Why did you start coming to (insert studio name here) ?
- How many studio programs have you experienced?
- How does (insert studio name) meet your needs?
- What else would you like to get out of working in a setting like this?
- Has working in this setting changed your practice as an artist? If so, how?
- How does this program make you feel?

I also intend to ask the following questions to program facilitators:

- How did you first become involved in this studio program?
- What were your goals for this studio programs when you began your work here?
• Has anything changed in this studio setting since you began your work here? If so, what has changed?
• What is your vision for this program for the future?
• What is the current mission of this studio program?
• In your opinion, why do artists participate in your studio program? What are they seeking?
• How is this program meeting the needs of the participating artists?
• In your opinion, are there any aspects of this program that are not meeting the needs of the participating artists? If so, do you foresee any changes or adjustments in the future?

Moving into the more procedural portions of this thesis, I will produce a section which I will refer to as a case study portrait that features descriptions of each studio site gathered from my field logs and interviews with facilitators and program staff members. These descriptions will present organizational histories, fact-based observations and specific experiences that I had while in these settings. These portraits will also feature highlights taken from interviews I conducted. I will then analyze these descriptions in a proceeding analysis section that pulls general themes and conclusions drawn from my observations and interview experiences.

With a concoction of input of participating artists and facilitators and my analyses of the sites I am exploring, this research has informed my understanding of art studio programming for artists with disabilities. Using disability theory as a spine and both case study, portraiture, and action research methods as bones, the narratives and documentation I have collected from these settings has added flesh to create a multi-faceted understanding of why these programs came about, the impact they are having, and their potential to create change in the way artists with disabilities work. This research
has also informed my practice as a facilitator in these settings as I enter this field as a professional seeking to use this body of knowledge.
Chapter 2: Methodology

Rationale

Before delving into the theories that will serve as a base layer to my field research, this chapter will draw on texts that are situated in the realms of social science as well as action research methodology. These sources combined provide me with the hybridized structure that primarily hinges upon case study methods according to which I have designed my research.

Case Study

Case study serves as my main methodology in that it dictates how I will be collecting and analyzing information. According to Robert Yin (2003), case study as a methodology serves to explore answers to the “how or why questions” of complex social phenomena (p. 2). I chose to utilize a case study methodology as my main mode of collecting information because I wanted to know how certain studio programs for adults with disabilities were operating. Stake (1995) describes perfectly my main motivation in relying on qualitative inquiry in the form of a case study when he states that “the understanding of human experience is a matter of chronologies more than of causes and effects”( p. 39). In my search to find a methodology that would enable me to fully explore the kinds of interactions that occurred studio settings, I found that case study was one of the only ways to present a multi-layered account of the phenomena that occurred in these spaces.
Research on disability also promotes the use of case study as a useful tool for exploring the complex nature of the experiences of people with disabilities. In *Case Study Method for Research on Disability*, Sanjoy Mazumdar and Gilbert Geis (2001) describe the reasoning behind case study’s applicability to research on disability specifically. They state that “statistical reports can reduce emotions to dry and dreary numerical formulations that fail to convey the most significant elements of the world of persons with disabilities and provide little advanced understanding of that world” (p. 256). This reasoning spoke to me as some of the first resources I found that pertained to the studio programs I hoped to research included annual reports and grant proposals that used numbers and quantitative data to describe the needs and wants of individuals with disabilities. While researching methodologies for the kind of research I wanted to do, this text enlightened me to the fact that research involving disability calls for a particular kind of methodological attention.

In terms of the kind of case study I am conducting, the studio settings will serve as instrumental case studies in that they are revealing to me more than a clearer understanding of one particular site, but an understanding of a category of sites. Additionally, these instrumental case studies will enable me to also observe the variations that occur among these different studio programs as they pertain to program models and their impacts as well as artist and facilitator attitudes (Stake, 1995). I have sought out these specific art studio programs as individual cases because I want to do more than just observe them in their natural states as I have been doing as a volunteer and collaborator in these settings over the course of the past year. Through this research process, I intend
to examine these studios through a culmination of physical observations and photographs, informal and unstructured conversations, and guided interviews with both facilitators and artists, (Stake, 1995). In combining multiple modes of data collection, I will be creating a multi-faceted case study to represent each studio program.

I have also deliberately chosen to investigate three cases total instead of just looking at one studio program in greater depth because a multi-case study serves to answer my research questions more adequately. Since the number of these studio programs is increasing rapidly in both the United States and specifically Ohio, I intend to compare and contrast three local studio programs in order to explore how their program models differ. In keeping with Robert K. Yin’s (2003) philosophy of choosing to study multiple cases for a legitimate and specific reason, I believe that each of the cases presents a different approach to the practice of facilitating art experiences with adults with disabilities. My interest lies in how each of these approaches impacts the participating artists and facilitators differently. Though I am studying multiple cases, I have found that this particular case study methodology is applicable in each of the settings since my research questions are the same for each site (Yin, 2003).

Portraiture

Almost as a lens through which to view my practice in case study, I have also relied upon the portraiture methodology outlined by Sarah Lawrence Lightfoot (1997). Lightfoot’s portraiture methodology heavily influences the gathering of my data as well as the final form this accumulated data will take. According to Lightfoot (1997), this methodology seeks to “capture the richness, complexity, and dimensionality of human
experience in social and cultural context” (p.3). In order to achieve this, the methodology consists of two main components: the gathering of data and the formulation of a final portrait that incorporates that data. In this research, case study methods are used to gather data and this data is then used to formulate a multi-layered account of the subject which is also known as a portrait (Lightfoot, 2003).

Action Research

Though the research methodology of case study comprises the majority of my chosen research methods some of the philosophies behind action research also play an important role in my rationale as a researcher as well as in the design of my research. According to Ernest Stringer (2005), researchers guided by principles of action research function in a different way than those engaged in traditional forms of scientific inquiry. He states that researchers engaged in this kind of qualitative inquiry “come to the table, as it were, as a facilitator of people’s exploration” (Stringer, 2005, p. 12). This is definitely true in my case as I work alongside artists and facilitators rather than just simply in their presence. Even through my interviews and observations, I aim to involve the participants in my research by allowing them the necessary room to contribute questions or observations of their own. Stringer (2005) also categorizes this kind of research as a “relationship-driven process” which is appropriate given my history with these individuals (p. 13). I began working with a small portion of the individuals who participate in these studio programs back in 2008 as a volunteer. Having been with some of these artists in various capacities as a volunteer, intern, and collaborator, I have developed a certain rapport with them. It is my goal that under the influence of action
research, my research process will strengthen my rapport with these artists and the additional artists and facilitators with whom I hope to work. In addition to building rapport in these studio settings, I also aim to create a reflexive dialogue where questions are asked and possibilities are explored collaboratively.

Research Design

I have divided my research questions for these case studies into two groups: issue questions and topical questions. In order to answer these questions, I will employ methods of thick description and observations, interviews, and analyses.

Issue and Topic Questions

Issue questions in these cases can also be identified as my main research questions which I will restate:

- How do these studio programs impact artists with disabilities?
- How do different program models affect or alter these impacts?
- What are artists in these programs actually seeking to gain from participating in them?

These questions evolved out of my research experience in these settings leading up to the official start of my thesis research. These questions evolved and were also influenced by the individuals or actors involved in each of these settings, as I grew more sensitive to their opinions and needs while working in these settings (Stake, 1995). Topical questions in these cases are more specific as they directly contribute to the actual description of each case. They will include the following:

- How do artists and facilitators participate in this setting?
• What does the setting physically look like?

• How do artists and facilitators view their work in these settings?

• What kind of program model is followed in each setting both in theory and in practice?

Methods

In order to explore some of the answers to the above stated questions, I will gather data in the form of thick physical description, photo documentation of each site, field notes, and interviews with participating artists and facilitators. The former three methods will be gathered from the perspective of three different roles I have played in these studio settings. I have participated in these settings over the course of the past year (or few in one particular case) as a volunteer or intern, collaborator, and researcher.

Descriptions, photos, and field note observations will serve solely to depict and describe what each setting looks like and what actions occur in each of them. I have made it a point to avoid opinions, interpretations, and conclusions in these portions since I only intend to provide the reader with a clear picture of each site so that s/he will better understand my interpretations and analyses later on (Stake, 1995).

Following my own descriptions and observations, interviews will serve as the main vehicle for gathering data from studio artists and facilitators. According to Stake, the interview is “the main road to multiple realities” (Stake, 1995, p. 64) and I intend to use it as such. Among the three general kinds of interviews, my methods will only include open-ended and focused interviews. I have chosen to omit surveys as an option for interviews because surveys present standardized ways of recording experiences and I
am not seeking a standard in these cases, but unique narratives and differing perspectives (Yin, 2003).

For my interview structure, I have created two sets of interview questions; one for artists and one for facilitators. My aim with using these questions during interviews is not to completely guide the discussion but simply to give the interviewee and myself a place from which to start. I am aware that the artists I am interviewing practice a variety of communication styles and I have planned for both open-ended and focused interviews in order to accommodate these.

After many attempts at planning for data collection and organizing the data collected from my interviews, I have decided that I will not be implementing a coding system. While the coding serves an important purpose in case studies, my cases will be constructed primarily through narrative descriptions and descriptions of key experiences that “bring out the essential character of the case” (Stake, 1995, p. 29). At this point in the process, I will refer back to Lightfoot’s (1997) description of the portrait as a collection of experiences, artifacts, and interactions. After gathering data in multiple forms, I will create a portrait case study of each studio program that consists of four key parts: history and organizational context, current studio operations, thick description, and interview highlights. In presenting each studio this way, I am blending the methods borrowed from a case study methodology with the process of building a portrait, layer by layer, in order to create what Lightfoot (1997) refers to as a “resonance” (p. 15). This resonance will consist of a portrait that “represents context as a collage of multiple sources of data,
balanced with emerging themes…and the [site’s] overarching mission” (Lightfoot, 1997, p.65).

Ethics

While ethics are a concern in many research methodologies, action research-based processes require substantial ethical considerations (Stringer, 2005). In order to protect the identities of my research participants and maintain confidentiality, I will be assigning code names to each artist that is participating as well as to those facilitators that wish to remain anonymous. Since this population of artists is defined by many research protocols as vulnerable, it is my intent to keep their input and contributions confidential outside of the writing of this thesis. Materials collected during this process will not be released for any other purpose and artists will be assigned code names so that their personal information is not revealed to the readers of this material. In addition to maintaining confidentiality, I have also created written consent forms as well as verbal consent scripts to be offered to those participants who unable to communicate consent in written form. These consent forms will be obtained for each interviewee and will be kept on file for the duration of the study.

Validity

In order to maintain validity throughout my study, I will be incorporating the use of member checks as I complete interviews and begin to write about them. Should the interviewees be interested, I will be offering the portions of my writing that contain references to their words or experiences for their review. My aim in practicing member
checking is to ensure that my depictions of these individuals and their experiences are accurate and contain no fallacies (Stake, 1995).

In addition to member checking, I would also like to clarify how I have gained access to these individuals and how I have entered these settings so that the reader fully understands my role in this research. Stake declares that a “quiet entry is highly desirable” in terms of beginning one’s research (Stake, 1995, p.59). For me, I entered these settings first as a volunteer or intern from 2009-2011. Then as my research interests grew and I began to formulate my thesis, I started to view my interactions in these spaces through a researcher lens. I have become familiar with the protocols of each studio space as well as the habits and schedule rhythms through directly working with the artists and facilitators first as a volunteer or intern, and then in some cases as a collaborator. I will expand on my personal history with each studio site later on in the descriptive sections of my data.

In addition to Yin and Stake, Stringer also contributes to the validity conversation as he describes this concept as it concerns action research. Three elements of research relevant to my research methods that confirm a study’s validity are prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and diverse case analysis (Stringer, 2005).

In terms of my level of engagement, I have been documenting the amount of time I have spent in each studio setting and made sure to keep a consistent schedule of studio visits over the past eight months. It is my hope that my prolonged engagement in this case will contribute to my study’s validity since I am making it a point to maintain a rapport with these individuals that began before my research started and will not be
ending any time soon, even once my thesis has been defended. In addition, I have made sure to observe routinely and maintain a high degree of consistency with each site so that artists and facilitators are consciously aware when I am visiting to observe, collaborate, or interview. I am persistent in collecting data in a set group of sites so that I am being given a consistent and reliable picture of how these programs operate.

