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Cultivating a Meaningful Experience: Art Education for Adults with Disabilities at a Community-Based Art Center

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Cultivating a Meaningful Experience: Art Education for Adults with Disabilities at a Community-Based Art Center

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Dedication

For Denise Schulz, my strongest foundation and greatest cheerleader. You are the best mother / thesis advisor a person could have. Thank you for your unconditional love and support.

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Abstract

Cultivating a Meaningful Experience: Art Education for Adults with Disabilities at a Community-Based Art Center

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The purpose of this study was to investigate instructional components that foster meaningful learning for adults with disabilities in a community-based art center. Through narrative analysis and case study methodology, the researcher examined the programmatic content of a single community-based art center—the Arc of the Arts Studio and Gallery (AOA) in Austin, Texas—from 2009 to 2011. Utilizing authentic instruction and constructivism as educational frameworks (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005; Newmann & Wehlage, 1993), the investigator proposed instructional changes to the AOA program that encouraged student-centered learning through discipline-based inquiry, maintaining real-world connections, and the active construction of knowledge. The researcher instituted a structured, arts-based curriculum based upon these educational concepts that infused lessons with illustrative materials, sequential learning, and public promotion of

participants' finished art products in order to stimulate creativity and meaningful learning within the art center.

This study scrutinized historical literature documenting art and general education for the disability community in order to examine the influence each historical orientation to disability had on art instruction for this population. Coupled with analysis of the programmatic structure of similar art centers around the country, this information facilitated a more full and rich understanding of how and why art education for people with disabilities is currently organized. The process of creating and implementing a structured art curriculum into the AOA studio addressed the ways in which meaningful learning may take place for adults with disabilities at community-based locations, and emphasized the need for further research into the quality, experience, and location of art education for the wide spectrum of people with disabilities.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to Cultivating a Meaningful Experience

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

This study consists of a narrative account of my experience at the Arc of the Arts Studio and Gallery (AOA), a community-based organization providing arts instruction to adults with disabilities. My involvement in the program lasted from 2009 to 2011, and during this time I was closely connected to the art activities and instruction initiated in the studio. The initial portion of the study relates a descriptive portrayal of the studio and its art program, particularly the instructional influences and motivations illustrated by staff. These preliminary observations revealed an open-format art studio with participants heavily reliant on the assistance of instructors to complete artwork. Members of the studio had a variety of disabilities, yet all were considered *high-functioning* by staff members, meaning these individuals did not need constant physical assistance to work[1]. My perception was the absence of organized instruction in the studio produced this co-dependency, and moreover, that the integration of a structured art curriculum would guide participants to be more independent in their art-making and increase the level of learning within the studio. It is within this inquiry that this study is concerned. This research investigated the organizational structure of similar art programs around the country, and utilized authentic instruction and constructivist learning theories as methods to understand meaningful learning, in order to inform the creation of a structured art curriculum for the AOA studio. The process of my experience designing organized instruction for the studio brings into question the ways in which meaningful learning may occur for adults with disabilities at community-based locations.

[1] There is no academic consensus as to what defines high-functioning individuals with disabilities. However, this term was consistently used by Arc of the Arts staff members to describe the studio participants and is therefore used in this study.

CENTRAL RESEARCH QUESTION

How might one design an arts-based curriculum that promotes meaningful learning for adults with disabilities at a community-based art center?

PROBLEM STATEMENT

There has been little research in the field of art education concerning the education of special-needs populations. What does exist predominately focuses upon the remedial and rehabilitative qualities of art activities and how they therapeutically benefit people with disabilities (Anderson, 1994; Guay, 1995; Henley, 1992, 1997; Lowenfeld, 1940, 1941, 1942, 1956). The qualities of content and instructional practices utilized in the environment are rarely examined. Scholarly attention chiefly rests upon children with disabilities and their experiences within the K-12 school environment (Anderson, 1994; Dalke, 1984; Guay, 1995), and as a result large portions of the disability community, and the diverse locations their art education exists within, have been systematically overlooked. There is a lack of literature examining community-based art education for people with disabilities, and even less focused on the quality of teaching and learning occurring at these locations.

MOTIVATIONS FOR RESEARCH

Examining the quality and organization of art education for people with disabilities fits well within my personal and academic interests. From 2009 to 2011, I was involved with the Arc of the Arts Studio and Gallery (AOA), a nonprofit organization providing art-making opportunities to adults with developmental disabilities in the Austin metro area. During this time I grew very close to the staff and studio participants, and therefore became extremely invested in the future of the program. I saw this research as an opportunity to positively impact the AOA studio: designing

curriculum that encouraged meaningful learning would promote artistic and social growth in participants and encourage instructors to diversify their teaching. My academic interests as a community-based art educator were also supported by this research, as it provided valuable experience in designing art-based instruction at a non-traditional setting for a diverse population.

The research involved in this study would additionally contribute to the overall knowledge base of art education for people with disabilities, of which there is little. The limited amount of academic literature regarding this subject has contributed to the marginalization of the disability population in educational settings and society as a whole (Blandy, 1991, 1994; Eisenhauer, 2007; Funk, 1987; Hahn, 1987). In order to combat this situation, the quality and experience of art education for people with disabilities, and the diverse locations it exists within, must be brought to the forefront of academia. There is a need for research into the characteristics of art programs for the disability community in order to better understand and evaluate the level of learning possible for this population at community locations. An in-depth understanding of a program such as the Arc of the Arts will benefit the fields of art education and disability studies by informing the future design and application of meaningful arts programming for people with disabilities.

RESEARCH METHODS

For this investigation, I coupled narrative analysis with a descriptive case study to create a hybrid research method. My previous personal experience working in the research environment was thoroughly connected to my portrayal of the studio, so it follows that these research methods were interrelated in my written description of the study. I supplemented my unique investigative approach with significant research into

art education and disability studies literature to provide a frame of reference upon which to situate my observations. I utilized in-depth participant observation and visual documentation as the basis of my research, in addition to reflective journal observations of my personal interaction with staff members and studio participants. I also collected documents from the studio—lesson plans, critique forms, progress notes, and artist biography forms—that related to the content of instruction. I integrated these records into my overall investigation of the research question.

Due to a structural reorganization within the art center, which occurred during my research period, there is a comparative component to the study as well. This component is related in my description of learning in the studio through the incorporation of time-series analysis, as described by Yin (1994), wherein I compared the quality of teaching and learning within the program before and after this transition.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Authentic Instruction – Theory presented by Newmann and Wehlage (1993), stemming from constructivism. Promotes the concept that teaching and learning have consequences in the real world, both as content that applies outside the classroom and as teaching and learning strategies that are useful in life. Learning strategy that promotes learners' construction of knowledge in groups, expects higher-level thinking, encourages substantive conversation about a topic, and takes a thematic approach to learning.

Construction of Knowledge – A term implying that learners actively develop knowledge rather than passively receive it from teachers, textbooks, or other authorities. The practice of constructing knowledge involves higher levels of thinking: analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

Constructivism – Anderson and Milbrandt (2005) believe students are in control of their own learning and determine what knowledge they absorb. Knowledge is not predetermined or passively given from an authority, but rather actively constructed by the learner through his or her participation in the environment.

Disability Studies – This area of inquiry focuses on how disability is defined and represented in society, and generally refers to the examination of disability as a social, cultural, and political phenomenon, and stands in contrast to clinical, medical, or therapeutic perspectives on disability.

Flow Theory – A mental state of openness in which a person is fully immersed in an activity and displays energized focus, full involvement, and success in the purpose of the activity. Proposed by psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi.

Higher-Order Thinking – Newmann and Wehlage (1993) characterize this level of reasoning by the clear manipulation of information and ideas in ways that transform their meaning and implications. Thinking that often involves synthesis, generalization, explanation, hypothesis, and analysis.

Meaningful Learning – There is no conclusive definition of meaningful learning. For this study the term refers to a learning experience that has quality or purpose in the lives of learners, as opposed to that which is trivial or useless.

Substantive Conversation – Defined by Newmann and Wehlage (1993) as the process of using concentrated and shared dialogue to learn and understand the substance of a topic. It includes both verbal and visual conversation, and is a critical component in high-level thinking and construction of knowledge.

LIMITATIONS TO THE STUDY

This study concentrates on the organizational structure and programmatic content of a single community-based art center—the Arc of the Arts Studio and Gallery (AOA) in Austin, Texas—before and after the introduction of a structured art curriculum. The study period was from 2009 to 2011. I define the organizational structure of the program as the formal mission statement of the art center and the educational background of core staff members who designed and implemented art activities, identified as the Program Director and Lead Art Instructors. The content of the program was comprised of the material make-up and structural format of the art activities completed in the studio. For the material make-up of an activity I review the supplies, subject matters, and artistic techniques utilized. The structural format of an art activity encompasses the instructor's explicit goals and objectives, time length of the activity, the instructional tools utilized (such as introductions, discussion questions, and visual examples), and the sequence of instruction (the order in which tools were introduced into the activity).

The theories used to explore these components and their relationship to the larger event, stem from art education and disability studies research, and are employed to create an analytical framework upon which the study was built.

BENEFITS TO THE FIELD OF ART EDUCATION

This research has the potential to benefit the fields of art education and disability studies by providing insight into the quality of teaching and learning available for adults with disabilities. This study can additionally expand the knowledge base of community-based art educators by illustrating the process of adapting instructional techniques to fit the needs of diverse populations. This study centered on the evolution of learning at a single community-based arts organization, however, schools, universities, museums, and human service centers alike can utilize the information concerning the creation of

meaningful learning to support the social and artistic growth of this population. Evaluation of the instructional techniques that stimulate learners to explore new areas of expression and artistry can be utilized by educators in the future creation of educational programming for people with disabilities at many locations.

CONCLUSION

This study encompasses a narrative analysis and descriptive case study of the Arc of the Arts Studio and Gallery (AOA) during a time in which major structural and programmatic changes were enacted. My participation in the studio resulted in a pronounced interest in the quality and structure of education for people with disabilities, particularly as it existed in a community-based art center. The impetus for this research was my observation of studio participants who displayed an unreasonable reliance on instructors for assistance in creating art. My perception was this co-dependence was not a product of participants' disabilities, but rather occurred as a result of the absence of organized instruction in the program. Moreover, I believed the integration of a structured art curriculum would guide participants to become more independent in their art-making and increase the level of learning within the studio. This theory is the focal point of this study, and is addressed through examination of similar organizations around the country, as well as the characteristics of authentic learning theory, in order to inform the creation of a structured art curriculum for the AOA studio.

In order for this investigation to take place, it is essential to first understand the organization of art education for the disability community, both past and present, as this directly relates to curriculum design. Historical analysis of the social orientations to disability, and the arrangement of this population's art education through the years, provides insight into the current motivations of art instruction for people with disabilities.

Furthermore, appraisal of modern-day art centers illustrates the organization of contemporary instructional practices and their present uses. With regard to raising the level of learning within a community-based institution, it is important to investigate educational practices that cultivate quality educational experiences. Authentic and constructivist learning theories were investigated to this end, and the didactic characteristics within these pedagogies informed the instructional goals and objectives that came to exemplify the curriculum enacted in the AOA environment. The process of collecting this pertinent information and eventually integrating it into an organized instructional design was essential to addressing the ways in which meaningful learning may occur for adults with disabilities at community-based locations.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Chapter Introduction

At the time of this publication, there was a limited amount of research concerning art education for adults with disabilities, even less regarding their education at community-based art centers, and very little reviewing the creation of a meaningful curriculum for this population at a community art center. As a result, the research recounted in this review of literature relates to the study in peripheral ways, and primarily falls under three distinct themes: disability studies, which generalizes the American societal understanding of disability over time; the intersection of art education and disability theory, research that concerns the characteristics of art instruction—predominantly art therapy—as influenced by different orientations to disability; and authentic instruction, an art education theory that illustrates the components of meaningful learning for typically-developing students.

The Functional-Limitations Orientation to Disability

As a society, the American conception of the disability experience has been systematically related to the implicit and explicit assumptions about disability built into public policy (Hahn, 1987; Scotch, 2002). Hahn (1987) writes of the fundamental fact that disability is ultimately defined by governmental policies, "disability is essentially whatever public laws and programs say it is" (p. 182). Authors have found that historically these agencies, and thus the public in general, viewed disability in terms of the functional-limitations orientation, which centered on the physical and economic restrictions experienced by an individual due to the loss of personal capabilities created by the disability (Blandy, 1989, 1991, 1993, 1994; Eisenhauer, 2007; Funk, 1987; Hahn, 1985, 1987). This orientation primarily associates disability with incapacity due to the

perceived constraints—both physical and developmental—to an individual's type of work and the amount that could be completed (Scotch, 2002). The ramifications of this orientation are the prevalence of attitudes towards disabilities, and those experiencing them, that are negative and often stereotypical. For example, Clements and Clements (1984) describe that deficiencies in cognitive development are "routinely linked with an assumed enjoyment of repetitive tasks or bewilderment by too much stimulation," and hearing impairments "encourage self-consciousness and discourage talking" (as cited by Blandy, 1991, p. 132). Even Lowenfeld (1957) perceives disabilities as prompting a pronounced disconnectedness from the environment. Hahn (1985) establishes a direct link between the attitudes promoted by the functional-limitations orientation and the "popular perceptions of a person's capacity for employment and quality of life" (as cited by Blandy, 1991, p. 132).

The functional-limitation orientation defines disability in terms of a person's limitations, and thus situates the disability experience solely in the individual (Blandy, 1991, 1994; Eisenhauer, 2007; Hahn, 1987). Such an orientation is closely related to the medical model of disability, in which disability is perceived as a "health-related inability" potentially curable through treatment (Hahn, 1987, p. 181). By situating the social conception of disability in biological and medical terms, Blandy (1994) explains, the functional-limitations model propagates the view that individuals with disabilities are themselves the source of the problem, or the victim (Scotch, 2002), and therefore require remediation through therapy. Rehabilitation programs are emphasized as the principal means to rectify the perceived problems confronting the disability community, and the restorative techniques covered in these curative programs aim to improve mental and motor skills, particularly as they relate to cultivating vocational talents (Funk, 1987; Hahn, 1985, 1987).

Early Conceptions of Disability and Art Education

Art education has historically aligned with a functional-limitations orientation to disability (Blandy, 1991, 1994; Eisenhauer, 2002), and according to Blandy (1994), was often employed as a way to bring an individual with disabilities "closer to a perceived norm" (p. 182). In the nineteenth century, art was recognized as a diagnostic tool to determine non-functionality and psychopathology in individuals, and those identified as such were relegated to residential institutions for treatment (Blandy, 1991; Gilman, 1984; Hahn, 1987). The rehabilitation programs offered at these institutions were minimal and often available to only a select few who appeared to be potentially employable (Funk, 1987). Gilman (1984) identifies that art became "formally linked with a rehabilitative and remedial purpose in the minds of those charged with the care of people perceived as being disabled" (as cited by Blandy, 1991, p. 134).

During the early part of the twentieth century, the approaches to art education for people with disabilities largely addressed the influence of a particular disability on art-making (Gaitskell & Gaitskell, 1953; Lindsay, 1966; Lowenfeld, 1940, 1941), or the remediation of a given disability through art-making (Anderson, 1956; Eisner, 1960; Lowenfeld, 1942, 1956, 1957). Gaitskell and Gaitskell (1953) were prominent researchers at this time, and initiated a systematic study on the abilities of "slow learners"—identified as those with an IQ under 89—to participate in art education activities. The authors believed that the focus of art-making for people with disabilities would be the expression of personal life experiences (Gaitskell & Gaitskell, 1953). Furthermore, Gaitskell and Gaitskell (1953) assumed that art was a product of emotion and intellect, which supposed that individuals testing below 40 on an IQ test were incapable of participating in or benefiting from an art program. The authors did not scrutinize whether the teaching methods communicating these art education ideals

contributed to the inability of individuals' to participate in the program, which consequently removed the environment from the conception of the disability experience (Blandy, 1991).

Lowenfeld (1940, 1941, 1942, 1956, 1957) also wrote extensively at this time on the proper approaches to teaching art to people with disabilities, and closely linked therapy with this task. Lowenfeld perceived the environment as an unchanging and inflexible entity to which the individual must negotiate a relationship with in order to participate in society (Blandy, 1991). In his opinion, education in the arts was the means to facilitate an individual's process of adjustment into society, as the art product was the mediator between the individual and the environment (Lowenfeld, 1957). Lowenfeld considered these artistic endeavors to be "therapeutic," and viewed the art product as a record of the problems and conflicts facing the individual, as well as a visual indicator of each individual's progress towards the goal of a healthy personality. Unlike Gaitskell and Gaitskell (1953), Lowenfeld believed that all individuals, regardless of intellect, were creative and thus possessed the ability to participate in an arts program (Blandy, 1991). The author maintains that art education would encourage "personal initiative [in people with disabilities] leading toward independence, flexibility, social interaction, and self-confidence" (as cited by Blandy, 1991, p. 136). The research provided by Gaitskell and Gaitskell and Lowenfeld focused academic attention on the practice of art education for the disability community, however they continued to overlook the learning environment as a possible contributor to the perceived problems facing this population: "Like Gaitskell and Gaitskell, Lowenfeld saw disability in people rather than programs and environments that failed to meet the needs of individuals" (Blandy, 1991, p. 136). These authors thus continued to promote the view—in society and in the field of art education—that individuals alone must bear the responsibility to adapt to their environment.

The notion of therapy-through-art promoted by Lowenfeld was integrated into public policy through the passage of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, revised in 2004 as the Disabilities Education Improvement Act, which legally mandated special education for almost all young people with disabilities (United States Department of Education, n.d.). Art education was integrated into special education instruction as a method of socializing and rehabilitating students and predominantly focused on the rehabilitative aspects the discipline could provide to people with disabilities in the classroom (Anderson, 1994; Henley, 1992; Ulman, 1987). Early special education instruction adopted the functional-limitations orientation where art instruction focused on building perceptual, motor, and academic skills in children with disabilities (Dalke, 1984). Furthermore, Derby (2011) explains special education initiatives positioned students with disabilities as "helpless dependents requiring unusual services from nondisabled [*sic*] educators, paraprofessionals, and peers," thus reinforcing the concept that disability is situated within the individual and requires outside remediation to correct (p. 96).

The functional-limitations model compels people with disabilities to adapt to environments "in the quest for an abstract 'normalcy'" (Blandy, 1991, p. 132), and as a result, a considerable amount of past American disability research was performed through a diagnostic lens and in the search of related remedial treatments for the disability under scrutiny (Scotch, 2002). Furthermore, Blandy (1994) maintains, historical research has had little consideration that disability may be a result of institutional barriers and failures in the physical environmental: "environmental contributions to disability [were] of secondary importance to the possibilities inherent in personal rehabilitation or remediation" (p. 180). This limited scope of research, according to Scotch (2002), leads to a general misunderstanding of the "characteristics and experiences of people with

disabilities in their everyday lives, outside of their roles as patients or clients, in which their impairments were usually the central focus" (p. 23). In order to expand the public perception of disability as more than a personal limitation, researchers needed to investigate the full experience of disability, which incorporated individual needs and aspirations, as well as to consider the environmental factors creating problems for this population (Blandy, 1991, 1994).

THE SOCIOPOLITICAL ORIENTATION TO DISABILITY

A conceptual and cultural shift towards understanding disability through the lens of social justice and diversity occurred during the second half of the twentieth century with the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (Derby, 2011), which required "reasonable accommodations" for people with disabilities in public locations (ADA, 1991). The ADA brought public awareness to the environmental issues confronting the disability population, which impacted educational systems as well. Following the ADA, Blandy (1991, 1994) argued for a cultural and academic shift from the functional-limitations orientation to disability, to embrace a sociopolitical orientation. The sociopolitical orientation, as expressed by Hahn (1987), depicts disability as a product of the interaction between the individual and the environment, stressing that the difficulties encountered by those with disabilities should be viewed as "arising not from functional losses sustained by an individual but from the attitudinal and physical constraints created by a disabling environment" (p. 187). Disabling environments encompass both physical and attitudinal barriers that restrict the opportunities for individuals to fully participate in society (Hahn, 1987). As proponents of this perspective, Blandy (1991) and Hahn (1985, 1987) embrace the disability community as a minority group and promote the understanding of disability as the failure of social

systems, including educational systems, to address the needs and aspirations of every individual. As with other minority groups seeking equal status and protection under the law, individuals with disabilities require public policies, educational programs, and societal concepts that combat prejudice and effectively promote community integration of all citizens (Blandy, 1991, 1994). The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) of 2004 incorporated aspects of the sociopolitical orientation to disability in its legislation:

> Disability is a natural part of the human experience and in no way diminishes the right of individuals to participate in or contribute to society. Improving educational results for children with disabilities is an essential element of our national policy of ensuring equality of opportunity, full participation, independent living, and economic self-sufficiency for individuals with disabilities. (IDEA, 2004, sec. 601, p. 118, stat. 2648).

Rather than viewing disability as an individual limitation, Eisenhauer (2007) clarifies that a sociopolitical orientation to disability "engages disability and the very concept of limitation as social constructions" by investigating how such discussions serve to oppress those with disabilities (p. 8).