Lastly, diverse case analysis is defined as the assurance that “all possible perspectives are taken into account and that interpretations of important, significant, or powerful people do not overwhelm others” (Stringer, 2005, p.49). This factor is important in regards to the data I have collected due to the fact that my data includes the perspectives of art program facilitators (also program directors or creators in some cases) and participating artists. In an effort to explore each perspective equally, I have created two different sets of guiding questions for my interviews so that each conversation at least starts in the realm of interaction in which each interviewee is most comfortable.

Data Analysis

I will be employing two main strategies for the analysis of the data I’ve collected once a portrait case study has been created for each studio. The first strategy I will employ will be to produce thorough descriptions of each case so that the reader is able to see the parallels between my observations and interviews as well as the themes that emerge from these depictions (Yin, 1993). In compiling the data I have gathered through interviews, observations, and informal conversations, I will be producing a portrait that features emerging themes from each studio setting as well as historical context of each program, current daily operations, and an overarching mission (Lightfoot, 2003).
The second strategy I will utilize is direct interpretation as described in Stake’s *The Art of Case Study Research* (1995); to “tease out relationships and probe issues” that surface through the data collection (p.77). It is my hope that through my depiction of these studio settings and the experiences had in them will enable me to analyze the artists’ and staff members’ responses to interview questions in the context of the various theoretical models for studio programs of this nature. I will then create an analysis section organized by studio to present you with themes that emerged from the setting as well as connections I made between the studio’s context and the social and historical contexts of disability that I will illustrate in my review of literature.

Through an action research lens, Stringer assigns a slightly different purpose to data analysis than those typically employed in scientific research. In this case, data collection and analysis serve to “understand the ongoing, experienced reality of people’s lives rather than seeking to explain events in terms of an existing psychological or social theory” (Stringer, 1995, p.88). While I will be making connections between the theoretical underpinnings surrounding the social model of disability found in my literature review, my research data ultimately aims to provide a better understanding of the realities of the models that constitute the studio programs I am exploring. Specifically, the data I will be analyzing should serve to help me “learn from and with people rather than studying them” (Stringer, 1995, p.88).
Chapter 3: Literature Review

Rationale

In the case of my research, the literature review plays an important and dynamic role in that it offers me a glimpse of other perspectives that might inform the perspectives that emerge during my study. According to Stringer (2005), the literature review in the course of action research provides “useful information to be incorporated into the perspectives and accounts emerging in the research process” (p. 82). Instead of serving to provide concrete information that explains the nuances that I encounter in my interviews and studio visits, the literature I have chosen will provide a historical background to disability as a social phenomenon that informs the reader about the climate in which these artists and facilitators are working and how it came to exist. Additionally, the literature that focuses more specifically on the intersections of artists and disability as well as perspectives gained from the field of art education will provide a context for the situations that arise in the settings that I am researching.

The History of Disability

A very distinctive history and sequence of events has led to what we now call disability. This history plays a large role in informing the way disability is perceived in today’s society. To start this review of literature, I sought resources that detail this complex yet grim history. In *Bending Towards Justice*, Marcia H. Rioux (2001) introduces disability as first being documented in the mid-1700s before the birth of the United States in the United Kingdom and Canada. She describes the English practice of
rulers shipping those with disabilities or in other words those who were deemed undesirable to the colonies that were sprouting up in Australia and Canada (Rioux, 2001).

This practice identifies one of the earliest phases of the social construction that is disability. Though he writes from the perspective of art education, Doug Blandy (1991) touches upon the same phase in history as he references the work of R. Funk (1987) who outlines all four of the major phases that constitute the history of disability. He explains this first phase in a way similar to that of Rioux. He technically identifies this first period of history as Phase 1 and goes on further to describe a time in which people with disabilities were left to be cared for by family and community members when they weren’t being shipped off to different colonies or countries. In this phase, people with disabilities had little to no presence or rights in society whatsoever and abusive situations were prevalent given that families and communities had no knowledge of disabilities or resources with which to work.

As a solution to the problems that arose, Blandy (1991) describes Phase 2 as it began in the early 1900s and consisted of the creation and growth of large scaled residential institutions in an attempt to eliminate the abuse and mistreatment of people with disabilities. The introduction of the institution to society however marked a period of even more abuse and mistreatment.

Some of the more extreme forms of abuse faced by individuals with disabilities during this time included the practice of eugenics and forced sterilization. In his essay *Disability, Genetics, and Eugenics*, Tom Shakespeare (2008) details the eugenics movement that grew in the United States in the early 1900s. The practice of eugenics
grew from early inspirations found in the work of Francis Galton, Charles Davenport, and Harry Laughlin as they developed the Eugenic Record Office in 1910 (Shakespeare, 2008). The philosophies that resulted from the established focus on eugenics included the ideas that “…lower social classes, or inferior races, would come to predominate over ‘superior’ beings, who were likely to reproduce at a slower rate” (Shakespeare, 2008, p. 23). Eugenicists at this time also believed that social behaviors or characteristics like alcoholism, promiscuity, and feeblemindedness were inherited. With these thoughts intact, practices like forced sterilization and diagnostic tests on babies were common among certain populations thought to be at-risk for certain behaviors or social practices (Shakespeare, 2008). Though eugenics is not as prevalent in today’s discussions concerning genetics, Shakespeare (2008) emphasizes that “it is clear that the negative thinking about disability that underpinned eugenics remains widespread in certain societies and can occasionally be seen in most societies “(p. 27).

In addition to some of the horrors that ensued during this point in time, this phase was also notable in that early research was developing in the area of art experiences for people with disabilities, mainly children in this case. In his article, Blandy refers to studies that were conducted by Charles D.Gaitskell, Margaret R. Gaitskell, and Viktor Lowenfeld among others which introduced the arts to children with different disabilities. While many of these research endeavors focused on using the arts as a remedy or type of therapy, one important resulting attitude was that children with disabilities were as capable as their non-disabled peers at efforts in communication and expression. Though it was considered only a minor finding in the fields of therapy and rehabilitation, this
sentiment was an important first-step in a conception of disability that would focus first on the abilities of a person, not his/her limitations. In addition, the findings that were born out of this research concerning the arts and healing led the way for researchers to question the role of the environment as a possible disabling factor instead of the assumed handicap of the individual (Blandy, 1991).

Following these initial research efforts concerning therapy and rehabilitative experiences as well as the horrible living conditions that constituted the institutional experience, Phase 3 was the beginning of the period known as the Deinstitutionalization period in which people with disabilities were integrated into society with the passage of the “Rehabilitation Act” of 1973 as well as the “Education for All Children Act” of 1975. These two laws were some of the first attempts at protecting the rights of people with disabilities. This period continued the development of the attitudes gained from the aforementioned research, which focused on the abilities of people as opposed to the disabilities. This shift in attitude was also accompanied by an emphasis on the importance of Art for all people, which is a philosophy with which many of today’s museums align their overall missions.

Lastly, Blandy (1991) references Phase 4 of Funk’s stages of the development of disability which highlights the beginning of what would become a full-blown civil rights movement in which people with disabilities as well as advocates sought to change attitudes and legislation concerning disability in our culture. This period of civil rights activism regarding disability consisted largely of questions of access to everything from government facilities to educational institutions like schools and museums. With regards
to the topic of my research, conferences were occurring at this time that dealt specifically with Art Education and students with special needs. Blandy describes the important realization that was born out of this phase that “people experiencing disabilities were seen as being more similar to their nondisabled peers than not” (Blandy, 1991, p.7).

Though this history does not seem to have a place in the art studios on which I am focusing, Rioux (2001) emphasizes that its influence can still be found today in the “attitudes, laws, policies and programs that find their roots in the early rejection of disabled people” (p. 35). She also makes direct connections between historical notions of disability and the widespread practices of modern society such as “immigration procedures, sterilization practices, pre-natal screening and selective abortion, institutionalization, competency laws, education acts, medical care and triaging” (Rioux, 2001, p.36).

Conceptions Towards Disability

As a result of the aforementioned history, multiple perspectives and attitudes towards disability have populated our understanding of the concept. This understanding has changed over time but has gone through some strongly identifiable phases, some of which still exist today (Barnes, Mercer, and Shakespeare, 1999). Though I will focus mainly on conceptions of disability in the US, I will also briefly introduce some of the mainstream attitudes towards disability from other eras and cultures in order to properly contextualize the perspectives that have been adopted in the US.

According to Barnes et al. (1999), “…disability does not have a universal character…in some cultures and languages, there is no term for ‘disability’, and social
difference; is categorized in many different ways” (p.14). Some of the beliefs surrounding disability in other cultures such as those found in places like Kenya and Zaire include views of disability as caused by nature or a God. Additionally, the presence of a disability is also seen as a supernatural phenomenon or even a positive marking or message from its creator. While assumptions about the meaning and social impact of disability can differ, the authors here note that those with disabilities in more traditional societies are still included in family units and community groups with assistance through adaptations on the part of their family members and neighbors (Barnes et al., 1999).

This acceptance of individuals with disabilities becomes less common when one looks at conceptions of disability in more industrialized and capitalistic societies. In industrialized places like the modern day United States, “impairment has become a more important source of disability…[and] as a consequence, disabled and elderly people have suffered a diminution in status and become more dependent on others” (Barnes et al., 1999, p. 14). When considering a society’s view of disability, it is important to think about the social and economic circumstances of that society. In Disability and Culture, Ingstad and Whyte (1995) introduce three main factors to consider when attempting to understand a particular society’s relation to disability: the ability of the family unit to care for an ailing or disabled member, the occupational structure of that society and the way it integrates individuals with different abilities, and the extent to which that society offers programs and services for individuals with impairments. Consideration of these factors
demonstrates that socioeconomic factors have a significant impact on how impairment in an individual is viewed thus changing the way disability is conceived.

*The Individual Model*

Given that social and economic movements play a large role in the way a society perceives and accepts disability, I will now outline two major models of disability that have been prevalent in the United States since the turn of the eighteenth century. The Industrial Revolution as well as a growth in the fields of science and medicine led to the medicalization of disability that would lay the foundation for the *individual model* of disability (Barnes et al., 1999). This conception of disability first entered the scene with the rise in factory work and standardized vocational regiments that experienced growth in the late 1700s. With a rapid growth in technology and new production capabilities that demanded an enormous workforce, disability became “a source of friction and lost income within the new industrial system” (Barnes et al., 1999, p. 18). With this new association, individuals with disabilities were taken out of the workforce if their skill sets did not match those of their able-bodied co-workers.

Along with the machine-driven industries of this time period, the field of medicine expanded resulting in its “success in medicalizing illness and impairment [which] gave legitimacy to radical shifts in the treatment of disabled people” (Barnes et al., 1999, p.19). This meant that here were more attempts on behalf of medical professionals to identify and control individuals with impairments or illnesses. According to Barnes et al (1999), “This heralded the ‘therapeutic state’ with its novel and polarized conceptions of normal and abnormal, sane and insane, healthy and sick” (p. 19). With this
increased focus on therapy, rehabilitation, and the overall repair of individuals deemed disabled, segregation and isolation became the primary method of society for dealing with an entire population of individuals that had been given labels and diagnoses in the place of their names and identities (Barnes et al., 1999).

According to Michael Oliver (1996), the medicalisation of disability was one of the primary components of the individual model. This model consists of two main points that Oliver outlines nicely in his text, Understanding Disability. In it he states “firstly, it locates the ‘problem’ of disability within the individual and secondly it sees the causes of this problem as stemming from the functional limitations or psychological losses which are assumed to arise from disability” (Oliver, 1996, p. 32). He also points out that the tragedy theory is one of the major supports of this model of disability as it positions disability as some terrible chance happening that falls upon the lives of its victims rendering them hopeless and helpless (Oliver, 1996).

To further explain the individual model and its implications, Barnes et al. (1999) rely on its origins within the medical field. They emphasize that the focus of the individual model “is on body ‘abnormality’, disorder or deficiency, and the way in which this in turn ‘causes’ some degree of ‘disability’ or functional limitation” (Barnes et al., 1999, p. 20). Once this limitation is recognized, the individual is categorized solely by what that limitation bars them from doing whether it be a task of daily living or component of social interaction. Additionally, limitations faced by individuals are the focus of experts in various fields who then seek to “diagnose the bodily or intellectual ‘abnormality’ and advise on appropriate treatment” (Barnes et al., 1999, p. 21).
The Social Model

In lieu of the individual model, scholars like Oliver and disability activists alike embraced the social model as a progressive step towards a conception of disability that paints a clearer picture of its origins and implications. In his text, Oliver (1996) cites one of the origins of the language of the social model in a report of London’s Union of the Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS) that was published in 1976 which states:

In our view it is society which disables physically impaired people. Disability is something imposed on top of our impairments by the way we are unnecessarily isolated and excluded from full participation in society. Disabled people are therefore an oppressed group in society (p. 14).

Though this text was taken from a report that spoke on behalf of individuals with disabilities from an entirely different continent and culture, its language served as a starting point for the arguments that would be made pertaining to disability in the United States. In sum, the social model identifies disability as a result of external causes such as the environments and circumstances presented in society that bar certain individuals from participation. The acceptance of this model of disability demands a shift in thinking and attitudes that occur surrounding the individual with a disability, not those that exist in the supposed shortcomings of the individual (Barnes et al., 1999). One of the key foci of this model is the experience of disability that encompasses “a wide range of social and material factors and conditions, such as family circumstances, income and financial support, education, employment, housing, transport and the built environment, and
more…”(Barnes et al., 1999, p. 30). With that being said, it is clear that the social model considers an array of circumstances that contribute to the disability experience without solely laying blame and fault on the individual and his/her responsibility to simply overcome these challenges.

In addition to placing the responsibility of disability on society and not the individual, this text also inspired a discussion of the language used to represent the meaning of disability (Barnes et al., 1999). According to the model brought forth by the UPIAS text, disability and impairment were two distinctive terms that each had its own respective discourse. In Constructions of Disability, Claire Tregaskis (2004) describes the distinction drawn between the “acknowledged inherent functional limitations cased to the individual by their impairment, and the additional socially created barriers caused by disability”(p.10). She quotes the language of the UPIAS report (1976) to clearly define the terms disability and impairment:

- **Impairment** Lacking part or all of a limb, or having a defective limb, organ or mechanism of the body.

- **Disability** The disadvantage or restriction of activity caused by a contemporary social organization which takes no or little account of people who have physical impairments and thus excludes them from participation in the mainstream of social activities (p. 3).

Though the above text is concerned with physical disabilities, I have included it in order to illustrate the distinction between the terms disability and impairment. In the legislative language of the present day in the United States, the Americans with Disabilities Act
(1990) describes disability as “a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities of such individual.”

With the prevalent use of both terms in literature concerning disability, the social model serves to identify the difference between one’s individual characteristics and the judgment made about an individual based on those characteristics. Tregaskis (2004) stresses the importance of this delineation in the fact that it forces us as a society to look at disability as a social problem requiring a shift in attitudes which contributes to our overall ability to overcome the “exclusionary mechanisms” which we employ that are supported by individual model thinking (p. 11).

While the social model is a step towards progress in identifying and rectifying circumstances that serve as barriers to individuals with disabilities, there are shortcomings in this model that warrant further attention. Oliver (1996) criticizes the social model in Understanding Disability when he points out that some people with disabilities claim that the social model does not incorporate the experience of impairment. In most cases, it is the physical experience of certain impairments that cannot simply be remedied by social model thinking. Here Oliver (1996) makes clear that one of the main purposes supported by the social model is that impairment should not cause disability. Oliver defends the social model when he stresses the importance of realizing its capabilities and initial intent of rectifying social barriers, not removing individual physical impairments. As seen in an article written in 1992 by Sean Vasey, Barnes et al.(1999) summarize what it is that the social model actually emphasizes:
The social model is not about showing that every dysfunction in our bodies can be compensated for by a gadget, or good design, so that everybody can work and 80 hour day and play badminton in the evenings. It’s a way of demonstrating that everyone even someone who has no movement, no sensory function, and who is going to die tomorrow has the right to a certain standard of living and to be treated with respect (p. 31).

Disability in Art Education

In addition to the various conceptions of disability, literature on the intersection of art and art education with disability lends itself to my needs in exploring studios for artists with disabilities. It is my intent to present this literature in the context of my research given that art education is field from which I have started on this academic and professional journey.

Though a majority of articles from the realm of art education do not explicitly concern studio programs for adults with disabilities, their emphasis on the works of artists with disabilities provide a strong foundation upon which the artists I have researched can build their practice. One of the keystone authors so to speak on the topic of art education and disability is Doug Blandy who I have cited previously regarding his research on the history of disability. In his essay *Conceptions of Disability: Towards a Sociopolitical Orientation to Disability in Art Education*, Blandy (1991) delves further into disability perspectives in art education beyond the aforementioned historical context of disability as a social phenomenon. He picks up where the historical phases of disability leave off and introduces the recommendation that art educators adopt the sociopolitical orientation to
disability in their teaching practice. This orientation specifically encompasses a theory that “attributes auditory, visual, learning, physical, mental, behavioral, emotional, and other health-related disabilities to the failure of social systems, including educational systems, to accommodate the ‘needs and aspirations’ of all citizens” (Blandy, 1991, p.5). This understanding of disability is aligned with the social model developed earlier in this literature review.

When considering what this conception means for art educators, Blandy (1991) emphasizes the importance of three main areas in which art educators can implement this understanding. The first area being the language used to talk about art created by artists with disabilities. Blandy (1991) suggests modifying the way one talks about genres like l’art brut or outsider art as these categories tend to emphasize “disability rather than ability, dissimilarity rather than similarity” (p.10). Secondly, Blandy (1991) encourages art educators to create accessible environments within their classrooms so that every participant or student can experience art on their own terms and not solely according to whether or not they can physically access the space. Lastly, Blandy (1991) suggests revisiting the way disability is represented in visual culture and art as well as how work created by artists with disabilities is introduced in the classroom.

Another author who addresses the intersection of art education and disability is Jennifer Eisenhauer (2007) as she looks at the Disability Arts Movement in “Just Looking and Staring Back: Challenging Ableism Through Disability Performance Art.” Here, she examines disability artists who challenge the way disability is understood and perceived. While Eisenhauer (2007) references Blandy’s sociopolitical orientation,
she extends her argument to include the idea that ableism be included in art education discourses and that the affirmative model also become part of the sociopolitical orientation. She cites the affirmative model as references by Swain and French which involves the construction of self-identity by individuals with disabilities. While this model exists in conjunction with the social model, Eisenhauer (2007) also notes that it originates from a slightly different space with a slightly different mission as it “emerges from within rather than outside the disability community and emphasizes the cultural contributions of disabled artists as important voices through which to challenge cultural oppression”(p.3). In an art education context, this model implies that artists with disabilities are presenting through their art a critical discourse that speaks from the experience of disability and oppression posed by those without disabilities. Eisenhauer(2007) encourages the inclusion of disability artists in the body of art that is presented to students in the classroom in an effort to reveal the complexities of disability culture as well as the ableist perspectives that are inherent in our culture.

With Eisenhauer’s focus on disability in the context of art and art education, John Derby also writes from the viewpoint that disability be included in the discourses that constitute the field of art education. In his article, “Disability Studies and Art Education”, Derby (2011) argues that not much has changed in the field since Blandy’s call for art educators to adopt the sociopolitical orientation to disability. He emphasizes that disability studies has the potential to intersect with art education in a constructive and paradigm-changing manner if our field is able to see that its historical treatment of and
attitude towards disability stems from the medical or individual model instead of the progressive sociopolitical orientation (Derby, 2011).

This article also makes clear that Disability Studies has much to offer the field of art education in its recognition of “disabled people or people with disabilities as a social or cultural category with a minority identity whose communal locus is not corporeal similitude but the shared embodied experience of navigating a world whose design produces barriers to people with certain attributes” (Derby, 2011, p.97). Overall, this article provides me with a better understanding of the connection between a lot of the disability studies-focused literature and the role of art education, which is an important nexus to recognize as I begin to look at literature concerning art studios specifically.

Studios for Artists with Disabilities

While the majority of this literature review consists of material about the history of disability, the conceptions of disability that society has adopted at different points in time, and current understandings of disability, I will now examine literature surrounding the specific concept of studios for artists with disabilities. In my initial search for literature, I found a multitude of sources that featured this topic in some form. However, upon closer inspection, many of these resources were outdated and supported an attitude towards disability that still echoes the medical or individual model of disability. Additionally, these sources also contained more practical material that detailed the how-to of the creation and implementation of art programs for artists with disabilities instead of a more critical perspective on these environments which is what I was seeking. Given this disclaimer of sorts, I have chosen to include the following resources about studios for
artists with disabilities because they either offered valuable information about the intent of these kinds of programs or else a historical context for their existence.

In the Fall 2011 issue of the outsider art magazine *Raw Vision*, Sue Steward explores the development and impact of studios for artists with disabilities in her article *Art and Disability*. She traces the origins of this kind of programming as she researches an exhibition called The Museum of Everything. Quoting the founder of this exhibition, James Brett, that features art from artists with disabilities, she describes the unique role of these studios:

> Progressive studios, he says, do not teach. They simply enable. It is this process—where a creative environment provides support, time, space, and materials—which allows participant artists to discover their own styles, techniques, and voices. They are left to be artists in the truest sense of the word, they have simply been given the tools to do so (Steward, 2011, p. 21).

From her conversation with Brett, Steward is also able to extract what makes studio programs for artists with disabilities successful. The line is drawn between these more progressive studios as she calls them and the programs with more of a “therapy basis”(Steward, 2011,p.23). What is interesting about this delineation is that the history of these programs that Steward relays contains heavy references to psychiatric and therapeutic efforts in artmaking which makes it difficult for me to digest this article as being strictly about art programs that emphasize art and not therapy.
The author goes on to tell the story of early programs started in Germany in the twentieth century by psychiatrists from which fine art was produced and displayed. In addition to Germany, art studio programs were also started in Austria, Italy, and Japan following traumatic events such as wars and violent conflicts that plagued each country in an attempt to enable victims to express themselves following their traumas. From these programs stemmed individuals who began careers as artists though it seemed as if this circumstance was a happenstance effect of the more therapy-based programming efforts.

Randy M. Vick and Kathy Sexton-Radek (2008), two researchers from the field of art therapy, also contributed to the conversation about the makeup of these studio programs in the present day and how they tend to function in their article “Community-Based Art Studios in the United States and Europe: A Comparative Study.” Though they hail from a field that many facilitators in the programs I’ve observed describe as not being aligned with the kind of work that they do, the study they present in their article provides a broad survey of the attitudes of facilitators and artists in these kinds of studio programs in the US and the UK.

Vick and Sexton-Radek (2008) approach their research topic with a question pertaining to the similarities and differences between studio programs in the US and Europe that serve the same population; adults with a wide range of intellectual, physical, and developmental disabilities. Their main question concerning these studio programs is how each program may or may not be considered art therapy. Coming from an art therapy field, the authors are interested to observe the differences in how artists and employees of
these studios in the US view their work compared to how similar artists and employees view this work abroad throughout Europe. The authors are also interested in if this type of work takes the form of a social service or art experience. The authors conduct their research using survey methods reaching out to studio facilitators from a total of 22 programs with a response rate of 68%.

Citing art therapy and rehabilitation literature, Vick and Sexton-Radek (2008) describe the common historic linking between disability and therapeutic remedies like art. In the context of art programs for adult with disabilities, they see a discrepancy in how these programs are viewed in American and European cultures but see prominent similarities in their internal capacities as well as funding and revenue streams. The results of this study were intended to identify if these programs were indeed performing the same function but operating under different terminologies or participating in something entirely different altogether.