The Inclusive Art Environment

In order to embed a sociopolitical orientation to disability within art education, Blandy (1991, 1994) requests a reconstruction of the learning environment to emphasize inclusion rather than exclusion of this population during instruction. One such step, according to Wolfensberger's normalization principle, is the utilization of "means which are as culturally normative as possible" when working with people with disabilities (as cited by Blandy, 1991, p. 136). This principle implies that methods, techniques, and materials used to teach typically developing individuals should be equally used with those who are developmentally delayed, because these groups are more alike than not

(Blandy, 1991). Bryant and Schwan (1971) concluded that all children and adults could share the same art education goals as long as instructional strategies were adapted as necessary to fit the educational needs of the individual.

Art educators aligned with the sociopolitical orientation are interested in abilities rather than limitations, and focus on discovering the fundamental similarities this special population has to typically developing individuals. Anderson (1994) appreciates artworks created by individuals with disabilities as equal to their non-disabled counterparts, and proposes children with disabilities be removed from their special education classes and included in the regular art classroom. To create an inclusive educational setting, she promotes the use of age-appropriate activities in a "normalizing context," wherein the same art exercise is performed by students with disabilities as well as their "nondisabled age-mates [*sic*]" (Anderson, 1994, p. 3). Anderson developed and adapted educational techniques—art materials, tools, and an instructional sequence—for the typical school classroom with emphasis on the integration and inclusion of all ability levels in the same setting.

Guay (1995) explains that by the mid-1990s, school-instated segregation of people with disabilities from their typically-developing peers was on the decline: "Less emphasis was placed on special curricula [and] students with disabilities were increasingly integrated for academic as well as non-academic subjects" (p. 52). The focus on education for people with disabilities shifted from access to instruction to the outcome of instruction (Guay, 1995). Anderson's (1994) art-centered learning instruction incorporates interdisciplinary content areas into hands-on art experiences, providing the opportunity for individuals with disabilities to practice art-making skills while applying newly learned concepts from various subject areas. Anderson (1994) stipulates that this learning approach must have a good balance between the art concepts and the content

from other areas; if these components are uneven, she maintains, meaningful learning is not achieved. Wexler (2002) illustrates that meaningful learning for individuals with disabilities incorporates student-generated subject matter "carefully chosen for its relevancy to their lives" (p. 341). From her observations at a hospital art studio in Harlem, New York, Wexler (2002) found that when adolescents with disabilities were encouraged to paint from their own life experiences they were more invested in the work. Furthermore, after seeing physical and emotional benefits of the art-making exercise, the students developed confidence, shed inhibitions, and became more positive about their lives overall (Wexler, 2002). Anderson (1994) and Wexler (2002) agree that students with disabilities are motivated to learn new content when it is linked with familiar activities and involves a process of self-determination. Creating art activities that require decision-making, choice, and dialogue with the art object encourages students to reclaim autonomy and a sense of independence, which are integral components to a sociopolitical orientation to disability. The goal of this orientation is to support individuals with disabilities in achieving a typical life experience, rather than working to create a *nearly normal* person (Blandy, 1991; Funk, 1987). Wexler (2002) maintains art instruction for people with disabilities is successful when it is approached as an inner-directed personal discovery and "helps to build on what is intact rather than to remediate what is lost" (p. 340).

The previous dependence of art educators on the functional-limitations orientation prevented full participation in the arts by children and adults with disabilities (Blandy, 1991). To maintain the sociopolitical orientation to disability, Blandy (1991) explains that educators must develop instruction that creates accessible art environments as well as advocating "on behalf of [the disability community] constituency and the importance of art to quality of life" (p. 140). This mindfulness of accessibility and quality of instruction

for all individuals—not simply those with disabilities—will create inclusive educational settings that cultivate self-determination and advocacy for all learners (Blandy, 1991).

AUTHENTIC LEARNING IN ART EDUCATION

Self-determination and choice in the art environment are powerful motivational forces in learning (Milbrandt, Felts, Richards & Abghari, 2004), and when these practices are employed, Anderson and Milbrandt (2005) continue, they help to position art as "a social instrument for improving people's lives" (p. xxiii). Empowering the learner to be actively involved in his or her education, and furthermore, acting as the central guiding force determining the subject matter that is taught, are central themes to the authentic instruction model of art education promoted by Anderson and Milbrandt (1998, 2005). The authors employ this educational approach as part of their larger *art for life* framework, which maintains, "Art for life is the story of individual human beings and the groups we live in, told through art" (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005, p. 3). More specifically, Anderson and Milbrandt (2005) maintain that students engaged in art-for-life will:

> Understand that art and visual culture are visual communications between human beings about things that count. Understand that art has both intrinsic and extrinsic value and meaning; that its forms, meanings, uses, and values are important aesthetically and also instrumentally or functionally, in their social purposes. Personally engage in making art and in studying art and visual culture, both individually and cooperatively, to express themselves as well [as] to find out about meanings, values, and ways of living in the world. (p. 7)

The goal of this strategy is developing activities, conceptual tools, and learning strategies that help prepare students for success at school and in life, through learning centered on the major art disciplines—art production, criticism, aesthetics, and art history (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005). This comprehensive approach to art education employs the five standards of authentic classroom instruction as identified by Newmann and

Wehlage (1993). The first of these standards is higher-order thinking: students are encouraged to manipulate facts and information in ways that transform their original meaning, which is often enacted when learners synthesize, analyze, and explain concepts and conclusions (Newmann & Wehlage, 1993). Emphasizing the active participation of a learner in the environment, and encouraging them to construct their own knowledge related to the subject is known as constructivism, which is a significant component of authentic instruction (Anderson & Milbrandt, 1998, 2005). The next aspect of authentic learning is depth of knowledge, which sees students utilizing complex ideas to solve problems, develop arguments, and/or construct explanations (Newmann & Wehlage, 1993). Another standard identified by Newmann and Wehlage (1993), is the promotion of curricula connected to the social context outside the classroom; lessons address real-world problems and ask students to use personal experiences as frameworks for applying knowledge. Substantive conversation, a fourth criterion, emphasizes conversation and discussion as an integral part of understanding the substance of a subject (Newmann & Wehlage, 1993). The final standard, substantive support for student achievement, involves high expectations from teachers and learners, respect, and the inclusion of all students in the learning process (Newmann & Wehlage, 1993). The authentic principles of instruction maintained by Newmann and Wehlage are realized in the art-for-life approach in the following ways: encouraging students to make real-world connections, involving students in the active construction of knowledge—as opposed to the passive reception of knowledge from authorities—and developing "intellectual, emotional, skills-based, and expressive knowledge, abilities, and sensibilities" (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005, p. 7). Connecting these authentic learning concepts to skills-based art instruction enables students to creatively express their thoughts and ideas in meaningful ways.

Anderson and Milbrandt (1998, 2005) proclaim the goal of authentic and constructivist teaching as cultivating a learner who does more than simply reproduce knowledge through memorization or routine application. Producing art creates knowledge, they contend, as it is a social instrument providing learners with a sense of identity, value and worth (Anderson & Milbrandt, 1998, 2005). Art provides visual form and voice to an artist's ideas, perceptions and feelings, and therefore should be regarded in the classroom as a symbolic communication of inner ideas and feelings to the outside world (Anderson & Milbrandt, 1998, 2005). Walker (2001) contends that authentic instruction has implications for the structure for art education in general: students should be encouraged to "*not* produce artworks from rote formulas or create products that have little meaning beyond the exploration of media or the development of technical skills [emphasis original]" (p. xiv). Students should be encouraged to create artwork through the exploration and expression of ideas, Walker (2001) continues, and moreover these concepts should be connected to big ideas that deal with broad, overarching human issues. Anderson and Milbrandt (2005) agree, "people learn better and more deeply through powerful ideas—that is, when units are organized around key concepts—than by learning facts or techniques for their own sake" (p. 24). Big ideas provide art-making with weight, significance, and an outside social function when they relate to issues present in the lives of students (Walker, 2001).

Authentic instruction emphasizes the connections between art and life, and consequently requires an integrated, thematic, and cognitive approach to teaching and learning (Anderson & Milbrandt, 1998, 2005). This comprehensive approach to art education encourages students to utilize higher-order thinking skills and practice in the art disciplines to actively construct their own knowledge of how art can impact and better their life situation (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005).

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The purpose of the information gathered from disability studies research was to set a context for the cultural perceptions of disability through time. Examining the influence each historical orientation to disability had on art instruction facilitated a better understanding of how and why art education for people with disabilities is organized. Finally, investigating the characteristics of authentic learning illuminated the instructional tactics utilized to facilitate student-centered, art-for-life instruction. The collection of these diverse forms of academic discourse provided a literary framework in which to situate the research completed in this study.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Chapter Introduction

The range of inquiry methods available to researchers is quite vast, but certain studies require particular approaches. Many social science investigations, including those into art education theories and practices, fall under the umbrella of qualitative research, which Denzin and Lincoln (1994) describe as being invested in the examination of the "humanistic virtues" of a subject matter (p. 2). My work aligned with the qualitative approach because it sought to study the culture, customs, and habits of a specific social environment. However, like many researchers employing qualitative inquiry, I too encountered problems with what Denzin and Lincoln (1994) described as the "crisis of representation" (p. 3). I struggled with how to locate and position myself as an objective observer within a research environment I was intimately tied to, while still being acutely cognizant of my position. In my search for appropriate methods of inquiry that recognized the subjective role of the researcher, I found that case study and narrative methods of analysis fit best. These forms not only acknowledged the investigator's position in the study, but also embraced it as the chief data-gathering agent.

Case Study Method

Yin (1994) described the case study method as an empirical form of research utilized in the examination of contemporary social phenomena. Investigators adopt a naturalistic approach in this type of research, observing behavioral events in their real-life contexts, and eventually seek to interpret such occurrences "in terms of the meaning people bring to them" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 3). Case study methods complement situations where multiple behaviors—or variables—exist and when the researcher has little control over such circumstances. Complex social situations, like those found in

community art centers, provide little opportunity for investigators to exert any influence or command over activities, which can pose problems for those seeking a detailed classification of features. The case study format instead provides a general and holistic description of behavioral events (Gerring, 2007; Yin, 1994). A large portion of my investigation at the Arc of the Arts (AOA) detailed the portrayal of activities housed within the studio. In order to determine the amount of meaningful learning present in the AOA studio, it was important to first describe the existing activities as a whole. I therefore decided to utilize the descriptive form of the case study method, as it aims to portray the occurrences and events of a particular case in great detail. My research also reflected an exploratory approach, which Gerring (2007) recommends for inquiry sites and subjects that are encountered for the first time or "considered in a fundamentally new way" (p. 40).

Gerring (2007) writes that the broad depiction of events used in case study methodology incorporates synchronic analysis—study into the facts of a system as it exists at one point in time without reference to its history—as well as diachronic analysis—study into the changes of a system between successive points in time. The coupling of these examinations as an integrated whole, Gerring (2007) continues, enables case study researchers to track change over a period of time, as well as "ascertain as completely [as possible] the number and variety of traits, qualities, [and] habits combined in a particular instance" (p. 33). The dual scope of this analysis complemented my research goals, because my intention was to portray AOA as it existed during my internship experience, as well as how activities changed over time. My observations detailed the traits and qualities of activities at AOA, in the hopes of providing a general concept that could be later used as a point of reference to track change.

Site observations in case study research are not simply documented at random however, because that would provide an enormous amount of data for the researcher to sift through. In the case study method, even before data gathering commences, the investigator must create a detailed research protocol, which succeeds in pointing attention, limiting scope, and suggesting possible links between the observed phenomena. Yin (1994) explains that this comprehensive research design links the data to be collected, and the future conclusions to be drawn, with the initial questions of the study. This theoretical proposition effectively focused the range of my study and limited my data collection to recording evidence that solely supported the specific issues detailed in my central research question. The obligatory concentration of the case study prevented me from becoming overwhelmed with peripheral events not related to my study. In order to extract pertinent information from my notes I solidified my scope of inquiry, shaped a conceptual framework, and created a plan of action for retrieving a set of conclusions.

The next step of the case study framework, according to Yin (1994), was generating interpretive criteria for the research findings. The creation of criteria could be seemingly difficult because a great deal of research data is dependent upon the investigator's experiential knowledge of a situation. Although the researcher functions as the chief data-gathering instrument in the case study method, they rely enormously on multiple sources of evidence to support their claims, including documents, archival records, interviews, physical artifacts, direct observations, and participant observations (Yin, 1994). In my research I collected: documents, in the form of written curriculums and meeting agendas; physical artifacts, in the shape of photographs and original artworks; direct observations from program directors and instructors; and most abundantly, participant observations fashioned from my intimate role in the organization. Gerring (2007) and Yin (1994) explain that these diverse sources of information provide

a triangulation of data, which increases the validity of the research, because more than one source supports the research claim. A defining description of case study research, provided by Gerring (2007), is that it is an "intensive study of a single case where the purpose of that study is…to shed light on a larger class of cases" (p. 20). In other words, the analysis of a sample behavioral event will reveal the general nature of similar occurrences. However, in order for a single case study to act as a generalization of widespread events it must have more than one basis of contention. Claims that can be supported by multiple positions have an increased chance of proving the researchers' point to a wide audience. Furthermore, a variety of evidence ensures the inclusion of multiple and alternative perspectives.

These varying perspectives should be diverse, but must also align with a theoretical perspective. Gerring (2007) explains that theory is the vehicle for generalizing case study results. In my research I cited Blandy (1991) and his socio-political orientation to disability in my understanding and depiction of the population under review. I employed an authentic learning theory framework, as described by Newmann and Wehlage (1993) and Anderson and Milbrandt (1998, 2005), to understand the components of higher order thinking and determine how they can be cultivated in the art environment. The writing of Csikszentmihalyi (1990, 1996, 1997) on flow theory helped me to identify the presence and absence of meaningful learning in the studio environment, as well as recognize the steps needed to cultivate this engagement. Furthermore, I integrated aspects of situated learning, which emphasizes knowledge construction as being in part a product of the environmental context and culture in which it is presented (Pitri, 2004). And finally, I imported the framework of choice-based art education, created by Douglas and Jaquith (2009), to both identify how to teach for artistic behavior, as well as determine the pros and cons of a student-centered pedagogy.

These theories were integral in the creation of my case study research, however the only way to illustrate the presence and relevance of these theories and educational frameworks was through my personal perspective, detailed in a narrative inquiry.

NARRATIVE INQUIRY

One of the basic claims for the use of narrative inquiry in research studies, according to Connelly and Clandinin (1990), is that "humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives" (p. 2), which results in the subsequent organization of social experiences into narratives (Moen, 2006). The study of narrative is therefore the study of the ways humans experience the world. It would thus make sense that any investigation into a social phenomenon or behavioral event would encompass an examination of the narrative accounts of participants, because as Moen (2006) suggests, researchers "develop narratives to make sense of the behavior of others" (p. 2). This thought process aligns with the social constructivist belief that individuals learn and develop through participation in social activities (Moen, 2006). This theory supported my research into how meaningful learning occurred at AOA, because I investigated how both students and instructors developed and responded to the social activities present at the studio.

Narrative inquiry is concerned with groups and the formation of community (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Moen, 2006), however it would be naïve of the researcher to assume that he or she is not also involved in the formation of this community. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) identify "learners, teachers, and researchers [as] characters in their own and other's stories" (p. 2), and Moen (2006) explains that as individuals tell their stories they are not isolated and independent of their context, but rather "irreducibly connected to her or his social, cultural and institutional setting" (p. 4).

It was extremely important for me to not only identify my place within the AOA studio, but also clarify that my presence affected the participants and their interaction with the environment. Therefore, I tried to give an account of the multiple and complex levels of social interaction existing at the inquiry site (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). It is essential to the validity of the study to recognize the various voices involved in creating the narrative account, and appreciate that narrative inquiries capture both the individual as well as the larger context wherein he or she resides (Moen, 2006).

Narrative research relies on empirical evidence collected by the investigator, which takes many forms. A primary tool of this method is the field record of shared experiences. These notes are collected as part of participant observation in a shared practical setting. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) describe these notes as "active recording[s]," detailing how events are constructed (p. 5). Closely associated with the field record is the journal record, which provides a more personal interpretation of the construction and application of events. Throughout my time at AOA, I kept a journal of my thoughts and reflections on the experience, and also transcribed details of lesson plans and curriculum (see Appendices C-E and J).

Another data collection tool in narrative inquiry is the process of storytelling. There is a tendency for individuals to explain actions through stories, and I wanted to utilize this natural process of description in my research. Therefore during my unstructured interviews with the program directors and instructors I asked them to reflect on some of their favorite experiences, detail problems they saw with the studio format, or simply provide anecdotes they found amusing. The integration of their "lived stories" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 6), as well as my own, provided a personal description and explanation of studio events.

Autobiographical writing expands upon the anecdotes shared during storytelling, but it further investigates how such stories and events shape understandings. A large portion of my narrative inquiry is an autobiographical reflection on my experience at AOA and how that time affected my current research and future understanding of art education for people with disabilities.

The combination of these data collection tools enables the researcher to create a narrative account, which is the process of fixing a story into a written text (Moen, 2006). The structure of the narrative must encompass the time and place, or plot and scene as Connelly and Clandinin (1990) describe it. These aspects work together to create the experiential quality of the narrative. Time and place are not, in themselves, the interpretive or conceptual side of the inquiry, Connelly and Clandinin (1990) explain, nor are they a form of narrative criticism. They are the narrative itself. Without situating the event in terms of time and place, the narrative loses its effectiveness and basis in reality, and takes on a certain form of fiction, which undermines its authenticity.

However, once the time and place of the event are identified and the story is written, or grounded into text, it is effectively detached from the moment it occurred. This enables the narrative to assume importance beyond the initial situation and gain relevance in other contexts (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Moen, 2006). The narrative thus enters into an interpretive framework where multiple understandings and explanations can be attributed to the situation under review. In this way, my experiential account of the AOA site, and my subsequent conclusions regarding the presence of meaningful learning, could be ascribed to similar situations and locations.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

My research sought to describe the culture and habits of a behavioral event in a specified location, and within a certain timeframe. The parameters of this study fit well within the qualitative case study method framework, which provides a holistic description of events in a behavioral phenomenon. My close connection with the organization impelled me to additionally explore research methods that supported the infusion of my personal perspective into the work. To this end I found narrative inquiry, an investigative method that studies the ways in which humans experience the world through personal description. Through the integration of storytelling, autobiographical writing, and journaling, I was able to create a narrative and interpretive framework with which to analyze my experience. Case study method gave structure to my research design, in the form of theoretical foundations and the integrated analysis of events, while narrative inquiry and the integration of my "lived story," provided my research with a personal and human perspective.

Chapter 4: Initial Account of the Studio

CHAPTER INTRODUCTION

My research for this study began with a descriptive account of my initial introduction to the program site. I detailed the fundamentals of the studio and program structure, and made note of the instructional influences and inspirations that were evident. My portrayal of the studio revealed what I saw to be some programmatic problems that needed to be addressed in order for meaningful learning to be cultivated.

THE BEGINNING

My work with The Arc of the Arts Studio and Gallery (AOA) began purely by happenstance, in the middle of my first year of graduate studies at The University of Texas at Austin. I was finishing my first year of coursework in the Art Education Division, which included obtaining a formal internship position in my field of interest. As an aspiring community-based arts educator, I searched for organizations that had strong connections to the community and a stimulating arts program. I knew that if I was to spend a prolonged period of time with an organization I needed to have a certain level of personal investment in my internship setting.

My search for a site for my internship resulted in few prospects. However, while looking for an internship location I received an email from The Arc of the Capital Area, a non-profit organization dedicated to providing personalized and community-based services aimed at improving the quality of life for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in the Austin area (Arc of the Capital Area, n.d.). The email was sent out to recruit interns to support their art center, which provided art-making opportunities for youth and adults with developmental disabilities, ages 14 and older. The art center housed a studio for participants to create artwork in a variety of mediums,

in addition to a professional gallery space for the artists to exhibit and sell their completed work to the community. Although I had no previous experience working with people with disabilities I was intrigued by the novelty of a center that offered such in-depth art opportunities to this under-served population. This was something I had never seen or heard of, so I submitted an application.

The Program Director invited me to attended one of the seasonal art exhibitions in order to learn more about the art program. While sampling Valentines-themed cookies, I met the art instructors, former interns, volunteers, and many of the studio participants. I was immediately impressed by the level of respect and dedication the staff displayed when discussing their work in the program as well as their relationships with the participants. Many of the instructors and interns began as volunteers when the organization opened, and thus had very close ties to the program. The clients were eager to show me their artwork in the accompanying Cool Family Gallery, and I could see that this opportunity to display their finished work was a huge source of confidence for them. As I left the art exhibition I was overcome with a sense of excitement and anticipation, I knew I had found an organization with strong bonds to the community and an intriguing arts program I could connect with on a personal level. Little did I know that this was the beginning of my two-year relationship with The Arc of the Arts Studio and Gallery.

PROGRAM FUNDAMENTALS

The Arc of the Arts (AOA) program was the brainchild of the Director of Development at The Arc of the Capital Area, and was opened in September 2008. It was initiated as a day rehabilitation program for disabled adults with an interest in the arts. Classes were offered five days a week with instruction lasting four hours per day. AOA began with a single staff member, the Director of Development, running the day-to-day

operations and depended heavily on community volunteers to teach the studio art portion of the program. As interest in the program grew and classes expanded, the Arc of the Capital Area realized that the organizational structure of the art program needed to expand as well.

When I began my internship, the AOA program had an average studio attendance of sixteen people per day, and served approximately 80-85 adults in total. Studio attendance ranged from full participation, at five days a week, to occasional participation, often only once a week. The program had also grown to include two full-time employees, a Program Director, Lead Art Instructor, and one part-time Art Instructor. Each staff member had experience working with people with disabilities as well as a background in the arts—a factor I found very interesting. The Program Director received a Master's Degree in Art Therapy from Sonoma State University, and previously acted as a social worker for adults with disabilities in northern California. The Lead Art Instructor previously interned at an organization serving people with disabilities while completing a B.F.A. in Textiles at the Rhode Island School of Design. The part-time Art Instructor received his B.A. in Drawing and Painting from the University of North Texas, and worked as a volunteer at AOA during its early period.

I had expected the staff to be predominantly based in the human services/human development realm, because that was the general norm for those working at centers for people with disabilities. I found that the variation of the AOA staff's experiences resulted in the creation of a unique studio environment. The focus of the program went beyond pure recreation or rehabilitation; it encouraged personal as well as artistic growth within its participants. The Program Director explained to me that art-making was used as a component in the development of the entire person. During the initial portion of my internship I searched for ways in which the program served this dual purpose of both

personal and artistic advancement, and found that even the physical arrangement of the studio supported this growth.

Studio Structure

The studio portion of The Arc of the Arts program took place in a large, open room, decorated with various art pieces made by the participants. One corner of the room was dedicated to musical instruments and held a piano, xylophone, African drum, microphone, speakers, and a small stereo that played music during class time. These sat adjacent to the offices of the Program Director and instructors. In addition to the usual computers and office supplies, the staff kept art history books, lesson plan ideas, and inspirational images arranged by theme (landscapes, portraits, animals, etc.). There was a back room that held a ceramics wheel with clay materials, a large bureau filled with costumes and other theatrical objects, a paint-splattered sink used for clean up, and a small back lunch area. The south wall of the studio held the many canvases, Masonite boards, and frames bought by and donated to the studio, in addition to a line of cubbyholes used by participants to hold their artwork (see Photograph 1).

I found that the AOA program was designed to run as an open studio with each artist working at his or her own pace, and on work of his or her individual choosing. Communal art-making tables were organized in a large square pattern in the middle of the building (see Photograph 1). There were no seat assignments and artists made their own decisions about where to work. The placement of participants at collective tables, as opposed to individual desks, encouraged face-to-face interaction and infused a spirit of collaboration within the studio environment. Participants learned to share their space with one another, an important social goal, and even worked on projects together through the mutual use of materials.

Although there were no reserved seats, I found that participants tended to gravitate towards the same spaces each class time. I enjoyed seeing the individual ways each student organized his or her space. Some liked to bring objects and images from home that were used as inspiration for work or purely as decoration. Justin[2], the studio's longest attending artist, brought a binder with him to every class that was filled with computer printouts of '70s sitcom stars like Mary Tyler Moore and *The Jeffersons*. He regularly used these images as motivation for new artworks, but more often enjoyed organizing these pictures around his area (see Photograph 2). Cody, another artist, had a love for incorporating *Walker Texas Ranger*, sound equipment, and Afro hairstyles into his artwork. He decorated his space with his Sheriff star, sound production magazines, and Afro picks. One of my favorite pastimes was counting how many Afro picks Cody would bring to class each day (the record was seven). The AOA staff further encouraged this individual expression by tailoring their instruction in its support.

Program Structure

Each class began and ended with a group "check-in" time, where participants discussed their lives outside the studio (see Photograph 3). They conversed about their families and friends, and the various activities they had completed during the week. Many of the participants lived in residential group homes, which often limited their social interactions because of budgetary and time constraints, so this time of collaborative sharing created a sense of community by providing the opportunity to interact and connect with others on a personal level. This check-in time was also a chance for individuals to disclose ideas for new artistic endeavors, as well as display their progress on current ones. Even if the artworks were incomplete, you could see the sense of pride

[2] Due to the fact that people with disabilities could be considered a potentially vulnerable population, I have changed the names of each participant artist in order to protect their identity.

felt by artists as they presented their work. This sharing of ideas was a productive use of time as instructors and fellow participants would offer ideas and recommendations for these works in progress, but unfortunately these conversations were hindered by time constraints. The check-in processes, both at the beginning and end of class, were allotted 30 minutes each, which limited the extent that in-depth discussions could occur.

The remainder of class-time was spent investigating the ideas and themes presented by the artists during check-in times. Following the open theme of the studio, participants governed all creative decisions concerning their artwork. The work each artist carried out was determined by his or her own desire and adjusted to his or her individual pace. The artistic choices available to each artist were extremely diverse; there was drawing, painting, collage, sculpture, and clay modeling to choose from each day. Participants would draw inspiration from materials, images found in the studio or at home, and even from their dreams or imaginations. There was no structured curriculum or lesson plans. Instructors designed the art program as personalized and flexible, according to the desire and needs of each individual artist. Instructors physically distributed materials like paint and canvases, in order to monitor portion control, but each individual artist determined the colors, canvas size, and other materials used. This resulted in a diverse array of artworks with various topics and themes.

I found that the physically open layout of the studio fostered collaboration among participants, yet the range of artistic choices encouraged individuality. The coupling of these apparent opposing factors resulted in an art studio that promoted autonomy through the creation of community.

Studio Influences

The creation of community and socialization were crucial factors in the Program Director's organization of the studio. As an art therapist, the Program Director was interested in the expressive and therapeutic quality of art, and arranged studio instruction to support these ideas. The prominent art therapist Henley (1997) reflected these ideas in expressing the importance of creating artistic environments that "contribute to the forming of a productive, personal sanctuary and a harmonious community of peers" (p. 16). As an underrepresented and often isolated population in many environments, people with disabilities need to find community and a sense of belonging. Equally valuable is a feeling of independence and self-sufficiency, an important factor for any individual, but for those who are stigmatized as vulnerable or incompetent in society, it is essential.

The open format of the space and materials, and lack of structured curriculum, maintained a sense of artistic freedom for the participants. They could create whatever they wanted, whenever they wanted. In the past, I had taken art classes that limited my creative process, and had one too many creative ideas crushed in order to fit within the expectations of the teacher's lesson plan. As a result, I was drawn to the complete freedom AOA employed and eager to explore the self-guided artistic paths chosen by the individual artists. Some of the artists came to class brimming with ideas, and could not wait to get started. Yolanda, for example, usually shared one of her extremely vivid dreams with the class during check-in time, and would spend the remainder of her day giving artistic form to this vision. She once spent an entire day exploring her dream concerning a marathon race of skeleton competitors that took place in Death Valley. Another artist, Robert, typically had two or three artwork ideas in his head—usually portraits of musicians and sports figures—and he knew exactly how he wanted to execute them.

Other artists needed additional stimulus to begin a piece. They would ask for input or creative assistance from instructors, who would bring out a stack of binders filled with various inspirational images. These binders were separated by themes—such as landscapes, portraits, animals, etc.—and participants would flip through these until a picture was found that piqued their interest. The individual would usually be content with copying this image directly onto a canvas or Masonite board. I witnessed this incidence happen time and again with multiple participants, and could not help but wonder what separated those with directed paths and those who needed an extra push.

In time, I came to realize that the absolute freedom of the studio environment was daunting to many of the participants. In many cases, AOA was their first experience creating art. Art instruction in special education classes often focused on the remediation of some perceived problem—like building hand-eye coordination—or was simply none-existent (Blandy, 1994; Scotch, 2002). Instruction did not seek to inspire creativity within students, and therefore AOA participants were often unprepared for the self-guidance needed to perform in this open format.

This hesitancy could also be attributed to the "learned-helplessness" many people with disabilities acquire from their parents or teachers (Eisenhauer, 2007). They consistently have simple tasks—which they can complete without help—performed for them. They are treated as weak and helpless so often that they come to perceive this weakness in themselves. Artists manifested this learned-helplessness in the AOA studio through repeatedly asking for help from instructors, both in the forms of inspiration and even assistance with the artwork. Though participants authored the initial subject matter and theme of the artwork, staff and volunteers often influenced the physical construction of the piece. I witnessed instructors and interns drawing and painting on artworks, and I myself was asked multiple times to sketch images onto various canvases. I felt

uncomfortable leaving my mark on pieces that would be contributed to an individual artist, yet heard no complaints about this from staff. It was at this point that I noticed what I perceived to be problem with the construction of the program.

PERCEIVED PROBLEMS

Through my time at AOA I began to perceive an instructional problem. The difficulty I saw with allowing staff and volunteers to paint upon participants' artwork was that it raised a question of authenticity. A collaborative partnership created these works of art—one between the artist and instructor (or volunteer). Yet, when these pieces were eventually displayed in AOA's accompanying Cool Family Gallery, only the participant's name was attributed to the artwork. This concealment of authorship rang a little false to me. In my view, it misled the buyer regarding the full nature of the work, as well as reinforced a cycle of dependency between participants and instructors.

I realized that a portion of this dependency might have stemmed from the format of the open studio. Participants may have been intimidated by the absolute freedom of the class, which could cause them to regularly seek out assistance from instructors in the construction of their work. However, this is not to say that the open format of the AOA studio did not pose problems for those not seeking regular input from instructors. Participants like Robert, who came to class brimming with thematic ideas, continued to produce artworks without assistance, yet a problematic pattern emerged—piece after piece looked the same. I found this repetition to be most evident with Emelia, one of AOA's most well known artists.

Emelia was an artist with no shortage of inspiration and rarely asked for input from instructors. She was one of the highest selling AOA artists, eager to tackle large canvases, and had artwork illustrating the cover of the book, *Mental Wellness in Adults*

with Down Syndrome by Dennis McGuire and Brian Chicoine (2006). Emelia's artwork was immediately recognizable. She had an affinity for painting flat, two-dimensional scenes, usually involving brightly colored animals outlined in black set against a bold colored background (see Photograph 4). Most established artists have recognizable styles, but analysis of their work tends to show growth in some area, whether through the introduction of a new color palette, fresh materials, or complexity of subject matter. I was not able to visibly track any form of artistic growth in Emelia's work over the course of the two years she was in the AOA program. Her newest painting looked nearly identical to one of her earliest works. The background color and subjects may change, but the shallow scene and overall composition remained the same.

Justin, the aforementioned artist with the love of '70s pop culture, was another accomplished AOA artist who fell into this repetitive pattern. His colorful abstract paintings decorated many AOA marketing materials and were highly prized by buyers from the community. At the 2010 Arc of the Capital Area fundraising auction one of Justin's pieces sold for over $2,500. Like Emelia, the size and titles of Justin's work changed, but the overall composition of numerous swatches of color did not (see Photograph 5). His inspiration may have been representational, such as musicians or scenes from television shows, yet his finished product systematically remained abstract. An underlying factor of both these artists was that their art production had become stagnant—it did not change or evolve. I found this redundancy to be a problem of the artists' lacking motivation. The open format of the AOA studio was no longer challenging Emelia and Justin to grow in their artistic practices.

Artistic growth was not a goal of the AOA program during my initial encounter. The expressive and therapeutic quality of art was superior, in the Program Director's mind, to creative development, and therefore the program was arranged with these goals

in mind. Using the words of Simmons III (1998), the AOA program focused "on the arts as a social service, rather than art for arts sake" (p. 70). The Program Director shifted emphasis away from "appreciation-oriented" activities and towards those that were more active and expressive in nature (Simmons III, 1998, p. 70). For example, the prominence of check-in times and the partnered creation of artwork—between artist and instructor—created opportunities for both peer socialization and collaboration. These expressive choices aligned with the concentration of a day rehabilitation center—because they grew participants socially and personally—but in my opinion, did not necessarily align with those of an art center. This seemingly small observation was in fact a revelation for me, because it began to bring to light and encompassed the range of problematic issues I found within AOA.

THE LARGER ISSUE

Art-making must be the main focus of a community arts program, Simmons III (1998) explains, and in order to do so staff must maintain the "integrity of the art forms in terms of content, practices, standards, and values" (p. 62). I believed that AOA's practices, as I saw them, were not maintaining these definitions of an art center. Content-wise, the instructors were not delving into the full range of artistic subjects available. The studio housed a large amount of artistic materials, but the principal medium utilized by participants and emphasized by instructors was painting. Other artistic methods were only briefly touched upon. There was little discussion of drawing or sketching an image beforehand, in order to plan out composition, and many participants often went directly into painting on canvases once his or her subject matter was decided upon. The few participants that engaged in drawing only did so because it was his or her preferred medium.

The instructors also failed to explore the complexities of practices inherent in the diverse artistic mediums—painting included. They did not engage in skill development through various artistic exercises, like experimenting with line techniques or color mixing. The results of this were artworks with homogenous lines and pigments straight from the paint tubes.

Introducing art standards into a program for people with disabilities is a bit problematic; presenting an established artistic model for the basis of comparison may devalue or diminish the work created by participants and could lead to feelings of inferiority. To combat this problem, AOA did not present any outside examples, whether historical or contemporary, of artworks that achieved prescribed artistic standards.

The instructors at AOA promoted the value and importance of art to participants, but only as it existed within the inclusive studio setting. They celebrated the importance of all participants' work in the studio equally, by displaying completed artwork in seasonal exhibitions in the connecting Cool Family Gallery. These exhibitions were not curated, aside from choosing artworks (usually one from each participant) that aligned with the theme of the show. These themes, chosen by the Public Relations and Marketing director from The Arc of the Capital Area, related to the current time of year—i.e., Valentine's Day, Holiday season, and even the "dog days of summer." The staff additionally acknowledged art as an expressive and therapeutic outlet for participants, but with the implied use of art as a social service for individual growth. This resulted in a disregard, or underestimation, of the worth of art beyond the studio setting and in the lives of participants outside the AOA environment.

At this point in my reflection I had to take a step back. AOA's participants were happy in the program, and furthermore every institution had its problems—so why was I fixed upon these issues at AOA? Perhaps more importantly, why did I find them so

troubling? Why not let the program occur naturally and have the artists create on their own? My answer to these questions was two-fold. I felt that first of all, AOA was experiencing a programmatic identity crisis; they presented themselves as a community-based art center, yet implemented practices more aligned with a therapeutic day rehabilitation program. I likened this issue to my aforementioned problem with crediting one artist with the artwork completed by two—it was a question of authenticity. I saw this as a misrepresentation of the programmatic goals of AOA. Perhaps if they had identified themselves solely as a day rehabilitation program I would not have this concern. This led into the second part of my answer: AOA had the potential to be a community art program as defined by Simmons III (1998), but I did not believe they were realizing this potential. They employed staff with college degrees in studio art and owned a professional space to exhibit artwork—all the components needed for a successful art center. What they lacked was an educational model to utilize. I recognized that AOA was not the only community art center providing arts instruction to adults with disabilities in the United States, and thus wondered if research into similar organizations would provide instructional information and the educational example AOA needed.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

My initial experience at AOA was extremely positive. I forged close relationships with the participants and program staff, and learned a great deal about working at a community-based art institution. However, my time also provided insight into the intrinsic problems of the institution, which revealed programmatic issues that I felt impeded the extent to which meaningful learning could occur. I determined that AOA was not fully utilizing the artistic knowledge of its staff or full range of its facilities, and therefore could not realize the potential it had to become a dynamic

community art center. To address these issues there was a need to do further research into community art organizations that provided similar arts programming for people with disabilities. Through this examination I could better understand how comparable institutions situated their arts programming, and whether more meaningful learning could occur within these circumstances.

Chapter 5: Models, Theories, and Ideas

Chapter Introduction

To better understand how meaningful learning is created, and ascribe that knowledge to AOA, I determined there was a need to do research outside my case study site. I looked at information about community art centers around the country that provided arts programming for people with disabilities, and reviewed the organizational similarities and differences as compared to those of AOA. This research was used to gain insight into the educational practices utilized by art programs around the country in teaching people with disabilities. My next step was investigating art education theories that addressed the characteristics of meaningful learning and higher-order thinking—a process that helps lead to meaningful learning. This collection of knowledge enabled me to create a basis with which to assess the programming at AOA and better determine what changes could and should occur at the organization in order to raise the level of learning.

Similar Organizations

AOA was my first exposure to community-based art centers for people with disabilities, so my initial search into the presence of similar programs around the country was predominantly due to curiosity. I wished to see the number of these organizations in existence and their locations around the country. Through a web-based search I found an online database listing contact information and websites for about 25 organizations that provided art instruction to people with disabilities. I was shocked by the relatively small amount of institutions, but realized that although we live in a digital age, many of these under-funded programs did not have proper websites or were not (as of my search) listed in online search engines.

After my initial findings, I decided to investigate how the program and structure of these institutions compared to AOA. I concentrated my focus on non-profit visual art centers that provided services to adult populations with disabilities. Of the twelve programs that fit this criteria, many presented mission statements and program characteristics that appeared to coincide with that of AOA, while others adopted a more therapeutic and rehabilitative approach to their instruction (see Appendix B for a full list of the art centers). ArcWorks Community Art Center in Peabody, Massachusetts explained their mission as providing "opportunities for individuals with disabilities to explore and discover their creative abilities, to express themselves through the arts and to provide opportunities that enable their artistic voice to be heard" (ArcWorks, n.d.). Paint A Miracle Art Studio in Rochester, Michigan offered "programs and possibilities for those…with disabilities and other challenges to explore the arts in an atmosphere of hope, growth and encouragement" (Paint A Miracle, n.d.). A truly inspiring mission statement came from The Arts of Life program based in Chicago, Illinois. This organization established the core values guiding their collaborative work as "promoting self-respect, inspiring artistic expression, building community, [and] developing independence" (The Arts of Life, n.d.).

AOA employed practicing artists as their studio instructors, and in my search I found that many organizations shared this practice, including the National Institute of Art & Disabilities (NIAD) in Richmond, California; Passion Works Studio in Athens, Ohio; Creative Growth Art Center in Oakland, California; and Creativity Explored in San Francisco, California. Creativity Explored, in particular, emphasized the professional quality of their instruction, defining their program as a "supportive studio environment for artists with developmental disabilities in which they receive individualized instruction from mentoring artists, quality art materials, and professional opportunities to exhibit

their work" (Creativity Explored, n.d.). Many of the organizations I researched exhibited artwork in gallery spaces—which is similar to AOA's practices—but I found that Creativity Explored, NIAD, and Creative Growth Art Center to be the few locations that held exhibitions as a top priority in their programs. Creative Growth Art Center, for example, maintained their professional studio environment fostered artwork that was "included in prominent collections and museums worldwide" (Creative Growth, n.d.).

ORGANIZATIONAL SIMILARITIES & DIFFERENCES

The search for comparable arts education at these particular community locations was performed by computer rather than in-person research, and therefore I was unable to determine the full extent of educational programming offered at each institution. As such, the conclusions I drew about these organizations were dependent upon my readings of the content presented on each website. Nonetheless, I found similarities between these organizations and AOA, including the employment of practicing artists as instructors, the presence of professional gallery spaces, and the shared values as proclaimed in mission statements. In these ways I felt that AOA was on the right path to providing meaningful learning in its program. And in fact, AOA's resources and instruction appeared to exceed those of many programs around the country. However, I could not dismiss the feeling that there was more AOA could do to strengthen their instruction. Of the twelve programs I researched, two in particular—National Institute of Art & Disabilities (NIAD) and Creativity Explored—continued to present themselves as model comparisons. Both organizations employed only practicing artists as their instructors and emphasized the importance of regular art exhibitions. These key factors displayed a commitment to connecting art-making and instruction to real-life events, which in my mind supported meaningful learning.

The main differences I found between Creativity Explored and NIAD as compared to AOA, extended to class size, number of instructors, and the wider variety of artistic mediums available, which included fiber arts, sculpture, digital arts, and printmaking. I attributed many of these differences to the longevity of the two programs. Creativity Explored and NIAD were both initiated in the early 1980s, and in that time had established themselves as visible members of their communities. This sustained interaction with their local communities would understandably increase these programs' attendance rates, which would subsequently lead to the hiring of new instructors with more diverse artistic backgrounds.

Creativity Explored and NIAD were more significant to me than the longevity and size of their programs however, even though these were respectable feats for any community organization. I felt that the longer AOA remained in the Austin community the number of participants and instructors—and even available art mediums—would increase and begin to align with those of the more established programs. In my mind, the key factor situating Creativity Explored and NIAD as model organizations for AOA was their maturity, which stemmed from an acute awareness of who they were as a program and the mission they served. Both centers shared a common interest in nurturing the creative process of people with disabilities, and outlined such in their mission and vision statements. Creativity Explored, for example, advanced the value and diversity of artistic expression and stated they were "committed to supporting people with developmental disabilities in their quest to become working artists, and to promote their work as an emerging and increasingly important contribution to the contemporary art world" (Creativity Explored, n.d.). NIAD's innovative program "develop[ed] the capacity for creative expression in people with developmental and other physical disabilities," which they explain increased attendees' "sense of personal identity and pride" (NIAD, n.d.).

They, too, provided a gallery space and other exhibition opportunities, which they claimed validated participants' art while "enhancing their self-esteem and providing them with earnings for their personal use" (NIAD, n.d.).