This study provided a lot of information pertaining to reflections of overall attitudes towards artists with disabilities among people like those who facilitate and participate in these programs. The researchers here tried to pick apart the ways in which this kind of work is viewed as well as the ways this work is performed in different settings. While this brief study only scratched the surface of attitudes towards this kind of work, it provided me with relevant examples of attitudes facilitators in these settings tend to have towards their work. In seeing these different attitudes, I was also able to recognize some of these philosophies in the studio settings I researched and the impact they had on both the work being produced and the artists working in the programs.
To return to the history of these programs specifically in the United States, the artist pair consisting of Florence Ludins-Katz and Elias Katz took inspiration from programs in Europe and started a studio in California called Creative Growth in 1972. Throughout the next decade, the couple also launched the National Institute of Art and Disability and other satellite programs like Creativity Explored in San Francisco and Creativity Unlimited in San Jose. These programs were some of the earliest efforts in the United States at providing art experiences for individuals with disabilities with the hope of also providing employment and professional artistic skills.

The aforementioned programs still exist today in addition to larger studios abroad like Arts Project Australia in Melbourne and the Centre of Expression and Creativity in Belgium. Steward (2011) stresses that both these programs abroad and newer studios sprouting up in the US prove that artists with disabilities can contribute significantly to the overall art market and that they can also benefit from being a part of this market. This article also makes clear that these studio programs can vary widely in terms of their organizational makeup but that they have the power to collectively “enable significant work to be made and great artists to come to light”(Steward, 2011, p. 27).

Florence Ludins-Katz and Elias Katz also published a book of their own in 1990 that details a practical approach to starting and implementing art studios for artists with disabilities. Although most of the book titled Art and Disabilities consists of practical information regarding art materials and organizational development, they open their book with a philosophy that clearly defines the terms Creative Art, Art Therapy, Art in Recreation, and Art in Education. Being able to distinguish among these terms is helpful
when looking at art studios for artists with disabilities because these terms are often confused when looking at the existing literature about these sites. The latter two terms are fairly self-explanatory but the former two have made their appearances in the literature that I have examined thus far so I will expand upon them both. Creative Art in this context is defined by Ludins-Katz & Katz (1990) as the “outward manifestation in an artistic form of what one feels internally…[and] although there is a terrific drive for sharing, it is not necessarily part of the creative act”(p. 7). In contrast, art therapy is described as a creative activity executed with a primarily therapeutic intent that includes diagnosis and/or treatment of a diagnosis (Ludins-Katz & Katz, 1990). Though art therapy has many definitions and contexts in different fields, I will be using the definition provided in Art and Disabilities since it is created in the specific context of studio programs for artists with disabilities. The two definitions from this text will be useful to me as I attempt to draw connections between them and the programs that I will be observing.

In addition to providing important definitions, Ludins-Katz & Katz (1990) provide a clear description of what they identify as art centers for disabled adults which are the settings with which I am most concerned in this research. They describe this kind of programming in terms of a working definition, contributions to the field, and overall goals of these kinds of settings. They define an art center for artists with disabilities as a “full-time supportive and stimulating environment…in which creative work in painting, sculpture, printmaking, creative drafts, etc. is carried on in a studio setting by people with mental, physical, or social disabilities”(Ludins-Katz & Katz, 1990, p. 15). They also add
that these settings can include galleries, educational and professional development, outings, and exhibitions.

In terms of how these settings contribute to the individual artist, the authors explain that these centers emphasize both creative development and a nonrestrictive environment (Ludins-Katz & Katz, 1990). Combined, “the act and results of creating serve as catalysts in mobilizing the different strengths in the person, and in welding these strengths together to form a total productive personality” (Ludins-Katz & Katz, 1990, p. 15).

The goals of these art studios according to the authors include artistic development, creation of high quality art, and vocational training and experience among others (Ludins-Katz & Katz, 1990). While the authors list over twenty goals for art studios for artists with disabilities, I have referenced only a portion of them given that some of the goals are presented in a way that indicates the authors are writing from the perspective of an individual model of disability. I am not dismissing these goals however I am only hoping to clarify that this material does not fully align itself with the more progressive social model that was described earlier in this review of literature. I intend to use the materials from this book as a tool to more clearly describe and present what I find in the upcoming portraits of each studio program.

Having gained a better understanding of the context of art studios for artists with disabilities in the realms of history and art education, I will now present three organizational portraits. These portraits depict three existing studios that are operating today in Central Ohio. Each portrait will serve as an organizational profile as well as to
provide you with an understanding of the goals and intentions that lie at the heart of each program. The portraits will present historical and contextual information pertaining to each organization’s birth and will also include personal accounts from both facilitators and artists who participate in these programs.
Chapter 4: A Case Study Portrait, Goodwill Art Studio and Gallery

I will now present a hybridized representation of each studio program that incorporates both methods of case study and portraiture. I will begin as Lawrence-Lightfoot (1997) recommends by providing a broader history of the organization and work towards a more specific understanding of the context of the art studio with the larger entity as well as the individual perspectives of facilitators and participating artists that constitute the studio.

Goodwill Art Studio and Gallery

History

To begin, Goodwill Columbus belongs to an international conglomerate called Goodwill Industries International which was started in 1902 by Edgar James Helms in an attempt to offer work opportunities to immigrants who were unable to find employment in the Boston area in the early 20th century. With a background in ministry, Helms felt called to improving the public but sought to do so in a different way than traditional charities and giving efforts at the time. With the help of the Methodist church for startup funds, his early work took the form of first collecting donated goods from wealthier neighborhoods. Following a collection, he would then hire individuals who were unable to find work otherwise due to social, economic, and cultural barriers to refurbish and resell them in a retail setting.

By 1915, the name Goodwill was established and by the 1930s, Helms’ model was recreated across the country and the world. With national events in the US like the
Great Depression and World War I abroad, Helms and Goodwill affiliates began to address the increasing need for rehabilitative services on top of employment assistance for individuals like returning war veterans. From this early history grew a model that permeates Goodwill Industries contemporary mission and philosophy called the social enterprise model which states that local Goodwill agencies are run as “social enterprises…that serve their communities by creating a culture of service, innovation, and collaboration” (The Goodwill Social Enterprise Model, n.d.). According to Director of Public Relations, this means that Goodwill first responds to a need in the local community of where to donate unwanted gently used goods and then creates both a profit from the resale of those goods and social impacts through the work opportunities and income provided for individuals with a vocational and rehabilitative need.

Today, Goodwill Industries consists of 181 member organizations and reports that it has provided workforce development training to 29.4 million individuals, earned 2.69 billion dollars in retail sales, and provided personal and family support services to over 9 million families (Goodwill Social Enterprise Model, n.d.). In addition, Goodwill has also earned revenues through industrial and service contract work and garnered support from individuals, foundations, and corporations through charitable giving. According to a press release published in 2012, 84% of Goodwill’s total revenue goes towards education, career services, and community programs.

Goodwill Columbus

At the local level, Goodwill Columbus provides work force development, vocational skills training, and occupational therapy for individuals with developmental
disabilities or those who face other barriers in the community. This local chapter of the organization was established in 1939 and is the seventh largest nonprofit organization in Central Ohio. Goodwill Columbus actively serves the overarching organizational mission of “building independence, quality of life and work opportunities for individuals with disabilities and other barriers” (Goodwill Columbus, 2010, p. 2). Their Central Ohio headquarters and primary center offering services is in Grandview, Ohio and offers services ranging from rehabilitation to vocational services and commercial opportunities.

Based on this historical narrative, it’s clear that vocational involvement and job participation are the key elements integral to the fulfillment of the Goodwill mission. The purpose of presenting the reader with this history is to provide a context within the larger entity of Goodwill in which the happenings of the art studio specifically are situated. I will now focus more on the beginnings of the art studio and illustrate the current efforts of the program and the effects they are having on participating artists.

*Goodwill Art Studio and Gallery*

In 2003, the idea for a more focused arts and crafts program emerged out of a division of Goodwill Columbus’ services called SAGE senior services. This program was geared towards adults with disabilities aged 45 years or older. Given that there was a growing interest in the art and craft element of the division’s daily programming, this area was given more focused attention as activity specialists decided to offer arts and crafts programming in a segment of the facility in Grandview which would become an art studio. In 2004, Goodwill received grant funding to fully develop a studio facility that earned the name the GoodArt Studio. Soon after in 2005 a local artist who trained at
Passionworks in Athens, Ohio was contracted to design instruction that focused more on fine art than the crafts that were previously available for participants to create.

By 2006, a program manager was assigned as the GoodArt Studio became an independent program apart from the SAGE senior services programming. With this change also came a new direction for the art program as the new manager focused exclusively on developing more fine art products, exhibiting artists’ works, and selling them in the mainstream art market of Columbus, Ohio. With this new emphasis on fine art, the program was renamed the Goodwill Art Studio and Gallery. After tremendous growth, the adding of three resident artists, and a merge with a smaller art studio for artists with disabilities, the Goodwill Art Studio and Gallery serves over 120 artists on a weekly basis.

My entry into this site as a subject of my study began when Goodwill Industries purchased a smaller studio in which I worked for three years in May of 2011. This studio was embedded in a social services agency called United Cerebral Palsy of Central Ohio (UCP) which provided similar services and served the same client base as Goodwill Columbus. Upon this merge, I was introduced as a volunteer to a new art studio setting and began to learn more about how these programs can vary according to their mission, structure, and operations. This transition into a different studio environment than the one which I was used to prompted me to want to explore these studio programs on a deeper level by comparing and contrasting their missions and actual impacts on the artists with disabilities that they serve.
Before the start of this research project, I volunteered at this studio setting for a period of six months. In the Fall of 2011, I began to record my observations of what occurred in the studio and started to conduct my interviews with the facilitators who taught there and the artists with which they interacted. My role in this setting took the form of both a volunteer and a researcher. Though I did have a history with some of the participating artists in this setting since some of them had transitioned from UCP, I interviewed both facilitators and artists from the former studio at UCP and those who originated from Goodwill in the first place.

*Thick Description*

Tucked away off of a major thoroughfare in Grandview Heights Ohio, you will find Goodwill Columbus sitting on Edgehill Drive. A massive clean white concrete building with large windows exists in a more industrial pocket of suburban Grandview. Walking through the automated front doors below a glowing Goodwill sign, you will find a front desk behind a glass window and a waiting area with a few rows of chairs. To your left you can see a conference room encased in glass and straight ahead is a secured door that leads to the rest of the facilities if you have a magnetic keycard with which to enter. Every guest and every employee signs in at this front desk and are either given a visitor’s badge or dons their employee badges. To your right you see wire display stands featuring goodwill advertisements that give way to a short but open hall containing works of art on similar wire display columns. Walking up the steps or ascending the wheelchair ramp to your right, you see a set of glass double doors.
Through these doors, you enter the art studio with its twelve-foot ceilings and paint splattered floor. Amidst the room’s 2,500 square feet, there are two oblong work tables capable of seating up to 12 artists each that you encounter first coming from the entrance. To the left along the wall, there are drying racks and shelving units labeled by day of the week and class time containing a plethora of unfinished works of art. There are paint splattered edges on pieces of wood in varying shapes and sizes as well as three dimensional pieces like sculptures of houses, an assortment of boxes, and textile pieces. In front of this storage area sits a smaller table that contains pieces and supplies in different stages of use. In the far left corner, a computer station sits featuring a disheveled desk and a paint-splattered office chair. Moving past this corner, another wall houses storage shelves that reach over ten feet containing a variety of textile, wood, and ceramic materials as well as tools and supplies like sewing machines, hot irons, hair blow-dryers, and spray bottles.

Beyond this supply shelving unit, there is another set of double doors that are open during class hours. Next to these doors are a row of sinks and cabinets with countertops filled to their capacities with cleaned brushes drying in coffee-cans and water basins in need of fresh water. Another doorway leads to a small shop room that houses some power tools, hardware, and frames in varying states of completion. Beyond this shop room, a gallery space takes up about a third of the studio space. With a glass display counter and a cash register, this serves as the primary location to purchasing works of art. Art that can be purchased here includes everything from two-dimensional words like prints and paintings to three dimensional hanging pieces like wooden houses, silk
scarves, house wares, and jewelry. From this display area, you can look between racks of art pieces and see artists working at the long tables across the room. This provides a sense of transparency as shoppers are able to see the products that they are buying as they are being made.