Yet more than strong ideas, Creativity Explored and NIAD had the established programming to achieve their objectives of increasing the artistic endeavors of people with disabilities. The NIAD studio instruction focused on "developing the capacity for creative expression" through investigation of various art materials. Their studio environment focused on art creation "while building the independent living skills of observation, concentration, decision-making, project management, co-operation, and the value of practice" (NIAD, n.d.). The studio arts program at Creativity Explored was modeled after an artists' collective, which afforded the opportunity for studio artists to work "individually or collaboratively with their peers … and/or with artists in the greater community" (Creativity Explored, n.d.). They provided their studio artists with workspace, instruction, and opportunities to explore a wide variety of media. Participants at Creativity Explored choose materials and subject matter, and "trained professional artists [were] available to assist each studio artist in exploring the creative process" (Creativity Explored, n.d.).

Once again, I cannot claim to know all the intricacies of the NIAD and Creativity Explored programs, but my interpretation of the information available online led me to infer that these programs had a guiding principle, or mission, directing their studio instruction. Their art instruction and learning were connected to something meaningful and more significant than therapeutic expression. AOA, in comparison, had no clearly stated goal or mission for its studio program. Operating under the umbrella of the larger Arc of the Capital Area organization meant that AOA aligned with the organization's larger mission of "provid[ing] personalized, community-based services that improve the

quality of life for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their caregivers" (Arc of Capital Area, n.d.). I am not proclaiming this mission to be unacceptable by any means; it clearly establishes the goals of a social services organization. However, by not mentioning the arts in any way, AOA's mission does not appear to fit with the specific means of an arts center.

If AOA's artistic programming was meant to improve the quality of life for its participants, then it follows that their instruction should have quality or meaning, as well. NIAD and Creativity Explored advanced art-making for people with disabilities into something beyond a therapeutic or purely expressive endeavor. By connecting the creative process of art-making to important life-skills—like concentration, decision making, and cooperation—these programs imparted the meaningful ideal of art-making as an integral part of life. This concept was reminiscent of authentic and constructivist learning theories in art education, and lead me to investigate how these systems could contribute to the creation of meaningful learning at AOA.

CONNECTING ART TO LIFE

Relating art-making to real-life practices and experiences is a teaching framework known as authentic instruction (Anderson & Milbrandt, 1998, 2005; Newmann & Wehlage, 1993; Walker, 2001). This unique, interdisciplinary approach to education aspires to help learners immerse themselves in real-life themes and ideas in ways that are both real and meaningful, and which promote solutions that are significant beyond the learning environment (Anderson & Milbrandt, 1998; Newmann & Wehlage, 1993). Summarizing the general objectives of authentic instruction in art education, Anderson and Milbrandt (1998) explained this educational framework as seeking "to understand art

and visual culture, to engage in creative expression, and ultimately to achieve the primary purpose of developing real-life skills and meanings through instruction in art" (p. 9).

The claim that art should have a social function outside the studio environment defies what Efland (1976) described as the "school art style" of teaching, which is prevalent in many schools and art institutions (p. 37). Anderson and Milbrandt (1998, 2005) described the divergence between authentic instruction and the school art style as the fundamental belief in either art for life's sake or art for art's sake. The school art style situated art-making as an activity primarily focused on instilling manual skills, such as mastering the elements and principles of design and manipulating various mediums (Anderson & Milbrandt, 1998; Efland, 1976). In authentic instruction, or art-for-life, art education has a connection to the world beyond the instructional context, and enables learners to construct knowledge and meaning about life from their hands-on experiences with the various disciplines of art (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005).

I took note of these opposing concepts of art instruction during my investigation into meaningful learning because they addressed the conflict I found in AOA's instruction. In my mind, AOA viewed art-making as a solely aesthetic endeavor, or as art for art's sake. The program's instruction centered on the exploration of materials and processes, with little regard for the larger function art held for these individuals. By removing the social element of art education, AOA placed art-making as a peripheral or recreational endeavor—an exercise in manual skill to create an aesthetic product. I utilized my research into authentic instruction and art for life approaches to uncover educational strategies that could be implemented in the AOA environment. Three themes presented themselves: the use of discipline-based inquiry, making real-world connections, and the construction of knowledge.

Discipline-Based Inquiry

Each discipline of art possesses its own distinctive content and investigative structure, be it art production, art history, aesthetics or art criticism. Anderson and Milbrandt (1998, 2005) believe each core discipline holds its own unique insights into the substance of art. In art production, artists connect ideas and emotions through "the physical act of making aesthetic forms" (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005, p. 139). Artists utilize the elements and principles of design—like line, color, and form—to create visual representations of their inner thoughts and ideas. These "visually meaningful statements" are forms of visual communication between the artist and the viewer, and can provide insight into the artists' inner processes, emotions, and problems (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005, p. 140). Participants at AOA could better understand the communicative qualities of art, and how to best employ them in the creation of their own visual statements, by learning and experimenting with these same elements and principles of design in their own art production. I wanted to make certain, however, that the learners would not simply replicate the art products constructed by other artists (a practice they had performed in the past). Art production at the AOA studio would hold more significance if it could "begin with and come back to students' own identities and what they do in the world" (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005, p. 144).

It is also valuable for learners to reflect upon what others do in the world, especially when those experiences are creating art. Art history is a historical narrative of both the group and the individual, a recording of experiential feelings and events of a point in time, and it functions as a method of maintaining and transmitting culture. Anderson and Milbrandt (2005) suggest investigation into the artifacts and performances of different cultures and times offer "particular observations of human nature and [could] provide opportunities to discuss themes that are important in many times and places" (p.

117). The review of traditional and older works of art, as well as investigation into the cultural contexts in which they were produced, could shed light for AOA artists into their own personal situations. It is imperative however, for instructors to present learners with artworks (and artists) grouped according to larger themes, as opposed to a strictly linear or chronological format, because this enables a cross-cultural comparison that is more applicable to the participants' daily lives (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005). Infusing art history into the AOA curriculum would additionally provide an opportunity for instructors to introduce art from the disability community and "outsider art" in a significant and meaningful way, where it could be discussed and valued in terms of its social importance.

The question of value in art is fundamentally known as aesthetics—the philosophy of art and beauty. Systematically, this core discipline consists of asking questions about the nature of art, and developing and utilizing arguments to answer these questions (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005). Without delving too far into the philosophical aspects of this discipline—which could be an entire study in itself—aesthetics is utilized in authentic instruction as a means to define art, determine its meanings and value, and decide how best to approach it in conversation (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005). It would be important to learn about and address aesthetics in the AOA environment because the concept is subjective and has a governing influence; the instructor's aesthetic theory, or personal definition of art and beauty, shapes and directs their instructional approach (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005). Encouraging AOA participants to develop their own understanding of beauty, and further recognize the subjective quality of this interpretation, would aid in the construction of their personal knowledge, appreciation, and understanding of art.

A deeper understanding of art is achieved through discussion, whether in verbal or written form, which addresses the meaning and significance of the piece. This process of critiquing the forms and content of art is at the heart of art criticism. "Art reflects human values and understanding," Anderson and Milbrandt (2005) write, and therefore "at a deeper level we engage in criticism to understand our own existence" (p. 99). Utilizing the reflective process of art criticism in the AOA curriculum would enable artists to view artistic style as a "container of meaning," and could help them to better understand the expressive meanings conveyed by themselves as well as other artists (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005, p. 99). Whether intentional or not, art is a form of communication, and to understand ourselves as well as others through this visual message we must consider the context and conditions in which a work of art is made, used, and valued (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005). In the AOA context, art criticism could aid learners in their larger understanding of how their work is viewed by others, as well as asking them to reflect upon their response to the artwork of other artists. Anderson and Milbrandt (2005) expand upon this idea stating, "the goal is for students to engage in art criticism in order to find meanings for their own lives and to understand the authentic meanings of others" (p. 101). In authentic instruction, critique exists as a platform to discuss, analyze, and examine an artwork with the ultimate objective of viewing it beyond the purely aesthetic value and in terms of its social achievements.

A collective understanding of the full range of the properties, uses, and values of each of the core art disciplines could provide the AOA artist with a more comprehensive understanding of the importance of art for life—for their lives as well as others. Another key step in retaining the motivation and engagement of learners, Anderson and Milbrandt (2005) stipulate, is maintaining the presence of real-world, "personally authentic problems" in the environment (p. 25).

Real-World Connections

An interdisciplinary investigation into real-world issues and problems can take many forms in the studio and range in complexity, from a class investigating their relationship to visual culture by counting the number of logos on their clothing, to examining the process of social acculturation through discussing the oppression of various cultural groups. The bottom line, however, is the "continual search for real-world connections for learning" and the investigation of life-centered issues as they relate to the individual and the group (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005, p. 25). Anderson and Milbrandt (2005) view collaboration as an effective tool in the process of connecting artistic content to real-life issues; "real-world problems are by their very nature not only personally engaging but also socially defined because they reach out into the larger society" (p. 26). AOA instructors could fuel these discussions by asking learners to investigate a concept, however "learning is actually manifested in relations with others," which necessitates a group effort (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005, p. 27).

Collaboration and group discussion of concepts can bridge the gap between life experience and critical thought, and may also integrate important issues that do not surface in the normal learning environment (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005). In authentic instruction, teachers promote a cooperative model of learning by designing tasks that encourage students to communally investigate an idea through the sharing of real-life experiences. Whether these experiences are common to the AOA studio or individual to the learner—for example discussing both group and individual experiences of building identity—providing various perspectives prepares participants for "growth and cultural change through discussion that encourage multiple perspectives and expand…sensibilities" (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005, p. 27). Encouraging AOA artists to investigate issues that are authentic and realistic beyond the studio setting will lead

them to construct a more sophisticated understanding of the subject matter, as well as of themselves.

Construction of Knowledge

The final overarching theme of the authentic instruction approach is the positioning of learning as an active construction of knowledge, as opposed to viewing it as the passive acceptance of another's meaning, particularly that of a teacher, textbook, or other higher authority (Anderson & Milbrandt, 1998, 2005; Milbrandt et al, 2004; Newmann & Wehlage, 1993). Psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1990, 1996, 1997) concurred that the best moments in life are not passive, but rather occur when a person's body or mind is stretched to the limits in an effort to accomplish something difficult and worthwhile. Constructing knowledge involves higher order thinking, a process requiring learners to manipulate information and ideas in ways that transform their original meaning (Newmann & Wehlage, 1993). In this way, making art is constructing knowledge. Working within the symbolic structure of visual form, the artist communicates inner feelings, perceptions, and ideas through manipulating symbols and patterns in new and different ways. In relation to the AOA studio, if participants are encouraged and taught to consider art as symbolic communication they would more deeply understand not only their own personal ideas and feelings, but also the ideas and feelings of others (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005, p. 28).

Higher-level thinking and construction of knowledge do not always come naturally to learners in general, and particularly to those with disabilities. This is not necessarily due to intellect, but rather to motivations—both internal and external. There is a misconception by teachers and instructors that people with disabilities cannot perform high-level thinking due to their disability, and therefore they are asked to do the

bare minimum. However, as Anderson and Milbrandt (2005) stipulate, if expectations are low then only low levels of cognition will result. Higher-level thinking and construction of knowledge need to be facilitated by moving students beyond the lower cognitive methods of simply naming, describing, and memorizing facts, and pushing them into higher-level cognition like analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating knowledge (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005; Newmann & Wehlage, 1993). Individuals with disabilities can perform these higher-level thought processes, but external motivators must be present to encourage this development.

Substantial conversation is one of these higher-level thinking motivators and is characterized by "considerable interaction about the topic, evident sharing of ideas, and an improved collective understanding" (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005, p. 29). Newmann and Wehlage (1993) provide a list of principles that promote substantial conversation in a learning environment. These include: discussions involving asking questions, forming hypotheses and making distinctions; idea sharing that is authentic and organic, as opposed to structured and controlled by the instructor; and discussion built upon participants' thoughts and previous knowledge to promote a collective understanding of a topic or theme.

The self-determination and choice involved in constructing knowledge are powerful motivating factors for learners, and can simultaneously support both their social and personal development (Milbrandt et al., 2004). Yet, there are also expectations and responsibilities that come with constructivist education—learners construct their own meaning, and thus are largely responsible for their own learning. Milbrandt et. al (2004) observed, "The analysis, interpretation, and production of artworks engages students in many opportunities for decision-making and critical thinking," skills which engage higher-levels of thinking and learning (p. 21).

FROM THEORY TO PRACTICE

My investigations into authentic and constructivist approaches to education provided insight into the theoretical directions needed to create a meaningful learning environment full of higher-level thinking, substantial discussions, and real-world connections. However, I came to realize that my enthusiasm and perception of these frameworks as a perfect match for the AOA environment were mine alone. The literature I read had typically-developing students in mind and was intended for the K-12 school environment. Yet, I continued to believe these concepts could be adapted for people with disabilities and implemented in a community art environment. At the point when my frustration at the lack of art education literature for people with disabilities was at its peak, I accidentally stumbled upon my rescue. On the top shelf of a bookcase located in the AOA Program Director's office, I found *Freedom to Create* by Florence Ludins-Katz and Elias Katz (1987). It was quite the coincidence, but I learned that the authors of this book had also initiated both the Creativity Explored and National Institute of Art and Disabilities art centers. This book provided a philosophical foundation for teaching art to people with disabilities and offered practical examples of how to organize lessons that stimulated creativity.

Freedom to Create was a crucial discovery in my search to create meaningful learning for people with disabilities. This book represented the intersection between art education and disability studies research that I desperately searched for, yet never found. As previously mentioned, research into authentic art education involved typically-developing students. Similarly, my reading into disability theory literature made no mention of the discipline of art. The only research I found concerning people with disabilities and art-making fell under the practice of art therapy, and therefore dealt largely with the remedial and restorative values of art and little with the production of

knowledge. I wanted to create a relationship between two separate areas of thought, yet had no academic foundations supporting my labor. The Venn diagram (see Illustration 1) visually captures the process of my pursuit to integrate these educational fields.

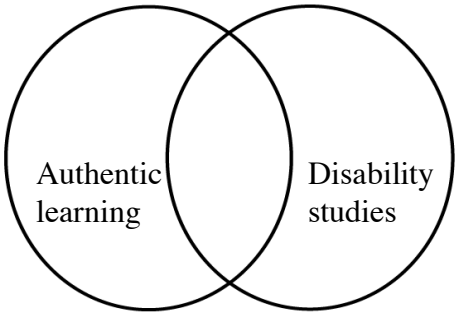


Illustration 1: Venn diagram.

I had my two sets of knowledge, represented by circles: authentic and meaningful learning through the arts in one sphere, and disability studies—research examining factors that define disability and help determine educational responses to these differences—in the other sphere. This study was the search for the union between these two areas. However, the lack of previous literature concerning the intersection between authentic art education and disability studies meant my research existed in the unknown space between the two, and became a first step in discovering and defining the connection between these disciplines. *Freedom to Create* was a practical application and integration of these ideas and therefore an extremely useful text in my research.

Ludins-Katz and Katz (1987) did not specifically name authentic or constructivist learning approaches in their philosophical dictations, yet there were important indicators of these ideas in their writing. They commented on the communicative power of art in the creative environment and acknowledged the art product as both a container for real-world experiences and as the outward manifestation of inner feelings:

> An environment in which creativity is appreciated, stimulated, and encouraged open up to the [learners] whole new areas of expression and imagination. They are able to put down what they feel, what they think, how they react to the world around them and how the world reacts to them. (Ludins-Katz & Katz, 1987, p. 1)

In each of their practical experiences, or lesson plans, they promoted the importance of the finished art product. Ludins-Katz and Katz (1987) placed a strong emphasis on matting, mounting, and framing artwork, and encouraged instructors to exhibit the completed work from each student in halls, auditoriums, display cases, or community spaces, so that students would become "part of the…community" (p. 13). By emphasizing and professionalizing completed artwork, Ludins-Katz and Katz reinforced the importance of art production for people with disabilities and provided the means for learners to better understand how their visual messages could connect to members of the community.

Celebrating the finished product in the AOA environment was relatively simple because the studio already had a gallery space in which it showcased artists' work. However, I wanted the studio to change the ways in which it exhibited completed artwork in the Cool Family Gallery. "Each student's work must be genuinely the student's," Ludins-Katz and Katz (1987) explain, and a teacher, instructor or volunteer must never work on a student's piece "unless it is understood to be a joint work and is labeled as such" (p. 7). AOA artists would more deeply appreciate the artistic process if the art they put their name on was solely their own. Furthermore, I wanted the studio to develop their exhibition strategies to include art critiques on a one-on-one level with the instructors, as well as in a group setting during the check-in and out times. These critiques would be constructive in nature, focusing on how the work could be improved to achieve its purpose, as opposed to solely concentrating on what is not successful in the piece. Engaging in the reflective process of art criticism would empower AOA artists to

deliberate upon their individual artistic styles, discuss what is successful in their artwork and what may need improvement, and understand how others view their work.

Ludins-Katz and Katz (1987) also embraced the transformative power of art-making, writing "art enables the [learner] to transcend himself and his environment" (p. 4). They encouraged artists in their programs to appreciate the importance of art to both themselves and to others, and illustrated these ideas by providing students with illustrative materials in the form of artists, artwork, and artifacts that related to the current lesson. Ludins-Katz and Katz (1987) felt these reference materials provided both contemporary and historical examples of art-making that could "broaden the scope of the student's imagination and broaden his [or her] knowledge and appreciation of art and civilization" (p. 17). I wanted illustrative materials to be used as points of reference for AOA artists, rather than as intimidating models towards which they should strive. "Comparison are odious," and damage the creative process (Ludins-Katz & Katz, 1987, p. 7). Artistic references should instead be used to demonstrate the multitude of ways past and present artists utilized familiar materials to solve aesthetic problems. I reasoned that the first illustrative materials to be integrated into the new AOA curriculum should be artworks created by the instructors. I believed the AOA artists would be less intimidated by this artwork because the instructors were not professionals, very approachable, and could intimately explain their artistic process. Utilizing the instructors' artwork as illustrative material in the studio also created an opportunity to demonstrate the critique process to participants. Instructors would explain their intent, ask for feedback on their artwork, and exemplify the ways to field criticisms in a constructive, rather than personal, manner. This practice discussion would prepare artists for their future critiques and broaden their knowledge of the artistic process.

The primary goal of the creative art center for Ludins-Katz and Katz (1987) was to facilitate the development of creative people who "experiment with many images, ideas, materials and techniques" (p. 5). They believed the instructor's primary function was to stimulate students, and implant in them the desire and urge to create. The success of an instructor was measured by a learner's "absorption in their work and by their desire to continue" (Ludins-Katz & Katz, 1987, p. 7). The way to cultivate this captivation in art was to encourage students to take new steps in their art and present them with certain artistic challenges to overcome. Csikszentmihalyi (1996) echoed this sentiment, "When there is nothing specific to do," he wrote, and "when there is no external force demanding that we concentrate, the mind begins to lose focus" (p. 348). I felt this loss of focus and the subsequent boredom that followed were to the detriment of creativity at the AOA studio, and the explanations for the growing stasis in participants' art-making.

A motivating factor of creativity is the quality of experience felt when involved with an activity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). The most enjoyable experiences, coined *flow experiences* by Csikszentmihalyi (1996), often included "difficult activities that stretched the person's capacity and involved an element of novelty and discovery" (p. 110). Ludins-Katz and Katz (1987) embedded the process of discovery in their practical experiences by including follow-up activities that encouraged instructors to create artistic challenges by adding variety and complexity to the lessons. Additionally, participants were urged to make independent judgments, using knowledge constructed from previous lessons to address these new challenges. Csikszentmihalyi (1997) stipulated that the complexity of these challenges must match an individual's skill level in order to create an optimal experience:

> Flow [experiences] tends to occur when a person's skills are fully involved in overcoming a challenge that is just about manageable…. If challenges are too

high one gets frustrated, then worried, and eventually anxious. If challenges are too low relative to one's skills one gets relaxed, then bored. If both challenges and skills are perceived to be low, one gets to feel apathetic. But when high challenges are matched with high skills, then the deep involvement that sets flow [experiences] apart from ordinary life is likely to occur. (p. 30)

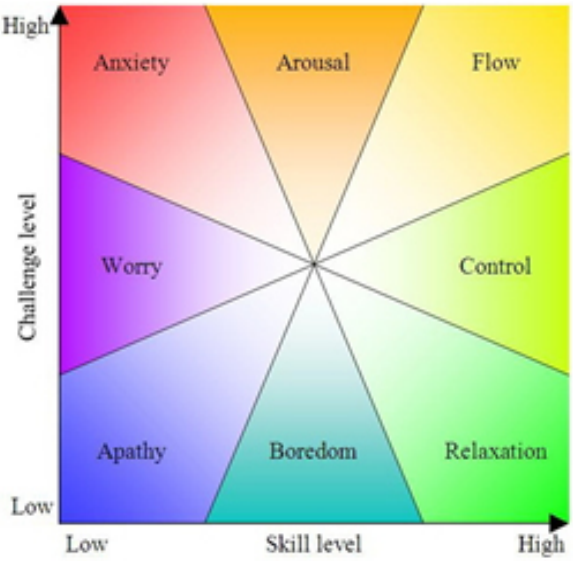


Illustration 2: Flow theory graph (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997).