Current Operations

Before discussing the content of the interviews that I conducted, I will provide a brief explanation of the daily happenings in the studio that I observed over the course of my weekly visits. Outside of the more structured interviews, my involvement in the studio mainly consisted of volunteering assistance to the facilitators and artists throughout studio sessions whether that meant technical help with materials or else guidance and direction with specific projects. On a typical day, artists enter the studio for their assigned one-hour class period. Every artist is allotted one period in the art studio per week so that the studio can serve the 120 artists that wish to participate. Facilitators typically assess each artists’ interests and skills to match them with an appropriate project idea from their line of products.

Interview Highlights

I conducted my interviews with the facilitators and the artists in this space at different times we scheduled around my weekly studio visits with only exception being the interview with the Director of the studio, Helen, which took place in her separate office. While I started out with a set of main questions, my interview with the director focused more on the studio’s mission and the reasons that artists choose to participate. The mission of the Goodwill Art Studio and Gallery is building independence and
creating income opportunities through creative self-expression which echoes the overall Goodwill mission with more of a focus on the arts. When asked what her goals were in addition to fulfilling this mission, Helen responded that the bottom line of the work she does at the studio is providing the opportunity for artists in her program to be part of the mainstream art market; to be treated like any artist in any studio or gallery in the country when it comes to their work, the marketing of their work, and the income generated from making art.

There are a total of three facilitators in the Goodwill Art Studio; one full-time and two part-time. I interviewed Diane, the full-time instructor as well as Craig, one of the part-time instructors. My conversations with Diane tended to stress the importance of the social aspect of the studio. When I asked her about the studio mission and the reasons artists participate, she stated that the purpose of the studio is to be the face of the participating artists in the community. She emphasized that the individuals who work in the studio all have different motivations for doing so but seem to have in common the desire for the link to the community and the social atmosphere the studio provides. She described that the environment she and the other facilitators as well as artists create is unlike any other space in Goodwill Columbus and that’s exactly what draws participants from all over.

When I spoke to Craig, he described the equal opportunities that the studio provides to artists because in his words, “everyone gets to play”. He said one of his main aims to provide instruction tailored to each individual’s level of interest or skill set. He also said that it is challenging since everyone who wants to can participate in the art
studio and the level of participation is the exact same for each individual. While Craig wants to provide everyone with similar attention, it is challenging to divide this attention between individuals who consider themselves working artists by profession and individuals who come to the studio solely for the social interaction but not to really focus on artistic development.

After getting a better understanding of the intentions of the facilitators, talking to the artists who participate in the Goodwill Art Studio was integral to understanding what the impacts of their studio involvement and the reality of the facilitators’ intentions. Given the varying levels and styles of communication utilized by the artists, I gathered information through verbal conversations, text-to-speech devices, gestures while working and presenting their artwork, and observations of demonstrations of their working. One of the first things almost every artist I spoke with described was the atmosphere of the studio. When asked why he comes to the studio, an artist named Jim told me that it was to not only make art, but to make laughs. Jim is also the individual who plainly told me that he comes to the art studio “to see” because he claimed that he doesn’t see the same way that he sees in the art studio.

Another artist named Tony attends two studio programs including Goodwill and has been an artist for 21 years. He explained that he comes to Goodwill because they put his art out in the community in a way that he himself cannot. Tony has a limited range of motion due to Cerebral Palsy and paints on a mat lying down. He benefits from Goodwill because the facilitators there are able to display his work at shows and exhibits.
and make connections with buyers that he would not be able to make from where he lives and works.

One of the more prominent artists from Goodwill named Charlotte that transitioned there from the studio at UCP claims that the family aspect of the studio is what draws her to it. Having worked with Craig at the previous studio, Charlotte values the feedback she receives from him about her work. She also loves the tight-knit network of artists to which she belongs and claims that she seeks that “family kind of feeling” from working in the studio; a feeling that she has not quite developed at Goodwill yet since the transition but one that she greatly desires.

In addition to the aforementioned artists who are higher-functioning, a large portion of artists at Goodwill have more severe disabilities that make it challenging to convey their experiences clearly in this writing. Despite this inability for me to properly illustrate the narratives of these individuals, I will at least describe one experience I had while working one-on-one with an artist named Steven. I was introduced to Steven eight months ago and observed him in the studio up until a month ago when I personally worked alongside him. By nature, Steven is extremely active and a rarely stays in one place as he moves about the room exploring things that catch his interest. Upon entering the art studio, Steven is seated and given a piece to begin working on which typically involves paint as that is his favorite medium. Once Steven had a brush in his hand, he instantly slows down and exhibits a level of focus that Goodwill employees say is exclusive to this environment. While working alongside Steven aiding him with materials, I can clearly see between his alternating furrowed brow and widening grin that
he attains a level of concentration and contemplation that speaks loudly about his experience in the art studio.
Chapter 5: A Case Study Portrait, ArcWest Art Program

Arc Industries

History

ArcWest is a division of Arc Industries, which is a nationwide chain of sheltered workshops for adults with developmental disabilities. ArcWest is the employment component housed in the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities (formerly Mental Retardation). The history of Arc Industries began with the early incorporation of the Franklin County Council for Retarded Children (FCCRC) in 1951. With the passing of Bill 157 in the Senate that year that established training centers for individuals with disabilities under the age of 21, FCCRC began to focus on providing some form of training or education for youths with disabilities who were not included in the public school system at that time. Early on, this took the form of programs detailing health and hygiene, safety, and basic skills for children that were ambulatory and able to be transported to programming locations including local church basements or schools that were no longer used by the public (Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities, n.d.).

By 1960, in addition to county programming for children with disabilities, Senate legislation was enacted that led to the creation of County Boards of Mental Retardation across the nation. With the creation of Boards of Mental Retardation (whose names were officially changed in 2009 to Board of Developmental Disabilities) came increased focus
on sheltered workshops to offer work opportunities for adults with developmental disabilities.

In 1963 ARCraft was established in Franklin County and sheltered workshops were set up in two locations in Columbus; ARCraft North. ARCraft South soon followed as it opened in 1979. By 1980, the name of these workshop facilities was officially changed to ARC Industries. ARC Industries East was opened in 1983 and a fourth and final workshop center on the West side of Columbus in 1989.

Current Operations

All four locations are currently still in operations and offer a variety of vocational opportunities and training. These centers primarily consist of sheltered workshops that manufacture a variety of goods from textile products to machinery and industrial tools. According to the mission of Arc Industries, “employees consistently provide exceptional customer service with impressive attention-to-detail and a finished product that exceed expectations” (Arc Industries Inc., n.d.). These worksites not only provide manufacturing positions but vocational training in other ventures such as quality control, courtesy clerking, ticket collection, food service, and janitorial services.

The art studio at Arc West is a relatively young program as it started in 2007. Up until this time, ArcWest was subdivided into different workshops and activity centers that focused on different work and life skills. With a growing interest in the arts and crafts segments of participants’ everyday programming, the director of ArcWest decided to allot funding to start an art-specific program that took place in a shared room with another activity leader. After one year of the popularity and success of this activity
center, another staff member was added in another space to also conduct arts and crafts activities. After another year of these two similar activity programs, a new facilitator with a background in art with individuals with developmental disabilities was hired and an entire room was converted into a studio space. By 2009, the art program at ArcWest was officially a separate work activity open to any individuals in Franklin County that qualified for Arc programming. Funding for the art studio was initially part of the budget for ArcWest’s work development programming and profits gained from the sale of products made there went directly back to the artists as income. A portion of the profits also went back to the county to go towards the purchase of more supplies and materials.

At this point in time, ArcWest’s art studio consists of four instructors, one assistant, and a part time consultant. The number of artists who participate fluctuates with the amount of work in other workshops as well as the kinds of projects happening in the art studio. Since anyone who has an interest at any point in time is allowed to participate, there are a lot of faces in the art studio. Participating artists can participate for half or full days depending on their work and activity schedules. There are about 10 individuals who participate consistently and during the majority of their time at ArcWest.

I began my involvement with ArcWest in December of 2011 as a volunteer and collaborator on a group project. I volunteered weekly for a few hours and tried to scope out the interests of the participants and facilitators there before I suggested a project idea I had for the group. Amidst starting this piece of artwork, I was able to form connections with the more consistent artists there and the facilitators. It was my intention to begin working with these individuals as a volunteer and collaborator first since I did not have
the rapport with this organization that I had with Goodwill form the previous portrait. I also hoped to become more comfortable in the setting as well as allow the artists and facilitators to familiarize themselves with me.

*Thick Description*

From the outside, ArcWest looks like an industrial warehouse or factory as it sits on Dodridge Street just west of Ohio State’s campus. A large brick building with minimal windows and a few loading docks off of the west side of the building. As you enter through the automated sliding doors, you see a glass wall to your left that separates you from the reception office. Visitors, guests, and participants sign in and are allowed to enter through another series of sliding glass doors. Instantly you encounter the smell both the aromas of cleaning solvents and food as you see a large cafeteria to your right. To your left is a small hallway that leads to administrative offices. Walking beyond these two areas, you navigate down a long narrow hallway lined with lockers. There are activity centers in individual rooms to your left and right as you walk further down the hall which ends with a set of double doors that lead into the main workshop or “the floor” as participants call it. Before you reach “the floor,” you turn right into a hall lined with colorful artwork that leads you into a large studio space that spans about 3000 square feet.

As you enter the room, you encounter a small kiln room to your left and a large industrial laundry set to your right. Walking past these two areas, you see a row of two desks to your left where facilitators have individual work stations with computers and desk clutter. The wall to your left houses cupboards and storage cabinets as well as a
small supply closet. The far wall you face has a few fogged windows and another two desk areas for two more facilitators. The wall to the far right contains more storage cabinets and two sink stations. Work areas in the room are divided into quadrants where different activities take place. Craft-based projects and make-and-take activities occur at the table to the far right. Two short tables in the front of the room are home to the ceramics work area. Another long table to the very far left of the room houses the beads station where clay beads are made, glazed, and assembled. Handmade signs hang from the ceiling indicating which projects occur at each station. At any given time there can be up to twenty individuals working in the room at a time. Some participants come with a project idea in mind in which they want to participate out of the main product options offered and others come and participate in simple projects to pass the time like cross-stitching and coloring.

Interview Highlights

As I began to understand the dynamics of the studio, I started to take on more of a researcher role and scheduled my interviews with individuals that seemed interested. I had also explained my intentions early on with the facilitators so they would periodically ask me about my work and if I had any questions about anything so they were extremely receptive to being interviewed. I spoke with two facilitators, a woman responsible for development, the consulting artist, and six participating artists that frequented the studio daily.

My first conversation took place with Margaret, the individual responsible for the business side of the studio’s ventures. She also acts as sort of a volunteer coordinator as
well as she was my first point of contact for the studio and was the one who invited me to come into the space in the first place. She explained her background as solely business and administration-related and discussed her early efforts in trying to manage funding for the arts activities specifically and the marketing of the products created in the studio. She also handles all of the retail and sales aspects of the product lines created in the studio which include metal and ceramic garden art, ceramic beads, and decorative clay masks for wholesale.

When I asked her what her main goals were with the studio, she began be describing the importance of work and a source of income as many of these individuals seek. She also talked about the kinds of work environments that she individuals practically grew up working in with the deinstitutionalization movement and the big switch into smaller residential homes and sheltered work environments. She stressed the importance of being given a choice to work in a different setting; one that allows for socialization and interaction as well as clearly visible results in being able to see a product from start to sale. One of the key ideas she pointed out about how work in the art studio differed was that participating individuals experienced an entirely different sense of gratification in knowing that something they made and left their mark on was sought out and purchased by a complete stranger. She made it clear that with a lot of the piece work done on “the floor,” individuals often have no sense of where the product is going once it leaves their hands nor if they have even made an impact.

In addition to the work aspect, Margaret emphasized that the socialization element was huge for many of the individuals who participate. She described that “in no other
place are these guys able to talk, laugh, even sing while they work.” This made it clear to me that while an income is a primary motivation, the atmosphere means a lot to those who participate.