As with any educational environment, the AOA studio had participants with a variety of skill and ability levels, which meant that instructors needed to create challenges that could be flexible and adjustable. In the suggested follow-up section of each lesson, Ludins-Katz and Katz (1987) presented ideas of varying complexity that could be utilized to challenge students according to their skill levels. For those with lower skill levels, a balanced challenge could be employing new materials in their art, an example being the use of fabrics in place of paper for a collage piece. This seemingly simple exchange would require artists to utilize their previous knowledge of collage in the search for creative solutions to new aesthetic problems. Participants with higher skill levels could be introduced to challenges that involved higher level thinking skills, such as moving beyond a realistic rendition of a still life scene to portraying the same scene with abstract

or expressionist methods. This more experimental adaptation would build decision-making skills and may even lead students to discover an entirely new approach to painting, thus adding variety and new energy to their artwork. Encouraging artists to manipulate materials and subject matter in new and different ways would promote higher-level thinking in the environment, support learners to take control of their learning through experimentation and critical thinking, and effectively prepare them for even more new challenges.

It was also important for me to extend challenges to the AOA instructors as well, as I believed this would increase their engagement in lessons and may enhance their teaching effectiveness overall. I wanted them to create lessons that encouraged substantial conversations and discussions, built upon participants' previous knowledge, and incorporated new materials and techniques. The most difficult challenge I perceived, was inspiring instructors to look beyond single lesson plans and larger curricular units that were informed by overarching themes relevant to the participant's lives beyond the studio. This goal was ambitious to be sure, but within reach now that I was armed with the means to help create a setting for meaningful learning in the AOA studio.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The research I collected from community-based art centers around the country illustrated that such programs went beyond therapeutic expression for people with disabilities, and by employing practicing artists as instructors, holding regular art exhibitions, connecting art-making to real-life skills, and promoting diverse visual arts programming, they contributed to the overall development of their participants as both individuals and artists. Authentic instruction and constructivist literature highlighted the theoretical components of discipline-based inquiry, real-world connections, and the

construction of knowledge, which were needed to create learning that supported the development of real-life skills and meanings through instruction in art. And the text, *Freedom to Create* by Ludins-Katz and Katz (1987) delivered the practical means to enact these art education theories in a real-world setting. This collection of knowledge provided the opportunity to connect authentic art education and disability studies in academic research, and additionally afforded me the skills to create arts curriculum that would promote meaningful learning in the AOA studio. The next step was working with the instructors to draft a relevant arts-based curriculum, and evaluation process, which would lead participants into a more meaningful understanding and appreciation of art, as well as develop their growth as both artists and individuals.

Chapter 6: Curriculum in the AOA Environment

CHAPTER INTRODUCTION

Armed with a theoretical base provided by constructivism and authentic instruction, as well as the practical lesson examples offered by Ludins-Katz and Katz (1987), I collaborated with AOA instructors to design curriculum for the studio that was approachable for everyone. Initial changes were made to prepare the studio for the oncoming curriculum, in particular adding a systematic routine to daily activities. General goals for each lesson unit were introduced with the understanding that they could and should be modified to appropriately match the realities of the studio, both in terms of participant needs and abilities. Finally, I emphasized the importance of reflection both during and after the curriculum was implemented; this would help instructors and I determine how this instruction was influencing work in the studio.

CHANGES IN THE STUDIO

In the midst of my research into authentic instruction, constructivist theory, and the programmatic structure of other art centers for people with disabilities, AOA was undergoing a large restructuring of its own. The previous Program Director was leaving and being replaced by Ann[3], who came from a background in studio art and art education. Additionally, Andrew, the previous part-time instructor, was moving into the Lead Art Instructor position and two more Associate Instructors, with studio art backgrounds, were joining the program. The studio was at an exciting moment of transition, new energies and ideas were stirring, and I found this to be a perfect moment to introduce my research into the studio environment. During one conversation, where Ann and I were assessing

[3] With permission, I have included the first names of the staff employed at the program during the second portion of the study due to the fact that I used the real name of the study site.

the program, I presented my idea to create a structured curriculum for the AOA studio. Detailing my intention to ground the instruction in authentic and constructivist learning theories, I synthesized my research for Ann into three main thematic points I wished to emphasize in the program: discipline-based inquiry, construction of knowledge, and real-word connections.

I explained that it was important to see the studio expand its artistic endeavors by incorporating more diverse art materials, integrating artwork from other cultures and times, and cultivating critical conversations with AOA artists about their work. Additionally, there was a need to present challenges for the participants to overcome with their art and encourage them to manipulate materials and information in new and diverse ways. Furthermore, it was essential to position these investigations into new materials, outside artists, and concepts as an exploration into real-world and life-centered issues so that the creative process at AOA was integrally connected to participants' lives outside the studio environment. I expressed that all these concepts would expand the artists' skill sets and push their artwork, as well as themselves, into new and significant territories. Ann agreed that she too wished to see the studio move into a more meaningful realm of arts education, and gave me her full support.

The next step was to meet with Andrew and determine how best to integrate components of my curriculum into the AOA studio setting. It was important to work closely with him in this respect, because simply presenting lessons to use in the studio would insult his teaching practice. Additionally, this move would distance many of the artists who, for better or worse, were accustomed to the open format of the studio. A sudden and drastic disruption in their normal activities would be counterproductive to their learning and might alienate them completely. Finally, introducing curriculum in this manner would effectively violate a key component of authentic learning: instruction

should be based upon the interests of participants. If lessons were introduced that had no significance to the AOA artists, my curriculum would simply be wishful thinking.

INITIAL PROGRAM CHANGES

Taking these points into consideration, I discussed with Andrew initial programmatic changes that I felt would prepare participants, as well as instructors, for the structured curriculum to follow. The first adjustment was eradicating the practice of volunteers and instructors physically contributing to artists' work, such as drawing or painting on their canvases. This change was the first, and possibly most important step, in establishing AOA as a reputable art studio, and illustrating the organization's dedication to being more than a therapeutic day habilitation center that dabbled in art. Furthermore, setting a precedent for artists to complete their own work from start to finish would help address the learned helplessness prevalent within the studio by empowering participants to work without outside help.

Introducing new materials and techniques into the studio was another initiative I encouraged, and one I hoped would expand the variety of artwork created in the studio, as well as advance the modes of expression utilized by artists to visually convey their thoughts and ideas. This practice would equally enable instructors to delve into artistic arenas, both well known and unfamiliar, which were previously unavailable to them, thus expanding their teaching practice and overall effectiveness. My final recommendation for initial modifications to the studio was to hold more regular public gallery shows and to extend these into an increasing number of community locations as well. AOA, however, was already introducing this change into the studio, declaring their intent to hold bi-monthly art shows in the accompanying Cool Family Gallery. Furthermore, they were presently coordinating supplementary exhibitions with various coffee shops and

businesses around town. These regular showcases increased the opportunities for participants to discuss their work with the public—employing what they practiced during critiques—as well as provided a platform to sell their work, thus helping them gain personal income and improved self-determination.

Affects of Initial Changes

These alterations to the AOA environment were employed as preliminary preparations for the incoming structured curriculum, and therefore could have been viewed as a secondary component of my research. However, I found that these changes manifested their own significant contributions to a meaningful learning environment and were thus important to mention. The initial responses many artists' had to the termination of drawing and painting help from instructors and volunteers was frustration and irritation. There were many declarations by artists of, "I can't make it look as good as you," and, "but I want it to look a certain way," but instructors and volunteers were dedicated to staying true to their mission and continuously explained to participants the importance of controlling their own work. In time, I noticed that artists asked for less and less outside help and, in fact, were supremely proud to display their completed work and identify it as solely their own: "this was all me," and "I did this all by myself!" Working through this change in the studio helped AOA artists move forward in their artistic process as they achieved a new sense of autonomy and controlled their learning.

AOA instructors introduced jewelry making, ceramics, wearable art, mixed media painting, and basic digital media—in the form of film shorts and cartoons—into the studio environment even before the formal curriculum was implemented. As I had hoped, presenting these unknown mediums infused a newfound sense of excitement into the setting as artists discovered the intricacies of the materials and instructors familiarized

participants, as well as themselves, with the appropriate techniques needed to work within these modes of expression. These new materials found their way into completed artworks that were displayed during AOA's bi-monthly exhibitions, and consequently enhanced the diversity of work presented to the community.

BUILDING CURRICULUM

These initial adjustments to the studio format signified to the AOA artists that a larger programmatic change was on the horizon. They were visibly excited to try something new, but Andrew and I discussed the need to initiate a set routine into the studio in order to help participants acclimate to the format of the curriculum. Introducing a level of uncertainty into a program for people with disabilities could be distressing, if not disastrous, if a level of familiarity is not maintained. Additionally, retaining a standard structure in the studio was an essential component because attendance changed from day to day. Those who visited AOA once a week, as compared to five days a week, could maintain a sense of comfort and confidence in their expectations of the day because each class was similarly formatted.

Structural Framework

It was agreed that check-in time would remain relatively similar to its previous form, where participants could continue to share their experiences and stories from outside the studio. This activity encouraged fellowship among artists and created a comfortable transition into the day's activities. Andrew was consistently the last person to contribute during check-in, and we decided he would use this time as an opportunity to introduce the current lesson to the group. It would be expected of artists to dedicate the first half of their day to focusing on the exercise, and in the afternoon they were free to work on whatever they chose. Check-out time would remain an opportunity for

participants to discuss the progress of their work with the group, in addition to presenting an opportunity for Andrew and the other instructors to discuss the morning's lesson. Artists would show their work and voice their opinions, both positive and negative, about the exercise. This moment of reflection was important to include in the curriculum because it enabled participants to communicate with each other over their shared experience, a practice that promoted discussion and collaboration. Additionally, this critical conversation helped instructors assess the extent to which artists were receiving and comprehending the lessons.

It was important to balance each day in the studio with a structured morning and a free afternoon, because it provided the artistic training needed to develop participants as artists, while still enabling them to retain a clear level of ownership over their individual practice. Speaking in terms of Csikszentmihalyi (1990, 1996, 1997) and his flow theory, structuring the studio in this way provided an equal balance between challenge and skill: morning lessons presented an artistic endeavor for the group to address, while the freedom of the afternoon afforded the opportunity for artists to engage the challenge in an individual way, according to their particular level of skill. A completely prearranged day would be as detrimental to some artists as was the previous fully open studio, wherein anxiety would replace apathy because challenges would exceed skill (see Illustration 2).

Another consideration Andrew and I discussed was the length of time each instructional unit should span. Studio attendance was a consideration, as was participants' attention level. For those who attended the studio regularly—three to five days a week—a single lesson could become monotonous if extended too long, and lead to boredom. Likewise, expecting weekly attendees to recall instruction from weeks past could pose too high a challenge, and thrust them into a state of anxiety or worry. It was therefore decided that each lesson would span one week, an acceptable amount of time to

explore a topic while retaining comprehension. Creating meaningful learning, however, demanded more than stringing together indiscriminate lessons. The studio needed to group together single topics—like figure drawing and surrealism—into larger, thematic units—such as gesture and abstraction—which would establish a more consistent and continuous learning environment for participants. It was decided that each unit in the curriculum would encompass three to four weekly topics, thus providing enough variation in lessons to hold participant interest, while still maintaining the sufficient time and correlation between subjects needed to successfully explore an artistic theme. Another key element in creating meaningful curriculum in the studio was designing individual lessons and larger units that were flexible enough to provide increased challenges for more advanced artists, yet fundamentally accessible for those with less skill. The goal of each lesson was divided into closed-ended objectives—specific skills and concepts covered by artists—and open-ended objectives—artists using the skills and concepts to express themselves meaningfully. Designing lessons with strong goals and clear objectives provided an educational framework that enabled Andrew and the other teachers to modify their instruction to fit a diverse array of learning styles and ability levels.

Lesson Units

I utilized the practical examples provided by Ludins-Katz and Katz (1987) when designing the curricular framework for AOA, which encouraged the use of illustrative materials in lessons, promoted sequential learning by providing connecting follow-ups to instruction, and emphasized the importance of displaying finished art products once units were completed. I left room for instructor interpretation regarding how each component

could best be employed to match the needs and instructional goals of each lesson and larger unit.

Illustrative Materials

Displaying illustrative materials during a lesson demonstrates ways past and present artists utilize resources to solve aesthetic problems. I emphasized that these visual examples could be contemporary, historical, professional or novice because their significance was seen in how they related to the lesson, rather than their status in the art world. For the unit on "Composition," I encouraged Andrew to provide his personal sketchbook as illustrative material. The initial lesson objective was directed toward the exploration of sketching as a means to design a larger composition, and utilizing a sketchbook as reference material illustrated to AOA artists the individual steps of the artistic process. This was done in addition to signifying the lesson's larger goal, which was contemplating and planning out an artwork. Utilizing illustrative materials belonging to an AOA instructor also provided the unique opportunity for participants to glimpse into the mind of an artist and his/her creative process. Andrew's sketchbook showed signs of mistakes and incomplete drawings, which illustrated that not every idea must be turned into a completed artwork.

Some instruction, however, called for more historical illustrative materials. Impressionism was introduced to the class as the final installment of a larger unit on line, with the goal being the discussion of and experimentation with the genre's use of layering lines. During his introduction to the lesson, Andrew passed around books and images from artists who represented this specific art movement, such as Renoir and Monet. Participants used the images to identify and discuss the variation of line styles and brush strokes used by artists. In utilizing the work of famous artists as illustrative materials, I

stressed the importance of placing the educational emphasis on identifying visual characteristics that coincided with the genre, rather than positioning the artworks as goals for AOA artists to strive towards. Andrew wished to discuss the Impressionist practice of experimenting with line value and clarity to create depth in an image, and illustrated this concept to the class by comparing a piece of tracing paper to one made of card stock. The tracing paper displayed the word *translucent* and the card stock the word *opaque* (see Photograph 6). He held each paper up to his body in turn, and asked the studio to discuss the differences between the two. This action began a conversation about layering translucent lines to build up color and texture in an artwork. Use of these illustrative materials enabled Andrew to present a key art concept to the studio as well as introduce new vocabulary words.

In each of these lessons instructors could have easily vocalized the important concepts to AOA artists. However, I felt that participants would more acutely understand these objectives, and be able to express the ideas in their own work, through the visual means of illustrative materials. Visual methods often communicate ideas more significantly to people with disabilities than verbal means (Ludins-Katz & Katz, 1987). Additionally, these illustrative materials facilitated relevant ways to introduce art history and other visual narratives into the studio.

Sequential Learning

Providing connective material between lessons was another significant basis of instruction that Ludins-Katz and Katz (1987) promoted in their writing. Sequential learning encourages knowledge building, as participants are asked to find thematic correlations between lessons and carry their knowledge through subsequent levels of instruction. In the AOA studio, I wanted skills presented in the first week's topic to be

significant on their own, while also supported close-ended objectives of providing a foundation for the larger instructional unit. The first week of the "Gesture Drawing" unit explored still life observation (see Appendix C, 2.1). Instruction began with a memory activity, where artists were given twenty seconds to look at a still life scene before it was covered. The class recounted the objects and details they remembered, which were visually recorded by the instructor. If a cup was mentioned, Andrew would ask if it looked more like a coffee mug, wine glass, or plastic cup, which encouraged artists to consider the importance of specificity. The group's collective drawing was then compared to the actual still life, and the class discussed the differences between the two. The next activity had the artists create their own drawing from memory. The objective of this initial lesson was to build skills in time management, memory, reflection, and observation, which provided the basic foundation of knowledge needed to complete more complicated gesture drawings. Similarly, the first lesson in the "Abstract" unit introduced the idea of non-representational drawing to students, which supported the objective of teaching participants the difference between literal and symbolic artwork, and paved the way for their exploration into more conceptual work in areas like Surrealism (see Appendix D, 4.1).

The second and third weeks of each instructional unit provided lessons that challenged artists to implement these foundational skills in more complex and elaborate ways. For example, the objective of the initial lesson in the unit on shading was introducing shadow into the studio, and had participants experiment with either cross-hatching or scribbling to create shade on an imaginary two-dimensional object (see Appendix E, 1.2-1.3). Instructors challenged artists during the next two weeks to create artwork that integrated both scribbling and cross-hatching techniques into a single image. Additionally, they were expected to apply these drawing methods in the creation of a

shaded three-dimensional object, a practice that compelled participants to consider how a shadow changes across multiple dimensions. Adding complexity to lessons also involved incorporating new materials. In the "Gesture Drawing" unit, the intermediate lessons had participants use charcoal sticks instead of pencils (see Appendix C, 2.2-2.3). The instructional objective focused on exploring the challenges involved in this medium, because it could not be erased and had a larger value range than pencil. Charcoal was combined with figure drawing in the "Gesture" unit, which extended a two-fold artistic test for artists to address. Completing these transitional lessons encouraged AOA participants to push themselves into new artistic and conceptual territories by developing their understanding of how to apply the skills and materials covered by initial instruction in new challenges.

The purpose of the final lesson of each thematic unit was to encourage artists to demonstrate their full comprehension of instruction by incorporating previously learned skills into a unified piece. These lessons presented open-ended objectives that complemented the closed-ended objectives of the earlier lessons, thus fulfilling the larger goal of each unit on instruction. For the unit on "Gesture Drawing," participants created a larger composition by utilizing their knowledge of charcoal drawing and practice in observation, which were close-ended skills encountered in the previous lessons (see Appendix C, 2.4). The models and objects in the scene did not change yet drawing time was limited, which compelled artists to make quick, individual decisions on what objects and models to include. Participants had complete control over subject matter, including as much or as little as they wished in their drawings, which fulfilled the open-ended objective of utilizing previous skills and knowledge to express their ideas meaningfully. The initial lessons in the "Abstract" unit began with the close-ended objectives of exploring non-representational drawing and simplifying compositions into basic shapes.

The final lesson investigated Surrealism, which presented the challenge of creating an unrealistic composition of an idea based in reality (see Appendix D, 4.3). Completing abstract arrangements of realistic scenes in unrealistic ways illustrated that AOA artists achieved the open-ended objective of expressing shape and spatial relationships in new and innovative ways.

The active process of building and connecting knowledge throughout instructional units empowered AOA participants to take control of their learning. Furthermore, this practice of manipulating information and ideas in ways that transformed their original meanings promoted higher-order thinking skills and substantially increased overall artistic development within the studio.

Finished Product

Despite the fact that AOA consistently exhibited participant artwork in the accompanying Cool Family Gallery, I saw an opportunity to develop the ways in which the studio displayed work, in particular curating shows according to relevant themes and professionalizing the display procedures. The materials and methods used in matting and framing completed works were renovated, with the addition of professional mat cutters and donated frames. Andrew and I educated interns in the proper procedure of professionally framing artwork, and articulated the importance of assembling and exhibiting high-quality work, as it would increase the studio's overall status as a reputable art center.

The studio also increased exhibitions to a bi-monthly level, which strengthened the program's visibility in the community and amplified the opportunities for artists to both sell and discuss their work with members of the public. The ability for artists to speak about their artwork in a public setting was an important part of connecting studio

practice to the real lives of artists, and was thus an essential component of the curriculum. I supported the implementation of regular artist critiques in the gallery once a substantial portfolio of work was available. Some artists had a body of work containing almost fifty paintings (or more), and seeing these spread out in one space was an incredible sight for both artist and instructor, and provided a unique educational opportunity. Reflecting upon their total body of work, AOA artists were able to examine the similarities and differences found in their art—in terms of subject matter, materials, and theme—and in the process, discover their individual style. Ann created a list of questions for instructors to reference during these discussions that incorporated some close-ended inquiries such as, "What did you use to make this piece? What is this painting (or sculpture, etc.) of?" (see Appendix F). These questions were straightforward in nature, asking participants for clear answers, and therefore helped to build their confidence in this unfamiliar process. Instructors next asked open-ended questions, "Why did you choose this subject/subject matter? What was your inspiration?" which involved artists in higher-order thinking, as they were asked to evaluate and analyze the choices involved in their artistic process (see Appendix F). During the critique, instructors asked artists to discuss some of the other art objects in the gallery, as well as the artists who created them. This conversation would begin as simple identification of the different materials and processes employed by artists and the subject matter they depicted, and would often expand into an analytical evaluation by participants of how artists can use materials and subject matter to different effects. This one-on-one critique with an instructor enabled participants to contemplate their artwork as a whole and encouraged them to confidently articulate their individual artistic style. Additionally, this discourse prepared artists to confidently discuss their work with members of the public.

These critical conversations were also used to provide participants with vocational training, and focused on increasing their financial literacy and understanding of retail situations. Using role-play, participants acted as gallery attendants, providing information about the studio and describing artwork to instructors who played prospective buyers. Artists spoke about their work, discussing the materials and techniques utilized, and were asked to price their art. Instructors would ask, "Which of your paintings is most valuable? What about this piece makes it more valuable?" (see Appendix F). Participants were encouraged to consider the relationship between financial worth and their investment in the work—was the piece exceptionally large, did it require extra time to complete, or depict subject matter that was particularly significant to them? And how did these characteristics affect their appraisal of the work? This process of analysis and evaluation fostered critical thinking skills and actively engaged AOA artists in learning about the lives and practices of working artists. It was additionally important to help participants cultivate money handling and financial literacy skills, as these were equally significant to their development as both artists and individuals. AOA artists completed a mock sale in the gallery, where they took money, made change, and printed a receipt, which provided them with practical retail experiences that could be used in their daily activities outside the studio.