When I spoke to another facilitator, Jan, her perspective was similar to Margaret’s. She stressed the importance of giving individuals different opportunities than those involving piece work as mentioned above. She claimed that working in the art studio provided an entirely different sense of self-worth for the participants because they are creating products by hand. In the process, they are also making creative decisions pertaining to the form and color of the products which gives them a sense of autonomy and control which are two feelings that are not common to working on “the floor.”

One of the facets of the ArcWest program that comes with a challenge as described by Jan and another facilitator, Mary Beth is the equal opportunity it provides. Since the art studio program is available to any individual for both half and full-time participation, Jan explained that it was hard to develop consistency. She also described that projects created fluctuated with what products were selling and which ones were not. Given this structure of supply and demand, the volume of projects made fluctuates greatly and artists usually come and go with the workflow. The artists that do return no matter what don’t have as much time to develop their own work since they become so focused on the products they have been trained to create.

After talking with the facilitators, I spoke with the consultant who retired from teaching art with the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disability for thirty years. Her main goals in coming back to consult in the development of this studio program were
to aid in enabling the participants to feel comfortable expressing themselves through art making. She talked about her experience having a speech delay as a child and becoming an adult who could sympathize with individuals who had differing needs for communication and expression. She also agreed with the sentiment that creating art products gave participants a strong sense of self-worth and achievement once the pieces sold.

Many of the artists at Arc West are not as high-functioning as the artists I observed in other settings. I often use a variety of communication techniques when spending time at this site because some of them do not verbalize their intentions and observations in the ways that I am used to documenting and recording. I spoke with six different participants in addition to my normal weekly interactions and one of the most common comments pertained to the atmosphere of the studio. One artist, Keith, explained that in his previous jobs, he did not feel as calm and stress-free as he does in the art studio. He also said he enjoyed the jocular nature of the facilitator there they differed greatly from the coordinators that work on “the floor.”

The other artists I talked with concerning their involvement in the studio seemed to rely on those around them for queues during our conversations. It was a common response however that artists at ArcWest all loved both the atmosphere and the staff members whether or not they even had a strong interest in making art. Isabelle was very clear when she spoke of her love for the studio environment and her passion for using color in her work tasks instead of blank pages (like those required for many of the tasks on “the floor”).
A handful of participants seemed to participate in the studio solely because they were interested in the money and were unable to participate in the kinds of work available to them on “the floor.” My conversations with these artists started to shift on to other topics like work and family as it was clear these participants did not see themselves as artists and would go on to talk about their jobs and other interests.
Columbus Center for Human Services

History

The Open Door Art Studio (ODAS) is an option for day-hab programming through the Columbus Center for Human Services (CCHS). CCHS was incorporated in 1980 as a non-profit with the closing of the Orient State Institute located just outside of Columbus. The closing of this institution occurred with the deinstitutionalization movement of the 1970s and resulted in the need for assisted living and working settings for individuals who lived the majority of their lives in an institutional setting. The mission of CCHS is “to prioritize health, safety, personal goals and promotes positive community roles for individuals with disabilities” (Columbus Center for Human Services Inc., n.d.).

With the start of CCHS, early programming included supported living facilities in the form of smaller shared and single apartments with assistance and education in life and vocational skills. By 1990, CCHS expanded beyond supported living environments and began to offer opportunities for daytime rehabilitation (commonly known as dayhab programming). This dayhab programming commonly took the form of supported activities in a community environment during the standard business hours of the weekday that included life skills, recreational activities, and community and workplace outings. The two current service entities aside from the art studio program that constitute CCHS
are Supported Community Living and Park West Apartment Community. These two programs currently provide living environments for individuals with disabilities with varying levels of support and assistance for participants with both day-to-day tasks and vocational and personal planning.

Current Operations

By 2007, CCHS added to their offerings and called on a specially appointed committee of employees to form the Open Door Art Studio (ODAS). This studio program started serving participants as an option for day habilitation in the form of aiding in the development of a career as an artist. When it first opened, ODAS occupied a rented studio space in the back of a commercial restaurant building in Grandview, Ohio. The size of the studio limited the number of artists who could participate to about 8 individuals at a time with the assistance of three full time facilitators and an executive director.

In 2011, CCHS bought a larger building in an industrial sector of Grandview off of Goodale Boulevard that would be home to the new art studio. This new space featured 4000 square feet of workable studio space and included a gallery and retail segment. With this growth, the studio’s capacity to serve participants grew and one more full-time facilitator and a part-time assistant were added to the staff. Additionally, the studio developed an independent mission statement that stood apart from the mission of CCHS and reads as follows:

Open Door Arts Studio exists to empower artists with disabilities to develop unique artistic voices and to experience opportunities
afforded through the arts. The Studio believes that creativity knows no boundaries and that all individuals deserve an environment for expression without limitation (Open Door Art Studio Inc., n.d.).

Now, ODAS serves about 60 artists that participate in studio programming from one to four days per week. As program embedded within CCHS, ODAS receives a majority of its funding from the larger organization and a small portion of funding from grants for arts programming from the state and local arts councils.

Thick Description

Looking at the Open Door Art Studio from Goodale Boulevard, a clean freshly painted light blue building stands out among small warehouses and industrial office park suites. From the street you can see in the front façade’s windows where works of art are displayed and sold in the gallery area. At the front door, a wooden sign painted in bright colors reads Open and bounces against the glass door as you enter. Directly to your right, you see the wide open gallery and retail area that you saw through the windows. Walking through that area you encounter a hallway displaying works of art to your right and the vast studio area to your left.

The studio area is broken up into four quadrants that the facilitators use to divide up the artists in order to provide one-on-one attention in an organized manner based on artists’ needs and levels of functioning. Each quadrant contains a large table at which anywhere from three to six artists sits while working. Along the far left wall, one artist has his own special work space since he works on a sewing machine and creates large textile costumes that adorn mannequins. On the back wall there is a large garage door
with windows along the top through which sunlight pours into the room. To the far right, there is a small coatroom that houses artists’ belongings as well as cubby holes to store sketchbooks and personal inspiration materials. Along the wall to the right, you will find three bathrooms which not only contain various adaptive equipment to aid in personal care of the artists but works of art that all belong to the *Musee de Loo-vre* collection. Past the bathrooms, the far corner of the studio features the desks of five facilitators which are covered in art projects in varying stages of completion and documentation. A doorway to the left of the row of desks leads to the hallway you saw earlier filled with artwork that belongs to the “permanent collection” that features pieces of art bought from studios like Open Door from other states. This hallway also leads to a conference room and the office of the executive director.

Based on the physical features of the studio and gallery spaces, it’s evident that Open Door Studio as a whole takes their art and the art made by their community of artists with disabilities very seriously. I became involved with Open Door by learning of this reputation from my involvement in this specific part of the arts community. A close friend of mine began working at ODAS as a facilitator and I heard about their executive director who was a fellow classmate of Craig’s from Goodwill’s studio. She and Craig both attended the Columbus College of Art and Design and had an extensive background as studio artists themselves. I started volunteering weekly at Open Door in February of 2012. Like most volunteers, I started out doing simple tasks around the studio to assist the facilitators and artists whether it meant hanging and mounting work or keeping supplies organized and in stock.
Shortly after starting, I began to spend my time there just talking with artists and observing the various projects each person worked on. The facilitators assured me that this was the kind of interaction that was the most valuable for the artists which surprised me at first. I often felt that I wasn’t being “useful” until a facilitator pointed out to me that the artists can obviously wash their own brushes and squeeze their own paint but they don’t benefit from explaining their artwork to themselves. From then on, a majority of my time at Open Door was spent watching artists work, talking through their process and material choices and offering constructive criticism when asked.

Since I gathered a ton of feedback from the artists themselves during my weekly visits there, the facilitators were my focus in terms of scheduling and conducting formal interviews. I had had so much interaction with the artists that I felt I had a better understanding of their wants and the impacts of the studio solely based on their explanations of their work and their love for the studio which came up on a weekly basis.

*Interview Highlights*

The first person I spoke with was the executive director, Caroline, with whom I had interviewed before for previous research on the studio. Having been on the original planning committee before the birth of Open Door, Caroline had clear goals for the program from the beginning, which are still mostly intact today. Her primary focus is to provide quality art experiences for artists with disabilities that extend beyond the superficial and more craft-oriented projects that are common in this field. Her attitude towards taking art and the art made by participating artists very seriously is reflected in the studio’s mission as well as the other facilitators’ input during the interview process.
Next, I talked to my friend Alex more specifically about her work and her goals and observations of the impact of the studio. The most important aspects of the studio that she emphasized were the working environment and the professional opportunity it provides. When artists come to Open Door, they are usually familiar with the studio’s reputation for strong marketing, amount of sales, and dedication to developing individual artist identities instead of a collective brand or aesthetic. Individuals with an interest in art as a profession are drawn to Open Door as a place where that desire can flourish and develop to its full potential. Facilitators in the studio environment take the work very seriously and provide critical but constructive feedback and opportunities for advancement and learning that are rare in art settings for artists with disabilities.

Additionally, artists who come to Open Door benefit from interaction with their peers about their own work which provides the artists with a better understanding of how to communicate about the work that they make. This increase in ability to communicate about something as personal and specific as art work also improves overall communication and self-representation skills, which are something Alex explains that are often not taught to individuals with disabilities as they work towards independence.

This element of communication was also a key benefit observed by another facilitator, Kate. Kate agreed that being at Open Door taught artists a new way to represent themselves and their work. Additionally, Kate believed that being in this setting gave artists an opportunity to work and develop in the presence of professional artists as both their peers and the facilitators. Given that all of the facilitators are professional artists as well, being involved at Open Door provides a setting in which artists are
constantly exchanging ideas and opinions which is not as common in settings run by staff members with little to no artistic background. Kate also emphasized that artists are drawn to Open Door because they are treated as “adults with real responsibilities and real goals” and not simply as clients under the authority and direction of care staff.

The last staff member from Open Door that I spoke with was a part-time assistant named Caleb. When asked about why artists are drawn to Open Door as well as what they gain from participating, Caleb placed a strong emphasis on the education that occurs in the studio. Since each facilitator comes to the studio with a different expertise and personal interest as far as art is concerned, artists have access to some of the most knowledgeable people about an array of mediums and methods.

Outside of art instruction, Caleb talked about a special program that occurs daily at the end of the day in the studio that gives artists a unique opportunity they might not have elsewhere. *Awesome Time* is a one-hour discussion or seminar of sorts that is led by a different facilitator every day and sometimes led by a guest that presents an art, design, or culture-related topic to the artists in the studio in the form of a PowerPoint presentation, video, or demonstration. The purpose of this daily hour is to provide the artists with exposure to relevant topics pulled from art history, pop culture, and contemporary art that influence artists today. Since many of the artists at Open Door have not had the opportunity to partake in higher education or do not live in an environment that is conducive to peer interaction, the presentation of these topics is highly informative and inspiring to many of them. This time also allows facilitators to elaborate on or
explore further a topic that has informed their own work or research by presenting it to others for questions and discussion.

During my weekly visits, I spent a lot of time talking with participants about everything from a current piece they are working on to some of the favorite and not-so-favorite parts of the studio programming. Many artists are vocal about the pieces they are working on and often have questions about techniques or want an opinion regarding a decision they’ve just made. Though I usually didn’t need to ask probing questions, artists’ opinions about the studio as well as what they are gaining from participating commonly came out in our exchanges about their work and their environment.

Like the artists at any of the other studios I have studied, communication can take on various forms in my interactions with them. Many of the artists at Open Door have had a lot of practice in developing their identities as artists and the ways in which they choose to present themselves. One of the most vocal artists I interacted with spoke very clearly about why he comes to Open Door and what the difference is that separates this studio from others he has experienced. According to Ben, working at Open Door is like going to school in that you learn a lot and are pushed to improve but differs in that you are treated as an equal, not just a student. Ben stressed that working with the staff at Open Door was thoroughly enjoyable because he felt that he was treated like a human and not just a pair of hands on an assembly line or a person completely at the hands of his/her caregiver.

Another artist named Jimmy described the sense of confidence he gains from working in the studio and the curiosity fostered there that drives him to explore and
experiment in terms of his artwork. When working with the staff at Open Door, Jimmy explained that he was constantly challenged but never felt threatened or intimidated as he had in educational and professional settings growing up. He also described his satisfaction with the way everyone at Open Door was constantly looking to improve themselves and their work all while actually having a good time and enjoying the journey along the way.

I observed another artist in the studio who does not speak and provide the same insights as artists like Ben and Jimmy but that demonstrates a fervor and dedication in the art studio that speaks volumes about her practice and her views of Open Door. Mary Jane is mute and peers out from her work behind two round spectacles with bright wide eyes. Whether she is effortlessly navigating a piece through weaving or knitting or tackling a new two-dimensional subject like the bride of Frankenstein from the surface of her wheelchair, Mary Jane is constantly creating and emitting things from her hands. While she is able to mouth responses to questions and spoken interactions, I gained a lot more from watching her demonstrate how she works and what her current obsession is as well as from the smile that happens on her face the instant she puts her needles or brush or pen to a surface.
Chapter 7: Case Study Portrait Analyses

The studio programs I have featured in this research have distinct characteristics and a slight degree of similarity. My intent in creating case study portraits of each studio was to present the history of each studio as well as the intentions of the people involved with them and the impacts of each program on participating artists as these factors have varied significantly. One of the main results of the collection and presentation of these observations was that I was able to see how the history and early missions of each program had lasting effects on their current operations. I was also able to see living breathing examples of some of the theories and philosophies I’ve described in my review of literature.

In order to analyze each of the portraits I have created, I will return to my review of literature and pull themes that were illuminated in each of my studio portraits. I will organize this section by studio so that there will be three parts total starting with the Goodwill Art Studio and Gallery followed by the ArcWest Industries Art Studio and finally the Open Door Art Studio. Each part will contain key themes and instances wherein these themes have been observed. My observations of the studio atmosphere and the words and actions of the participating artists and facilitators during interviews all contributed to my understanding of these themes. This better understanding of the
connections between the literature and my portraits is the main constituent of my analyses of these programs and their impacts on the individuals who participate.

The Goodwill Art Studio and Gallery

*Initial Reflections*

During my time at the Goodwill Art Studio and Gallery, I observed artists working in a regimented way according to the schedule and routine that allows so many to participate. Given that the facilitators’ primarily aim to provide everyone with the opportunity to participate in the art studio no matter what their level of talent, commitment, or investment may be, each artist participates for exactly one hour each week. I noticed that this approach gave a lot of individuals the chance to experience art but also limited those individuals who may seek more from their art than a social or recreational activity. After talking with some artists, it was clear that some artists viewed their work in the studio as a trade or serious profession and others viewed it at a fun place to be in between other activities. Since these circumstances make it difficult for artists to develop their practice as working artists, Helen spoke of an upcoming evaluation effort in order to better gauge levels of interest and restructure how much studio time artists are given.

Based on my observations and the information I gathered from interviews, there were four main themes that I saw brought to life in the studio setting at Goodwill Columbus. These four areas included the impact of the history of disability on the happenings of the studio, the aesthetic developed by Goodwill, the echoes of the
individual model of disability within studio programming, and the argument for the inclusion of artists with disabilities in the broader art scene.

*Lasting Influences of the History of Disability*

Keeping in mind the history of the organization and its parallels with the history of disability, Phases 2 and 3 from Blandy’s (1991) writing are reflected in the early beginnings and current operations of Goodwill Industries. With its beginnings in the first half of the twentieth century, Helms created Goodwill in order to provide work opportunities to immigrants who were deemed unemployable. In doing so, these individuals were first isolated from mainstream society and assigned work tasks in environments not frequented by the general public. Though Goodwill work opportunities progressed over time to provide more interaction within communities through the creation of retail shops for the public, individuals with disabilities today are still isolated within the community given the location and physical space allocated for serving their needs. Sitting in an industrial area that is off the beaten path of the trendier parts of Grandview Heights, Goodwill Columbus is not a place that many people are aware of. Individuals who partake in work opportunities at Goodwill are given the chance to be a part of the work force but are usually participating behind the closed doors of Goodwill’s building.

In terms of the schedule and structure of the art studio specifically, interactions there were similar to interactions that would take place in a classroom or assembly line. *The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Education for All Children Act of 1975* were two key elements of the Deinstitutionalization movement that constituted Blandy’s (1991)
Phase 3 of the history of disability. These acts served to protect the rights of individuals with disabilities and intended to integrate individuals with disabilities in the work place and children with disabilities into the school system. Conceptually, these acts represented society’s attempt to assimilate individuals with disabilities into standardized settings like classrooms and workplaces.

The Goodwill Aesthetic

While the art studio is a unique setting compared to other activity centers at Goodwill Columbus, the work produced there is created in a manner that allows it to take on a certain aesthetic and be branded as a Goodwill product. While strolling through the gallery and retail area, it is easy to recognize each piece of art as obviously belonging to a larger body of work. In addition, it is also hard to discern how many artists contributed to each piece and who these artists actually are unless you look at the back of each piece where artists’ names are provided along with the percentages of the total piece that each person contributed. When observing artists working at Goodwill, it is clear that a majority of the projects have been decided upon by the facilitators and that artists contribute to many pieces at a time depending on what their abilities are and what each piece calls for.

In a blog post written by the founder of Passionworks, one of the first art programs for artists with disabilities in Ohio, the difference between art and craft are explained in the context of working with artists with disabilities. The founder, Patty Mitchell, provides the following description of the distinction between art and the crafts that occur at studio programs like that of Goodwill.
Arts and Crafts, traditionally used in programming, are about an already predetermined goal. The pieces of a project fit together in an expected way and the participants are just the labor for someone else’s idea. When working with people with multiple challenges and an angel made of macaroni is held up as the example of what we are shooting for and participants do not have the fine motor skills to replicate the task or thought processes that can lead them through the expected steps of the task- then the person’s deficits are amplified (Mitchell, 2009, para 3).

*Artistic Reflections of the Individual Model*

Mitchell’s (2012) description provided me with an understanding of how to differentiate between the different pieces of art being generated in the studio programs that I am researching. For the Goodwill studio in particular, this description perfectly describes the kind of pieces that are created and marketed as products of the Goodwill Art Studio and Gallery. In consideration of the description of craft, there are strong references to the individual model of disability reflected in the kind of work being produced.

As stated by Oliver (1996), the individual model describes disability as a result of the shortcomings and failures of the individual, which leave the individual with no choice but to attempt to overcome those shortcomings to adapt to the standards of their environment. This model is reflected in the way that artists are guided to contribute to projects that have already been conceived in whichever way their abilities will allow.
Inclusion in the Arts Community

While the ways in which artists create work in the Goodwill suggest more of a craft-based approach, the program director’s philosophy on the inclusion of Goodwill artists in the broader arts community is aligned with the call for artists with disabilities to be included in world of contemporary art that is found in the writings of Derby (2011), Eisenhauer (2007), and Blandy (1991). When I spoke with Helen, she emphasized that one of her main goals for the studio program was for the participating artists to be treated like any other artist in the Columbus arts community. This emphasis in my interviews with her and her staff members indicates that Goodwill’s studio program supports the notion that Goodwill artists should be included in the broader arts community as contributing artists in their own right. This sentiment is supported in art education literature that also supports the inclusion of these artists in the larger conversation about art in our classrooms and communities.

ArcWest Art Studio

Initial Reflections

The structure and organization of the studio at ArcWest made it clear that the program is in a very early stage of development compared to the other two sites I researched. The facilitators at this studio do not have a background in art and the overall mission of Arc Industries is clearly reflected in the fact that the company refers to its four locations as production warehouse sites. When talking with the facilitators, they referred to the projects they were leading strictly as products and the skills required of the artists were typically repetitive and simplified. The products created in the ArcWest studio
consisted of three main types of products, ceramic garden marking tiles, ceramic decorative mask totem poles, and ceramic beads used in jewelry and crafts, that are sold wholesale to large distributors and retail outlets. The only instance that I observed artists creating other kinds of pieces was when artists’ skills or interests did not lend themselves to the aforementioned products. In these cases, the artists worked on simple crafts such as coloring activities and yarn needlepoint images.

Based on my experience in the ArcWest studio, the three main themes that stood out to me were the residual effects of Phase 2 of the history of disability, the effects of the attitudes of facilitators and artists towards their work, and a discrepancy between what Ludins-Katz and Katz (1990) describe as the purposes of these studio programs and the actual realized purposes of ArcWest’s studio program.

**Phase 2 History Today**

Just as indicators of some of the earlier phases of the history of disability were present in the Goodwill studio, this history is also reflected in the daily operations of ArcWest’s studio program. The focus of Arc Industries to provide vocational opportunity and workforce training echoes the language of Phase 3’s transition of individuals with disabilities into the workplace with the *Rehabilitation Act of 1973*. In practice, Arc West is indeed providing work opportunities and income for individuals who would not otherwise be receiving it however the manner in which the individuals work and the environment in which they work is more resembling of an institutional setting that would have been prevalent in the mid-1900s.
While the individuals are certainly treated with respect and dignity, the kind of work in which they participate usually falls into the category of piecework which can be described as repetitive and menial tasks reserved for employees with limited skills and abilities. The work that occurs in the art studio does provide participating artists with a chance to exercise different skills however it still tends to take on the air of an assembly line. In my time there, it was common to see artists complete one or two steps of the process on very large quantities of products often making few decisions on their own as to the colors and forms used.

In addition to the way individuals work in this studio setting, there is a certain level of isolation that occurs as individuals spend all of their time in activity rooms or the workshop “floor.” All day, participants in Arc Industries program work inside of the large mostly windowless brick building that sits on the outskirts of the Ohio State University campus with little interaction with the world outside. This dynamic bears striking resemblance to the kinds of institutional places that Phase 3 of disability history sought to eliminate.

Artists and Facilitators: Attitudes Towards Work

One of the distinguishing characteristics of the attitudes of both the facilitators and artists at ArcWest was that they viewed the work being created there strictly as products. This kind of attitude differed from the view of their work as pieces of art that was common in the other studio sites I am explored. The effect of this attitude was that it created a self-image among the participants as workers and not artists. This phenomenon was perfectly described in the Vick and Sexton-Radek study that I presented in my
review of literature. As a result of their findings, the researchers found that facilitators who had a background in fine art or design were more concerned with the quality of the work produced in their studios as well as the development of individual artist identities. In studios where facilitators had no background in the field of art but instead in fields such as therapy, rehabilitation or even manufacturing, the focus in the studio was on the creation of products by individuals that were viewed strictly as employees.

Observing the way facilitators and artists interact at the ArcWest studio resembled the kind of interaction described in the aforementioned article given that the facilitators at ArcWest do not have backgrounds in art or art education. This observation enabled me to see the effects of the dynamic created by the facilitators and the artists which initially troubled me as I began my observations at this site.

*Studio Purpose in Theory and Practice*

In consideration of the terminology offered by Ludins-Katz & Katz (1990), the definitions of the terms *art and recreation, creative art, art therapy, and art in education* don’t encompass what occurs at the studio at ArcWest. While speaking with the facilitators and the artists themselves, some terms such as art therapy and creative art are thrown out to describe the happenings there however after observing the daily activities of the studio, the interactions there seem more like assembly line operations. I have noticed though that to many of the participants there, the work they are doing is so unlike their typical piecework tasks that they refer to it as making art. This differing view of what constitutes art and creative ventures opens the door to a whole other discussion about what art actually is that I do not have enough room or time to explain in this
In summary, I observed that the work that occurs at the ArcWest studio serves the purpose of providing a different set of tasks and opportunities than those with which the artists there are familiar. Based on these circumstances, the studio at ArcWest still bears some resemblance to the kinds of programming described by Ludins-Katz & Katz (1990) in that it provides practical work experience to participating artists. One of my main realizations with this fact is that though Ludins-Katz & Katz (1990) would not classify the experiences provided by ArcWest as endeavors in creative expression, the work that occurs here is fulfilling in a sense to those who participate. I will elaborate more on the implications of this realization when I conclude this research in a later chapter.