In order to create a meaningful learning environment I felt it was important for AOA instructors to utilize the instructional tools presented by Ludins-Katz and Katz (1987)—illustrative materials, sequential learning, and finished products—in ways that promoted the goals of authentic instruction and constructivist approaches to education. These pedagogies aimed to cultivate real-world skills through the analysis, interpretation, and production of art, and provided a theoretical foundation to organize AOA lesson units. The instructional tools promoted by Ludins-Katz and Katz (1987) enabled art

history, aesthetics, and criticism to be introduced into the studio in a practical and approachable manner. Furthermore, these components provided thematic links between instruction and participants' lives outside the studio, which positioned learning as an active and student-lead endeavor. The self-determination and choice involved in constructing new knowledge were powerful motivating factors for AOA learners, and supported both their social and personal development. I believed creating lessons that utilized illustrative materials, sequential learning, and exhibited finished products to be the practical means of employing authentic and constructivist learning frameworks. The successful integration of these theoretical and practical ideas into a unified curriculum cultivated inspiring instruction and meaningful learning in the AOA studio.

REFLECTION AND EVALUATION

It was not possible to determine the full impact the curriculum had on the AOA environment, as that would have involved a more extensive longitudinal study. Furthermore, evaluation was not the primary aim of my study; I wanted to know how to promote meaningful learning within the AOA studio. And yet, an aspect of answering this question was determining if meaningful learning was indeed present, which warranted a process of reflection. The curriculum was still very fresh and new for the artists, so I was not expecting to observe any substantial changes in their artwork. Instead, I was looking for more subtle changes, particularly in behavior.

During one class time a group of children from a local school visited the studio, and four AOA artists were asked to present their artwork to the group in the Cool Family Gallery. I will admit that I was a bit nervous initially, fearing that the artists would freeze up at the prospect of speaking to the group. However, I realized that the one-on-one critiques and mock gallery talks supported by the curriculum had instilled a newfound

confidence in these artists, and successfully prepared them to discuss their work with the public. The artists spoke assertively to the children about the techniques, materials, and subject matters used in their work, and answered each question posed by the group. I can confidently say that the artists as well as the children learned a great deal from this experience, and the instructors and I were equally impressed by the artists' performance in this situation. They faced this public speaking challenge with grace and confidence, and established themselves as true artists.

I hoped that introducing artistic challenges would generate similar changes in artists, particularly eradicating the apathetic and anxious manners I noted during my first six months with the studio. As previously mentioned, I believed the completely open format of the studio to be problematic for many artists, as they were not pushed to create work outside their comfort zone. Emelia and Justin were two of the artists I identified as falling into a repetitive pattern with their artwork. I noted that during the initial lessons, both artists continued to produce work similar to what they had previously done, but as the lessons progressed they began to display some new growth. The unit on shading presented a challenge for Emelia's flat, two-dimensional drawing, as she was encouraged to represent objects from various points of view and with appropriate shadows. Emelia struggled at first with the initial challenge of this lesson, but upon acquisition of the appropriate skills needed to express the third dimension she was elated, and this excitement was evident in the visible depth of her new images. This progress was meaningful because it provided Emelia with another way in which to illustrate her perception of the world. She was not expected to completely do away with her individual style, but was instead encouraged to incorporate these new skills into her artistic approach.

Justin also had a distinct, individual style. He produced bold, abstract paintings with colorful swatches of color (see Photograph 5). Justin also fell into redundancy with his artwork, as he did not move away from the abstract format. I never once saw Justin incorporate any pictorial or representational objects into his pieces, so I was intrigued to observe his practice in the "Gesture" and "Shading" units. The drawings he created during the Figure Drawing and Introduction to Shading lessons were relatively simple, and yet displayed recognizable images of faces and even objects with basic shading (see Photograph 7). These drawings were huge steps for Justin's artistic practice. Although he usually resumed his abstract work during the second half of class, when artists worked on whatever they wanted, he did begin to include some recognizable shapes into his swatches of color. This subtle change in his work illustrated that the lessons were indeed helping to build Justin's skill set. Even though Justin's progress was perhaps evolving at a slower pace than that of his peers, his growth was nevertheless important for the instructors to acknowledge and celebrate.

It was essential during the reflective process to analyze the effects of each lesson on an individual basis, from one artist to another. If instructors and I measured the success of a unit by comparing the artwork or progress of one artist against another the results would be skewed, as the progress of those with less skill would most likely be overlooked. To this end, I created a reflective document for instructors to use that would enable them to keep progress notes on each artist throughout the units of instruction (see Appendix G). The form recorded the instructional plan for each lesson: the materials, discussion questions, and overarching concepts utilized. It also provided visible reminders to the instructors of the larger goals and purposes of their teaching, which came in the form of specific skills and concepts (closed-ended objectives) and the application of these skills and concepts (open-ended objectives). I also wanted the

document to contain the words used in the flow theory graph—flow, control, relaxation, boredom, apathy, worry, and anxiety (see Illustration 2)—which I felt would help instructors identify the state of engagement displayed by an artist during each lesson. Instructors recorded how each artist performed during the lesson, taking note of those who successfully grasped concepts; "Tara had a successful day with the lesson. She made good use of the charcoal and perspective, and grasped the idea of shape, form, and size," as well as those who needed further instruction; "Alex contributed to the discussion [but]…. Perspective seemed to be a little bit of a confusion and the tambourine was much larger than the other objects" (quoted in Appendix G).

It was my hope that these progress notes could be utilized in the future to adjust the lessons and instructional techniques to encourage progress with each individual artist, incorporating extra challenges for those with higher abilities and slowing down the process for those without. For instance, it was useful to see the benefit of providing artists who successfully grasped lesson concepts, like Tara, with more complex processes, such as urging her to increase detail or use different materials in her drawing. Similarly, it was a positive step to present artists who required further instruction, like Alex, with more simplified variations of the lesson, such as displaying still life scenes with only two objects so he could more easily distinguish spatial relationships. Lessons in the AOA studio needed to be flexible enough to address the individual needs of the artists, and allow for distinct styles and practices to abide, while still remaining sufficiently structured in order to promote artistic growth. Reflection was a key element in developing a suitable balance between flexibility and structure in the AOA environment, as well as enabling the instructors to continue creating meaningful learning in the future.

FUTURE BENEFITS

As I prepared to leave the AOA studio at the end of my extended internship, I hoped that the meaningful learning and authentic curriculum the instructors and I created would not leave with me. I had observed significant growth in both the participants and instructors during my time in the studio, and I did not want to see the program fall back into its previous state. It was therefore important for me to ensure that instructors could utilize the concepts as well as devices I introduced to promote meaningful learning in future studio endeavors. I was excited to hear that Ann and Andrew had decided to utilize the critiques and gallery conversations in the creation of individual artist biographies. They expanded the initial critique questions to include more evaluation and analysis, "What is your favorite media to work with...What inspires you...What do you like about making art?" (see Appendix H). The questionnaire also incorporated more personal questions relating to the to artists' lives outside the studio, "What do you like to do outside of class...In what way are you most talented?" (see Appendix H). These artist biographies were added to the programs' website, where each artist had an individual page showcasing their artwork and detailed biography (Arc of the Arts Studio & Gallery, n.d.). This information would also be utilized in grant proposals and promotional materials for AOA and the Arc of the Capital Area, in general. Most importantly however, this questionnaire displayed to me that Ann and the instructors appreciated the importance of supporting authentic learning by relating art-making to the participants' lives outside the studio.

Another adaptation the instructors made was adjusting the unit progress notes to more adequately fit their needs (see Appendix I). The reorganized form detailed how a single artist progressed through each lesson of a unit, and included a checklist for the specific skills and concepts instructors wanted the participants to achieve. Instructors

generalized objectives across the four units we co-created, and utilizing a scale of 1 to 3, rated artists according to their attentiveness, understanding, participation, and use of materials during each lesson. Although I was disappointed with the eventual removal of the flow theory terms on the progress note page, I understood how these might have complicated the reflection process for instructors, instead of helping them. However, the fact that instructors included a lesson objective based on attentiveness illustrated to me that the basic concept of flow theory, as a way to determine engagement, was nevertheless being represented in the studio. There was also a space for final assessment, where instructors could evaluate a participants' overall progress during the unit. It was encouraging to see instructors fully integrate progress notes and lesson plans into their instruction, as this was a sign that purposeful curriculum, and its support of meaningful learning, was to become an integral part of the program.

Furthermore, I observed that embracing this curriculum enabled the studio to represent itself in a newfound way to the public: as that of a certified community-based art program. My initial concerns with the AOA program boiled down to the fact that I did not believe the studio had a guiding principle directing their instruction and did not perceive art-making to be the main focus of the program. Therefore, I could not originally identify the studio as an "educationally effective community art center" (Simmons III, 1998, p. 182). However, returning to this definition, as presented by Simmons III (1998), I found that AOA now embodied attributes that situated it in this category:

> Espouse and engage the power of art to transform and/or articulate personal identities, cultivate strong relationships among center constituents (teachers and students), know and carefully attend to the interests and needs of the communities they serve, provide enduring oases for students and families, carefully attend to their own process of development and transformation. (pp. 182-184)

Through its programmatic metamorphosis, AOA created an environment that was a significant resource, both artistically and socially, for adults with disabilities and their families. It addressed the educational needs of an underrepresented community by encouraging higher order thinking skills, promoting the construction of knowledge through discovery of new artists and techniques, and closely connecting art instruction to participants' real-lives. The relationships fostered between participants, instructors, and staff members were life long and extended beyond the studio environment. And finally, the studio nurtured the articulation of artists' personal identities, while maintaining its own identity as a relevant community-based art center. AOA achieved this significant goal through making and discussing art in an authentic and meaningful manner.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The AOA curriculum was a collaboration between myself and staff members, and was created through the combination of constructivist and authentic learning approaches and the practical instructional examples presented by Ludins-Katz and Katz (1987). Each lesson unit possessed objectives and goals meant to instill important skills and concepts in participants, as well as provide them with the artistic manner to meaningfully express themselves through these newfound skills. Instruction was student-centered and connected to participants' lives outside the studio environment. Lessons were designed to be flexible, so that appropriate challenges could be created to fit the needs of various skill and ability levels. Reflection and evaluation were essential components of the AOA curriculum, as these processes were needed to determine if meaningful teaching and learning were indeed present in the studio. Evaluation took the form of adapting concepts and instructional techniques to more adequately fit the needs and goals of the staff and artists in the studio. Instituting instructional changes, in the form of structured

curriculum, as well as altering the attitudes of both participants and staff to embrace authentic teaching and learning, established AOA as a meaningful and significant community-based art center.

Chapter 7: Conclusions

Summary of Research

The purpose of this study was to investigate and better understand how meaningful learning for adults with disabilities at a non-profit, community-based art center may occur. My definition of meaningful learning was the presence of instructional strategies and art-making approaches that promoted improved quality or purpose in the lives of learners. The motivation for this research was my experience working as an intern at The Arc of the Arts Studio and Gallery (AOA) in Austin, Texas. My prolonged interaction with this organization resulted in a pronounced interest in the quality and organization of art education for people with disabilities, particularly due to the unfortunate lack of substantial scholarly interest in the subject. Previous academic literature chiefly rested upon children with disabilities and their experiences within the K-12 school environment, which resulted in a systematic disregard of additional populations in the disability community, and the diverse locations wherein their art education exists.

I found the most rich yet direct way to address and answer my central research question was to combine an account of my time at the AOA studio with a more formal description of the site, utilizing narrative analysis and case study research methods. I began my description with a detailed narrative of my initial interactions with learners within the studio, and incorporated participant observation, visual documentation of artwork created in the studio, as well as reflective observations of my personal interaction with staff members and studio participants. I analyzed the fundamentals of the studio and program structure, making note of the artistic background of staff members, the format of studio time, and instructional influences enacted in the studio. My narrative of the program raised questions related to the instructional foundation of the studio, as well as

issues concerning the expectations of both participants and staff members. I found a lack of artistic rigor in the AOA studio, and a general sense of apathy and redundancy in participants' art production. I believed the instructional focus of the program had shifted away from promoting artistic growth in the participant artists, which is needed for an effective community-based art center.

To address these perceived problems, I set out to investigate art centers from around the country that similarly provided art instruction to people with disabilities. My goal was to determine positive organizational characteristics of these locations, and consider how they compared to AOA. I found that successful long term programs connected art-making to important life-skills—like concentration, decision making, and cooperation—and utilized this art-for-life connection as a clear goal to direct their program and its instruction. The concept these art centers promoted of connecting art to life was reminiscent of authentic and constructivist learning theories in art education, which supported artistic growth as an integral part of life. This information lead me to investigate how integrating the instructional frameworks presented by authentic instruction and constructivism could promote meaningful learning in the AOA program, and provide guiding principles that the studio could base its instruction upon.

My next step was to perform in-depth research into these approaches to art education and determine how they addressed the characteristics of meaningful learning and higher-order thinking—a process that leads to meaningful learning. The purpose of my research into these areas was to provide theoretical support for the problems I saw in AOA's programming, as well as to assist in my evaluation of the changes that could and should occur in the studio in order to raise the level of learning in the environment. As previously mentioned, these investigations illustrated that meaningful learning most readily occurs when art-making is student-centered and closely connected to participants'

real-life practices and experiences outside the studio setting. These educational concepts are employed in the authentic instruction framework, which additionally supports the exploration of discipline-based art practices in instruction—art production, art history, aesthetics, and art criticism—as each holds its own unique insights into the substance of art (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005; Newmann & Wehlage, 1993). Study of these practices provided AOA artists with a larger understanding of the full range of the properties, uses, and values of art, and a more comprehensive understanding of the importance art held for their lives outside the studio. Additionally, I found that authentic instruction connected art-making to the real-life experiences of participants, and furthermore directed learners to actively build and construct their own knowledge of these connections during the learning process. Tapping into the collective experiences of participants through collaborative projects was a method to promote this constructivist knowledge building, as was creating cognitive challenges that motivated participants beyond the lower mental methods of simply naming, describing, and memorizing facts. Stimulating artists to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate knowledge in newfound ways supported higher-level cognition and increased the participants' ability to discover their own connections to the artistic process of making and discussing art. Art-for-life and discipline-based inquiry are not mutually exclusive approaches to art education, and can in fact support similar learning objectives. Elevating the focus of art production beyond the acquisition of concrete skills enables learners to utilize artistic techniques in personal meaning-making endeavors, which aligns with the authentic instruction goal of producing social knowledge through hands-on experiences. Furthermore, the skills provided by discipline-based practices, particularly art criticism and aesthetics, can support learners' comprehension of how art translates into the larger social context, which additionally supports the art-for-life concentration.

Integrating disciplined-based inquiry, real-world connections, and the construction of knowledge into a structured curriculum promoted the capacity for creative expression and meaningful learning to occur in the learning environment. The theoretical research I reviewed to reach these conclusions was written with typically-developing individuals in mind, so my next charge in the research process was finding the means to translate the ideas promoted in authentic instruction and constructivist learning into an environment for people with disabilities.

To my good fortune I came across a book, *Freedom to Create,* written by Ludins-Katz and Katz (1987), founders of two established art centers for people with disabilities in California. The authors' pedagogy advocated similar ideals to that of authentic instruction, acknowledging the expansive power of art in the lives of this population. Ludins-Katz and Katz (1987) gave practical examples for organizing instruction to stimulate creativity in the art center: utilizing illustrative materials in lessons (both historical and contemporary visual art), promoting sequential learning by providing connections between lessons, and publicly displaying participants' finished art products. At this point in my investigation into the practical means of instituting meaningful instruction, I came across flow theory, which observed that a motivating factor of creativity is the quality of experience felt by individuals when involved in an activity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, 1996, 1997). Psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (1996) further explained that the most enjoyable experiences—flow experiences—often involved "difficult activities that stretched the person's capacity and involved an element of novelty and discovery" (p. 110). This philosophy was intimately connected to answering my central research question, as it addressed the process of creating a meaningful moment of learning. I found the ideas of Ludins-Katz and Katz (1987) to align with this sentiment, as they embedded the process of discovery in the follow-up activities of their

instruction. They encouraged instructors to create artistic challenges by adding variety and complexity to the lessons that followed. Ludins-Katz and Katz (1987) maintained the importance of flexibility in instruction, so as to complement all learning styles, and Csikszentmihalyi (1990, 1996, 1997) echoed this idea with his declaration of balancing challenges with appropriate skill levels in the creation of an optimal flow experience.

The collection of knowledge accumulated from investigating authentic instruction, constructivism, flow theory, and the writing of Ludins-Katz and Katz (1987) provided the desired framework I needed to design curriculum and meaningful arts instruction for the AOA environment. My goal was to design instruction that cultivated artistic growth and culminated in meaningful learning. This goal was separated into closed and open-ended objectives. Closed-ended objectives encompassed skills and concepts I wished to see artists complete: investigating new art materials; viewing contemporary, historical, and culturally diverse artwork; and engaging in critical conversations and discussions about art. The open-ended objectives involved artists using the previously learned skills and concepts to express themselves meaningfully in their art: overcoming artistic challenges through the manipulation of materials and information in new and diverse ways; relating new materials, outside artists, and concepts to real-world and life-centered issues; and connecting the creative process of art-making to their lives outside the studio environment. I believed that integrating these practical and conceptual skills into a unified curriculum would successfully cultivate meaningful learning in the AOA environment. Instructors incorporated my closed-ended objectives into the studio by diversifying the art materials used in their instruction, providing illustrative materials as inspiration and lesson examples, and integrating one-on-one critiques with artists once they completed a portfolio of work. As for the open-ended objectives, instructors created artistic challenges for participants that could only be

accomplished through mastery of materials and comprehension of previous concepts (for example moving from shading two-dimensional objects into three-dimensional objects). Furthermore, the exercises in art criticism and one-on-one critiques were related to the outside world as artists used these concepts in gallery talks during public exhibitions, and the critique questions were expanded to create artist biographies housed on the program's website.

THE DISCOVERY PROCESS

Although I began my research with a central focus and a single question, I discovered through the process that my study truly involved a twofold investigation: determining the components of meaningful learning, and exploring how to implement these ideas in a community-based setting for people with disabilities. Unbeknownst to me at the beginning of this study, my description of meaningful learning—the presence of instructional strategies and art-making approaches that promoted increased quality or purpose in the lives of students—was unfortunately vague. This ambiguity posed a problem since this concept was central to my research question. As a result, there was some frustration in the early stage of my research, as I rather unproductively scrutinized educational literature and the AOA studio for the general instructional characteristics of "quality" and "purpose." This frustration was further compounded by the lack of scholarly research concerning the subject of art education for adults with disabilities in a community location. I could not find research supporting my search, and so asked myself the question: does the lack of literature on my subject mean that it is insignificant to the field? Despite this nagging question, I could not ignore the feeling that the AOA studio was lacking something important in its instruction. My instincts told me that this unidentifiable "something" did indeed need to be addressed through further investigation,

and might even uncover new knowledge that could advance the field of art education. This factor led me to survey the programmatic structure of similar organizations around the country, which illustrated that arts instruction for people with disabilities was being related to important life-skills (something AOA was not systematically doing). This investigation helped to improve upon my understanding of the characteristics I was looking for in meaningful learning: I believed arts instruction for people with disabilities should coincide with participants' general education, as opposed to existing separately. Information provided by these art centers prompted my reading of authentic instruction and constructivist theory, which supported the development of real-life skills through instruction in art. These theoretical frameworks effectively defined the sought after features of "quality" and "purpose" I so eagerly searched for in my attempt to discern meaningful learning. This literature identified the purpose of learning as the active process of connecting art instruction to the life experiences of learners. A prime example of this instructional connection to real-life experiences was the AOA lesson on "Paradise" (see Appendix J). This lesson centered on the idea of paradise and what it meant to each individual artist, and engaged participants in describing their perception of this ideal through visual means. Additionally, the instructional units on "Gesture Drawing" and "Shading" enabled AOA artists to illustrate scenes that naturally occurred in their daily lives in more visually accurate ways. The quality, or characteristics, needed to cultivate this process of connecting art instruction to the life experiences of learners was found through exploration of discipline-based art practices, relation of art-making activities to participants' lives outside the studio, and encouragement of learners to construct their own meaning and understanding of art as it connected to their lives outside the studio. Through this research I successfully classified the instructional characteristics

I found to be essential in creating meaningful learning, thus answering the first component of my research question.

In order to fully understand how to create and implement meaningful learning in a community-based art center I needed to incorporate practice as much as theory in order to acquire a more balanced understanding of information gained during the investigation of my central question. The process of translating the theoretical foundations of authentic instruction and constructivism into practical lessons for the AOA studio was more difficult than I originally expected, and involved much trial and error as I continually searched for ways to adequately prepare an open-format studio for structured, theory-based curriculum. Initially, I believed that simply presenting instructors with the goals of authentic instruction and the practical lesson examples provided by Ludins-Katz and Katz (1987) would result in the natural occurrence of meaningful learning. However, I came to realize that although the Program Director and instructors aligned with the larger goals set forth by authentic instruction and constructivism, the significance of some of the specific instructional strategies was lost to them. In particular, I noticed that the program's instruction continued to center on the exploration of materials and processes, with little regard for the larger social function art held for participants. Instructors pursued more formal lesson topics like shading and abstraction, and did not delve into how these skills and concepts could empower artists to significantly express larger thoughts and ideas in their work.