Open Door Art Studio

Initial Reflections

My interactions with artists and facilitators at the Open Door Art Studio differed from the majority of my other interactions during this research experience. My time at Open Door was typically spent talking with artists about themselves and their work. It was clear that the focus at this studio was on artistic development and improvement as the participating artists had a distinctive way of communicating about their current projects and their feedback about other artists’ works. Though communication styles differed in this setting just like any other site, some of the artists I spoke with seemed to have a strong vocabulary and command of how to talk about their work. As I returned weekly to this studio, my interactions with both facilitators and artists set a different tone in the environment than the other two environments I had been researching. Some of the
major themes I was able to draw from my review of literature were the indications of the deinstitutionalization movement and the social model of disability, the effects of the attitudes of the facilitators towards the artists’ works, and a response to the call of art educators like Doug Blandy, Jennifer Eisenhauer and John Derby to include work by artists with disabilities in the broader conversation about art.

*The Deinstitutionalization Movement*

With each of these studios, I have been able to make connections between current operations and the history of disability. With Open Door in particular, the beginnings of its overhead organization, Columbus Center for Human Services (CCHS), are deeply rooted in the Deinstitutionalization Movement that constituted Blandy’s (1991) Phase 3. Though this transition began in the late 1900s, the process of including individuals with disabilities into society as contributing members is still in progress. Facilitators at Open Door operate according to a similar mission in their aims to include participating artists as valuable contributors to the Columbus arts community. Having seen this parallel, I can conclude that Open Door is involved in pushing forward a sort of deinstitutionalization movement of works of art created by artists with disabilities.

*Open Door and the Social Model*

As stated by scholars like Doug Blandy (1991), Oliver (1996), Barnes et al. (1999), and Tregaskis (2004), the social model of disability situates disability as a social construction and the result of a barrier-laden environment that hinders those whose abilities take a different form than the accepted societal standard. This model is disability is clearly present in the Open Door mission which emphasizes the creation of a barrier-
free studio environment that enables “expression without limitation” (Open Door Art Studio, n.d.). Observing the methods of the facilitators at Open Door reveals that they are dedicated to starting their process with an idea of the artist’s and moving forward by creating adaptations and aid in order for each artist to work in the way s/he prefers. I saw stark indications of the social model in this method of working in that the artists are pushed to excel using the skills they have with as much adaptation and modification to the studio environment as necessary to achieve their desired outcome. This clearly demonstrates that the environment is where barriers originate from and the facilitators at Open Door serve the purpose of eliminating these barriers so the artists can create without limitations.

*Effects of the Attitudes of Facilitators*

While I was able to observe the effects of facilitators’ attitudes at ArcWest’s program, the attitudes of the facilitators at Open Door also had a significant impact on the artists’ views of themselves as artists and their work. The study cited previously by Vick & Sexton-Radek (2008) revealed that studios surveyed in the UK were almost exclusively run by working artists and the high levels of quality and creative activity in the art work produced there were an indicator of the effect of the facilitators’ levels of artistic professionalism. Similar to the programs in the UK cited in the study, the staff members at Open Door are all professional working artists. With this professional background, it is clear that they view their work with artists with disabilities as a serious artistic endeavor. In talking with the artists themselves, it is also clear that they feed off
of this professional energy and trust the feedback and advice of their facilitators since they all demonstrate levels of expertise with their own artistic production.

*Answering the Calls from the Field of Art Education*

Though the body of literature that stems from the field of art education is small, the information presented is valuable in the context of both art education practices and conceptions of disability. One common thread I observed in both the literature and the mission of facilitators and artists at Open Door was the idea that artists with disabilities are important contributing members to the arts community on a local level in Columbus and internationally in the international art market.

In his article, Blandy (1991) challenges art educators to include works of art created by artists with disabilities in their curricula and classrooms. Eisenhauer (2007) also delves deeper into the modes of working of disability artists specifically and the importance of the contributions these members of the art community can have on our conceptions of disability. In his article, Derby (2011) also supports these ideas but argues that these calls for action have not yet been completely addressed in our classrooms and our conversations about art. The mission that is presented among all three of these pieces of literature is definitely aligned with the mission of the facilitators and artists at Open Door in that they strive to push art created by artists with disabilities into the mainstream art world. In addition, these authors and the Open Door Studio alike are seeking to change the paradigm of disability by using art by artists with disabilities as a vehicle for this change.
Chapter 8: Conclusion

Research Process

This thesis set out to explore how local art studios for disabilities operate and what kind of impact they have on the artists who participate. Specifically, I chose three programs and volunteered at each at least once a week. During my time at these studios, I assisted artists and facilitators, collaborated with artists on projects, and participated in dialogues with everyone involved whether it was as a listener asking questions or a peer answering questions.

Looking to the field of art education for more information on the history and founding philosophies behind these programs yielded little return. This forced me to realize that the purpose of this research was to contribute to the limited body of knowledge on these kinds of programs as they differ greatly from community art education initiatives and school art education practices. I wanted to see how programs specifically in Central Ohio were operating and the impact they had on the artists and facilitators who participated. Additionally, I wanted to see how each of these programs compared and contrasted with not only each other, but also the programs discussed in current literature. In order to explore these ideas, I relied on methods outlined by case study, action research, and portraiture methodologies. I gathered data through observations, photo documentation, interviews, and artistic collaborations. To analyze the data, I revisited interviews and observations as well as background research and created
portraits of each studio program that consist of each program’s history, current operations, and feedback from the participating artists and facilitators.

After compiling my data and formulating each portrait I realized I had learned a lot about the scope of art studios with disabilities and the complexity of gauging their “effectiveness.” Early in the research process, I found myself making judgments about these studio programs from the outside solely based on my experience volunteering with one exceptional program that’s no longer in existence. Reflecting on my work with a very small group of artists with disabilities, I felt that there was one studio model that truly worked and that other programs that operated differently weren’t quite meeting the same standards.

Findings

The key understanding I gained from this research was that no matter what form the program models took, how the facilitators conceived their roles, or how artists produced their work, the individuals I observed and interviewed were genuinely happy with the work they were doing and excited to express their feelings. With all of the evidence I collected both during literature review and data collection, I was able to draw conclusions about how artists were being treated and how artists were working. After rethinking these conclusions, I realized that every interview and observation conveyed that artists were benefiting from these programs in a variety of ways and that facilitators were genuinely trying to provide a service to each artist participating.

Each studio program was serving its own mission however there were also similarities among the three. Each of the three organizations was providing participants
with disabilities opportunities for social and/or vocational interaction during daytime hours. With histories born out of efforts ranging from containment and rehabilitation of disability to a present-day focus on the ability to work, it was apparent that the larger organizations housing these art studio programs existed now to provide vocational training, a source of income, and a sense of autonomy to their clients with disabilities.

For the Goodwill Art Studio and Gallery, the focus was on socialization and a productive environment. At ArcWest’s studio program, the emphasis was solely on work and production capacities with a minor concentration on the creative activities that resulted from some of the creation of some of the products. The focus at the Open Door Art Studio was primarily concerned with artistic development and the production of high quality pieces of artwork. In each case, these missions were being served. The manner in which they were being served depended heavily on the attitudes and goals of the facilitators in charge. This revealed to me that the initial goals and desires of the facilitators at a given studio play a huge role in how the participating artists are impacted.

Limitations

There were some limitations to this research study. I believe that having more time and more concentration on each studio program would provide me with more knowledge about how the artists were being impacted. Additionally, having a presence that extended beyond once or twice a week in each setting allowed me to immerse myself more fully in the studio environment and concentrate less on the time constraints and stresses related to traveling to three studios for multiple visits every week.
Aside from the challenges with time constraints that are to be expected in any study, one of the major challenges with working with this population was that communication styles varied widely as did levels of cognition and understanding of the individual artists. I was observing and interviewing individuals with an array of abilities and may not have gathered a strong understanding from my limited time with them. One anecdote that stands out to me from an interview I conducted at the Open Door Art Studio expresses the challenge of communication I encountered and have attempted to describe in my work:

So someone… a stranger would ask one of our artists how he felt about coming to the studio. He would consider the question for a moment and his response would be “I feel comfortable here” with a very small smile on his face…Not what you would expect from someone who had never done any programming outside of his home, had very few peer contacts before his time here and rarely, if ever, smiled. So the fact that he is smiling slightly and feels comfortable here is a huge response but a stranger would not know that. You might not even know that even after working with him for a while. You have to get to know the individuals to even partially gauge what they’re gaining from this experience (Facilitator, Open Door Art Studio, March 16, 2012).

This conversation with the facilitator at Open Door led me to question the validity of some of my observations however it also encouraged me to revisit my writing numerous times over the course of the past six months and persevere with my note-taking and reflexivity.
Another limitation I observed was the challenge with having multiple cases as my foci. At times, I found it difficult to distinguish between interviews and site visits if I did not carefully note what had happened during each visit. I started to note the simplest things such as minor interactions and events that occurred at each visit so that I would be able to discern later the “meaning” I had hoped to gain from the observation and interview process. Though I recorded every interview, I would have liked to return for multiple interviews at different times of the year in order to develop a stronger rapport with some of the participants with whom I was not as familiar. With this concern for a more attention to the artists of each studio, I believe that further research would require taking a more focused look at a single program before moving on to compare multiple programs with each other.

Further Research

For this study, I initially set out to learn as much as possible about three studio programs. In realizing the limitations of my methods and focal points, I believe that a singular study on one studio program for an extended period of time would enable me to absorb much more information about the aspects of that particular program. I also struggled with how to incorporate what I learned from every single interview when I began the processes of transcription and analysis of my interview recordings. Upon consulting with a mentor and former internship supervisor who is currently finishing a dissertation using similar methodology, I was given useful advice about how to utilize my interview data. Though this advice was very specific to the context of working on my thesis, I felt that my mentor’s advice to use my interviews collectively to tell the story of
each studio program instead of to create numerous miniature biographies giving voice to each individual artist was sound advice for my thoughts on revisiting this topic in the future (J.Glover-Boettcher, personal communication, April 17, 2012).

Final Thoughts

When I became involved with art studios for artists with disabilities, I was a sophomore in an undergraduate program in art education. I didn’t know what research was and I didn’t know what it meant to have certain questions about these programs permanently stuck in the cytoplasm of my mind. I constantly thought about the work I was witnessing and being a part of, and grew closer to the artists and facilitators with which I worked. Five years later, I have turned that early volunteer experience into a passion and have spent the last year developing ideas, asking questions, and learning as much as possible about studio programs for artists with disabilities. I had gathered more information than I knew what to do with and experienced the art of selection and refinement first-hand. Revisiting that piece of advice from one of my mentor’s, I am determined to keep in mind the words of the individuals I interviewed in order not to “give” them voices, but to relay their existing voices through my future research on this kind of programming.
References


FCBDD: Over 100 Years of History. (n.d.). Franklin County Board of Developmental


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APPENDIX A: IRB CONSENT FORM
The Perfect Fit: Studio Program Models for Artists with Disabilities

This research is being conducted as part of a Master’s thesis project organized by Morgan Green and advised by Dr. Jennifer Eisenhauer, both of The Ohio State University. The purpose of this research is to investigate different program models for studios for artists with disabilities. This investigation will take place through observations on-site as well as interviews with studio artists and studio staff members. Your participation is completely voluntary and may be revoked at any time. Your participation in this research can consist of an interview (or multiple interviews depending on your preference) that will last from thirty to sixty minutes. Your participation may also involve allowing the researcher to observe your work in the designated studio setting for up to two hours per week for the next 10 weeks.

Interview Participation Consent Form

I, ______________________, hereby give my consent to ________ (participant’s name) to record my responses to her interview ________ (researcher’s name) questions either via transcription or audio recording for the purpose of her Master’s thesis research project.

I am aware that I may be quoted in her writing and data collection under a pseudonym which will protect my identity.
I also understand that I may ask to see the writing that results from my interview participation and can give feedback to ensure that my words are recorded accurately.

_______________________________    ____________________
Participiant’s signature                Date

_______________________________
Participant’s Name Printed

For further questions or more information about your participation in this research, please contact:

Dr. Jennifer Eisenhauer
Eisenhauer.9@osu.edu

For further questions about your rights as a participant in this study or to discuss other study-related concerns or complaints with someone who is not part of the research team, you may contact Ms. Sandra Meadows in the Office of Responsible Research Practices at 1-800-678-6251