Additionally, there was a continued lack of collaboration and cooperative learning within the studio; instructors did not design lessons that encouraged artists to work together and communally investigate ideas through the sharing of experiences. Participants were taught skills as a group, but explored them through individual projects. My perception was that instructors did not necessarily under-value collaboration, but

rather continued to participate in the studio model of learning that perpetuated individualized instruction. Maintaining separate projects limited the amount of idea sharing that occurred between artists, as participants only witnessed their own creative process, and thus could not learn from the experiences of their peers. By promoting this individualized learning, the AOA studio missed the opportunity to emphasize the significance of collaboration as an important developmental and artistic skill. This lack of cooperative learning did not encourage participants to discuss their artwork in relation to the group or even the larger world, which negatively affected the amount of substantial conversation and discussion present in the studio.

I do not believe the AOA program intentionally disregarded these concepts, rather they did not fully recognize their potential benefits and placement in the studio. In reality, the problem existed in my passive transmission of knowledge to the staff. I did not adequately relate the key concepts and skills involved in authentic instruction to the lives of instructors, which meant they could not fully appreciate the significance these components contributed to promoting meaningful learning within the environment. I discovered through my research that creating meaningful learning was a process similar to constructing a studio lesson plan. In this metaphor, the foundational components of meaningful learning—discipline-based inquiry, creating real-world connections, and the construction of knowledge—each existed as a separate instructional element, similar to the AOA units of instruction that were focused on shading or abstraction. To generally understand shading, one must first learn the concept of shadow and its relation to light, as well as master the technical skill of cross hatching, which is necessary to illustrate the shadow. Each component of meaningful learning similarly included its own set of skills and concepts that needed to be individually addressed with instructors before it could be meaningfully applied in the studio. Utilizing discipline-based inquiry in the studio

required instructors to employ their own experiences with art production, art history, aesthetics, and art criticism to create interesting and varied activities. Furthermore, it was necessary for instructors to reflect upon the connectedness their own artwork had to real-world themes and issues, and integrate these concepts into their instruction. And finally, AOA instructors needed to construct their own knowledge of building meaningful curriculum, by sharing lesson and activity ideas, as well as creating a collective understanding of what they wanted their instruction to reflect. I let myself get caught up in telling the studio how their lessons should look and what they ought to incorporate, without realizing how counterproductive this passive transmission of knowledge was to the studio. Authentic instruction is an active and experiential process that requires the correlation of many components. By under-emphasizing the importance of the instructors' relationships to these instructional elements, I was attempting to reach the end goal of meaningful learning without developing the supporting elements to help attain this standard along the way. It would be as if instructors skipped the early lessons on non-representational drawing and expected Surrealism to be understood.

I found the investigation into my central research question to resemble some of the learning components I sought to assimilate into the studio. My study challenged me and involved a process of discovery, as I continually searched for thematic correlations in educational literature and art center structures that could provide relevant information to my topic. I was actively constructing new knowledge, for myself and for the field of art education, due to the limited information concerning my topic. Furthermore, I was learning alongside participants and staff, and as a result, was able to maintain an amount of flexibility in my study by incorporating changes as they emerged. I believe the similarity my study had to the process of creating meaningful learning positively contributed to my research, because I could more clearly understand the importance of

novelty, discovery, and knowledge building in the learning process for both AOA participants and staff members. These elements enabled me to successfully answer my central research question and determine how to create meaningful learning for adults with disabilities at a community-based art center.

In authentic instruction, or art-for-life, art education has a connection to the world beyond the instructional context, and enables learners to construct knowledge and meaning about life from their hands-on experiences with the various disciplines of art (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005). Through the research involved in this study it is seen that art-for-life is an attainable goal for learners of all abilities.

FUTURE RESEARCH POSSIBILITIES

My investigation into the arena of meaningful learning for people with disabilities introduced the opportunity for future research, as many questions emerged that were not answered. It would be interesting to return to the AOA studio once a significant amount of curriculum had been implemented, and evaluate the influence this programming had on participants' overall learning and artistic development. In order to gain a complete understanding of how the studio developed in relation to this instruction, one would need to closely examine individual artists' progress notes, review the breakdown of each lesson plan, and interview both instructors and participants for their assessment of the lessons. The results of this type of study would provide insight into how curriculum more acutely affects participants' development and lives.

Another research possibility involves utilizing Csikszentmihalyi's (1990, 1996, 1997) flow theory as a lens to evaluate the AOA curriculum. At the end of each day, instructors could utilize the flow theory graph (see Illustration 2) to indicate the behavior(s) each artist exhibited throughout the lesson. Once a number of lessons were

evaluated in this manner, each artist's information could be separated into lessons that encouraged positive flow behavior and negative flow behavior. The lessons that promoted each behavior could be analyzed in terms of what forms of instruction were employed, for example use of illustrative materials, discussion questions, and artistic practices. This research would involve a more complicated analysis process because instructors would need to receive comprehensive education regarding Csikszentmihalyi's theory in order to recognize the behavioral characteristics each participant displayed. The information uncovered during this study could determine the lesson topics and forms of instruction that advocated flow behavior in artists (and similarly those that did not), which would assist instructors in designing more meaningful instruction in the studio. Additionally, instructors could use this information to create specific challenges for artists that would not only promote flow behavior, but raise the artist's skill level as well.

Further investigation is needed into the topic of creating meaningful learning for people with disabilities at a community art location. I have provided two research possibilities that would explore this subject to a greater extent while equally benefiting the AOA studio as well as the general field of art education.

BENEFITS TO THE FIELD OF ART EDUCATION

I cannot begin to express how thankful I am to have performed this research. I assisted an organization to expand its programming and educate its instructors, thus enlarging my own knowledge of art education, and most importantly, stimulating artistic growth in learners. Yet beyond personal reasons, I am pleased with the amount of relevant knowledge I contributed to the fields of art education and disability studies through this research. Arts instruction for people with disabilities, particularly adults, has been systematically overlooked in art education literature, as have community-based art

centers. This is an unfortunate occurrence since the research in this study illustrates that designing meaningful curriculum for people with disabilities in a community setting is extremely similar, if not identical, to preparing meaningful curriculum for typically developing students in a K-12, college, or museum setting. The goals, objectives, and curricular components are equivalent; it is the application method that changes. Lesson themes were segmented into smaller units and given more time to develop in the AOA environment, and instructional goals and objectives were simplified. Schools, colleges, and museums could learn from the instructional format implemented by AOA, both in terms of simplifying goals and utilizing their instructional techniques. The open-ended component of the AOA studio could also benefit schools and museums by encouraging students to engage in art-making activities in an individual way, according to their particular level of skill, which would help learners retain a clear level of ownership over their individual practice. Additionally, integrating flow theory as an evaluation method is a way for teachers and museum educators to gauge student engagement in lessons.

On a larger level, the information gathered during my research helped illustrate that art education is an integral part of the social development of people with disabilities. Oftentimes, the creation of a visual art product is one of the few, or perhaps the only, means for a person with a disability to outwardly manifest their inner feelings and reactions to the world around them, as well as articulate how the world reacts to them (Ludins-Katz & Katz, 1987). It is therefore important to study the environments that provide creative outlets for this population, and evaluate their instructional techniques, in order to determine the best means of stimulating and encouraging these learners to explore new areas of expression and artistry. The limited amount of academic literature regarding this subject has contributed to the marginalization of the disability population in educational settings and society as a whole. In order to combat this situation, the

quality and experience of art education for people with disabilities, and the diverse locations it exists within, must be brought to the forefront of cultural discourse. Empowering this population to meaningfully express their life experiences through art will cultivate significant artistic and social growth within individuals, and perhaps more importantly, effectively situate the disability community as an integral part of the art world. It is hoped that in the future, the artistic abilities of this population will significantly outweigh and outshine their perceived disabilities.

Appendices

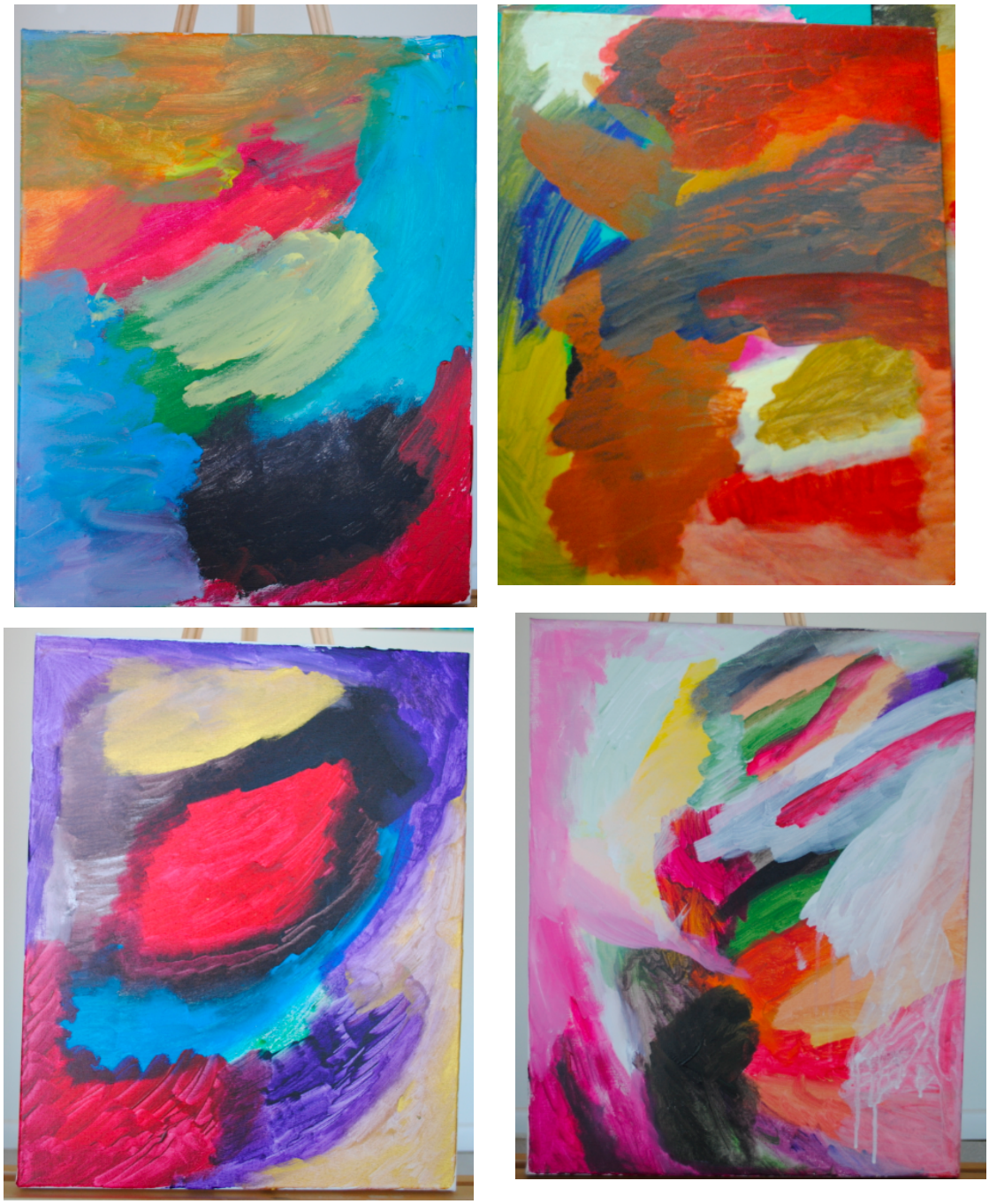
APPENDIX A: PHOTOGRAPHS

Photograph 1: Layout of the Arc of the Arts studio.

Photograph 2: Justin's reference piles.

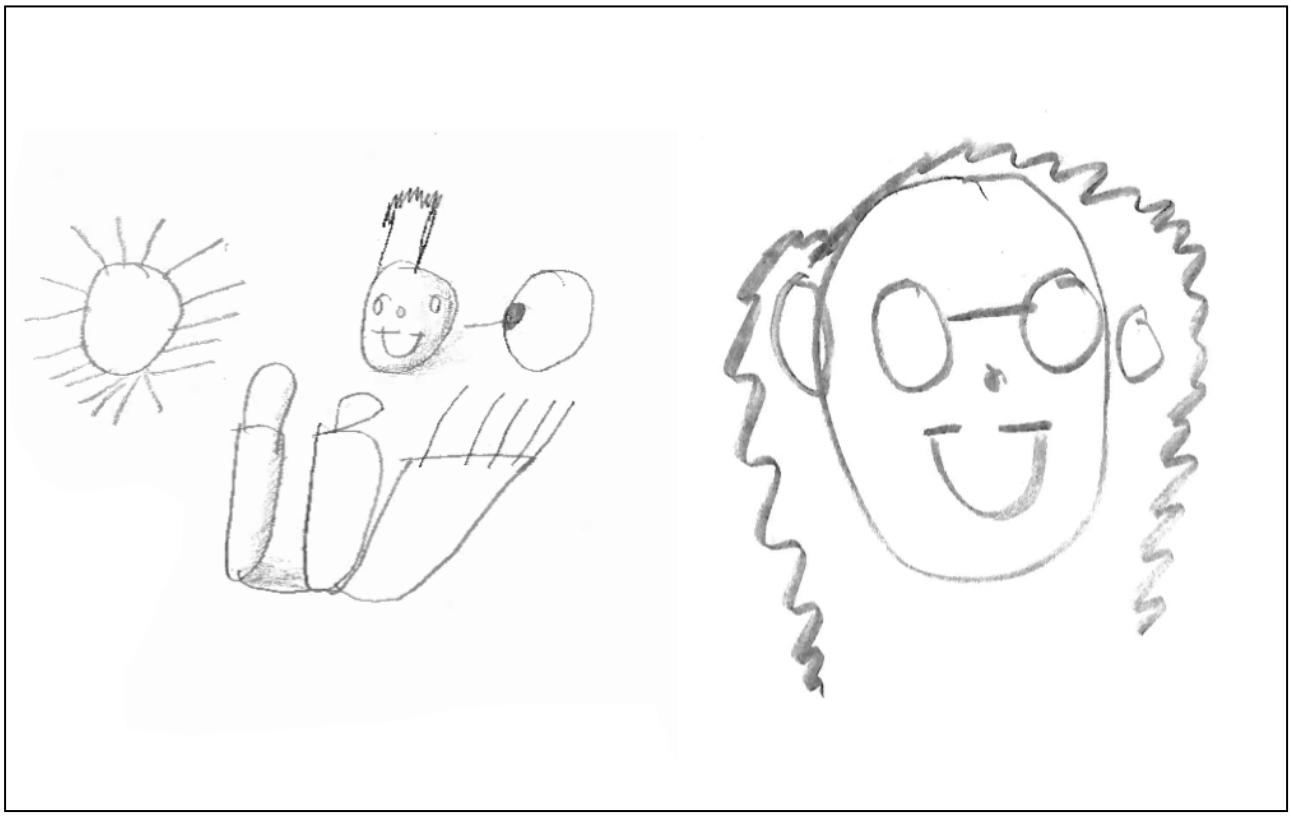
Photograph 3: Studio check-in time.

Photograph 4: Collection of Emelia's artwork.



Photograph 5: Collection of Justin's abstract artwork.

Photograph 6: Andrew teaching Impressionism to the studio.



Photograph 7: Justin's representational drawing.

APPENDIX B: ART CENTERS PROVIDING SERVICES TO ADULTS WITH DISABILITIES.

ArcWorks Center for the Arts
22 Foster St., Peabody, MA
Website: arcworksns.org
Mission: To provide opportunities for individuals with disabilities to explore and discover their creative abilities, to express themselves through the arts and to provide opportunities that enable their artistic voice to be heard by an ever-expanding community.
Goals: Identify, motivate and enable artists and artisans to create their work. Foster relationships between art communities and artists. Assist member artists in the promotion, distribution and sale of their work.

The Arts of Life
2010 W. Carroll Ave., Chicago, IL 60612
Website: artsoflife.org
Mission Statement: We are people with and without disabilities creating an artistic culture to realize our full potential.
Quality Statement: The Arts of Life, Inc. is committed to providing high quality, innovative services for developmentally disabled adults. The studio focuses on its artists' needs and strives to exceed expectations. The Arts of Life will continue to be characterized by both dedication to its artists and excellence in the field of developmental disabilities. Core values that guide collaborative work: 1. promoting self-respect; 2. inspiring artistic expression; 3. building community; 4. developing independence.

Creative Growth
355 24th St., Oakland, CA 94612
Website: creativegrowth.org
Mission Statement: Creative Growth Art Center serves adult artists with developmental, mental and physical disabilities, providing a professional studio environment for artistic development, gallery exhibition and representation and a social atmosphere among peers.

Creativity Explored
[Founded by Florence Ludins-Katz and Elias Katz in 1983]
3245 16th St., San Francisco, CA 94103
Website: creativityexplored.org
Mission: Creativity Explored advances the value and diversity of artistic expression. We provide artists with developmental disabilities the means to create, exhibit, and sell their art in our studios and gallery, and around the world.
Commitment: We are committed to supporting people with developmental disabilities in their quest to become working artists, and to promote their work as an emerging and increasingly important contribution to the contemporary art world.

Purpose: CE exists to provide people with developmental disabilities the opportunity to express themselves through the creation of art. Additionally, we provide studio artists the opportunity to earn income from the sale of their artwork and to pursue a livelihood as a visual artist to the fullest extent possible A key focus of CE's services is to support those individuals with developmental disabilities who wish to become self-employed artists in creating and operating fully viable and profitable businesses.

Exceptional Children's Foundation Art Center
8740 Washington Boulevard.
Culver City, CA 90232
Website: www.ecfartcenter.com/
Description: One program offered by The Exceptional Children's Foundation is the Art Center. Established in 1968, the Art Center has provided program participants with professional art training, studio facilities and a nurturing artistic environment. The Center also offers instruction in independent living skills, recreation and adult education. Participants range in age from 18 to 65. Over the years, the Art Center program has become nationally recognized for leadership in demonstrating that individuals with developmental disabilities have the ability to produce fine art.

Gateway Arts
60-62 Harvard St.
Brookline, MA 02445
Website: www.gatewayarts.org/index.cfm
Description: Gateway Arts is filled with colorful crafts, contemplative and whimsical paintings and over 95 talented artists with disabilities learning a vocation while realizing their dreams. This unique, non-profit service includes the Studio Program, The Gateway Crafts Store, and The Gateway Gallery.

National Institute of Art and Disabilities (NIAD)
[Founded by Florence Ludins-Katz and Elias Katz in 1982]
551 23rd Street
Richmond, CA 94804
Website: http://www.niadart.org
Description: NIAD's mission is to provide an art program for people with disabilities that promotes creativity, independence, dignity and community integration. Programs include the visual arts, such as painting and drawing, ceramics, multimedia, fiber arts, some language arts, and independent living skills. The staff is composed of professional, working artists. In addition to the studio there is an art gallery and gift store and a web site with an on-line gallery.

Paint a Miracle
210 W. University Dr., Ste 2
Rochester, MI 48307

Website: www.paintamiracle.org
Mission: The mission of Paint a Miracle is to create places, programs and possibilities for those of us with disabilities and other challenges to explore the arts in an atmosphere of hope, growth and encouragement. We believe that by engaging in the arts and discovering our inherent sense of creative expression, we are able to respond more effectively to our challenges, create personal peace and live fuller lives.

Passion Works Studio
21 S. Campbell Street
Athens, OH 45701
Website: www.passionworks.org
Description: Passion Works Studio supports collaborations between artists with and without developmental disabilities. The spirit of partnership and shared vision of Passion Works Studio represents the very best in collaborative, community arts. The creative process at Passion Works places Passion Work Artists together with Resident and Visiting artists to create outstanding and beautiful works of art and art products.

Pure Vision Arts
114 West 17th Street, 3rd Floor
New York City, NY 10011
Website: www.purevisionarts.org
Description: Pure Vision Arts (PVA) is Manhattan's only studio and exhibition space for beginning, emerging and established artists with autism and other developmental disabilities.

St. Madeleine Sophie's Center & Sophie's Gallery
2119 E. Madison Ave.
El Cajon, CA 92019
Website: www.stmsc.org
Description: Founded in 1966, SMSC offers comprehensive programs that serve developmentally disabled adults. Our focus is on functional skills required for self-advocacy, community integration, employment and self-care. Sophie's Art Gallery, a program of St. Madeleine Sophie's Center serves 150 adults with developmental disabilities. Sophie's was designed as a partnership of artists, gallery, and community. As such, student's art is exhibited in the community at local business, high schools, libraries, art shows and events. Developing these partnerships represents an important commitment to our student's futures and an important investment in our communities.

Suzie Cappa Art Center
3603 Range Road
Rapid City, SD 57702
Website: www.bhws.com

Description: The Suzie Cappa Art Center is a nonprofit art studio, established in Dec. 2001, where artists with all abilities create, exhibit, and sell their work and participate in music, theatre and dance. Our mission is to provide a supportive, inspiring environment where artists can explore their creativity. It is an inspirational place that encourages independence and artistic freedom, a place where one can enjoy the creative process and develop artistically in a supportive atmosphere. Creative expression fosters personal growth and self - esteem. Recognition of creative efforts by others gives the artist a feeling of worth that carries over into all areas of his/her life.

APPENDIX C: UNIT ON GESTURE DRAWING 2.1 – 2.4

Unit	Gesture Drawing 2.1
Topic	Brief Observation Still Life
Date	6/22/11 – 6/25/11
Length	One Week
Overview	The students will learn quickly and quietly to absorb the scene and conceptualize its contents.
Supplies	1 sheet of paper, 1 pencil or stick of charcoal. For instructor: dry erase board and marker, a box, and objects (apple, stapler, bowl, iron, cup, slinky, etc.)
Vocabulary	Gesture, capture, idea, memorize, line, color, small, large, generalizing.
Key Concepts	Utilizing the time given, memorizing a scene in detail, sketching quickly, generalizing the subject matter.
Instructional Plan	Instructor chooses to either introduce the subject of gesture before or after having the class participate in the memory activity. In the center of class is an upside down box. The instructor begins the activity and asks the class questions, only during the second activity does the class sketch.
Activity	Instructors uncovers what is under the box, explaining the class will look for 20 seconds, after which the instructor cover the objects and asks the class to remember what they saw. The answers are recorded on the dry erase board. If the class says they saw a cup, the instructor will draw several cups and ask the class which is most accurate (ex. coffee mug, wine glass, plastic cup). After the drawings are established the instructor asks for more details (such as color), and other comparative questions (ex. which object was the largest). Once several details are provided, the instructor lifts the box and compares the class notes to the actual objects. The next activity is similar but the instructor makes a new still life under the box, then has the class draw their own still life after the 20 seconds.

Unit	Gesture Drawing 2.2
Topic	Figure Drawing Gesture
Date	6/29/11 – 7/1/11
Length	One Week
Overview	Students will quickly sketch a figure while staff and volunteers model different gestures.
Supplies	1 sheet of paper, 1 pencil or stick of charcoal, figure model, accessories for model. For instructor: either dry erase board and marker or newsprint and charcoal
Vocabulary	Gesture, capture, idea, line, small, large, generalize, shape.
Key Concepts	Utilizing the time given, students break the figure into simple shapes and draw these quickly.
Instructional Plan	Instructor briefly reviews the idea of gesture. Shows how to break a body into simple shapes: circle for head, triangle for bent arm with hand on hip. etc. Does one quick gesture drawing for reminder while asking what details should be left out and what should be included.
Activity	While lead instructor introduces lesson and gives reminders about gesture drawing, two volunteers/co-instructors begin putting on accessories, making sure to include small objects (like a ring) as well as larger objects (like a hat or bag). The models come into the room and the instructor briefly reviews details that can be left out. The artists have a one-minute time slot to draw one of the models. After each minute gesture, the models change positions and poses. Once this exercise has been completed a few times the artists can volunteer to model. The last two gesture drawings should be two minutes, and artists should be encouraged to sketch both models.

Unit	Gesture Drawing 2.3
Topic	Detail Figure Gesture
Date	7/6/11 – 7/9/11
Length	One Week
Overview	Students will quickly sketch a segment of the figure using a viewfinder.
Supplies	1 sheet of paper, 1 pencil or stick of charcoal, figure model, accessories for model, viewfinder. For instructor: either dry erase board and marker or newsprint and charcoal
Vocabulary	Gesture, capture, idea, line, small, large, generalize, shape, viewfinder.
Key Concepts	Utilizing the time given, students chose segment of the figure and break it into simple shapes, which are drawn quickly.
Instructional Plan	Instructor briefly reviews the previous lesson over figure gesture. Next, he/she introduces the viewfinder and explains how to use it, "close one eye, gold viewfinder to open eye and move away slowly." Emphasize that the students should see their composition area growing smaller. Instructors describe cropping the figure and not drawing the entire person.
Activity	Volunteers/instructors act as models, posing for the class multiple times, wearing different accessories each time. The first few drawings will be one minute long. The class uses their viewfinders to choose what segment of the model to draw. In each pose, the class chooses a different section to draw. Poses at the end of the activity should last one and a half minutes, and class should be encouraged to include more detail to the sectioned drawing.

Unit	Gesture Drawing 2.4
Topic	Gesture Composition
Date	7/13/11 – 7/16/11
Length	One Week
Overview	Students will quickly sketch part of a still life scene that includes figure models.
Supplies	1 sheet of paper, 1 pencil or stick of charcoal, figure model, accessories for model, viewfinder. For instructor: either dry erase board and marker or newsprint and charcoal
Vocabulary	Gesture, capture, idea, line, small, large, generalize, shape, viewfinder.
Key Concepts	Utilizing the time given, students chose segment of the still life scene to draw (note: should not be entire scene).
Instructional Plan	Instructor briefly reviews the previous lesson covering figure gesture and how to use a viewfinder. Next, he/she instructs the class to choose a segment of the still life scene, similar to what they did with the figure in the last lesson. Choosing to omit aspects of the scene, including one or all of the models, gives clients control over their subject matter.
Activity	Volunteers/instructors pose for the class while the students use their viewfinders to choose the section of the still life scene (including models) that they wish to draw. One staff member draws along as the class starts to sketch; other staff and volunteers walk around helping those who are still unsure of what section to draw. After each pose, the class and the instructor who is drawing along will present what they have drawn. Instructors placing an emphasis on “chose.”

APPENDIX D: UNIT ON ABSTRACTION 4.1 – 4.3

Unit	Abstract 4.1
Topic	Non-representational
Date	9/14/11 – 9/17/11
Length	One Week
Overview	Students get an introduction to non-representational abstract drawing.
Supplies	Pencil, paper, 3 colored pencils. For instructor: dry erase board, 3 colored dry erase markers.
Vocabulary	Abstract, representational, non-representational, realistic, sections, interpretation.
Key Concepts	Learning the difference between non-representational and representational imagery, limiting the colors used in a single piece.
Instructional Plan	Instructor reviews the idea of representational and non-representational abstract artwork. Show examples of several non-representational pieces with the color palette displayed about each image (limited palette, only 5 colors). Explain that interesting art can be created with a limited palette.
Activity	Draw a series of shapes on the board using one continuous line that intersects many times. The class follows along. Then use the 3 colored markers to fill in the newly created series of shapes, trying not to have the same colored shape next to another, ex: red next to red, blue next to blue, etc. Walk around class to check on progress and have participants fill in at least the majority of the shapes creates.

Unit	Abstract 4.2
Topic	Upside Down Face
Date	9/21/11 – 9/24/11
Length	One Week
Overview	Students draw a face upside down by focusing on the individual shapes that make up a face.
Supplies	Pencil, paper, handouts of a drawing of a face. For instructor: dry erase board, dry erase markers.
Vocabulary	Shape, abstract, simplifying, upside down, focusing.
Key Concepts	Not focusing on drawing a face, but rather thinking of the individual shapes that make up a face and relating them in space to one another. The point is not to make an upside down face but to draw all the shapes this way to avoid the preconceived idea of what a drawn face looks like.
Instructional Plan	Instructor talks about abstract art and the importance of shapes. Shapes make up artworks and object. A face is a shape full of shapes. Even an eye is a shape with shapes inside of it. Try to get the class to think about only shapes and not representation. A face looks like someone because of the individual shapes and where they are placed; all faces look different.
Activity	Instructor has everyone turn their handout of a face upside down and asks artists to begin at any point and start drawing the shapes they see. The goal is to draw the shapes relative to other shapes on the face, so when it is turned back around it will resemble an abstract face. Instructor demonstrates by drawing their own upside down handout on the dry erase board while staff and volunteers help others with their own drawings. If this proves too difficult for some artists, instructor will inform the class that they can simply draw the individual shapes without worrying about their relation to other shapes, ex. an upside down eyebrow can be drawn in one corner, and upside down mouth in another. Make sure the entire class has at least attempted the exercise before doing this modification. When near completion, have class hold up their drawing if they wish to display it before turning in.

Unit	Abstract 4.3
Topic	Surrealism
Date	9/28/11 – 10/1/11
Length	One Week
Overview	Students play with abstract ideas through collage and surrealism.
Supplies	Pencil, sketchpad, scissors, magazines. For instructor: dry erase board, dry erase markers.
Vocabulary	Abstract, realistic, dreamlike, placement.
Key Concepts	Pushing the idea of abstract. Trying to get students to think outside of "a house is a house and goes where a house goes."
Instructional Plan	Instructor reviews what abstract is and that surrealism is similar to a dream in that anything is possible. Talk about realistic vs. unrealistic placement of images on a background. Have several cut out figures and backgrounds prepared before lesson begins fro instructor to use.
Activity	Instructor shows cutouts of figures and scenes, and demonstrates key concepts by placing objects in a surrealistic way (ex. Fireplace in the sky, cow in a bathroom). Have the students then look through their magazines and cut out a background and several items, at least one of them not belonging in a realistic sense. Once they create their surrealistic scene, have them sketch it in their sketchpad. Once the majority of students have finished, suggest they show what they've made.

APPENDIX E: UNIT ON SHADING 1.1 – 1.4

Unit	Shading 1.1
Topic	Introduction to shading
Date	5/4/11 – 5/7/11
Length	One Week
Overview	Introduce light source and shadow in relation to object on page.
Supplies	Pencil, sketchpad, scissors. For instructor: dry erase board, dry erase markers.
Vocabulary	Shading, shadow, light source, cross-hatching, scribbling, dotting, placement.
Key Concepts	Light source, shading and areas to leave light, placement of object.
Instructional Plan	Instructor explains shading using cross batching, scribbling or dotting techniques. Have those interested present their drawings. Collect drawings.
Activity	Instructor asks class to name an object. Instructor draws the object asks where the light source could be (up, down, left, right). Next, he/she adds the light source and asks the class where the shadow will be. Remind students about the rule of shadow being opposite the light source if necessary. Instructor shades the object using one of the mentioned techniques. Repeats with other object presented by students. Instructor lets students draw while walking around and helping them with questions.

Unit	Shading 1.2
Topic	Cross-hatching and line application
Date	5/25/11 – 5/28/11
Length	One Week
Overview	Students learn cross-hatching and line application (pressure and scribble techniques) to learn more about creating shadows.
Supplies	Pencil, paper, eraser, worksheet (with review of horizontal, vertical, and diagonal lines). For instructor: dry erase board, dry erase markers.
Vocabulary	Cross hatching, scribble, pressure, line, soft, hard, light, heavy, dark, closer, farther, vertical, horizontal, diagonal.
Key Concepts	Lines closer together appear to make a darker shade than lines spaced farther apart. Lines using more pressure are darker than lines using less pressure.
Instructional Plan	Class draws along with instructor as they outline cross-hatching, scribbling, and pressure line techniques. Working left to right on worksheet, where left is the darkest area and the right is the lightest. With cross-hatching, left square darkest, next is lighter, next is even lighter, and right square is right. Same concept with scribble. Pressure line is a single line that starts with hard pressure and ends with soft pressure. Pressure scribble is like pressure line but in scribble form.
Activity	Instructor explains cross-hatching, scribble, and pressure drawing techniques using vocabulary terms. He/she begins shading at top left of dry erase board with cross-hatching marks, and work down while class follows, stopping after completing each square for class to catch up. Performs the same activity with scribbling. Instructor uses different amounts of pressure and tone throughout activity.

Unit	Shading 1.3
Topic	3D Object Shading
Date	6/1/11 – 6/4/11
Length	One Week
Overview	Students will draw a 3D object with shading created by a dramatic, artificial light source.
Supplies	Pencil, paper, stool, gourd (or other object), lamp.
Vocabulary	Cross-hatching, scribble, vertical, horizontal, diagonal, light source, still life, opposite.
Key Concepts	Applying techniques learned from cross-hatching and scribble lesson to shade a single still life object. Shadow follows the curve of the object. Using shading to describe what you see.
Instructional Plan	Instructor reviews cross-hatching, scribbling, and pressure line techniques. Next, explains shadow by moving the light around the gourd (or other object) so all sides of the room can see the change. Re-emphasize that shadow is on the opposite side of where the light hits.
Activity	Instructor sets gourd (or other object) in stool with all lights out besides one lamp providing dramatic shadow. Staff and volunteers walk around the room helping clients see where the shadow is and how to apply it to the paper using cross-hatching and lines previously discussed.

Unit	Shading 1.4
Topic	Color Shading
Date	6/8/11 – 6/11/11
Length	One Week
Overview	Show how complementary colors can be used in place of black to shade an object.
Supplies	Red and green colored pencils, paper, newsprint. For instructor: dry erase board and markers, large sheet of paper, red and green soft pastels.
Vocabulary	Cross-hatching, scribble, color shading, cast shadow, light source, vertical, horizontal, diagonal, opposite.
Key Concepts	Applying techniques learned from cross-hatching and scribble lesson to shade a sphere. Overlapping colors to create a new color.
Instructional Plan	Instructor briefly reviews cross-hatching and scribble shading on dry erase board. Next, reviews horizon line. Explains light source by asking what the light source is inside the building (light bulbs) and outside the building (the sun). Instructor draws on a large piece of paper and explains activity while class follows along.
Activity	Instructor draws a circle, horizon line, and another circle for the sun. Next, he/she colors the circle with red soft pastel, and asks the class to do the same. Instructor shows where the shadow is located, and tells students to shade the circle/sphere with green color, with the option of using cross-hatching or scribble technique. Finally, adds a case shadow on the ground using both colors on top of each other, to show how they create a new color.

APPENDIX F: ARC OF THE ARTS CRITIQUE FORM

Instructor prompts to aid participants' in identifying and discussing artistic style:

- What did you use to make this piece?
- What is this painting (or sculpture etc.) of?
- Why did you choose this subject/ subject matter?
- Tell me about some of the other paintings in the gallery.
- Tell me about some of the other artists.

Ask the artist to compare a few of her/his own art pieces:

- How should these pieces be priced if we were to sell them in the gallery?
  - Why did you choose that price?
- Which of your paintings is most valuable?
  - Why do you think that this one is *worth* more than the other?
  - What about this piece makes it more valuable?
- How does this painting compare to other people's paintings in the gallery?
  - What do you like about this artist's panting?
  - How does this artist's work make you feel? (happy, serious, confused etc.)

Prompts for Helping Clients Speak about the Gallery: Using role-play.

- One participant is 'running the gallery.' The instructor leaves the gallery, and re-enters pretending to be a person who has wondered into the gallery, and who knows nothing about the Arc of the Arts program.

  Possible instructor questions:
  - Please tell me about this art gallery.
  - Who made this art?
  - Did one person or many people make these pieces?
  - What are these paintings/sculptures made from?
  - Where do the materials come from?
  - Which did you make? What was your inspiration?

When a new person does actually wonder into the gallery to look around, consider asking one of the participants to join you in the gallery to answer questions and show off their artwork. These exercises can also be used as a financial literacy tool and a means of collecting information for artist biographies.

APPENDIX G: ARTIST UNIT PROGRESS NOTES (INITIAL FORM)

Gesture Drawing 2.1

(Instructor) **Jessica** - Brief observation Still Life **Date:** 6/22/11

Lesson Plan Title & Description:

Materials used, discussion questions, overarching concepts. [table, box, objects — apple, stapler, bowl, iron, cup, slinky] artists - pencil, paper (charcoal on Friday)

overarching concepts: cross-hatching perhaps line, color, small, lar[ge]

Skills and concepts: For artist to quickly & quietly absorb the scene and conceptualize [memory]

Application of skills: taking the info they recalled - size, shape, color of object - quickly jot down in 30 seconds whatever material that comes to mind from their perspective

Flow Theory Words: Flow, Control, Relaxation, Boredom, Apathy, Worry, Anxiety, Arousal

	Weds.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.	Summary
"ALEX"		✓			"Alex" contributed to the discussion and answered questions about the shape of the objects and colors. Perspective seemed to be a little bit of a confusion and the [illegible] he was much larger than the other objects, but he started to [illegible]
	✓		✓		did well with the lesson. She drew a bowl and an apple. The apple seemed to [illegible] amongst the bowl, but gave the perspective that the bowl was in front. She is loving the new concepts.
		✓			was a little skeptical of the lesson at first, but then when staff explained the idea of gesture drawing to him one on one he trusted the idea a little more. He focused mostly on one object with [illegible]
				✓	was using a new medium and explored the page with the charcoal. She made some rough gestural marking and created some objects using crude shapes.
	✓	✓			has been enjoying the stimulation of "something new." He drew an apple & a stapler straight up in the air, but challenged the concept and quickly jotted down what he saw. (Thurs) Josh drew all of the representations of the objects [illegible]
	✓	✓			confirmed how "easy" the lesson was, but then had trouble putting into perspective the way the shapes were on the table — everything was linear. He helped contribute to color & shape & size of what objects were. (Thurs) Kevin captured the objects and perspective really well. Gesture drawing was tops!
		✓			had a wonderful time with the lesson. She contributed to the [illegible] about the objects' color and shape and identification. She did well with perspective and the organization of her shapes in relation to each other.
	✓	✓	✓		was frustrated at first with the idea of quickly figuring out [illegible] of the objects were in an unfinished [illegible]. [illegible] contribute to discussion about objects characteristics. (Fri) Stephen did well with the [illegible]. He used spraying overlapping techniques & got all the shapes.
"TARA"				✓	"Tara" had a successful day with the lesson. She made good use of the charcoal and perspective and grasped the idea of shape, form & size.

APPENDIX H: ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

Artist Name _____ Date:_____

What is your favorite media to work with?

What kind of art do you make most often? (Landscapes, pop-culture themed, bold colors, abstract, animal-themed, sculpture, etc.)

What inspires you?

What do you like about making art?

What do you like to do outside of art class? (Travel, social groups, sports, etc.)

In what way are you most talented?

How does creating art at the Arc of the Arts make your feel?

APPENDIX I: ARTIST UNIT PROGRESS NOTES (UPDATED FORM)

Artist Unit Progress Notes

Instructor: Andrew Artist: Emelia Unit: Gesture

Weekly Progress Notes		Objectives					
Date:	Lesson:	Attentiveness	Understanding	Participation	Use of Materials	Needs 1 on 1	♡
6.22-6.25	Lesson: Still life gesture						
6.29-7-1	Lesson: figure gesture Comments: Able to fit figures on page. Showed angle of legs. Added details like [illegible] Emily did well, her figures are in accurate poses.	3	3	3	3	no	
7-6-7-9	Lesson: figure close up gesture Comments: Got concept, drew individual arms + legs. Put in hand in com-nice! Added fingers due to faster drawing speed. First drawing of arm unclear, other two easier to identify. Continues to make basic shapes for arms + legs. Thus	3	3	3	3	no	
7-13-7-16	Lesson: Comments: chose to draw 4 objects from still life, no figures. Worked out and drew informative shapes. Chose to draw model this day (Fri) + Thurs drew model sitting in chair, legs bent (impressive) obviously looking at model, not from memory	3	3	3	3	no	

Skills and Concepts				
generalize	✓	life models	✓	
gesture	✓	memory and recalling	-	
detail	✓			
basic shapes	✓			
time limit	✓			
still life	✓			

Final Assessment

APPENDIX J: UNIT ON PARADISE 3.1 – 3.3

Unit	Paradise 3.1
Topic	Idea of Paradise
Date	7/20/11 – 7/23/11
Length	One Week
Overview	Students explore the idea of individual paradise.
Supplies	1 sheet of paper, 1 pencil, magazines and other reference materials. For instructor: dry erase board and markers.
Vocabulary	Personal, paradise, theme, composition.
Key Concepts	Deciding on an individual paradise. Making several sketches of that paradise.
Instructional Plan	Instructor introduces concept of paradise, illustrates what it could be to different people, and gives example of his/her own paradise. Asks class to share ideas of paradise (expecting most examples to be places). Instructor then elaborates on idea by having students come up with situations that would make the place into a paradise: i.e. Las Vegas is a paradise when you play slot machines, etc. Activity to follow.
Activity	Once decision has been made on an idea for a paradise, students look through magazines previously places in from of them for images that could be used in their work. The class makes at lease one basic sketch of their idea. Once the sketch is complete, so is the lesson. However, any student can continue to work on the sketch and even expand into working with watercolor (going into next week's lesson).

Unit	Paradise 3.2
Topic	Watercolor / Pastel sketch of paradise image
Date	7/27/11 – 7/30/11
Length	One Week
Overview	Students further explore the idea of individual paradise.
Supplies	Sheets of watercolor paper and pastel/charcoal paper in various sizes. Watercolor paints, cups, brushes, rags, pastels, charcoals.
Vocabulary	Personal, paradise, theme, composition.
Key Concepts	Further explore the composition of the paradise scene.
Instructional Plan	Instructor reviews concept of paradise, illustrates what it could be to different people, and gives example of his/her own paradise. Instructor discusses with class the process of choosing a drawing (pastels) or painting (watercolor) technique, and reviews the specific supplies needed for this portion of the project.
Activity	Students choose either painting (watercolor) or drawing (in pastel or charcoal) for their final medium. Instructor hands out according materials and the students (using their sketch from the previous week) start to create a more detailed version of their final paradise piece.

Unit	Paradise 3.3
Topic	Final versions of paradise images
Date	8/3/11 – 8/6/11
Length	One Week
Overview	Students begin a final version of their piece on paradise.
Supplies	Sheets of watercolor and pastel/charcoal paper in various sizes. Watercolor paints, cups, brushes, rags, pastels, charcoals, canvas, acrylic paint.
Vocabulary	Personal, paradise, theme, composition, depth.
Key Concepts	Further explore the composition of the paradise scene.
Instructional Plan	Instructor reviews concepts and techniques covered during the past 2 weeks; the idea of paradise and the students' progress in making an image. Instructor next informs the class they will each receive either a canvas or quality art paper to begin their final piece.
Activity	Students begin final version of their image of paradise pieces on high quality paper or canvas. Staff helps clients choose what type of paper to use if working on a drawing.

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